



# Corporate Report

NO: R178

COUNCIL DATE: July 19, 2004

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: July 16, 2004  
FROM: General Manager, Engineering FILE: 0350-08  
SUBJECT: Proposed Changes to the Surrey Annual Spring Clean-up Program

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## RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the replacement of Surrey's Annual Spring Clean-up Program with a "Bulky Items Disposal" i.e. Option 'E' as outlined in this report, beginning in 2005.

## INTENT

To apprise Council of the challenges presented with the current Spring Clean-up and program including recent public criticisms relating to the City's 2004 events and provide alternative options for consideration.

# BACKGROUND

### Annual Clean-up Week History

The annual clean-up week has been programmed by the City since the mid 1970's and refined over time. The event was divided into a two-week period where the curbside clean-up was conducted during the first week of the event and free dumping was hosted at the Port Mann Landfill during the second week. The free dumping event ceased with the closure of the Port Mann Landfill in late 1997.

In the early 1990's, the City began to face operational difficulties with the clean-up week due to the vast majority of households placing their clean-up week materials out at curbside on the weekend prior to the event, rather than doing so the evening before their scheduled collection day as requested by the City. However, it was observed that, in many cases, clean-up materials placed at curbside during the weekend were being salvaged by passer-by's. Since this was conducive to recycling, engineering staff determined that, rather than pursuing early starts through advertisements and enforcement, the placement of salvageable materials at curbside would be encouraged. Commencing in 1994, the week-end preceding each annual clean-up week events was aptly named, the "Annual Re-use Weekend".

With the closure of the Port Mann Landfill in 1997, Surrey's waste was diverted to the Burnaby Incinerator and Coquitlam Transfer Station. The 1998 Spring Clean up event was divided over a two-week period (Monday/Tuesday pick-up areas being serviced during the first week of the clean-up and Wednesday/Thursday areas serviced over the second week) to allow for more effective disposal of the large volumes of garbage typically generated over one-week duration. This program format has not changed since 1998.

### Annual Clean-up Week and Re-Use Weekend Dates

The dates for the annual re-use weekend and clean-up events are typically determined in November and reflected in

the residential garbage & recycling service calendars which are distributed by early January. Accordingly, the 2004 event was scheduled for early May 2004 in order to take advantage of the new Surrey Transfer Station operation, (which opened April 28, 2004) thus avoiding the costs and impacts of hauling the waste to the Coquitlam and Burnaby facilities.

## Early Starts

Despite advertisements for the 2004 clean-up event, a large number of residents placed their materials out at curbside several weeks prior to the scheduled event. It was discovered that households that were in non-compliance assumed that the event dates did not change from previous years. By virtue of these early starts, many other residents followed suit and placed out their materials simply because they were witnessing neighbours doing the same.

In order to contain the problem, Engineering staff engaged an aggressive advertising campaign via the local Surrey newspapers. The ads contained the clean-up event dates and provisions. In addition, staff distributed over one thousand advisories to households that were found to have early clean-up materials at their curbside. These households were directed to remove their materials within a 48 hour period or face the full cost of removal by City forces. These efforts resulted in some degree of compliance.

## 2004 Clean-up Week Event Facts & Figures

The waste loads experienced during the scheduled 2004 event were dramatically higher than in previous years.



As per the above, the total garbage truck loads for the 2004 clean-up week were approximately 40% higher than the previous year's (2003) event.

The following are additional waste volume figures and cost:

- The 2004 transfer station disposal costs for the event were significantly higher than the City's 2003 spring

clean-up disposal costs.

- In addition, due to the significant increase in waste volumes evident at curbside, staff directed our curbside contractor (Waste Management, Inc.) to engage maximum number of resources to ensure that all waste was removed within the prescribed two-week period. The higher level of service included the allocation of additional garbage trucks and longer service hours over the two-week period (including the continuance of collection after hours including the week-end periods). The cost of these additional resources under the conditions of the contract is estimated to be between as \$150,000 - \$200,000, but has yet to be confirmed.

### Common Issues

Few alterations have been made to the structure of the clean-up week event since 1998. Advertising for the event has also remained consistent over the years. Nevertheless, this event has presented a number of challenges to both Engineering staff as well as our curbside contractor due to the increasingly high number of non-compliant households each year. In summary 2004 was the most troublesome year yet experienced due to the following:

- Non-conforming households were observed to have placed large quantities of non-acceptable materials such as household renovation waste, refrigerators, car parts or hazardous materials (paint, oil, etc), etc;
- Several thousand households had placed excessive volumes of materials at curbside, far exceeding reasonable levels;
- In many cases, staff received reports from residents that waste materials were being trucked into their neighbourhoods from outside sources and placed indiscriminately at a household curbside (or done so purposely through arrangements with the property owner, i.e. allowing friends or relatives of outside neighbourhoods or jurisdictions to dispose additional waste at curbside).
- Staff faced high instances of raw scattered garbage originating from uncontained garbage that was placed at curbside by the dwelling.
- Very negative image/appearance of the City due to all the waste materials left at the side of the roads.

In an effort to minimize the above occurrences, Engineering and By-law enforcement staff had combined efforts in delivering advisories to non-compliant households directing that home owners remove materials from their curbside or be faced with the full cost of the removal by City forces. However, given the excessive number of non-compliant households evident throughout the City, only households that were in blatant non-compliance received advisories in this regard. The majority of these households complied with the City's orders.

### 2004 Rise in Citizen Complaints

The number of complaints received from residents during the 2004 annual re-use weekend and clean-up week far surpassed complaints from previous years' events. These complaints/criticisms were delivered by citizens via letters, phone calls, and emails. In addition, a number of negative "letters to the editor" appeared in Surrey's local newspapers as well as negative newspaper articles regarding the event.

The most common criticisms voiced by Surrey citizens were related to street sanitation concerns including potential health issues and the negative image that the Clean-up week event brings to the City. These criticisms were supported by evidence of excessive volumes of materials and/or raw garbage placed at curbside during the Re-use Weekends originating from a high number of households.

### Lower Mainland Municipal Comparisons

Presently, similar annual clean-up events are hosted in the Lower Mainland municipalities of Delta, Coquitlam, and Port Moody and the City of Langley. As illustrated in the following page, Surrey is by far the largest municipality currently hosting this event.

It was discovered that the problems that Surrey faced during this year's event were also apparent in Delta and Coquitlam. Both municipalities reported comparable issues of non-compliance. As a result, Delta staff has advised that they are determining alternatives to their existing program.

Coquitlam has advised that as result of the problems that they faced with their 2004 clean-up event, they have already

implemented a change to their program which will take effect in 2005. Their change includes the spreading out of their program over a four week period (allocating a separate clean-up week to each of their four collection areas) rather than concentrating City-wide participation of the event during a one-week period.



## **PROPOSED OPTIONS**

Given the problems with the City's current clean-up week program, the following options to the clean up week event outlined below are provided for consideration.

### **Option A: Status Quo**

- No Change to the existing Annual Clean up Week Program

### **Option B: Division of the Current Program**

- Dividing the program into four smaller events and staged at different periods throughout the year (i.e. Monday area receives clean up week services in April, Tuesday collection area received clean-up week services in June, etc), or spread out throughout the month of May (such as the new Coquitlam model);

### **Option C – “Free Dumping Voucher” for the Surrey Transfer Station**

- Allowing free residential disposal at the new Surrey Transfer Station Facility for up to 300kg of waste (by use of a time limited voucher);

### **Option D: Extra Collection Decals**

- Municipal mail-out of ten “extra bag/can” decals to Surrey single family homes which can be used by December 31<sup>st</sup> of any given year;

### **Option E: Bulky Items Disposal**

- Permitting the placement of only one-to-two large items at curbside per household per year (Township of Langley model);

## **DISCUSSION OF OPTIONS**

### **Option A – Status Quo (leave existing program as is)**

The problems associated with the existing Annual Clean-up Week and Re-use Weekend are explained in detail throughout this report.

Due to the high number of Surrey households, the management of this event over a concentrated two-week period is presenting a number of operational dilemmas and has prompted a high level of citizen criticisms and mounting public pressure to eliminate or replace the program. Accordingly, this is the least desired option.

Costs of the clean up event have significantly increased over the last few years with peak costs occurring this year at 30% higher than that of the 2004 budgeted prior of about \$760,000.

### **Option B – Extend Clean Up Event over a Longer Period**

With the present two-week split of our current program, staff is continually dealing with households placing out excessive and/or non-compliant materials as well as early starts. The introduction of a further split in the program would serve to spread the instances of these problems across a greater period of time. This may invariably enhance the volume of waste, unsightliness and public criticisms relating to the event.

Extending the period would add to the staff and contractor resources needed for the program hence costs would be greater than Option A.

### **Option C – “Free Dumping Week or Voucher” at the Surrey Transfer Station**

A “Free dumping week” option would not be feasible. Local transfer stations, including the Surrey Transfer Station (STS), would not be able to satisfactorily deal with the types of concentrated traffic volumes that would be generated through a free dump week event. In addition, based on the City's experience with free dumping at the Port Mann Landfill, it is apparent that traffic queues would extend far beyond the STS facility property and potentially past the 192 Street/96 Avenue intersection creating potential vehicular hazards and impacts to businesses in the area.

An alternative to free dump week would be to provide all single family dwellings with a time limited “free dumping voucher” that would be redeemable at the STS (i.e. to be used by December 31<sup>st</sup> of any given year). This would eliminate concentrating the entire event during a one week period.

It is difficult to project the likely cost of either a free dumping week or a voucher system. For example, if all Surrey households participated in free disposal at this facility at the estimated volume, the potential costs to the City for this option would be approximately \$1.6 million/year. However such a level of participation is unlikely. Consequently it is anticipated that the cost would be similar to Options A or B. However the level of service provided to the City's solid waste customers is less than that of the other options in that they have to arrange for their own suitable vehicle to take the waste to the transfer station, which can be a particular problem for large or bulky items.

### **Option D - Extra Collection Decals**

This program would entail the mail-out of ten extra garbage decals per household. The decals would be distributed to residents with their municipal tax notices or via the annual curbside calendar distribution. All decals would be time sensitive (i.e. valid from January to December of each calendar year) and colour coded accordingly. Residents may choose to use the decals throughout the year or all at one time.

The main problems that staff foresee with this option are related to non-compliance (i.e. additional garbage placed at curbside without decals) or claims of not having received the extra garbage stickers from the City.

In addition this options does not allow for the disposal of bulky items as allowed for in the other options and provides no extra level of service in that it is currently possible to purchase additional decals. If all households used all their decals then the cost would be up to \$1.2 million. It is unlikely that this would be the case consequently actual costs would be somewhat less than this.

### **Option E – Scheduled Bulky Items Disposal Model**

The Bulky Items Disposal Model (Alternative C) is presently used within the Township of Langley and appears to be functioning favorably within that municipality. Langley Township staff advised that this model was introduced several years ago as an alternative to their problematic (former) clean-up week event.

The premise of the program is such that all residents of single family homes can request the removal of up to two large items per year from their households. Residents may place the items out for pick-up at any time during the year. Residents are instructed to contact the Township's curbside contractor (Waste Management, Inc.) directly to make the arrangements. In turn, the contractor schedules the pick up day with the resident.

Langley Township staff noted that the program is administered entirely via the contractor. Presently, they are finding that approximately 65% of their total households are participating in this program on an annual basis. Langley staff have noted that the participation rates have dropped over the past few years (down from their initial 85% annual participation rates).

Waste Management has advised that the Langley Township program is manageable, however, it should be noted that the total single family household number in Langley Township is 16,900 compared to Surrey's 82,000 households. In this regard, Waste Management has also advised that a similar program in Surrey would require additional resources.

Based on quoted prices from Waste Management (who is also Surrey's collection contractor) the total cost of this option would be up to \$0.8 million assuming higher levels of household participation and similar items as collected in Langley.

### **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

Based on an analysis of the various options, Option E (Bulky Items Disposal) appears most favourable based on the following:

1. The Bulky Items Disposal program will continue to provide residents with an outlet to dispose of two-large household items per year, (similar to the current clean-up week program). This would be a particularly desirable option for the many Surrey residents that do not have a convenient method of transporting and disposing of large waste items (i.e. access to a pick-up truck).
2. Since the Bulky Items Disposal program will be carried out throughout the year rather than during a concentrated two-week event where huge volumes of waste are evident throughout the City, it will effectively eliminate unsightliness and negative City image associated with the clean-up event.
3. The program is relatively straight forward. Accordingly, non-compliance issues will be easier to identify and enforce.
4. The Option E is affordable within the current rate structure compared to the status quo and the other alternatives presented above which would require a rate increase.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW OPTION**

Should Council approve the recommended option then Staff will ensure that user guidelines for the Bulky Items Disposal Program are well advertised. The program will be featured in the 2005 Garbage & Recycling Collection Services Calendar, supplemented by monthly newspaper advertisements for the first half of 2005 (January to June). Advertisements will also advise residents that the Bulky Items Disposal Program will replace the Annual Reuse Weekend and Clean up Week Event. This should help reduce potential instances of residents inadvertently placing spring clean-up materials at curbside next spring.

Residents that require additional pick up services, over and above what the bulky item disposal option offers, will be advised/encouraged to contact private waste removal companies for this service, the costs of which will be negotiated and handled entirely between the resident and the private waste hauler.

## CONCLUSION

The City of Surrey is, by far, the largest municipality in the province that currently provides an annual clean-up week. Due to the high number of households in the City, these annual events are becoming challenging to manage both operationally and fiscally.

As a result of the excessively high levels of household non-compliance towards clean-up week regulations, Surrey citizens have escalated their criticisms towards this event. Public concerns relate to street sanitation matters including potential health issues and the negative image that the Clean-up week event brings to the City. These criticisms are supported by evidence of excessive volumes of materials and/or raw garbage placed at curbside during the Clean-up event.

Given the above, staff is recommending that the Annual Clean-up event be replaced with the “Bulky Items Disposal Model” as detailed in this report. This option allows for the disposal of up to two bulky items through direct scheduling between the resident and the waste removal contractor, and effectively eliminates the many problems associated with the current clean-up week program.

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