

## Three-bag limit on waste collection will be enforced in January

Earlier this month, Aurora took the first steps towards implementing a three-bag limit on household waste collection.

You may not have noticed it just yet as the new limits are currently in an education phase but, come the New Year, these new limits will be subject to enforcement.

The education campaign to familiarize residents with the new three-bag waste limit kicked off on October 1. Over the last few weeks, residents have been able to place up to three bags or containers of waste for pickup every other week on their regularly-scheduled collection dates.

In addition to the three-bag limit, allowances are also in place for the collection of up to five 'bulky' items including non-metal items such as furniture, mattresses and box springs, plastic lawn furniture, separated toilets and carpeting.

'Waste beyond the three-bag limit will have a non-compliance sticker placed on it and will not be picked up,' said the Town in a statement on October 1.

But these restrictions will move from education to enforcement in January.

'We have been working extensively with our communications division getting the information out to residents and so far it has been very well received,' said Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Operations, providing a status update to Council last week. 'I haven't heard any issues and we are working towards the education program picking up all garbage that is at the curb. However, effective January 1, we will be limiting that as per the Council-approved bylaw to three bags.'

At last week's General Committee meeting, however, Councillor Harold Kim questioned why residents won't have the option of purchasing bag tags from the Town should they have more than three bags of waste by the time their collection day rolls around.

'It's a combination of a number of things,' replied Mr. Downey on why that option is not on the table. 'The Bylaw does not identify a tag program. We have looked at our Regional partners with regards to our bag limit and we are at the upper end; no one has less than a three-bag limit with regards to their garbage pickup and the purpose of limiting garbage is to make a smaller footprint.'

We are looking at trying to reduce the amount of waste within the community. It is good for the environment and it is also good for the bottom line because we pay [collectors] by weight. We are not encouraging people who have the means to pay more to put out garbage. What we're trying to do is educate them at this point on how well can you manage your garbage?'

Mr. Downey added that if it is found once enforcement kicks in that residents have concerns a bag tag program is something that can be revisited.

'At this point, we're not proposing a bag tag program so we can ensure we're putting out as little garbage as we possibly can and making as small an imprint on the environment as we possibly can,' he said.

But Councillor Harold Kim suggested that this should be considered before implementation and residents should be given the option.

'It helps those who have large families [have] an option so they don't have to put a smelly garbage bag in their trunk; I would imagine probably five to ten per cent of households use more than three garbage bags, unfortunately, but they do have large homes,' he said. 'In terms of [the Town's] bottom line, if we're charging for these tags, our bottom line would increase, would it not?'

Most municipalities charge in the neighbourhood of \$2 per garbage bag tag, said Mr. Downey, and research hasn't yet been done at

the Aurora level to determine the ?appropriate fee? should Council direct the creation of a tag program.

?But even with bag tags, there is also a limit,? said Mr. Downey. ?Many municipalities say you can put out two bags, but you can only put out five total and need three tags. There is always a limit regardless of whether or not there are bag tags or not. We are proposing that we move forward with a limit and that if we need to then adjust that limit through the bag tag system, fine ? but once we get to that point we will then be evaluating at least that cost-neutral system in which a bag tag would not be in an additional cost to the community.?

**By Brock Weir** Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter