

2017 Solid Waste Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Over a three week span in November 2017, the City asked residents to complete a survey on their satisfaction with waste programs. More than 1,300 residents completed the survey.

The information gathered from the survey, along with various audits conducted throughout the year, help decide which initiatives the solid waste division will undertake. Below, is a synopsis of the information that we received. (2016 numbers are shown in brackets.)

Q. Do you find the solid waste staff knowledgeable, courteous and helpful?

91% (88.9%) of respondents found solid waste staff knowledgeable, courteous and helpful.

Q. How satisfied are you with the waste, recycling and green bin collection services at your home?

89.7% (88.9%) of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their collection services

Q. How satisfied are you with the weekly garbage limit?

89.5% (87.4%) of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their weekly garbage limits.

Q. How satisfied are you with the alternating blue and grey box recycling program?

87.6% (87.3%) of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the alternating blue and grey box recycling program.

Q. How satisfied are you with the green bin program?

80.4% (84.8%) of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the green bin program.

Q. Overall, how satisfied are you with the garbage and diversion programs offered and the level of service you receive?

92.8% (91.4%) of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with their level of service

Q. How satisfied are you with the City's garbage and diversion program information?

88.8% (91.2%) of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with waste program information.

Q. Did you participate in Giveaway Days this year?

30.1% (28.5%) of respondents participated in Giveaway days in 2017.

Feedback on comments

The City received more than 3,200 individual comments to the questions asked in the survey. Many of these responses shared common themes or requests. Below, you will find responses from City staff to the various requests and suggestions.

Green Bins

1. **Alternative green bin sizes**

We know it is nice to have options! That's why the City's solid waste division has been looking at being able to provide a **smaller** green bin option as well as keeping the standard and trusted 80L green bin as well. We now expect to be able to launch the smaller green bin option in 2019.

A green bin larger than 80L will not be considered. It's taken the division a while to decide this because the solid waste collection vehicles have to be compatible with green bin sizes and styles. Watch for more information and a chance to provide feedback.

2. **Addition of pet waste/cat litter/diapers**

The City's green bin waste is processed into compost. There are several technologies in the marketplace to process green bin wastes into compost; however, they are not local to Kingston.

The facility under contract to process the City's green bin waste, Norterra Organics, is located on Joyceville Road. It is not currently capable or licensed to process pet waste, cat litter or diapers. The existing system does not guarantee the destruction of pathogens that are possible in animal wastes, and diapers are made up of a number of plastic components that do not break down in the current composting process. All of those materials can contaminate the finished compost.

Municipalities that allow diapers or pet waste in their programs have their waste processed differently where contaminants can be removed. Approximately every five years, the City requests proposals for green bin processing services. Next time, the City will again express interest in a green bin processor able to process these types of materials to increase the allowable items in the green bin and send less waste to landfill.

3. **Allow residents to use the green bin for yard waste only.**

In the spring of 2017, the City began enforcing a bylaw that requires green bins

to be used for food waste. Residents may still use their green bin for yard waste, but we must also see food waste or soiled paper products.

When the green bin program started in 2009, it was intended to remove food waste from the garbage and ultimately from landfill. At that time there were already programs and outlets in place for yard waste; but, the City allowed residents to use extra capacity in their green bins for yard waste since there is not a regular weekly curbside yard waste collection.

However, curbside waste audits showed that residents were using their green bins for 'just' yard waste and a high percentage of food waste was still present in garbage bags.

In an effort to capture as much food waste, scraps and soiled paper products from the garbage as possible, the City began enforcing the rule that residents must use their green bin for food waste if they want to use it for yard waste.

We hope residents continue to use the green bin for all of their organics!

The Province recently released an Organics Action Plan, a strategy from their outcomes based legislation the *Waste Free Ontario Act, 2016* that suggests there will be a future ban on organics (green bin wastes) to landfill.

Garbage

1. Large-item collection

The City will not be offering large item collection to residents. There are several waste removal contractors that will remove waste for a fee right from your home.

2. Increased bag limits for houses with many individuals (students, large families, multi-generational households).

The one (1) bag limit per residential unit (home or apartment) is a service level that was approved by council. The City has a partial user-pay-based system: each residential unit is offered a base service level paid for through their property taxes, but any garbage bags above the one per week requires the user to place a \$2 bag tag on the bag.

Setting the base service level at one bag per residential unit is a fair way to establish the property taxes that go toward providing this service and offers an incentive for residents to use the diversion programs.

When the one-bag-per-residential-unit service level was set in 2012, council reviewed potential exemptions and allotments for larger families, student houses and multiple families living together in one residential unit. No exemption or alternative service level was provided – with the exception of an exemption for residents with valid medical conditions.

The partial user-pay system prevents others from having to subsidize a higher level of service and creates an easy-to-understand system: create more waste, pay for more waste.

Recycling

1. Introduce larger bins for all materials, or single stream recycling, collect both blue and grey boxes every week

The City facility, where residents' blue and grey box materials are processed into 12 distinct commodities, is a four-stream system: cardboard, mixed grey box materials, mixed blue box materials and glass.

The City's collection vehicles have two compartments to accommodate the way that the recyclables are processed. When we collect your grey box, cardboard is placed into one compartment and all of the other mixed grey box materials into the other. On blue box weeks, glass is placed into one compartment on the truck and all other mixed blue box materials are placed into the other compartment.

Collectors are required to sort materials at the curb and this does not allow the use of larger boxes or carts, which may put their health and safety at risk.

Major upgrades to the processing facility would be required to create a single-stream recycling program. Single-stream processing facilities have a significant capital cost associated with them and require a large supply of recyclables to maintain economies of scale.

Kingston does not have a large enough supply of recyclables to warrant a single-stream system.

However, the City is reviewing the potential to retrofit the facility to be a two-stream facility, which would allow cardboard and glass to be collected with their respective boxes for the City to collect both streams weekly.

2. Add more material to recycling system.

The City is constantly reviewing the markets for recyclable materials to determine if more materials can be added to the recycling stream. Unfortunately, if a market

does not exist for a material, these items cannot be added to the recycling stream. This is what occurred when coloured Styrofoam was removed from the program. If the City cannot sell an item on the recycling market, it cannot be recycled.

Yard waste

1. Christmas tree collection

The City will not be providing Christmas tree collection. Trees can be dropped off at the Kingston Area Recycling Centre and/or a number of charitable and sports organizations will collect your trees for a small fee.

2. Enhanced yard waste collection

The City is reviewing the feasibility of a spring leaf and brush collection. This enhancement would have to be approved by council and included in the solid waste division's operating budget. The City is also reviewing changing from a separate leaf and brush collection schedule to a simplified yard waste (both brush and leaf) collection.

Other diversion programs

1. Expanded battery collection

The City will be looking to increase the number of curbside battery collection programs as soon as possible.

2. Electronics/textile curbside collection

In 2017, the City attempted to introduce curbside collection of electronics and textiles through various not-for-profit organizations. These organizations were not able to handle the logistics involved in a city-wide collection of these materials; however some other solutions were offered and will be reviewed for 2019.