

Clear Bag program could begin as early as June 5

By Brock Weir

Aurora's move to a Clear Bag garbage program could begin as early as June 5 with a voluntary start day.

If recommendations to Council are approved next week, the 'soft launch' of the clear bag garbage program will be set for that date to coincide with United Nations Environment Day, before the program becomes mandatory on October 19.

Pending Council's green light, however, at least two further public information sessions will also be added to the schedule before the June 5 roll out.

The move to continue the public education component of the controversial program comes after an information meeting held at Town Hall last month, and ongoing online surveys to gauge public awareness and concerns over the program, which will mandate a move away from the popular black garbage bags of today to clear bags to help weed out items which may not be in the proper waste stream.

According to a report from Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure and Environmental Services, approximately 60 residents attended the February 9 sessions, who outlined a number of concerns. One worry was a limit of using just three opaque bags within a larger clear bag for privacy. That issue has now been tackled with a move towards an unlimited amount of opaque bags in each clear bag.

Some residents were also concerned they would not be able to use their garbage containers; they can.

Others, however, were more concerned with enforcement and what to do with garbage left curbside that drivers deem unacceptable.

'The program would be enforced no differently than the current practice for blue box and green bin compliance,' said Mr. Simanovskis. 'Any compliance issues would be communicated to the resident through a detailed Clear Bag Garbage 'OOPS' sticker which would identify the reasons for non-collection.

'Any disputes can be channeled back to the Town for consideration. The intent is to educate the residents on acceptable material to ensure proper collection is achieved and not to avoid collection, which only increases resident frustration.'

Over 170 residents have weighed in through the online survey which focused primarily on awareness of different components of the program, but just a 24 per cent support rate for the clear bag initiative overall.

'It is recommended that public education and awareness continue through to the end of 2015 as the program transitions from voluntary start to full transition,' said Mr. Simanovskis. 'In addition, staff will conduct two additional surveys and open house events. One will be targeted in advance of the voluntary start date of June 5, and the second will be in advance of the full transition date planned for October 19. The focus of these events will be to gauge community support and to ensure appropriate messaging is occurring. The results of these events will be reported to Council prior to launch dates.

'The result [of public consultations shows] the majority of residents are in support of the program once made aware of the specific aspects of the program. In particular, residents' concerns were focused on privacy, cost and enforcement, which in most cases were addressed once staff were given an opportunity to fully describe the program.'