

Municipality Of Chatham-Kent
Infrastructure and Engineering Services
Public Works

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Ryan Brown, P.Eng. Director Public Works
Date: October 28, 2020
Subject: Leaf and Yard Waste Service Modifications

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. All Leaf and Yard Waste pickup services be removed starting January 1, 2021, and the corresponding leaf and yard waste levies be removed from all residences.

Background

As per the recommendation in the Report to Council titled “Council’s Growth and Recovery Next Steps” which was approved at the October 19, 2020 Council meeting:

“That Council accept the Growth and Recovery Strategy next steps as presented in the Growth and Recovery Strategy Next Steps Gantt Chart.”

- Item 26 of the Gantt Chart depicts “Leaf and Yard Waste Review - RTC.”

Prior to amalgamation in 1998, nine communities received a level of service that included leaf and yard waste curbside pick-up provided by the Public Works Department. Once amalgamated, Chatham-Kent continued to support these services. To date, the service has not been expanded or offered to any other areas of Chatham-Kent.

Four services are currently provided: bagged leaf, bagged yard waste, brush and leaf pickup. The level and frequency of the service varies by community (Table 1). The timing of the service also varies but is generally during spring and fall with leaf pickup occurring in the fall only. All budgeted funds are area-rated to the community with any variance to the budget absorbed by the general tax base through the Public Works budget.

Table 1: Leaf and Yard Waste Current Level of Service

COMMUNITY	Bagged Leaf	Bagged Yard Waste	Brush	Leaf Pickup
Romney				
Wheatley				X
Tilbury E				
Raleigh				
Harwich				
Chatham Twp				
Dover				
Tilbury	X	X	X	X
Blenheim	X		X	
Erie Beach			X	
Erieau			X	
Howard				
Orford				
Zone				
Camden				
Ridgetown	X	X	X	X
Highgate				
Bothwell	X	X	X	
Thamesville	X	X	X	X
Dresden				
Chatham				
Mitchells Bay				
Wallaceburg				
Bates Subdivision	X	X		

Bagged Leaf Pickup: Leaves placed in plastic bags picked up at curb by truck and trailer.

Bagged Yard Waste Pickup: Grass Clippings, leaves, garden waste, small sticks placed in plastic bags picked up at curb by truck and trailer.

Brush Pickup: Piles or bundles of branches not exceeding 5” in diameter or 5’ in length picked up by truck and trailer or chipped immediately and removed.

Leaf Pickup: Loose leaves raked to curb, truck and leaf unit vacuum up leaves into truck and removed.

Comments

Similar to the recent Council approved recommendation to standardize Public Works beautification initiatives (banner hanging, Christmas light installations), this report examines options to standardize leaf and yard waste service levels.

Three options exist to standardize the level of service across Chatham-Kent:

1. Expand all services to all communities of Chatham-Kent

The highest level of service is currently offered in Ridgetown and includes weekly bagged leaf, yard and brush pickup April 1st to December along with weekly loose leaf pickup from October to December.

If this is the preferred option, the following actions will be required:

- Expansion or purchase of new leaf and yard depots to support the increased demand
- Consultation with the public, internal unionized employees and Ministry of Environment
- Evaluation of insourcing versus outsourcing service options
- Determination of increased staffing levels at all Leaf and Yard sites
- Outsourcing the project to a consultant through a RFP process at an estimated cost of \$125,000

A high level estimate is contingent on land purchase, and is expected to be in the \$4M to \$5M range per year comprising both upfront capital cost and ongoing base budget impact.

The project is anticipated to take up to two years to complete as it will be highly contingent on land acquisition opportunities.

2. Expand some services to all communities of Chatham-Kent

This options considers offering one or more of the four services currently offered - bagged leaf, bagged yard waste, brush and leaf pickup - to all residents. Further, this option will consider modifying the frequency of the service.

If this is the preferred option, required actions will be identical to option “1,” and will start will public consultation to determine which of the four services is desired and at what frequency. Costs will be highly dependent on the confirmed level of service and therefore cannot be estimated at this time.

3. Eliminate the service

If the service is eliminated, all communities will be required to manage leaf and yard waste on their own properties, or choose to bring leaf and yard waste to one of the several depots located in Chatham-Kent.

The 2020 budgeted amount of \$475,245 will be saved resulting in a tax decrease for residents that currently receive the service. The \$475,245 comprises \$295,144 in labour and \$180,101 in equipment costs.

The service is a challenge to provide efficiently as it is only offered in certain communities at various levels and is not full time work for any employee at any garage. Therefore, although the labour portion equates to three Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), it is felt that only two employees or \$196,762 can be logically eliminated. Based on the “Infrastructure and Engineering Services - Service Backlog Analysis” reported to Council in January 2020, a staff reduction is not recommended at this time. Instead, this additional capacity will be used to continue reducing the 1,458 outstanding service requests that exist today.

The \$180,101 equipment portion of the cost consists of vehicles that are utilized for general services (\$158,435) and three leaf pickup units (\$21,666). The \$158,435 will be transferred to the general tax base and the leaf units will be removed from the fleet lifecycle.

From an environmental perspective there are several benefits from eliminating the service. Residents receiving the service will be encouraged to adopt best practices such as mulching and composting. On-site composting and mulching enhances nutrient uptake which reduces fertilizer needs. In addition, eliminating the service will likely result in a reduction of materials being brought to the leaf and yard depots, which will in turn result in a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the number of plastic bags that are used to collect the yard waste.

By eliminating the service, there is a potential risk of increased illegal dumping of materials onto roads or rights-of-way. While this activity occurs throughout Chatham-Kent, it does not happen more frequently in Chatham or Wallaceburg where the service is currently not provided. As a result, administration believe this risk to be manageable.

Public Consultation

Leaf and Yard Waste service levels have been a topic of debate for many years within Chatham-Kent, with strong opinions provided both in support and against the service.

Those residents fortunate enough to receive the service generally support the continuance and often request expansion and increased frequency of the service.

Residents who do not receive the service feel that an inequity exists within Chatham-Kent that should be rectified. Opinions vary and include:

- a) the service is not necessary,
- b) the service is desired, or
- c) the service should be removed from all communities.

Environmental advocates feel strongly that offering the service does not promote best practices such as mulching and composting.

Areas of Strategic Focus and Critical Success Factors

The recommendations in this report support the following areas of strategic focus:

Economic Prosperity:

Chatham-Kent is an innovative and thriving community with a diversified economy

A Healthy and Safe Community:

Chatham-Kent is a healthy and safe community with sustainable population growth

People and Culture:

Chatham-Kent is recognized as a culturally vibrant, dynamic, and creative community

Environmental Sustainability:

Chatham-Kent is a community that is environmentally sustainable and promotes stewardship of our natural resources

The recommendations in this report support the following critical success factors:

Financial Sustainability:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is financially sustainable

Open, Transparent and Effective Governance:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is open, transparent and effectively governed with efficient and bold, visionary leadership

Has the potential to support all areas of strategic focus & critical success factors

Neutral issues (does not support negatively or positively)

Consultation

Employees of Drainage Asset and Waste Management, Finance, Budget and Environmental Planning teams were consulted in the writing of this report.

Financial Implications

If Council proceeds with option 3 and eliminate the service, a base budget reduction of \$196,762 per year is possible due to a 2 FTE reduction and corresponding fleet lifecycle reduction of three leaf pickup units of \$21,666. The FTE reduction is not recommended at this time due to a significant number of outstanding work orders that exist in Public Works.

Assuming no FTE reduction, the \$475,245 leaf and yard waste levy will be removed from the tax assessment of the residents of the nine communities. \$453,579 will be accounted for in general tax base and \$21,666 removed from the lifecycle budget.

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Attachments: None

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