

City axes curbside collection of electronics

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By Patricia Lonergan
patricia.lonergan@transcontinental.ca

Residents won't be able to kick their old computers, broken televisions or fried microwaves to the curb next year.

Starting Jan. 1, 2010, the city will no longer pick up electronic items, known as e-waste, and truck them to landfills. Instead, residents will have to take the items to retailers or businesses listed on the city's website who accept such items.

Orléans Coun. Bob Monette argues the change, which was passed by council on Dec. 9, will be inconvenient for a lot of people. He questions how residents without vehicles, especially seniors, will dispose of unwanted e-waste. Now every homeowner is responsible for finding a place to drop off their waste, Monette continues, noting some places charge a fee for disposal.

"Everyone was able to use the service in the past," he says of curbside collection of e-waste. "As far as I'm concerned, it's a cut in service.

"Taxes increase but services decrease," he continues. "We need to find better alternatives."

Monette suggests the city could have continued picking up e-waste and piled it in a separate location so other businesses or even residents interested in refurbishing items could pick it up free of charge.

The rationale behind the change is to remove electronics from garbage flowing into landfills.

Given the concern for the environment and the fact that the province has introduced a well-developed e-waste recycling program, it was no longer deemed appropriate to provide curbside collection for disposal in the landfill, a city report states.

Innes Coun. Rainer Bloess supported the motion to eliminate e-waste from landfills.

He indicates the city is trying to control, limit and find ways of dealing with waste. It's also a way of rethinking waste management. In the past, Bloess explains, residents wheeled their trash to the curbside and never thought of it again. But now there's more awareness.

"There's a responsibility from the manufacturer to the retailer to the consumer," Bloess continues, adding the next big challenge will be to reduce over-packaging.

If residents can get to the store to purchase their goods, he continues, chances are they can access retailers to dispose of their unwanted items.

As for reflecting the loss of e-waste collection on the tax bill, Bloess indicates the city still has to send trucks down the streets to pick up garbage.

"Garbage is not taken away for free," he says.

The city's Take it Back program has a list of businesses and organizations that accept waste, including household electronics. For a full list, visit ottawa.ca/takeitback.