



City Asking Residents to Use Paper Compostable Bags during Annual Fall Leaf Pickup



Fredericton, NB – The City of Fredericton Public Safety & Environment Committee is asking residents to use only paper compostable bags during this year’s fall leaf pickup program.

The recommendation comes after two years of promoting and testing different types of bags. Using paper compostable bags will keep thousands of plastic bags out of the landfill and allows for a smoother transition of fallen leaves from homes to the City’s composting facility.

“The use of paper compostable bags is better for the environment,” said Mark Hymers, a senior engineer with the City’s Department of Engineering and Public Works. “Keeping plastic bags out of the landfill will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also makes the leaf collection process less labour intensive.”

The City conducts a Fall leaf pick-up program annually during a two-week period in November. This year, the pickup will be held November 1-12 on regular garbage pickup days. The collected leaves are composted into topsoil and used on landscape projects throughout the city. In the past, all plastic bags used by homeowners had to be hand-emptied and separated during the pickup while paper bags are biodegradable and are compostable along with their contents.

In 2008, a pilot project was implemented in the Sunshine Gardens area of the city. Approximately 100 homes participated, with half of the test group receiving compostable paper bags, and the other half receiving a compostable plastic product. From curbside pickup to delivery at the City’s compost facility, the leaves were never emptied from the bags in order to test the decomposition of the bags at the compost facility over the winter. The paper bags performed better and were the preferred choice.

In 2009, the city promoted the use of plastic and paper compostable bags as part of the leaf pickup. Paper compostable bags went directly into the composting operation.

“Plastic bags are becoming less and less acceptable and more residents are becoming environmentally sensitive,” said Councillor Eric Megarity, Chair of the Public Safety & Environment Committee. “Using paper compostable bags will help solidify the City’s commitment to being more sustainable and decrease our environmental footprint.”

Compostable paper bags are now available at all major home improvement and department stores. They are larger, more tear-resistant, and are easier for homeowners to use than the plastic equivalent.

The City will still collect any leaves in plastic bags this year but they will be taken to the City landfill along with regular household waste during normal garbage collection. Only paper-bagged leaves will be collected during the special fall leaf pickup program and taken to the City’s composting facility.