

INFORMATION NOTE

Title:	Litter
Date Prepared:	April 23, 2020
Report To:	Regular Meeting of Council
Councillor and Role:	Councillor Ian Froude, Public Works & Sustainability
Ward:	N/A

Issue: Litter Clean Up Process

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

As winter comes to an end and the snow melts, the emergence of litter begins. The spring season untidiness is an annual occurrence. Under normal circumstances both the City and the many community groups/volunteers would begin large-scale spring litter clean-ups. Unfortunately, this however is not a normal year.

The COVID -19 pandemic has forced the City of St. John's to change how it operates. Public Works Department employees are now following; strict physical distancing rules, one employee per vehicle (where possible), and extensively sanitizing vehicles and equipment.

The requirement for physical distancing is resulting in fewer employees being present on individual work sites. Employees are spread over greater distances and locations. The City of St. John's Business Continuity Plan identifies core services that must be maintained. Staff are addressing these core services with fewer numbers. The regular work process of several employees assigned to a specific area is no longer possible. Intense activity at work sites does not occur. Tasks take longer as employee safety is paramount.

Clean St. John's, a not for profit organization, having a mandate to create and promote a litter-free city through volunteer - based action, has suspended community cleanups for the coming months. The loss of 300 community cleanup events will impact the rate at which the City is freed of litter.

Assigning significant staff resources to the cleanup of litter and collection of garbage achieves a tidier space but puts staff and the residents at risk, because:

- it places several employees in close proximity to others,
- requires the physical handling of debris,
- requires more vehicles for employee and material transport,
- creates a greater service level for Fleet Division,
- increases the risk of virus exposure and subsequent spread.

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Most critically, should COVID – 19 infiltrate the work force, fewer employees will be available to report to work and the City's ability to respond to core service responsibilities will be negatively affected. This could mean a partial or complete shutdown of the Public Works Department. Water treatment and wastewater processing could be impacted.

Essential services like garbage collection, ice control (salting), pothole patching and watermain repairs could be temporarily, suspended. All activities must be done with safety as the priority, in order to continue to keep the essential services in operation.

The reasons why volunteer community clean ups have been suspended; (1) prohibitions on gatherings of more than 5 people; and (2) requirements for physical distancing, also apply to our staff. For the foregoing reasons I do not recommend a redeployment of staff to conduct litter collection throughout the city.

We can however provide the appropriate level of service by following is the proposed course of action;

- The Downtown Litter Clean Up contractor is in place and working with two (2) crews. The contractor may be able to increase staffing levels to multiple crews. All safe work protocols provided by the public health officials and our OHS staff will be followed.
- During April, the Parks and Open Spaces Division will have approximately six (6) employees assigned daily to supplement the existing Downtown Litter Clean Up contractual crews. They are focusing on the clean - up of dog feces, ground litter and servicing barrels along sidewalks, at City buildings and open spaces. Waste and Recycling Division employees are servicing single use and multi- stream containers.
- City of St. John's and Grand Concourse Authority employees have begun litter cleanup and garbage collection along trails and roadsides. This is accomplished being mindful of the recommendations provided by the public health officials, in relation to COVID-19. Approximately thirty- two (32) staff are involved.
- In early May, four (4) full time staff will to be assigned to the Downtown Core and facilitate the placement and servicing of additional waste receptacles as well as the collection of litter in this area.
- In May approximately thirty - five (35) staff will begin the cleanup and garbage/litter collection at parkettes, playgrounds, parks, plazas, open spaces, sports facilities monument sites and along roadsides etc.
- In May, additional waste receptacles will be placed and serviced along trails throughout the City.

I trust this provides abroad overview of the measures and timing to be enacted to address the cleanup of litter and collection of garbage in parks and public spaces.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: N/A
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: N/A
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans:
 - a. A Sustainable City
 - b. An Effective City
4. Legal or Policy Implications: N/A
5. Privacy Implications: N/A
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations:
 - a. Media campaign in relation to residential property clean ups and responsible pet ownership.
7. Human Resource Implications: N/A
8. Procurement Implications: N/A
9. Information Technology Implications: N/A
10. Other Implications: N/A

Conclusion/Next Steps:

While it is important to address the litter issue within the City of St. John's, it is more important to adhere to the COVID - 19 pandemic advice provided by the provincial and federal health authorities. They indicate that now is not the time to relax the strict protocols that have been put in place and are working. Now is the time to remained focused and to continue to stop the spread COVID - 19 in order to protect our family, friends and community. By doing so the City of St. John's will have a greater chance of continuing to provide the essential services to its residents.

Staff are recommending proceeding with the previously outlined process, for the collection of garbage and cleanup of litter in the City of St. John's. This may, however, take more time than in previous years, but will still be done.

Prepared by:
Approved by: