



Staff Report

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Report To: General Government Committee

Date of Meeting: October 19, 2020

Report Number: CSD-010-20

Submitted By: George Acorn, Director of Community Services

Reviewed By: Andrew C. Allison, CAO

By-law Number:

File Number:

Resolution#:

Report Subject: Municipal Buildings – Waste Reduction and Recycling Update

Recommendation:

1. That Report CSD-010-20 be received for information.

Report Overview

The intention of this report is to provide an update to Council on direction provided to staff to develop a program to effectively eliminate the use of single-use plastic, where there exists an environmentally responsible alternative. The report will outline the accomplishments to date as well as ongoing efforts. In addition, staff is moving forward with other forms of waste reduction for municipal buildings, which is in line with Council's Strategic Priority for Environmental Sustainability. With this expanded focus Community Services is better positioned to make significant improvements in waste reduction and recycling in our buildings.

As the result of the transition of Building Services, as recommended in the Grant Thornton Organizational Review, all municipal buildings are now the responsibility of the Community Services Department. This will result in a consistent approach to single-use plastic elimination, enhanced recycling and an expanded organic waste program. As part of our role to liaise with all arena and community hall operating boards, we will also work with them to adopt these waste reduction measures in their operations.

1. Background

- 1.1 At the March 25, 2019 General Government Committee (GGC) Meeting, Resolution #GG-171-19 was approved, stating "That staff be directed to see what can be done about reducing their use at Clarington Council meetings or events the matter of single use plastic plates, cups and cutlery; and That Staff report back on the elimination of single use plastics in Clarington buildings."
- 1.2 Resolution #C194-19 was approved at the May 21, 2019 Council meeting, which stated "That the matter of banning of single use plastics (non-recyclable) from Municipal Buildings, where possible, be referred to Staff to report back at the September 23, 2019 General Government Committee meeting."
- 1.3 Community Services and Operations provided Report CSD-008-19 for the September 23, 2019 GGC meeting. The Report provided Council with information on a proposed program to eliminate or reduce the use of single use plastics in municipal buildings and recreation facilities.

- 1.4 At a Council meeting held on October 7, 2019, Council passed the following Resolution #C-343-19: “That Report CSD-008-19 be received; That Council direct Staff to develop and implement a program for the elimination of single use plastics in municipal facilities and buildings, where there exists an environmentally responsible alternative; That Staff report back to Council after six months on the highlights of the program and the results achieved; That all single use plastics be banned from the Municipal Administrative Centre as of November 30, 2019; and That the Clarington Public Library, Clarington Museums & Archives and municipally owned/Board operated Community Halls and Arenas be advised of the decisions of Council.”
- 1.5 A planned April 2020 report to Council on the highlights of the program and results achieved was postponed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic situation, and a memo on the June 1 GGC agenda notified Council of the intention to provide the Report this fall.

2. Objectives

Single Use Plastics

- 2.1 According to data from the federal government, less than 10% of plastic manufactured is recycled. On October 7, the federal government announced the ban of specific single use plastics, including bags, straws and cutlery, in Canada by the end of 2021.
- 2.2 By moving forward at this time, the Municipality will be well positioned for the pending ban as well as having a positive impact on the damage that non-recycled plastics are having on our environment.

Maximizing the Effectiveness of the Existing Recycling Program

- 2.3 Although the Municipality has employed a robust recycling program in all municipally operated buildings for many years, staff have reviewed the current program and will be making the necessary adjustments to increase recycling effectiveness.
- 2.4 One key to an effective program is the proper sorting of recyclables at the source, especially by our customers. By enhancing the messaging with clear signage on recycling containers, the result will be less contamination of recycling materials.

Introduction of an Organic Waste Program

- 2.5 Currently, few municipal buildings have introduced organic waste pick up to their waste management programs. The only opportunity we have is for buildings that are included in the Region of Durham’s curbside pickup program.

- 2.6 With the expansion of this program to our larger recreation buildings, we can divert tonnes of organic waste annually from traditional land fill. With the resumption of concession services in our arenas and events in our community halls we will benefit greatly from this program.

3. Successes to Date

Program at the Municipal Administrative Centre

- 3.1 The first step in eliminating single use plastics at the Municipal Administrative Centre (MAC) was to educate and engage staff in the process. A poll was sent out to test people's awareness and to solicit suggestions, which were then used to eliminate the use of single use plastics. These included removing all disposable cups for coffee in all kitchenettes, replacement of plastic stir sticks with environmentally friendly alternatives, and eliminating the use of single creamers (many of the items were donated to camps or other areas to be repurposed in programs). Boomerang lunches were encouraged for staff, whereby if a single use plastic was brought, staff then had to take that home with them.
- 3.2 Staff worked with our partners at Dewey's Café to reduce the amount of non-recyclable materials they were using to package their foods (for take-out). When people were eating there, there were dishes available, however, to take back to their office they were disposable products. The staff at Dewey's moved to environmentally friendly alternatives (either compostable or recyclable products) and away from Styrofoam as a result of this initiative.
- 3.3 At source separation in recycling is key to reducing contamination. As a result, MAC has multi-stream waste bins that include plastics and containers, fibres and organic recycling. These multi-stream bins are an attempt to reduce the number of recyclables that end up in the garbage. To monitor this, a waste audit was completed, and results shared with staff to help with the awareness and education as to the importance of properly sorting their recyclables. This continues to be monitored by using clear bags to view the contents that are discarded. Both above were implemented by November 30, 2019.
- 3.4 Additional water fountains were installed throughout the staff floors at MAC in order to reduce the need for staff to bring single use water from home. Staff were encouraged to bring their own refillable water containers to be used at the filtered water dispensers.

- 3.5 Finally, staff contacted local downtown Bowmanville eating establishments to confirm if staff were to bring in their own, clean, reusable containers, if the restaurants would package the food in those as opposed to disposables. This was well received, and the businesses were willing to do this once it was explained it was an attempt to reduce single use items.

Development of a Staff Team to Manage the Program and Successes at Facilities

- 3.6 In a May 2012 report, Council approved declaring Clarington a Blue Community. This included funding for the installation of water fountain/bottle fill stations in many municipal buildings. This also called for a ban on the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities. By providing bottle fill stations for public use, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of plastic bottles generated, over the last eight years.
- 3.7 Upon the efforts implemented at MAC to ban single use plastics, a team of waste reduction champions was established within the Community Services Division. The purpose of this team was to find and plan for opportunities to accomplish waste reduction in our recreation facilities.
- 3.8 Staff worked with Participation House (who operates the concessions at our twin pad arena facilities) to put a plan in place to reduce single use items. As a result, single use condiment packages, creamers and sugars were all eliminated successfully at the concessions.
- 3.9 At Garnet B. Rickard Recreation Complex, the same strategy was implemented for all meetings and hall functions. Re-useable dishes and jugs of water are now provided for all municipal meetings that require food and beverages. In addition, staff have worked with caterers to eliminate the use of single use plastics for events in our facilities, including plastic glasses for bar service. We have been successful with this initiative but from time to time, staff will need to follow up to reinforce this requirement. Our rental contract terms and conditions have been updated to reflect these requirements.
- 3.10 Staff at Diane Hamre Recreation Complex (DHRC) took the initiative to complete an internal audit of the waste and recycling program at their facility. This initiative, which included reducing the number of receptacles throughout the facility, saw a 60% reduction of the waste and recycling at this facility. The collateral impact of this initiative demonstrates the level to which staff has engaged in waste reduction initiatives within Community Services.

- 3.11 As a pilot project a waste audit was completed at Courtice Community Complex. A staff team was assembled that logged all waste and recycling over a 24-hour period. The program provided insight as to where our efforts needed to be focussed. Staff concluded that the number of receptacles could be reduced by 60% (like DHRC) and a new flow of traffic was mapped to inform where the locations of the reduced receptacles should be replaced. New receptacles are required and will be multi-stream units which include organics recycling where appropriate.
- 3.12 Customer Services staff worked with facilities to eliminate the printing of duplicate copies of permits issued to groups renting our facilities. As a result, training was provided to staff to ensure they could run electronic reports to gain the same information from a printed permit. This reduced the paper use at facilities and reduced the need for shredding and recycling of outdated permits.
- 3.13 Customer Service staff worked with Communications on a targeted promotion to our customers, encouraging them to add their emails to their Active Net accounts. Not only did this speed up the communication to our customers about closures or upcoming events (if they chose to give us that consent), it also permitted us to inform our customers of membership expiries without having to mail them a paper letter. We continue to encourage customers to add their emails to accounts.

4. Future Projects

Recreation and Leisure Guide Going Green

- 4.1 Community Services staff have looked at current processes that could lend to improved waste reduction. One area for consideration is the elimination of the printed Recreation and Leisure Guide. Prior to the current COVID-19 situation, the quarterly guide was printed in large quantities with distribution to households across the Municipality. Through the current online registration opportunities for our customers, staff will be considering the potential elimination of this publication. More details and recommendations will be before Council in an upcoming staff report.

Additional Projects

- 4.2 Battery recycling is being investigated to implement at MAC. This would reduce the amount of hazardous waste that is currently being disposed of potentially incorrectly. Battery recycling is a challenge at most locations. Staff have already been working with the Region of Durham to work through the process of setting this up with MAC.
- 4.3 A staff team had begun working with Hall Boards to implement similar approaches where health measures allow (i.e. areas with non-potable drinking water still need an alternative). Staff will continue to work with Hall Boards on this initiative as they re-open from being closed as a result of the pandemic.

- 4.4 The Building and Property Services team have identified that the next step in managing waste reduction is to include other Municipal staff locations, including Public Works sites and Fire Stations, By-law and Animal services. All locations are intending to add organics recycling and staff are investigating other locations that are suitable for battery recycling.
- 4.5 Community Services will look to take the next step in waste reduction at our facilities by standardizing the multi-stream units. These units, like what is in place at MAC, will help with recycling and at the source separation. The addition of organics in our facilities will greatly assist in waste diversion. The staff team have created a standard to be implemented at each of our facilities and will be submitting a request for funding through the 2021 capital program to standardize the units at our facilities. This will be phased in at all facilities over the next 2-3 years on a priority basis.
- 4.6 In the interim, Community Services staff will plan to complete waste audits at the remaining facilities in order to find efficiencies until the proposed program is in place. This will help achieve some waste reduction prior to the standard program being implemented at all facilities.
- 4.7 Customer Service staff have worked with our software provider, Active Net and our IT Department to implement signature pads at all our facilities. This enables us to have customers electronically sign permits and other transactions (like memberships and registrations) without having to print out a paper receipt. The system then stored the electronic signature and the receipt and confirmation paperwork can be emailed to the customer (paper copies can be provided upon request). This essentially eliminates the need for printing at our customer service desks and leads to a “greener” processing of transactions.
- 4.8 Ensuring that this program is sustainable moving forward, Facility and Building and Property Supervisors will be tasked as part of their primary responsibilities to ensure waste reduction is a priority for all staff in the facility. Community Services will continue to promote Going Green Champions to look for further opportunities to reduce our waste impact and divert items from landfill.

5. Concurrence

- 5.1 Not Applicable.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 By providing this update to Council, staff are identifying the valuable work accomplished to date that both addresses the direction to eliminate single use plastics in municipal buildings and the undertaking of other waste reduction initiatives, in line with the Environmental Sustainability priority that Council has adopted for this current term of Council.
- 6.2 It is clear there remains much work to do and staff remain committed to make waste reduction and effective recycling in municipal buildings a high priority. We are confident our efforts will result in a positive outcome for our community.

Staff Contact: Lee-Ann Reck, Client Services and Acting Facilities Services Manager, 905-623-3379 ext. 2508 or lreck@clarington.net.

Attachments:

Not Applicable

Interested Parties:

There are no interested parties to be notified of Council's decision.