

Changes proposed to garbage pickup in Victoria backyards 1

The days of Victoria city workers collecting garbage from your backyard and then returning the empty cans could be coming to an end.

Looking to save money and reduce injuries, city staff are recommending residents be consulted on three garbage collection options — none of which would see a continuation of the status quo.

Under the closest (but most expensive) option — called a modified status quo — city crews would pick up garbage cans from the backyard but leave the empty cans at the curb for you to retrieve. (The estimated annual cost per household is \$190.20 for an 80-litre tote and \$202.32 for a 120-litre tote.)

The other two options are: curbside service every two weeks in which the resident is responsible to haul the cans to the curb and back (estimated annual costs: \$132 for an 80-litre tote; \$138.16 for 120 litres, \$147.25 for 180 litres and \$157.34 for 240 litres); or weekly curbside service (estimated at \$165.49 for an 80-litre tote and \$170.61 for 120 litres). Seniors and people with disabilities could arrange for specialized service.

All the options to be considered by councillors Thursday would see the city supply residents with standardized, wheeled totes. Offering different-size totes will provide residents an opportunity to reduce their costs by putting out less garbage.

The earliest any change in city service could proceed is thought to be January 2013.

The city wants to move to the standardized, wheeled totes that can be automatically tipped by trucks to reduce workers' injuries, said director of engineering and public works Dwayne Kalynchuk.

Offering a modified status quo option instead of the existing service is an attempt to reduce costs, he said.

"People are always accusing government of increasing costs. Well, here's an opportunity for the public to actually decrease the cost of garbage collecting — but they would either have to bring it to the curb and take it away or they would have to have it collected every two weeks," Kalynchuk said.

"Those are both very viable options and people can reduce their costs. And that, really, is the premise of putting this forward."

Victoria and Saanich are among the few remaining municipalities that have crews do backyard garbage pickups. Victoria collects every week from about 14,000 single-family homes, while Saanich collects every two weeks from more than 31,000.

A 2003 Victoria survey found 88 per cent of residents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service.

Meanwhile, staff are recommending that the city not take on the collection of organic waste for recycling at least until the Capital Regional District decides how it's going to proceed. The CRD has decided to delay collection of organics at least until the end of 2013.

Victoria Mayor Dean Fortin is not sure people are ready to give up their current backyard garbage service for what would amount to a modest yearly saving.

"The report raises many questions that I'm looking forward to getting answers on, on Thursday or at another date," Fortin said.

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