

Potential Closing of Garbage Chutes at Selected Multi-Residential Buildings as part of a Waste Diversion Plan

Date:	January 15, 2010
To:	Public Works and Infrastructure Committee
From:	General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	p:/2010/swms/Feb./004PW

SUMMARY

This report requests City Council's approval of a garbage chute closure program for multi-residential buildings in order to help improve recycling rates in multi-residential buildings. The program proposes to permit owners of selected apartment buildings to close a garbage chute if the closure is part of a waste diversion plan for the multiple-dwelling that has been approved by the General Manager of Solid Waste Management Services and meets certain minimum criteria set out in Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services recommends that:

1. City Council approve the garbage chute closure program as set out in Appendix A to begin on May 1, 2010; and
2. The City Solicitor be directed to submit the necessary bills to Council to implement Recommendation 1.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact resulting from this report.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Solid Waste Management Services regularly hosts meetings with representatives from the multi-residential sector through the Multi-Family Waste Diversion Working Group. At these meetings, the issue has been raised about a subsection of § 629-22, Garbage and debris, storage and disposal, of Municipal Code Chapter 629, Property Standards, which is felt by some members of the working group to be inconsistent with Solid Waste Management's waste diversion goals of 70% diversion as approved at the June 20, 2007 City Council meeting. Solid Waste Management Services staff reviewed the matter with Municipal Licensing and Standards staff and are recommending this program to facilitate the temporary or longer term closure of chutes as part of a waste diversion plan to assist multi-residential buildings to increase diversion and realize environmental and possibly monetary benefits.

COMMENTS

The City of Toronto has set an aggressive goal of diverting 70% of waste from landfill. In 2008, the City attained an overall diversion rate of 44%. The single family diversion rate was 59% while the multi-residential diversion lagged behind at 15%.

A number of new programs have been initiated to increase diversion in the multi-residential sector, such as the volume-based waste utility fee, a provision of free in-unit recycling containers, initiation of a green bin source separated organics collection program and a 3Rs Ambassador volunteer program directed at multi-residential customers.

However, the multi-residential sector has several operational challenges with respect to improving waste diversion; the main challenge being the lack of convenience for recycling. Residents of older stock buildings can bring their waste to a garbage chute accessible on each floor, while recyclables must be brought to a common collection point, often in an underground garage or outside the building. New developments must meet development requirements to make recycling as convenient as garbage disposal; however, older stock buildings are often limited in space and design which prevents them from making recycling as convenient as garbage.

Allowing an owner or property manager of older stock buildings to close garbage chutes would permit more control of the waste stream to encourage recycling.

Jurisdiction Review

Staff have contacted several municipalities to gather information on chute closings to improve recycling rates. The City of Sault Ste. Marie allows buildings to close their chutes for garbage and city staff have seen improvements in recycling rates as a result of chute closures. The City of Hamilton is currently reviewing their By-laws to allow for the closure of chutes as part of a building's waste diversion program. Hamilton staff are

aware of two buildings that have taken the initiative to close their chutes and have increased their diversion rates substantially as a result.

The City of Ottawa is looking at closing the chutes in several older buildings with the anticipation that this will eliminate the disincentive to recycling by creating a level playing field as far as convenience is concerned. As well a new 8 storey, 100 unit elevated building is in the development stages in Ottawa as part of green development and is being built without garbage chutes. The garbage and recycling room will be on the main floor and will feature educational displays on recycling.

The City of San Francisco, California actively encourages its property managers to close chutes. City staff have seen an increase in recycling in buildings that have closed their chutes.

Affected Buildings

It is anticipated that primarily buildings with less than 10 storeys would be able to undertake chute closings. From discussions with the Greater Toronto Apartment Association and other property managers, at the most about 200 buildings, approximately 5% of Toronto's multi-residential buildings, may be interested in closing the chutes as a tool to improve waste diversion. Providing the ability for property managers and owners to close their chutes could potentially allow buildings to make substantial improvements to their diversion programs, thereby helping the City to move towards its waste diversion targets. Allowing for the closing of chutes may also permit property managers and owners to reduce their solid waste management fees.

Implementation

Appendix A sets out the process that SWMS and the property owners would follow in determining whether a building should be granted permission to close the garbage chute. The intention of this program is to allow for the non-permanent closure of chutes by padlock, for example, or some other reversible method of preventing access to the chutes.

Highlights of the program include:

- Buildings must meet the following minimum requirements:
 - Receive Solid Waste Management Services;
 - Have sufficient storage space for the increased number of garbage containers required, as garbage would no longer be compacted;
 - Have sufficient recycling containers for the building; and
 - The storage space for garbage containers complies with the Building Code and Zoning By-laws.

- Owners, property managers, condominium boards or co-op boards must submit:
 - An initial application indicating interest in closing the garbage chute;

- Provide a draft communication plan to inform the residents of the proposed plan to close the garbage chutes for SWMS approval;
 - Provide a draft plan to assist seniors and people with disabilities in transporting their waste to the common collection point for SWMS approval.
- Once the communication plan and assistance plan is approved the Owners, property managers, condominium boards or co-op boards must demonstrate that at least 51% of the units are in favour of closing the garbage chute;
- If at least 51% of the units are in favour of closing the garbage chute, the building has the required space for the additional waste containers and the plans were approved by SWMS, then the General Manager will issue a permit to close the garbage chutes;
- Conditions of maintaining the permit include:
 - Preventing residents from using the garbage chutes;
 - Continual compliance with requirements for cleanliness of the garbage storage areas per Chapter 629, Property Standards;
 - Continual compliance with all the applicable requirements under Chapter 844, Waste Collections, Residential; and
 - Continual assistance to seniors and people with disabilities per the approved plan; and
- Failure to abide by the conditions of the permit will result in the permit being revoked and the garbage chute reopened for normal operations.

Solid Waste Management Services Staff will work in conjunction with the property manager/owner/condominium board to determine the feasibility of closing the chutes on a location by location basis, to submit the application and to facilitate the drafting of a communication plan including a template for letters to residents.

Staff of Fire Prevention in Fire Services and staff of Toronto Building were consulted and do not have concerns over the concept of closing chutes in multi-residential buildings. Staff of Municipal Licensing and Standards have reviewed this report and support the proposed garbage chute closure program.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Program to Close Garbage Chutes in Multi-Residential Buildings