

## Garbage bag tags could cost residents \$5 apiece

An Aurora-wide bag tag program for waste collection could be ready to launch as early as January.

That is the timeline being eyed by Council this week, along with a price of \$5 per tag.

Should the dates and costs of the program be accepted by lawmakers, single family dwellings and secondary dwelling units will be allowed up to three garbage bags without tags and three additional bags with tags for a maximum of six come January 1.

The bag tag program was last before Council on February 23, leading to a request for further information before the final ratification of the new system.

‘Fewer complaints and positive feedback from residents suggest impacts of three-bag limit collection are acceptable and solid waste going into landfill has been reduced,’ said Jim Tree, Acting Manager of Public Works, in a report to Council this week.

‘Aurora’s waste collection contractor was instructed to discontinue collection of more than three garbage containers/bags commencing January 1, 2021, and as of March 1 we received an additional 60 calls which included 12 complaints with the new limits and 12 requests for additional waste to be collected that had been left by the collection contractor. It became apparent that the effort put forth to educate and notify our residents had resulted in fewer complaints and a significant rate of 78 per cent compliance was observed by our staff.

‘This compliance rate was based on the results of a formal audit of 2,684 households prior to and again following the implementation of the three-bag limit during the month of January. Since the three-bag limit remains in effect and the number of calls and complaints have plateaued, this would indicate that the impacts associated with limiting the amount of waste per household are generally acceptable.’

As far as waste collection goes, Mr. Tree said that waste collection between January and March of this year was down by 393 metric tonnes compared to the same time period as the year before, resulting in a savings of \$37,278. Between January and May of 2020, approximately 2,776 tonnes of waste were collected. Between the same months in 2021, this was reduced to 2,382.72 tonnes.

‘This is a positive trend that we will continue to monitor and we remain confident that with further education and communication, reductions will continue to be realized,’ he said.

Pending Council’s approval, Aurora is currently the only one of York Region’s Northern Six (N6) municipalities that does not offer a bag tag program. Other communities within the N6 are Newmarket, King, Whitchurch-Stouffville, East Gwillimbury and Georgina.

East Gwillimbury, for instance, sells their tags for \$2 with a limit of up to three tagged bags for a maximum of five. Georgina’s buck-per-tag program allows up to four items with a maximum of five. King Township sells their regular tags at \$10 per five tags, while Newmarket sets their price at \$15 for a package of five.

Mr. Tree’s report notes that Aurora is currently the highest contributor per capita on solid waste amongst all of the N6 municipalities with lack of enforcement of waste programs cited as a ‘major contributor’ to this distinction.

Should the program be approved by Council this week, the process of getting things in place will begin in September with enforcement kicking in with the New Year.

It won’t be all smooth sailing, however, with secondary suites such as basement apartments an outstanding concern.

‘A significant challenge to date is managing the waste collection limits per dwelling unit in the residential dwelling where there are

multiple apartments within a single home," said Mr. Tree. "Further challenges arise when the non-registered apartment units enter the picture. To date, staff have identified 319 registered legal apartments within residential homes in Aurora. We have been in contact with many of the property owners to advise them as well as their tenants on how to place their waste at the curb. Additionally, our waste collection contractor has been provided with the list of multi-residential addresses and the contractor has been cooperative in ensuring that the waste being collected from these locations follows the limits."

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