

Addition of New Blue Bin Materials

Date:	June 11, 2008
To:	Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
From:	General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	p:/2008/swms/June/009PW

SUMMARY

This report provides the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee with an update on the implementation plan for adding polystyrene and plastic film to the City of Toronto Blue Bin Program on November 1, 2008.

Financial Impact

There are no significant financial implications in 2008, arising from this report. It is projected that there should not be a net increase in costs to the City to add polystyrene and plastic film to the recycling program. Revenue from the sale of the materials, avoided disposal savings and increased Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) funding are expected to offset or mitigate increased processing, collection and promotion costs. However, if there are additional net operating costs resulting from the addition of these materials to the program these costs will be incorporated in the 2009 Operating Budget Submission of Solid Waste Management Services. Revenue from the sale of the materials is contingent on suitable bids and market stability.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of July 25, 26 and 27, 2006, City Council adopted Report No. 5, Clause No. 10 from the June 20, 2006, Works Committee titled “Addition of New Materials to the Blue Box Program”. This report recommended that plastic film and polystyrene be added to the Blue Box Program subject to the implementation of the new Blue Bin Program that would provide residents with the anticipated required capacity for these new recyclable materials. This report can be viewed at the following link:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/council/cc060725/wks5rpt/cl010.pdf>

City Council on June 19, 20 & 22, 2007, adopted EX9.1 titled “Proposed Initiatives and Financing Model to Get to 70% Solid Waste Diversion by 2010” with the following Motion #25, which states “Prior to adding new plastics to the recycling program, that staff be requested to submit a report to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee on costs, diversion efficiency, material contamination and material end use for each proposed plastic.” This motion can be viewed on page 4 at the following link:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/cc/decisions/2007-06-19-cc10-dd.pdf>

City Council on July 16, 17 and 19, 2007, adopted Report PW7.21 recommending the award of the contract for the new Blue Bin and Garbage Bin Programs. The report can be viewed on page 108 at the following link:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/cc/decisions/2007-07-16-cc11-dd.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

This report provides the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee with an update on the implementation plan for adding polystyrene and plastic film to the City of Toronto Blue Bin Program. The new blue bins, in addition to providing the required capacity to accommodate these new materials, have a lid that will prevent these new lightweight materials from blowing out of the bin and causing litter.

The blue bin distribution to single-family households commenced in December 2007. It is anticipated that the delivery will be completed by the end of June 2008, at which time the distribution of the garbage bins will commence, with an expected completion date to all single-family households by the end of October of 2008. Once the garbage bin delivery is complete the single-family volume-based rate system will begin effective November 1, 2008. The addition of new materials, polystyrene and plastic film, to the Blue Bin Program is planned to coincide with the implementation of the single-family solid waste rate.

COMMENTS

The City of Toronto plans to issue two separate Requests for Sale (RFS) in July 2008, for polystyrene and plastic film. The intent is to award in August 2008, to allow sufficient time for the markets and our processing contractors to plan for receiving this material from the City of Toronto in November 2008. The RFS document will include

environmental and safety standards equal to or better than Ontario standards and also compliance with international obligations such as the Basel Convention. A further conditional requirement is that the markets must prove that they are stable and can handle the volumes of material the City anticipates collecting. It is projected that the addition of these materials will divert an additional 3,500 tonnes annually and have a 0.4 percent impact on the overall waste diversion rate in the City.

Polystyrene

Polystyrene is comprised of both rigid and expanded foam products (EPS) of which 75 percent of this stream is EPS and 25 percent is rigid. EPS consists of foam packaging, cups, plates and take out packaging. Rigid polystyrene consist of cutlery, compact disc cases, take out clamshells, food trays, etc. The concern with adding rigid polystyrene to the Blue Bin Program is that fifty percent of the product examples listed above are also made from other plastic resins that are not compatible with the current polystyrene markets. Therefore, due to the high contamination levels in rigid polystyrene, Solid Waste Management Services plans to only include EPS to the Blue Bin Program at this time. However, we plan to conduct trials at Material Recovery Facilities to test the sortation of rigid polystyrene from other rigid plastics with the hope of including this material at a later date. It is anticipated that 1,400 tonnes of polystyrene will be collected in the Blue Bin Program annually. Polystyrene is recycled back into packaging, signs, home decorative products, etc. Based on market research Solid Waste Management Services is confident that the RFS will result in award to a stable polystyrene market that will have the market capacity to meet our collection quantities.

Plastic Film

Plastic film is comprised of plastic grocery sacks; retail store carryout sacks; rinsed milk pouches and outer bags; bread sandwich and bulk food bags; dry cleaning bags; diaper outer bags; frozen food bags; and over wrap for toilet tissues and paper towels. The primary market for plastic film is plastic composite wood and there are few other markets for this material in North America. It is anticipated that 2,100 tonnes of plastic film would be collected in the Blue Bin Program annually. Based on market research, Solid Waste Management Services is concerned that a viable North American market for plastic film may not be available at this time. One reason for this concern is the introduction and growing trend towards the use of biodegradable retail store carryout plastic bags that are a contaminant to the polyethylene plastic film market. Furthermore the current demand for plastic film has fallen off due to the reduction in the use of plastic lumber, this has been partially caused by the downturn in the housing market in the United States. Therefore, plastic film will be included only if we receive suitable and sustainable bids.

Communication Plan

To effectively implement any new diversion program, public education is extremely important. Solid Waste Management Services feels that homeowners are largely supportive of the Blue Box Program and will embrace the addition of a new material to the Blue Bin Program. The challenge will be one of informing residents that these materials can now be recycled. For this we plan to use print or radio advertising to announce the addition of the new materials and reinforce this message with existing communications such as WasteWatch, Collection Calendars and the new Utility Bill. Furthermore, the plan will include a strategy to work in partnership with the local grocery stores and the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors to promote the recycling of plastic film to residents at the in-store consumer level where it is being generated.

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