

September 28, 2009

Mayor Sam Katz and
Members of Winnipeg City Council
City Hall
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B9

Dear Mayor Katz and City Councillors:

With respect to City Council's consideration of a proposal to provide wheeled carts to households for garbage collection in areas of northwest Winnipeg, Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM) has the following concerns:

- * In the interests of allowing informed public input into this substantial change in waste collection practice, RCM requests that full public information be provided to the community, along with sufficient time for residents to respond before a decision is made.
- * RCM supports worthwhile cost-saving efficiencies and we are certainly in favour of safeguarding workers' health. However, we are unable to see that the City's move to rolling carts, as we understand it, will have any benefits for waste reduction. Indeed, we are greatly concerned that such a move is likely to have a reverse effect. That is, the provision of large containers along with free collection invites householders to fill the bins full, undermining momentum for recycling and composting. There is really no incentive for residents to divert waste from landfill under such a system.
- * RCM recognizes that a number of other cities are moving to automated waste collection using wheeled carts. We note that best practice in this regard is to offer bins of different sizes and to set collection fees in accordance with container size. Households with smaller containers pay less for collection service, and those with larger ones pay more. This provides a meaningful financial incentive for waste reduction and diversion.
- * Under Winnipeg's plan, as we understand it, the carts for all of the households involved will be of uniform size, which will effectively rule out subsequent linking of cost recovery to the amount of garbage produced. This means that Winnipeg households producing less waste will continue to subsidize those producing more, an unfair practice that discourages waste reduction. Moreover wrestling a large cart through snow in winter could prove a challenge for seniors and disadvantage low-waste households that might otherwise set out a small shopping bag of waste.
- * If the plan proceeds, RCM suggests prominent labeling of the new containers to make it clear that they are for garbage, not for recyclables or compostables.

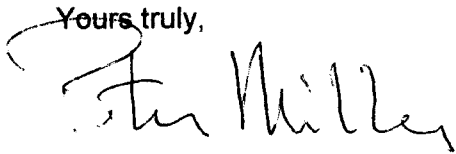
- * We recommend consideration of less frequent collection (bi-weekly) for areas that get these large new bins.
- * We do not understand how the carts will reduce the use of plastic garbage bags.
- * RCM is unclear how a cart program that undermines waste reduction will fit with the City's upcoming sustainability plan, which we look forward to seeing next spring.

RCM affirms our commitment to work with the City and all residents toward waste reduction goals that will make Winnipeg a greener and more sustainable community.

Resource Conservation Manitoba is a non-profit, non-governmental organization carrying out environmental education on waste reduction, sustainable transportation and resource conservation.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "P".

Peter Miller, Chair
RCM Policy Committee