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Clear Bag Policy Promotion & Education

CIF Project 902



Continuous Improvement Fund
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Acknowledgement

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Executive Summary

The Town of Kearney is a municipality in the northern reaches of cottage country. Residents are provided with a two stream recycling program at two drop off transfer sites. A clear bag policy was implemented for the New Year in an effort to divert more recycling waste from landfill.

The Town successfully applied for funding from the Continuous Improvement Fund (CIF) to implement a communication campaign to promote and educate residents on the change to the clear bag policy. The steps identified in the CIF [Clear Bag Program Implementation Toolkit](#): a step by step guide for municipalities, were followed in implementing this programming change. The communication plan included mail-out notifications of the new programming, signage at the municipal waste sites, and promotional package give-aways for residents.

While the clear bag policy came into effect January 1, 2016 the campaign began notifying residents of the upcoming changes in the summer of 2015. Four notices in total were mailed out to permanent and seasonal residents to create awareness of the new program. Promotional packages were created which included sample clear bags, coupons for purchasing bags at local stores, informational brochures and other promotional items. The promotional packages were handed out to residents as a means to inform residents of the programming change and creating buy-in/compliance. In total nearly 4,000 of these packages were given out to residents over the first 6 months of 2016.

Town staff monitored the amount of recyclables collected at the waste sites and compared the first 8-months of 2015 vs 2016. Over these periods, the total amount of material collected has increased just over 5% (appx 5 tonnes). Interestingly, the amount of paper fibre products collected has actually decreased nearly 10% while the amount of mixed containers has increased more than 30%.

In implementing the communication plan, staff monitored resident's behaviour at the waste site to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. Over 90% of permanent residents were aware of the programming change as of the effective date and quickly jumped on board to comply with bringing their waste to the site in clear bags. This was not the case with seasonal residents as very few were aware of the new policy when coming on to site for the first time in the spring/summer vacation season. Staff noted that it was also more difficult to convince this group to comply with the new policy and had to issue many warnings due to infractions.

For both seasonal and permanent residents who were unaware of the clear bag requirement, staff felt the promotional packages were an effective way to start a conversation about the new policy and create buy-in. Site attendants proved key to the success of the clear bag policy implementation both in terms of enforcing the new policy and, more importantly, in educating residents of the change through one on one conversations and providing information resources.

Staff are confident the new policy is working and fewer recyclables are entering landfill. The project was completed under budget at a total cost of approximately \$1,530.

For more information about this project, please contact:

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1 Background information

1.1 Municipal Information

Kearney is a town and municipality in the Almaguin Highlands region of Parry Sound District of Ontario, Canada. With a landmass of 531 square kilometres and a year-round population of 841 in the Canada 2011 Census, Kearney claims to be the “Biggest Little Town in Ontario.”

Kearney is located 3 hours North of Toronto, 30 minutes North of Huntsville, 1.25 hours North-West of Parry Sound, and approximately 1 hour South of North Bay. Kearney is known for its proximity to the northern entrance of Algonquin Park, being only 45 minutes West of the Park.



Figure 1: Town of Kearney map

Population.....	1,086
Permanent households.....	379
Seasonal households.....	588
Blue Box Tonnage	110
Municipal Grouping	Rural Depot North - (8)
Blue Box Program net cost.....	\$111,641
Net Cost per Tonne	\$1,015
Annual P&E Budget	\$1,000

1.2 Program Description

The Town operates a waste transfer station on King William Street and a landfill / transfer site at Kallio Rd Sand Lake location. The Town has a garbage bag limit in place which permits residents to drop off up to 5 bags of garbage at the sites per month and are able to purchase additional bag tags for \$2.

The two drop off transfer sites provide residents with two-stream recycling, which target the following materials:

Containers – Plastic bottles numbers 1-7, glass bottles and jars, aluminum, tin and steel cans, and aluminum foil

Fibers – Newspaper, mixed paper, boxboard and old corrugated cardboard

There is no revenue sharing agreement in place between the Town and Progressive Waste Solutions who transport and process our recycling in Bracebridge ON.

In addition, the following diversion programs are in place at the Sand Lake site:

- **Tires:** The Town is a registered collector with the Ontario Tire Stewardship and permits residents to drop this material off at the Sand Lake site.
- **E-waste:** New in 2015 the Town began accepting e-waste.
- **Appliances & Scrap Metal:** Scrap metal and appliances are accepted free of charge
- **Construction & Demolition waste:** Is accepted at set fees.
- **Burnable brush:** Is acceptable at set fees.

The Town also provides special event days for collection of household hazardous waste (HHSW).

1.3 Program Challenges

The Township has a mandatory recycling bylaw in place which prohibits landfilling of recyclable materials. The previous program accepted garbage in black bags, which made it difficult for the site attendant to determine if recyclables are entering the landfill and the bylaw being infringed upon. In order to improve the diversion of recyclable materials entering the waste sites, and thus prolonging the life of the landfill and reducing Green House Gas emissions, the Town planned the transition to a clear bag policy.

Clear bag policies have been used previously in other municipalities as a low cost effective measure to increase diversion of materials from landfill and improve resident and site attendant safety. Staff followed the CIF [Clear Bag Program Implementation Toolkit](#), which is a step by step guide for municipalities to use in implementing this type of policy.

Clear bags allow site attendants to quickly identify recyclables and/or unsafe objects in garbage waste for proper disposal. A clear bag policy requires residents bring their separated garbage and recycling to site in clear bags (not black, white or of any colour). Residents are permitted one opaque “privacy” bag inside each clear bag. Waste materials not in a clear bag are not permitted for disposal.

The purpose of this project was to build an education package, including ads, flyers & pamphlets, hand-outs, and install signage at the drop off transfer sites to inform and educate residents about the timing, specifics, and benefits of the transition to the clear bags policy.

2 Approach

The Council of the Corporation of the Town of Kearney passed a new Waste Management By-law early in 2015 which came in to effect on January 1, 2016. This by-law stipulated that all waste must be deposited in clear (see-thru) garbage bags for disposal at all Town Transfer Sites and included all garbage for pick-up in town for residents that receive this service.

Town staff submitted an REOI application to the Continuous Improvement Fund requesting funding to cover a portion of the costs of a promotion and education (P&E) campaign to inform residents of the clear bag policy. The application received funding approval September of 2015. The Town worked with a Dave Douglas to inform local and national retailers of the impending change, thus ensuring the availability of clear garbage bags for consumers, as well as to receive introductory offers at retailer locations and hand-outs for the promotional packages.

Town staff created a communications plan for the P&E campaign which included strategies for assessing the impact of the new policy.

2.1 *Monitoring and Measurement Methodology*

There are two primary measurements monitored in evaluating this project: recycling tonnes and stakeholder feedback. The hauling contractor weigh bills from the first 8 months of 2015 and 2016 are used as the benchmark and post-implementation cases. Feedback from residents, attendants, and Town staff were monitored to evaluate the implementation of the clear bag policy.

2.1.1 Tonnages

In the first 8 months of 2015, the municipality collected 87.8 tonnes of recycling materials to the processing centre from the waste sites. With the two-stream program, this breaks down to 33.0 tonnes of containers and 43.2 tonnes of fibres.

2.1.2 Stakeholder Feedback

The transition to clear bags, or any programming change, can sometimes catch residents unawares despite best efforts by staff to provide notice. Monitoring resident awareness of program changes and getting their feedback allows staff to evaluate their communication tools and make changes when necessary. It is also important to get feedback from front line staff who are dealing with the public daily and see firsthand where information gaps exist.

To monitor stakeholder feedback, staff tracked the number of promotional packages given away, the number of written warnings, and completed retrospective questionnaires. The questionnaires sought to identify the issues with implementing this type of programming, timelines for users to comply with the new policy, and the communication requirements for notifying residents of programming change.

2.2 Implementation

2.2.1 Communication Plan

Table 1 below identifies the roll-out schedule for key communication materials used in informing residents of the clear bag policy.

Table 1: Communication plan timetable

Date	Item
August 1, 2015	Mail-out notification of upcoming policy change to clear bags requirement
November 1, 2015	Mail-out reminder of upcoming policy change to take effect January 1, 2016
December 1, 2015	Draft signage for waste sites
	Prepare promotional package for give-away
January 1, 2016	Promotional packages available for permanent residents
	Mail-out notice of new policy in effect
	Install signage at waste sites
February 1, 2016	Tax bill mail-out – notification of new policy in effect
June 1, 2016	Promotional packages available for seasonal residents

Following implementation of the new program on January 1, the waste site attendants were key front line staff charged with enforcing compliance and educating residents on the new policy. It was imperative to provide these individuals with clear training on the new program requirements and with informational packages they could provide to residents to reinforce the new expectations.

2.2.2 P&E Materials

Promotional Give-Aways

Packages are given to residents who show up to the waste site with black bags and are not permitted to deposit their waste; residents are permitted to sort their waste into a clear bag on site for disposal. The packages were created to soften the blow by providing residents with a suite of materials meant to explain and promote the new policy.

Packages contained a free clear bag and \$2 off coupon for purchasing bags, informational brochures on the recycling and clear bag policy, and other promotional material. The number of these packages given away to both seasonal and permanent residents was tracked.

Notices

Four written notices were mailed out to residents informing of the upcoming policy change and implementation date. 2 notices were sent out prior to policy implementation, 1 at the new-year when the policy was launched, and 1 a month after implementation with the tax bill. This information was featured at the top of the written notice which was combined other municipal information.

Written warnings

In the event residents refuse to comply with the new program, and are found to be infringing on the

Town bylaw which bans landfilling recyclables, sequentially numbered written warning slips were prepared to track these incidents. The slips record resident transfer site card numbers, which are provide to site attendants when a resident looks to access the site, date and description of the incident. In the event 3 written warnings are recorded for a resident, a fine will be issued to the offender under the Town bylaw.

Signage

Signage which features the clear bag policy, accepted materials for diversion program, and hours of operation were designed and implemented to assist with the programming change.

2.2.3 Issues with Implementation

In general, the new policy was well received by residents. There were many conversations with both permanent and seasonal residents who noted they were not aware of the switch to clear bags. The promotional packages were effective in creating buy-in from residents and ensuring compliance for the next site visit.

3 Project Results and Analysis

The following is a breakdown of the key performance indicators tracked for this project as identified in the previous section of this report. First, the results are presented comparing the tonnes of material collected between 2015 vs 2016. Then, feedback from our key stakeholders is assessed.

3.1 Project Results

The key performance indicators tracked for this project were: haul costs, tonnages (load weights), fuel use by the backup generator, and the financial impacts of the new policy.

3.1.1 Tonnages

The first 8 months of tonnages for 2015 and 2016 are presented in Table 2 below. In the first 8 months of 2015, 68 loads of material, totalling 87.8 tonnes, were hauled from the two waste sites to the processing centre. In the first 8 months of 2016, 72 loads of material, totalling 92.6 tonnes, were hauled.

Table 2: Collect recycling tonnage comparison 2015 vs 2016

	2015	2016	Diff	Diff
Mixed paper / cardboard	54.7	49.5	-5.3	-9.6%
Comingled containers	33.0	43.2	10.1	30.6%
Total	87.8	92.6	4.9	5.5%

As the recycling program source separates materials into two streams, this information is also presented above in Table 2. The amount of materials collected through the mixed paper and cardboard stream has decreased nearly 10% in the study period of 2016, while the amount of containers has increased almost a third. Overall, the amount of material collected through the recycling program has increased more than 5%.

3.1.2 Stakeholder Feedback

The feedback from three key stakeholders were monitored: staff, permanent residents and seasonal residents.

Resident awareness of program change

In monitoring the resident's awareness of the new clear bag policy, there is a significant difference between permanent and seasonal residents. Staff noted approximately 90% of permanent residents were aware of the clear bags requirement on their first visit to the waste site in 2016, in contrast to only 10% of seasonal residents.

Verbal warnings

Similar to resident awareness of the programming change, seasonal and permanent residents behaved differently in terms of complying with the new policy. Staff noted very few permanent residents had to be given verbal warnings (5) regarding bringing their waste onto site in black bags and there were no repeat offenders. However, many verbal warnings (+200) were given out to seasonal residents and on average it took 2 return visits with repeat warnings to get them into compliance.

Promotional package give-aways

Close to 4,000 promotional packages were given-away to residents. The packages were provided when residents entered site with a black bag and staff had to have a conversation about the clear bag policy. Approximately three quarters of the packages were given to seasonal residents, with the remainder handed out to permanent residents.

3.2 Analysis of Results

3.2.1 Tonnages

Staff were expecting an increase in the amount of recycling material collected from the waste sites as a result of implementing the clear bags policy. While tonnage appears to be up (~5%), there is a difference between the paper fibre (↓10%) and mixed container streams (↑30%).

In understanding the decrease in paper fibres, staff are aware of trends in the packaging industry away from this type of material (fewer/lighter newsprint in circulation) and the overall light-weighting of materials.

Staff point to the substantial increase in the amount of mixed containers collected as a clear indication the clear bag policy is working.

3.2.2 Stakeholder Feedback

Staff were very pleased with the buy-in demonstrated by permanent residents. It was clear that the communication plan connected with these residents and they were made aware of the new policy implementation. Further, those who were unaware quickly jumped on board to comply with the new program.

With seasonal residents, staff identify the communication plan as being less effective than with the permanent residents. It was apparent to waste site staff that these residents were not aware of the policy change and took significantly more effort to get into compliance.

The first likely cause of this difference is that it is more difficult to directly communicate information to seasonal residents as they live in other municipalities. Secondly, the seasonal residents have their own 'at home' programs which may be different than what the Town offers and this may cause confusion. Finally, seasonal residents are on vacation looking to deposit their waste as a last to-do before they head home for the work week and are generally less likely accept being told they are doing things wrong. Staff found giving out the promotional packages very helpful in managing any conflict that might have arisen in this type of an interaction and promoting compliance with the clear bag policy.

3.3 Lessons Learned

Implementing new policy can go smoothly when residents are well notified of upcoming changes. For those residents who forget or were not aware of the change, a soft launch period where black bags are accepted for a brief period and waste site attendants communicate the new expectations and provide promotional packages is very helpful in creating buy-in.

Seasonal residents need greater supports for complying with program changes and waste diversion programs in general. Communicating with these residents while they are at home is a difficult task. In the future, staff will continue to prepare and provide 'on site' communication materials to communicate with and convert seasonal residents. The promotional packages were effective in doing this and the on-site signage which clearly identified clear bags as being mandatory as of January 1, 2016 was also necessary.

There appears to be a growing popularity for short-term rental of seasonal properties. With such things as "AirBNB" and Cottage Rental magazines and "apps", many seasonal residents are in fact transient residents or those without a staked interest in the municipality. In order to address this, it may be helpful to consider "welcome packages" available to property owners who rent their residences or to contemplate province-wide advertising (or perhaps google ads) promoting the necessity of recycling.

4 Project Budget

The budget vs actual costs for the clear bags policy communication plan is outlined in Table 3 below. The project was \$455 under budget. The average cost of the campaign per household was approximately \$1.58.

Table 3: Communication plan expenditures – planned versus actual

Item	Budget	Actual	difference
Mail-outs	\$285.00	\$483.77	\$198.77
Signage	\$1,000.00	\$634.66	-\$365.34
Promotional packages	\$700.00	\$412.00	-\$288.00
total	\$1,985.00	\$1,530.43	-\$454.57

5 Conclusions

The implementation of the Clear Bag Policy within our municipality has been a profitable undertaking. Apart from the obvious considerations, the far-reaching implications have broadened staff appreciation for such programs. This includes the realization that seasonal residents seem to be disconnected from the issues and responsibilities they share with others in the municipality (including staying informed of policy changes and waste disposal).

The opportunity to work with Dave Douglas of VisionQuest Environmental Strategies was very beneficial and educational. We wish to thank Dave for his input, ideas and experience in educating our residents and working in conjunction with retailers and manufacturers to offer our residents the ability to take a much needed initiative without a substantial impediment to their ability to budget their household. Glad also deserves a hearty thank you for supplying our municipality with the initial supply of clear bags and coupons for our educational promotional packages.

We believe this was a worthwhile undertaking, which will benefit our municipality and could be of aid to other municipalities hoping to increase waste diversion and decrease the speed at which their landfill is being used. As time progresses, municipalities and regional governments will need to consider many such measures. Consideration for a wider range of advertising may be beneficial to increase awareness of new programs. From social media to digital advertising (google ads, etc.) on websites which may be frequented by those using the programs could raise cognizance and prevent the “disconnect” we noticed with some residents.

Appendix

Kallio Road Transfer Station

Remember: CLEAR BAGS ONLY!



Garbage

Household Appliances & Electronics
Household Appliances & Electronics
Household Appliances & Electronics
Household Appliances & Electronics
Household Appliances & Electronics
Household Appliances & Electronics
Household Appliances & Electronics
Household Appliances & Electronics
Household Appliances & Electronics
Household Appliances & Electronics

Fees

Additional Bags of Garbage - \$2/bag for each bag over limit

Large Appliances - \$5 - per appliance (hot water tanks, stoves, etc. NOTE Fridges, freezers, etc. must be drained & tagged)

Furniture - \$5 - per item (bed, dresser, mattress, etc.)

Burnable Brush or Clean Bldg. Material - \$25/pick up load

\$75/single axle load
\$125/tandem axle load

Asphalt Shingles - \$150 / pick up truck load
\$250 / single axle load
\$300 / tandem axle load

CONTAINERS



PAPER PRODUCTS



Hours of Operation

April 1 to Thanksgiving weekend
2pm - 6 pm

Thanksgiving weekend to April 1
2 pm to 5 pm

Closed Wed. & Thurs.

Closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday

Transfer Station Attendant

Brink Custom

Figure 3: Promotional package notice

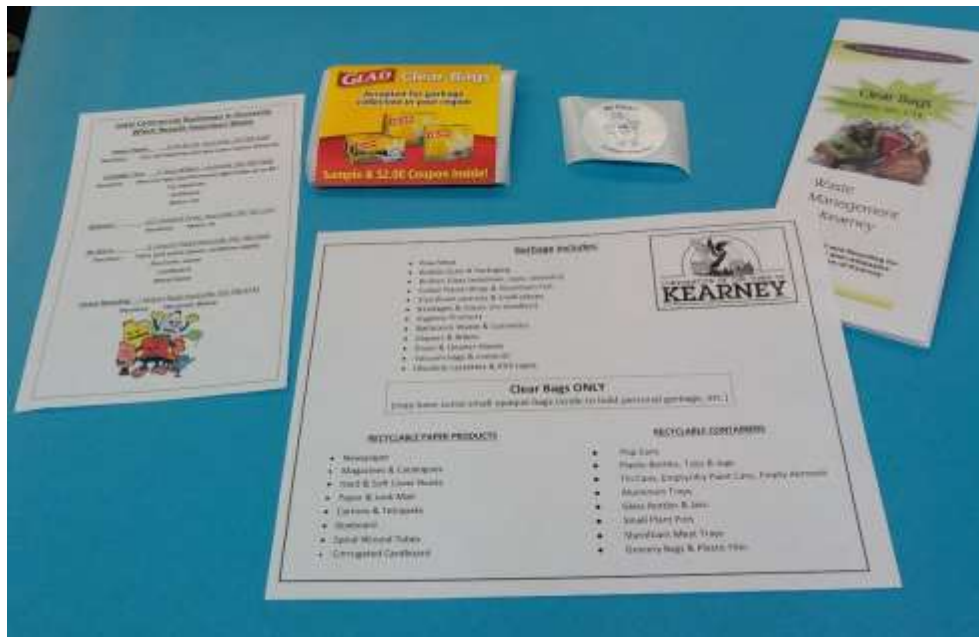


Figure 2: Promotional package give-aways