



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

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TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Environment  
FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services  
SUBJECT: Alternative Commercial Solid Waste Management Services

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council endorse, in principle, the conversion of existing commercial solid waste collection systems which require the use of large volume containers, or "dumpsters", and their storage on city streets and lanes, in one or more business improvement areas ("BIA's"), to an alternative system that does not require the use of dumpsters, based on the following objectives:
- i. It should result in cleaner streets and lanes;
  - ii. It will incorporate incentives for waste reduction and diversion;
  - iii. It will include a socially integrated or supported service component, such as partnerships between the business and binning communities; and,
  - iv. It will result in reduced commercial waste hauling traffic volume, congestion and vehicle emissions through limitations in the number of collection service providers operating in given areas.
- B. THAT upon any BIA demonstrating to the City, to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Engineering Services, in consultation with the Director of Legal Services that the BIA has developed and made arrangements to put fully into effect a plan for a suitable dumpster free commercial waste collection service, contingent only on the City putting in place an applicable and operable regulatory system for such service:

- (a) the General Manager of Engineering Services and Director of Legal Services develop the necessary by-laws and licensing, and permitting and enforcement systems necessary for the planned alternative waste collection system's use of streets and lanes; and
  - (b) staff give notice to commercial waste haulers currently operating dumpster systems within that BIA that an alternative solid waste disposal system for the BIA is under consideration and that, on 60 days' notice to the hauler, the City may soon terminate it's authorization for the use of its streets and lanes for dumpster systems.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to issue to current commercial waste haulers, at an appropriate time after arrangements are in place for the implementation of the alternative waste disposal system discussed herein, a 60 day notice of termination of the City's authorization for the use of City streets and lanes for a dumpster system.

#### GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Engineering Services recommends approval.

#### COUNCIL POLICY

In September 2006, Council approved amending Container License Agreements between the City and commercial solid waste companies to allow for the approval of waste container storage locations on streets and lanes to be transferred or cancelled at anytime on 60 days' notice if the City, in its discretion, decides that an alternative waste collection system should be implemented.

In December 2006, Council requested of staff that they work with United We Can and one or more BIA's to implement a pilot program which promotes careful separation of trash and provide employment and resources for the people who rely on recycling deposits for their livelihood.

In December 2006, Council passed a resolution making a commitment to the Project Civil City. This initiative supports projects which result in cleaner streets, increased civic pride, and build partnerships between businesses and their communities. A "dumpster free" commercial waste management system supports and contributes to achieving the goals of Project Civil City.

In April 2007, Council received for information a report titled 'The Next Steps in Waste Diversion', which included comprehensive information on commercial sector waste diversion options and planning.

In September 2007, Council received for information a report titled 'Report Back - Commercial Solid Waste Diversion and Container Enforcement Strategy', which included information on waste diversion options for commercial waste container users.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Council on recent developments with the planning of a “dumpster free” commercial waste collection system in areas of the City, most notably Yaletown and Downtown Vancouver, and to obtain Council’s endorsement, in principle, for the implementation of this type of collection system by Vancouver business communities based on specific objectives.

## BACKGROUND

Commercial waste containers, often referred to as dumpsters, are used by the industrial, commercial and institutional (IC&I) and multi-family dwelling sectors. There are about 2,400 dumpsters stored on City streets and lanes because of a lack of storage space on private property for these large containers.

The City’s involvement with commercial waste collection is limited to enforcing minimum standards for the use of dumpsters through the Solid Waste By-law and license agreements between the City and waste management companies that own and empty the containers. Details of challenges and strategies for dealing with unsanitary and messy dumpsters have been reported to Council on various occasions in the recent past.

Since 2005 staff have been assisting several BIA’s, and in particular the Downtown Vancouver, Yaletown, and Gastown BIA’s, with the development of alternative commercial waste collection options. This work is largely a result of specific BIA’s wanting to remove dumpsters from streets and lanes for the purpose of improving sanitary conditions and aesthetics, and to address various public disorder issues that often occur in proximity of dumpsters.

City staff have been involved in the investigation and planning for alternative commercial waste collection systems through activities such as:

- the development of a business plan for a proposed Gastown Dumpster Free Alley Pilot Project (2005);
- an audit of commercial waste containers stored on streets in historic Yaletown (2005), and a study of commercial waste management options and alternatives (2006);
- an audit of commercial waste containers in Downtown Vancouver (2006);
- an assessment of the binning community to develop a profile of this population (2007 in progress); and,
- the development of educational information and materials on waste collection issues and alternatives, and participation in and organization of various public forums and meetings with business community members in various BIA’s, and representatives of the commercial waste service industry and binning community (2005 to present).

## DISCUSSION

Following Council’s authorization to amend the City’s Container License Agreement in late 2006 to accommodate the implementation of an alternative waste collection system, the Yaletown and Downtown Vancouver BIA’s have made considerable progress with the planning of a dumpster free system. Over the past year, these two BIA’s have been working together to develop *Streets and Alleys Cleanup Strategies* (SACS). Interest in participation in this

initiative has also been expressed by other Vancouver BIA's, including Gastown and the West End.

### Program Overview

SACS is being modelled after similar dumpster free collection systems that are currently operating in other jurisdictions, including:

- Seattle's *CleanScapes* program ([www.cleanscapes.com](http://www.cleanscapes.com));
- Downtown Kelowna's *Back Alley Garbage Solutions* (BAGS) program; and,
- Toronto's *Yellow Bag Program* ([toronto.ca/yellowbag](http://toronto.ca/yellowbag)).

In general terms, these programs involve the conversion of the traditional system of collecting commercial waste from dumpsters, to a *pay-as-you-throw* (PAYT) model similar to what is provided in the single family residential sector. Individual waste material streams are separated at source and are set out in colour coded bags or carts. The non-recyclable residual fraction is managed as garbage, whereas the other waste streams are treated as commodities and diverted from disposal. Service costs assessed to the user are a more accurate reflection of the true cost of managing these materials with the reusable and recyclable material streams charged at a lower rate than garbage because of their value as commodities. This pricing differential results in a direct incentive to reduce and divert waste, leading to greater separation at source and increased diversion. Collection occurs on a more frequent basis (smaller quantities per set out compared to using dumpsters) by a limited number of service providers operating in defined areas, which also results in sustainability benefits.

### Anticipated Benefits

Based on the experience of other jurisdictions, the anticipated benefits of a dumpster free waste management system in Vancouver are numerous and include:

- Increased public safety and security (removing dumpsters improves access and sightlines).
- Improved sanitation and aesthetics (reduced illegal dumping; odours caused by overflowing dumpsters, and urination and defecation next to dumpsters are mitigated; lane appearance is improved).
- Increased waste management awareness, and waste reduction and diversion (from source separation and differential pricing).
- A more equitable system consistent with the principles of pay-as-you-throw.
- Standardization of service contract terms and conditions within business communities resulting in administration efficiencies, higher service standards and increased value.
- Employment opportunities for individuals with barriers to traditional employment as an alternative or in addition to binning (such as through partnerships with local businesses and BIA's).
- Reduced noise impacts (extensive use of heavy equipment and large containers becomes unnecessary).
- Reduced traffic congestion (from a reduction in multiple large vehicles concentrated in given areas).
- Increased collection routing efficiencies which can result in decreased vehicle emissions.

## **Roles, Responsibilities & Scope**

Since the collection of commercial waste in Vancouver is a service provided by the private sector, the City's role with planning and implementing a dumpster free initiative is primarily limited to facilitation and regulation. With respect to the SACS initiative, the Downtown Vancouver and Yaletown BIA's are leading the development of the new service model on behalf of their membership. That work includes consulting with their members and obtaining feedback, determining the most appropriate contracting model, and engaging in discussions with private waste service providers for the purpose of entering into contract negotiations.

The Yaletown and Downtown Vancouver BIA's have received support from other Vancouver BIA's, as well as the Green Table Network, the Vancouver Board of Trade, the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) and Tourism Vancouver all of whom are contributing members within their respective BIA areas.

SACS is being planned as a socially integrated program so that income opportunities and waste diversion benefits resulting from scavenging in dumpsters (binning) are not displaced. For example, BIA and City staff are working with United We Can to identify the most appropriate role for a social enterprise within such a program. Opportunities include the development and promotion of partnerships between businesses and binners for the recovery of refundable beverage containers and potentially other waste items of value, and the provision of enhanced micro-cleaning services.

The BIA's who support SACS intend to implement it as a full scale project as opposed to a pilot since the benefits are understood and measurable based on the experience in other cities. Further, consultations with the waste hauling community has led to the understanding that potential service providers are not interested in participating in a pilot given the significant investment required to retool their operations. For that matter the waste hauling community has generally indicated their opposition to a different waste management model in Vancouver, primarily since they have significant capital invested in the current collection system involving the supply and emptying of dumpsters. Also, the proposed new system is anticipated to:

- result in a reorganization of the current waste hauling market share structure;
- require an investment in new equipment and human resources; and
- potentially result in increased uncertainty and risk during start up.

The City's role in this is that any commercial solid waste disposal system necessarily involves the use of City streets and lanes for storage (whether permanent, semi-permanent or temporary) and for truck stopping/loading purposes. The City can shape the kind of system that is put in place by regulating such uses of its streets and lanes.

## **Next Steps**

City staff are generally encouraged with the SACS concept because of the anticipated benefits noted previously. Further, the interests of staff and the BIA's, with respect to commercial waste management are generally aligned. Staff have indicated to the BIA's that, from the perspective of Engineering Services, our overarching interest is increased waste diversion, and cleaner streets and lanes with less traffic congestion compared to the current system involving dumpsters that are often mismanaged and serviced by multiple haulers operating in the same area. In this regard, staff look forward to reviewing the final details of the

proposed service model when it is made available, but anticipate the need for new regulation and enforcement systems depending on the required use of streets and lanes by the new system. For example, limitations will likely need to be imposed on the length of time bags or carts can be set out in lanes, and responsibilities for cleaning up uncollected materials will need to be allocated.

The Downtown Vancouver and Yaletown BIA have established a goal of fully implementing a dumpster free program by spring 2008. They are currently preparing a request for proposals and are developing contracting options with the assistance of private legal counsel. The City can facilitate implementation of an alternative system by revoking approval for container locations under the City's existing garbage container license agreement with 60 days' notice.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Based on our current understanding of an alternative waste collection program such as SACS, regional/City waste diversion goals will be matched and a cleaner public realm is anticipated.

### **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

If not designed with a strong social component, the removal of commercial dumpsters from public spaces to accommodate an alternative waste collection system may impact negatively on the binning community who scavenge materials set out as waste. To mitigate these impacts, a new system should capitalize on the numerous informal partnerships that currently exist between businesses and binners, and the opportunity to expand on micro-cleaning initiatives which provide life skills, job training and employment to marginalized individuals.

### **CONCLUSION**

Considerable progress has been made with the planning of an alternative commercial waste management system in the downtown area since Council directed staff to work with one or more BIA's on this initiative in late 2006. In particular, the Downtown Vancouver and Yaletown BIA's have demonstrated exceptional leadership with the planning of a new system based on their strong desire for change, and their understanding of the benefits a dumpster free system can bring based on the experience in other jurisdictions. Staff support this initiative, in principle, and are prepared to facilitate implementation of an alternative system by revoking approval of existing container locations. However, staff are also cognizant of the numerous details that still need to be worked out and the support that is required from the private sector waste management industry to move this initiative to the implementation phase. Despite these challenges, staff remain optimistic that with Council's support specific business areas may soon convert to dumpster free waste collection alternatives that meet the objectives outlined in this report.

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