

DATE: September 23, 2022

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Blake McIntosh, Director Civic Operations

SUBJECT: Bear Resistant Cart Pilot Project Update

ATTACHMENT(S): PG Bear Smart Status Implementation 2019 Update

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated September 23, 2022 from the Director of Civic Operations titled “Bear Resistant Cart Pilot Project Update”.

PURPOSE:

Administration is providing an update on the 2019 bear resistant residential automated cart pilot project initiated by Solid Waste Services.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Prince George is continuing to build on the progress it had made in previous years towards the achievement of Provincial Bear Smart status. As part of the Bear Smart community program process, an interagency working group was created which includes the following organizations/agencies:

- City of Prince George
- Conservation Officer Service of BC
- Province of BC
- Northern Bear Awareness Society
- Regional District of Fraser Fort George

A draft of the Prince George Bear Smart Community Program application was distributed to this working group in June 2020 for review. From that review, it was identified that there were some items that needed additional work before the application could be submitted in order for the agencies/organizations to provide their full support. As a result, and recognizing the impacts of COVID-19 (budgets and staff resources), the application submission was deferred to a future date and the working group stopped meeting during the pandemic. This additional time allowed Solid Waste staff to complete a pilot program on bear-resistant residential garbage carts.

In April of 2019, the City of Prince George initiated a pilot project with the introduction of 300 bear-resistant residential solid waste carts within a high frequency bear area in the Hart Highlands neighbourhood. The bear-resistant cart includes a built-in locking mechanism in the lid that is supposed to open when inverted by the garbage collection vehicle. Residents in the pilot project area received the

carts at no additional cost for the duration of the project. Parks and Solid Waste Services staff have monitored the challenges of the pilot project for potential expansion of the system in future years.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Supporting the ongoing implementation of continuous improvement processes to advance efficiency and effective service delivery.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

After monitoring the bear resistant carts in the field for almost 3 years, it has been determined the existing latch system is unreliable and problematic in cold weather. Of the 300 carts in the field, 22 have had the special latch completely replaced, a failure rate of approximately 8%. In addition to the complete failures, Solid Waste staff face the weekly challenges of trying to empty carts that are inoperable due to frozen latches or latches plugged with debris etc. The success of an automated curbside collection system relies on the efficiencies realized from dependable equipment and minimal down time in the field. Requiring the operator to exit the automated collection vehicle and spend time manually unlatching carts that are not functioning properly is counter-productive and inefficient.

Given the results of the pilot project, Solid Waste Services is recommending against expanding the program to other problematic areas in the city using the latch system currently in place. City staff will continue to explore other bear resistant options for the automated refuse cart that might be better suited for the weather conditions we face in Prince George.

Residents in the pilot project area will have the opportunity to keep the large bear resistant cart as long as it functions properly. Residents that choose to continue with a bear resistant cart will see their utility bill updated to reflect the large sized container. Residents that want to return to their original sized cart won't be charged the exchange fee and will have a smaller cart delivered directly to their residence on collection day by City staff.

The interagency working group has recently resumed meetings to discuss next steps in the process for achieving Provincial Bear Smart status. Attached is the last application status update document that was presented to City Council pre pandemic in 2019.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: October 3rd, 2022