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Town of Aurora

# General Committee Report

No. OPS23-023

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**Subject:** Dog Waste Pilot Project

**Prepared by:** Sara Tienkamp, Director of Operations

**Department:** Operational Services

**Date:** October 3, 2023

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## Recommendation

1. That Report No. OPS23-023 be received; and
2. That, based on the positive results of the pilot project for dog waste containers, that the new service level be adopted permanently in parks and trails; and
3. That the Operating Budget be increased accordingly to accommodate disposal costs of organic waste; and
4. That staff include dog waste containers in the 2024-2026 Capital Budget.

## Executive Summary

This report provides Council with information associated with the one (1) year Dog Waste Container and Diversion Pilot Project implemented in June of 2022 within parks and trails:

- Aurora's dog waste collection and diversion pilot program in parks and trails has proven to be extremely successful in the community.
- Performance targets and evaluation of program results positive at end of pilot project.
- York Region will continue to accept waste from the dog waste receptacles through their green collection program.

## Background

Improper disposal of dog waste is a problem for the public that use public spaces and for the staff that maintain the receptacles. In numerous park/trail locations 50-75% of

the waste in a receptacle is pet waste. Proper disposal is through the organic waste stream and residents are encouraged to dispose of pet waste through their residential “green bins”; however, it is not convenient for pet owners to carry waste back home and it is commonly disposed of in the nearest Town waste receptacle or tossed aside where it creates unpleasant odours, needs frequent removal, and is streamed to the landfill.

In April of 2021, Council endorsed the idea of a yearlong Dog Waste Diversion Pilot Project and in late fall, approved the associated budget to implement the program as part of the 2022 Capital and Operating budgets.

## Analysis

**Aurora’s dog waste collection and diversion pilot program in parks and trails has proven to be extremely successful in the community.**

Aurora’s pilot project involved the installation of twelve (12) inground dog waste containers in June of 2022, including a study of the diversion of waste, audits, and public satisfaction survey. The project was very well received by the public/staff and produced the following results:

- Diversion of approximately ten (10) metric tonnes of pet waste between June 2022 and end of May 2023.
- Operational waste disposal costs for the pilot are approximately \$23,300.
- Overall, staff reported a significant improvement in the reduction of dog waste being deposited in regular waste receptacles in parks and greenspaces, where dog waste containers were installed.
- 88% of residents surveyed in parks and trails indicated they would wait for the next available dog waste container.
- 85% of residents also indicated there were too few containers and would like to see program expanded.
- Consensus by public that the containers are easy to identify, use, clean, convenient, and odour free.

Staff hope to expand the program through future budget approval as the project was well received by the public and endorsed by frontline staff.

### Performance targets and evaluation of program results positive at end of pilot project.

Staff evaluated the performance of the containers against the targets indicated in Table 1 over a one (1) year period from June 1, 2022, to May 31, 2023, presented in Report No. OPS21-008. The program will be evaluated on the following criteria:

**Table 1: Container Performance Measures and Targets**

Performance Measure	Target	Outcome
Amount of dog waste diverted from landfill	30 tonnes per annum	Ten (10) tonnes per annum
Frequency of pet waste collection visits by operator	Average every six (6) weeks	Collection every six (6) weeks, with a few instances where containers required collection at week four (4) as they were at capacity
Reduction of pet waste in regular trash receptacles in parks/trails	75% reduction of inclusion of pet waste in regular trash receptacles at locations where dog waste containers located (exception of Canine Commons as green waste option exists)	Staff estimate through receptacle audits that there was a minimum of a 75% (in some locations it was closer to 90%) reduction of dog waste in regular trash receptacles
Pet owner engagement	200 pet owner online survey completions	Staff took an alternative approach to online survey and engaged the public in person, surveying the public in the parks network (182 pet owners were engaged)

The results indicate that the program was effective in reducing pet waste from regular waste receptacles. Collected dog waste was diverted from landfill for conversion to renewable energy and fertilizer and prevented these organics from entering landfills. Also, the in-ground containers minimized contact the public and staff had with pet waste as experienced with disposal in the traditional mixed waste receptacle. The in-ground units eliminated foul odours and provided ease of disposal for residents and more importantly significantly reduced the safety concerns for staff as they were no longer exposed to mass quantities of pet waste, loose dog waste and heavy cans of mixed waste in parks where inground units had been installed.

As such, staff are proposing that the Town move forward with implementing a permanent pet waste diversion container program in parks and trails.

**York Region will continue to accept waste from the Town's dog waste program through their organic collection program.**

The collection of the dog waste is contracted out through our current waste collection provider GFL, as it requires a large capacity truck with a crane arm to lift the waste from the inground containers.

Dog waste is considered as residential green bin waste and York Region is willing to continue to accept the waste at their transfer station located in Newmarket. There will continue to be no additional costs associated with the acceptance of the organics above the contracted tonnage fees.

## **Advisory Committee Review**

The Community Advisory Committee previously provided support of dog waste diversion initiatives/containers and off leash park development through reports, CAC19-003 Future Off Leash Dog Park Locations, October 10, 2019

## **Legal Considerations**

None.

## **Financial Implications**

The annual maintenance costs for twelve (12) in-ground waste containers are estimated to be \$23,300 based upon data from the one (1) year pilot. Table 2 presents a more detailed break-down of this estimate.

**Table 2: Estimated Yearly Operational Impacts**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Costs</b>
Collection of units (every 4-6 weeks) by contractor (approximately ten (10) tonnes total of organic waste)	\$ 23,000
Compostable liners	\$300
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$23,300</b>

It is recommended that this service enhancement continue on an ongoing basis. As a result, staff will include this incremental amount in the Town's proposed 2024-2026 Operating Budget for Council's formal review and approval.

In consideration of the pilot's success, staff further recommend that this service be expanded to include 45 additional in-ground waste containers for the Town's remaining parks and trails. The estimated capital cost to expand this service to include the additional 45 units would be \$342,000. A detailed breakdown of this estimate is presented in Table 3. Staff will present this proposal to Council for its consideration and approval as part of the 2024 -2026 Capital Budget expending these proposed funding requirements equally over future years.

**Table 3: Estimated Capital Project Financial Impacts 2024-2026**

<b>Materials</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Supply of 45 inground waste receptacles	\$ 270,000
Installation	72,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 342,000</b>

If we assume similar container operating costs to what were experienced with the pilot, the total estimated operating cost for the additional 45 containers may be as high as \$87,400 once they become fully operational; however, some economies of scale savings can be anticipated which will reduce this cost. The incremental operating costs for the additional containers will be inserted into the appropriate proposed operating budget for Council's review and approval.

Every effort will be taken to offset all capital and operational costs for this program; staff will investigate potential cost offsets through corporate sponsorship and pet license fees.

## **Communications Considerations**

Should the program be expanded on permanent basis, Communications will implement an education campaign targeted to residents and visitors on the Stoop and Scoop bylaw and proper waste disposal. The campaign will be multifaceted, and include among others a media release, website content, social media, Noticeboard, Newsletters and park signage.

## **Climate Change Considerations**

The recommendations from this report have resulted in the diversion of organic dog waste from the landfill. These large capacity containers are installed below ground where the depth allows for cooler conditions and no direct sunlight, eliminating odours, maximizing capacity, and reducing required frequency of service, reducing emissions. The waste is processed through an anaerobic bio-digester facility where it is safely converted into energy.

## **Link to Strategic Plan**

The collection/diversion of organic waste supports the Strategic Plan goal of Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all through their accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within this goal statement:

Investing in sustainable infrastructure: Maintain and expand infrastructure to support forecasted population growth through technology, waste management, roads, emergency services and accessibility.

## **Alternative(s) to the Recommendation**

1. Council could decide not to expand the existing program.

## **Conclusions**

Dedicated collection of dog waste ensures that it is diverted from landfill and flows through the correct stream of organic materials. The solution will help to collect dog waste correctly, which can then be converted to energy and fertilizer. Staff recommend that the in-ground dog waste program be expanded within the parks and trail systems, where feasible. The receptacles required will be phased in over a three (3)-year cycle of budget and will be presented to Council for consideration through the 2024-2026 Capital Budget.

## **Attachments**

None.

## **Previous Reports**

OPS21-008 Dog Waste Container and Diversion Pilot Project, April 20, 2021

OPS20-007 Off-Leash Dog Park at Highland Gate, May 5, 2020

CAC19-003 Future Off-Leash Dog Park Locations, October 10, 2019

## **Pre-submission Review**

Agenda Management Team review on September 14, 2023.

## **Approvals**

Approved by Sara Tienkamp, Director, Operational Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer