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Dufferin seniors struggle with province-wide move to larger recycling bins

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Changes to recycling have been a boon to some residents and a bane to others.

Recycling in Dufferin County has been expanded to accept more materials. And households throughout the county can now haul those recyclables to the curb in new, larger, covered Blue Bins. A full transition to the larger bins is expected in April.

Some residents have expressed trepidation about the 360-litre blue recycling carts. They're large and may be a challenge for residents with limited space. There are limitations on the volume of materials that can be put out for recycling. Materials that prevent the cart's lid from closing will have to be held until the following week's collection day. There are also specifications about how the cart is to be parked at the curb.

Residents can access a smaller 240-litre cart, but concerns remain. Among the anxious are the county's senior citizens who maintain their own homes.

Orangeville resident Maria, 88, asked that her last name and neighbourhood not be published to avoid identifying where she lives alone.

Maria has arthritis, which complicates her efforts to maneuver the blue bin from her one-car garage to the curb.

?They're so big and they are cumbersome,? she said. ?My thing is it's my mobilities. I'm going to have to pay somebody to do that for me.?

She said GFL Environmental offered to put somebody on hand to do the chore for her. But she'd need a note from her doctor testifying that she's not capable of moving the bin to the curb.

With many seniors along her street, she is doubtful a couple extra hands on the green truck will have the time during their route to provide that service to all who need it, she said.

Her neighbour across the street is 96 years old, and she is also at a loss about how to manage the bin. She pays a neighbourhood boy to handle the task.

?She shouldn't have to do that,? Maria said.

Mayor Lisa Post said she isn't surprised by the issues with the new recycling program. The crowd at Queen's Park rolled it out haphazardly and without much thought, she said.

Post said GFL has been making accommodations for people in Dufferin County as far back as pickups have taken place. And, she said, they're continuing that practice.

?There's always been situations where people just don't have the capacity to get their garbage or Blue Bins to the road,? she said.

Post expected more people would need such a special accommodation with the larger bins.

?It has been frustrating to deal with,? she said, and added that's because she feels the provincial program was poorly introduced.

?There was a lot that they could've done to strengthen communications and make it an easier transition.?

Ontario is a big province geographically, with a large population. Those are factors in the provincial government's difficulties administering the new program.

?I feel fortunate that we were able to at least get a second bin size option,? Post said. ?That wasn't going to be an option until we did some advocacy on our end to get that done.?

Initially, the program was going to start in January, when heavy winter snow would've caused havoc.

?Change is never easy,? she said. ?But as we're navigating the change at least we're doing it without a whole pile of snow, too.?