

## NEWS

**Mandatory recycling targets apartments --- City hopes new bylaw gets tenants to participate**

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'Pilot projects aren't good enough. The public may lose faith in this program if they don't see it happening where they live and about half of Toronto residents live in apartments.'

Katrina Miller, Toronto Environmental Alliance.

The days of throwing pop cans and newspapers down the garbage chute in Toronto apartment buildings will be history on Jan. 1 when a city bylaw will make recycling mandatory for all residences.

But an even bigger trash challenge looms for landlords and tenants if the city approves a plan next month to get residents to separate their wet and dry garbage, a staff report warns.

City records show that while residents of single family dwellings recycle some 32 per cent of their garbage, tenants put just 9 per cent of their trash in recycle boxes.

About 1,500 or almost one third of the city's 5,000 apartment complexes don't even provide recycling programs.

In July, city council gave approval in principle to a plan to divert 60 per cent of Toronto's residential trash from dumps by 2006. The "three-stream" plan would see residents separate their wet, dry and recyclable waste for curbside collection.

Start-up funding and an implementation schedule will be debated tomorrow by the city's works and budget committees. If approved by council in October, Etobicoke's 70,000 single family homes will start the new program in July, 2002; Scarborough homes will get the service in June, 2003; North York will join in February, 2004. Part of Toronto East York and York will get the service in October, 2004, with the remainder coming on stream in June, 2005.

Under the plan, all apartment complexes must participate in blue and gray box recycling programs by June, 2003. But there is no plan yet to get tenants to separate their wet garbage.

That's because city surveys have shown landlords and tenants are concerned about smell and pests associated with storing wet garbage separately for collection.

However, two pilot projects will test innovative ways to meet those challenges, said Geoff Rathbone, policy director for the city's solid waste management services.

One involves a "Tri-sorter" chute system that has already been installed in two city-owned apartment buildings, he said.

The system uses the buildings' existing garbage chute, but adds an electronic panel on each floor.

A button operates a metal flap at the bottom of the chute that directs the waste to one of three containers for separate disposal.

The "Tri-sorter" costs about \$30,000 to install in a typical 17-storey apartment building, Rathbone said.

The second pilot will test a system for apartments without garbage chutes that involves burying large plastic barrels almost five feet below ground.

Toronto parks already use the "**Molok**" barrels to collect mixed garbage in at least four city parks where staff say they have been a huge success.

A medium-sized barrel, about 2.4 metres deep and a metre wide, costs about \$2,000.

In the Toronto trial, four **Molok** barrels will be installed in the yard of one apartment building to collect recyclable containers, newsprint, organic waste and garbage.

The second building will have just three barrels.

Apartment dwellers produce about one-third of the city's 907,000 tonnes of residential garbage annually, Rathbone said.

But environmentalists say the city will never reach its 60 per cent waste diversion target without more tenant involvement.

"Pilot projects aren't good enough," said Katrina Miller of the Toronto Environmental Alliance. "The public may lose faith in this program if they don't see it happening where they live and about half of Toronto residents live in apartments."

Rathbone said the city must be realistic. "You have to walk before you run with apartments," he said. "With so many buildings not even recycling, our first step has to be in that area."

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