

Accessibility Considerations for Curbside Solid Waste Collection

ISSUE

Relocating residential solid waste roll-out containers to, and from, the street or alley for collection can be problematic or impossible for residents with disabilities. The City currently offers a closed program to a limited number of residents, which improves service accessibility for single-family household (curbside) collections. Saskatoon residents who are not currently part of the program have expressed the desire and need for a similar service.

BACKGROUND

2.1 History

Since 2007, the City has delivered a service to enhance the accessibility of curbside solid waste collections; previously referenced in reports as the Special Needs Garbage Collection Service. For those residents included in the program, their roll-out solid waste containers (or 'carts') are retrieved from their property, the contents collected, and then returned to the same location on the property by collection crews.

This program, which was intended to be phased out, was established along with the project which replaced the 300 gallon communal back lane garbage containers with household-specific carts. The service was initially extended as a one-time offer to residents who met pre-defined criteria in affected areas. Since the initial intake, the program has remained closed to new applicants.

City Council at its meeting held on October 23, 2017, considered the Special Needs Garbage Collection Service report and resolved, in part:

“That the Administration report at 2018 budget deliberations outlining the potential for and impact of accepting new applicants to the Special Needs Garbage Collection Service for the interim term prior to the results of the Waste Utility consultation and resulting updated Waste Management and Services implementation.”

The Options for Expanding Special Needs Garbage Collection report was received as information in support of the Recommended Changes to Waste Management in Saskatoon report at the November 20, 2017 meeting of City Council. City Council also resolved to forward the report to the waste consultations.

The aforementioned 'waste consultations' was a reference to a curbside residential waste community engagement campaign that was planned and executed in 2018 to inform recommended changes to waste management in Saskatoon. Applicable information is summarized within the 'Public Engagement' section of this report.

At its regular business meeting held on March 25, 2019, City Council resolved:

“That the Administration report back with options and implications of special-needs collection services (waste, recycling and organics). As previously directed, Administration should engage with relevant stakeholders such as senior and disability services organizations, as well as the Saskatoon Accessibility Advisory Committee, to address accessibility needs as well as any updates required to the Special Needs Garbage Collection Service.”

2.2 Current Status

The Special Needs Garbage Collection Service continues to be offered to those residents in the program until they leave their current home. Unless program or service level changes are mandated by City Council, the program will eventually have no participants. This service is currently provided for the black (garbage) and blue (recycling) carts.

In 2017, a marketing campaign was launched, promoting neighbours helping neighbours roll their carts to the street or alley on collection days.

2.3 Public Engagement

On March 6, 2018, the Administration hosted the Accessible Waste Collection workshop. Prior to the workshop, the Administration presented to the Saskatoon Accessibility Advisory Committee at their February 9, 2018 meeting. Engagement opportunities were highlighted with respect to accessibility and curbside waste collection. Invitees for the March 6, 2018 engagement workshop were also discussed.

Results of the March 6, 2018 workshop were presented in the Changes to Waste Management in Saskatoon - Engagement Results report to City Council at its meeting on June 25, 2018. At that time, City Council resolved that the report be received as information in support of the Recommended Changes to Waste Management in Saskatoon report.

An attachment of the June 25, 2018 report is also appended to this report as Appendix 1. Barriers and challenges of the current state were presented, along with opportunities for the future. In short, a desire for improvements to the limitations of the City's current program were expressed by workshop participants. The following key values were proposed, for the design and delivery of a potential future program:

- Transparency and openness – of program offered;
- Fairness – of eligibility, access;
- Equity – in level of service and cost (comparative to regular household program);
- Affordability – conscious of constrained incomes (old age pensions, disability); and
- Coordination – between service providers.

Results of other waste-related engagement activities, reported in June 2018, also indicated a desire for accessible solid waste collection services by some residents.

2.5 Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

The Administration contacted other Canadian municipalities to identify whether they offered a dedicated program to enhance the accessibility of solid waste collection services. Of the eleven municipalities that responded, eight offered such programs. Answers to a series of program-related questions are included in Appendix 3, which will inform future service level investigations for Saskatoon.

OPTIONS

Option 1: Status Quo – Do Not Change the Service Level of the Existing Special Needs Garbage Collection Service

Should this option be approved, the City would continue to deliver the existing service, until such time as all the residents in the program vacated their households. Eventually, the service would cease to exist.

There would be a gradual increase in the capacity of collection staff and equipment. This would be offset by City growth, and therefore there would be a minimal reduction in annual operating expenditures.

This option is not supported by feedback from previous public engagement.

Option 2: Cancel the Existing Special Needs Garbage Collection Service

Should this option be approved, all residents, including those in the current Special Needs Garbage Collection Service, would be required to relocate their carts to the front curb or back alley for collection. The City would cease to provide a service which enhances the accessibility of curbside solid waste collections, after appropriate communication had been delivered.

There would be an immediate increase in the capacity of collection staff and equipment. There may be a reduction in annual operating expenditures.

This option is not supported by feedback from previous public engagement.

Option 3: Initiate a Project to Develop and Evaluate Alternatives to Expand the Existing Program

Should this option be approved, the Administration would initiate a project to explore the feasibility of alternatives to expand and alter the existing Special Needs Garbage Collection Service. Appropriate community engagement would be completed once the details of each alternative were developed. The goal would be to provide City Council with a report containing a recommendation which ensures equitable access to curbside solid waste collection services, for residents with a disability, to the best of the City's ability.

Factoring in the 2020 and 2021 multi-year budget, the timeframe for the report would be targeted to allow for an operationalized program at some point in 2022.

The 'Rationale' section of this report highlights the short term financial implications of this option. The information outlined within the 'Additional Implications/Considerations' section would be factored in to the evaluation of potential alternatives.

This option is supported by feedback from previous public engagement.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services recommend to City Council that:

1. The Administration proceed with Option 3 to initiate a project to identify alternatives to expand the accessible City-wide curbside (single-family household) solid waste collection service, report back on the feasibility of each, and recommend an alternative for implementation;
2. The values identified in the March 2018 engagement session (Accessible Waste Collection workshop) be included in the Administration's evaluation of accessible solid waste collection alternatives, along with legal, financial, and labour relations considerations; and
3. The report of the General Manager, Utilities & Environment Department dated January 13, 2020, be forwarded to the Saskatoon Accessibility Advisory Committee, with a specific request to propose a new name for the Special Needs Garbage Collection Service.

RATIONALE

The information in Appendices 1 and 2 support the recommendation, from a community engagement and a legal standpoint, respectively. In addition, the information in Appendix 3 demonstrates that other Canadian municipalities offer City-wide curbside accessible solid waste collection services.

In order to provide City Council with a comprehensive evaluation of options for altering the current program, additional work is required to refine the list of alternatives, and explore the feasibility of each. This work would include an evaluation of opportunities for accessible solid waste collection services offered by both City staff or a third party. An open, fair, and transparent process would be utilized to obtain the third-party information.

This work was initially included in the scope of the 2017-2018 capital project which evaluated curbside solid waste collection as a utility. As the scope of the utility project changed, the work on accessible collections was put on hold. This work will be completed using existing resources, which may have a slight impact on the timing of other priorities.

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

The exploration of expanding the accessible solid waste collection service is not only isolated to curbside garbage collection. The curbside recycling contract is also a factor, as is the pending City-wide curbside organics program.

City staff provide the existing service for curbside garbage, and the contracted recycling collection provider delivers the service for curbside recycling. The legal and logistical implications of engaging another third party to deliver the accessible curbside solid waste collection service must be explored. In addition, Requests for Information to prospective third party service providers must adhere to the City’s Purchasing Policy (C02-045) and applicable processes.

Other considerations of a future program include the following, in addition to those outlined in previous engagement sessions:

- Resources;
- Costs;
- Eligibility and access;
- Level of service and cost compared to “regular” household program;
- Clear eligibility criteria; and
- Possible streams for temporary and permanent disabilities.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Administration will report back to City Council once the feasibility of future service alternatives have been explored.

APPENDICES

1. Accessible Waste Collection Workshop Summary
2. Confidential Solicitor/Client Privilege
3. Municipal Benchmarking Results

REPORT APPROVAL

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