

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO**

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2009**

**CIRCULATED REPORT  
FOR AGENDA**

**PAGES**

2-5                      Garbage and Recycling Collection Program - Financial Relief for Medical Treatment.



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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Carey McIver  
Manager of Solid Waste

**DATE:** January 2, 2009

**FROM:** Jeff Ainge  
Zero Waste Coordinator

**FILE:** 5370-00

**SUBJECT:** Garbage and Recycling Collection Program – Request for Financial Relief Resulting From Home-based Medical Treatment

**PURPOSE**

To provide the Board with options for providing financial relief to persons whose medical situation causes them to have extra garbage for household collection.

**BACKGROUND**

**Board Direction**

At the May 27, 2008 Board meeting, the Regional Board approved the following motion:

*That the RDN staff be directed to prepare options for the Board's review for a policy to provide relief for the extra costs of solid waste removal for persons that have medical issues.*

**RDN Garbage & Recycling Program**

The Regional District provides a contracted curbside household garbage and recycling collection service to 20,700 homes in the electoral areas and City of Parksville. An additional 4,825 homes in the District of Lantzville and Town of Qualicum Beach receive contracted recycling collection only from the Regional District (their garbage collection is provided through the individual municipality). Within the Regional District, including the partnering municipalities, the base utility fee allows for one can of garbage per week. Additional garbage, up to two extra cans per week, can be set at the curb with the purchase of "extra garbage" tags. Tags cost \$2.00, except for Lantzville collection which charges \$3.00 per tag.

On occasion the Regional District has been approached by residents requesting financial relief from the charges associated with extra garbage tags. Reasons include having large families, children in diapers, adult incontinence products, or additional waste from home-based businesses. It is more common for staff to be contacted by residents requesting relief because they feel they have less garbage to set out for collection, and they request a reduced rate for less than one can per week. By making this regional service mandatory with a base fee and having the collection trucks accessible to all single-family and equivalent homes, economies of scale and fairness to all residents is attained. No relief requests have been granted to date.

### **Financial Relief Programs Elsewhere**

In responding to the Board's direction, staff have contacted a number of municipal and regional district offices enquiring if financial relief was offered for residents with medical issues. Only two other municipalities on Vancouver Island offer such a program. Neither municipality advertises this publicly, and each requires applicants to be assessed by staff on a semi-annual basis to gauge the amount and type of extra waste generated. Both of these municipalities employ their own garbage collection staff but use contracted recycling services.

No other municipalities or regional districts contacted in various parts of the Province offer financial relief of any description. Some do provide additional service by way of collecting garbage cans at the door (a carry out service) for residents who meet certain criteria: elderly and infirm, those with limited mobility, or those whose medical conditions preclude lifting or carrying. An assessment and medical verification is usually required. In each jurisdiction where this service is offered the garbage collection is provided by municipal, not contracted staff.

In the two municipalities with relief policies in place, a limited number of special garbage tags are provided to the resident. Municipal collection staff monitors the use of tags and occasionally audits the garbage at the affected addresses. The tags are not transferrable, and when the supply runs out the resident must reapply and be reassessed by municipal staff. This system is in place to avoid abuse and is in keeping with the overall user pay philosophy.

Municipal staff at both locations emphasized that their financial relief programs are sympathetic to applicants generating additional garbage as a result of medical procedures, and that the extra waste is of a medical nature. An example is waste generated by home dialysis patients, who may have large amounts of packaging and plastic tubes that have come in contact with body fluids. Waste generated from use of personal hygiene products, such as diapers and incontinence products does not qualify for financial relief.

### **Vancouver Island Health Authority**

In discussing this issue with health staff it became apparent that for those receiving personal medical services in the home instead of at a medical facility, home-based kidney dialysis is likely the generator of additional waste.

Staff spoke with nursing staff at the Home Dialysis Unit of the Royal Jubilee Hospital, and corresponded with the Vancouver Island Kidney Patients' Association. At that time there were fewer than six home-based Hemodialysis patients in the RDN (excluding City of Nanaimo), and fewer than ten home-based Peritoneal dialysis patients. According to the nursing staff the waste generated by these treatments is not classed as "bio-medical" waste.

The nursing staff were not aware that the extra packaging and medical equipment waste caused a financial hardship to any of the home-based treatment patients. Some patients do stockpile their tubes and non-recyclable containers and take them to the local kidney clinics for disposal when going in for routine checkups.

### **City of Parksville Request**

The City of Parksville has also reviewed the issue of home-based medical waste. At the November 17, 2008 Regular Council Meeting, Council resolved that financial relief for water and sewer utilities be provided upon satisfactory proof that medical equipment has been requested by a medical doctor. The

Council further directed staff to contact the Regional District and request similar relief be provided for the garbage rates. The Board received correspondence regarding this request at their December 9, 2008 inaugural meeting.

If the Regional District was to offer some form of financial relief for residents who generate a surplus of garbage because of home based medical treatments, a formal policy with explicit language and definitions will be required to avoid abuse. It may also require consultation with the contracted collection company. Current staffing levels are not set up to administer the process of designing, implementing or monitoring a relief program of this nature.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Direct staff to prepare a policy for Board consideration that establishes the ability to provide financial relief for residents who face additional costs for garbage disposal due to at-home medical care.
2. Maintain the current policy with no changes.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Alternative 1**

The Garbage and Recycling Collection Program is funded solely from user fees. Under Alternative 1, the base cost for annual garbage collection would still be levied. The relief comes in the form of not charging for additional garbage beyond the one container covered in the base fee. If the form of financial relief is to provide tags for extra medical equipment related garbage, a special medical relief tag could be designed as a way to dissuade abuse. By keeping it separate from the current system of tags it will be easier to track the amount given out and used.

By providing tags free of charge, a subsidy is being provided which must be funded by everyone else on the program. Administration and staff costs, tipping fee revenue lost and possible additional collection costs incurred are not currently budgeted for in the Garbage and Recycling Collection budget.

Providing a subsidy to people whose home-based medical treatments result in additional garbage may also result in further requests from other garbage, sewer or water utility customers for financial relief from the extra costs associated with a variety of extraordinary circumstances.

### **Alternative 2**

There is no financial implication to the Regional District under Alternative 2. While the vast majority of municipalities do not provide financial relief for residents faced with additional garbage disposal costs, the City of Parksville may wish to administer a program of purchasing and distributing extra garbage tags for their residents who meet their Council directed criteria.

## **INTERDEPARTMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

If a new tag system is introduced for excess garbage containing medical equipment related waste, RDN Solid Waste and Financial Services staff will need to set up tracking and administrative systems. Staff from both departments would also need to consider how best to implement the assessment of applicants seeking financial relief.

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Should the Board direct staff to implement a policy of providing relief to qualified applicants across the region, coordination with Vancouver Island Health Authority, Public Health nurses, and the Home Dialysis Unit staff would be required to ensure the correct information is available to patients and medical practitioners. Home visits by RDN staff to assess the applicants' need for relief from extra garbage costs would be best accomplished in conjunction with medical staff.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

If a relief policy was put in place the Garbage and Recyclable Material Collection Bylaw No. 1009 will need amending. Revision of the collection contract may also be required to make note of the different tags and procedure to assess financial relief applicants.

**SUMMARY**

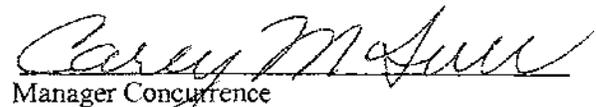
Staff have been directed by the Regional Board to prepare options for their review regarding relief from costs associated with extra garbage generated as a result of medical issues. City of Parksville Council recently resolved to provide utility billing relief to qualified users of home-based medical equipment, and have requested the Regional District consider similar relief from the garbage rates.

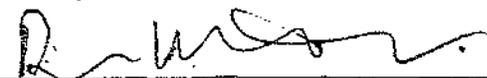
Only two municipalities on Vancouver Island offer relief for the additional garbage generated through home-based medical treatment. Neither program is advertised and in each case the base utility fee is levied. Unlike the RDN's collection system which is contracted out, the collection in the two municipalities is provided by municipal staff who are able to closer monitor the garbage set-outs, and provide program administration.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the current policy regarding financial relief for residents who face additional costs for garbage disposal due to at-home medical care be maintained with no changes.

  
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Report Writer

  
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**COMMENTS**