

Garbage limit to be single bag county-wide

As a result of a garbage audit and the planned review of the bag limit numbers permitted in different lower tier municipalities, Dufferin County will move to a standard one-bag or one-container limit as of June 1, 2014.

There are no specified limits for recyclables and source separated organics.

The change would mean a reduction of permitted no-charge bags or containers of bona fide garbage for all municipalities except Orangeville and Mulmur, which now have a one-item limit.

The current limit is two items for Amaranth, Grand Valley, Melancthon, Mono and Shelburne. The limit for East Garafraxa is now three.

However, according to an audit of 1,542 households on 12 garbage routes throughout the county, the county-wide average number of bags set out is 0.97.

Where the limit has been one item, the average weekly number is 0.83 but residents there had been restricted to a single bag or container prior to the June 1, 2013, county bylaw.

The audit appears to show a correlation between the averages permitted and the actual number placed at the curb, said Public Works Director Scott Burns in his report to the Community Development Committee.

Where the allowed limit was two, the average set out was 1.04. Where it was three, the average was 1.09.

Shelburne Mayor Ed Crewson asked for the Shelburne average, and appeared elated to learn that it was .925. He praised the homeowners of his town for their co-operation, and then quipped that 925 is the first three digits of our telephone number. I'm going to buy a lottery ticket," he said.

It wasn't clear whether the bag reduction represents a reduction in volume of solid waste or greater participation in recycling and composting. Mr. Burns noted that the audit revealed a 94.8% participation in blue box and 79.3% in green bin.

Grand Valley Mayor John Oosterhof, chairman of the committee, said not all bags placed to the curb are always full. People who customarily were putting out two or three bags might have found they could place the same amount in a single bag.

He said he usually sets out a single bag but it's never full. "It could take me two or three weeks to have a full, tight bag," he said.

Amaranth Mayor Don MacIver said the county's contract with Green for Life is effectively in two parts: one for the picking up and the other for disposal. If there is a reduction in solid waste, would that reduce the costs, he asked.

Mr. Oosterhof said it would but the results won't be known until the year end.

In an interview outside the meeting, he acknowledged that it is expensive to dispose of recyclables and organics. But, he said, the county receives repayment for part of those costs from a provincial program funded by the packaging industry. As well, the county benefits from any sale of the recyclables although the amount from that source is subject to market fluctuations.

The council voted to accept the recommendation to place a universal single bag or container limit on solid waste, and also to provide for three "double-up days" annually.

Those three days are the ones following Victoria Day, Labour Day and New Year's.

By Wes Keller