

From: **"Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>**
To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**
Date: 1/28/2022 2:05:24 PM
Subject: UPDATE: Green bin collection - COVID-related service changes

Good afternoon Mayor and Council,

Through our COVID task force, we are monitoring on a daily basis the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on staffing levels and potential service impacts. This email provides information on staffing shortages within Engineering resulting from COVID-19 and temporary service changes we will be implementing next week in response to that situation.

Sanitation

The cumulative impacts of COVID-related absences, coupled with other staffing challenges, has resulted in significant staff shortages in Sanitation. We are currently short 30 staff in the garbage and green bin collections group it has been a challenge to keep up with daily collection requirements. Staff have been working extensive overtime to catch up on collections during and after the snow fight, weekend work for city-wide Christmas tree collection and the effects of this past weekend's accident.

Fleet and Manufacturing Services (FMS)

Similar challenges exist within our Fleet and Manufacturing Services team, who help to keep all of our trucks on the road. FMS is short 19 staff and 10 positions are currently vacant, though recruitment is underway. Staff have been consistently working overtime to keep trucks on the road and much of the work has been on weekends. However, our staff are reaching the point of exhaustion and many are no longer able/willing to accept overtime. We are sending vehicles to external vendors for repairs where possible, however external capacity is limited as well.

Particularly considering the intense operational demands since late December, it is not sustainable or safe to continue the reliance on overtime work to cover the impact of these staffing shortages. **Accordingly, in order to address these challenges and protect the safety and well-being of staff, we will be taking the following steps:**

Sanitation – Residential Waste Collection Services

1. Cancelling this weekend's follow-up collection of any last remaining Christmas trees (city-wide collection was incomplete for the weekend of January 22-23). We will be extending free drop off of Christmas trees at the Vancouver Transfer Station to March 1, 2022 (an additional month) for residents who are able. Residents can also cut trees into smaller pieces and add to their green bin.
2. Temporary scheduling change to green bin collection for the month of February. Starting the week of January 31, **green bins will be collected every two weeks on resident's regular garbage day for the month of February**. Of note, green bin volumes are much lower during the winter months due to minimal need for yard waste and trimmings coupled with colder temperatures that minimize the potential for odours. As such, the extended service interval will have very limited impact. This temporary schedule change takes 8 trucks off the road and allows us to accommodate the driver shortage and provide some relief to FMS in that they can schedule the maintenance through the week and get a break from weekend OT. This change is temporary and we anticipate regular green bin service to resume at the end of February.
3. Proactive notification to residents will begin Sunday regarding the temporary green bin schedule changes. Please see the communications rollout and tactics below.

FMS – Internal Services

1. Two heavy duty mechanics currently on afternoon shift at National will be moved to Manitoba to support their maintenance needs. A full complement of staff will be maintained at National during the day shift to provide support there.
2. Reducing weekend overtime to support staff recovery and well-being.
3. Notifying FMS clients (e.g. other Engineering branches and City departments) of the need to balance and prioritize services and the potential for servicing delays.

Communications Rollout to Residents – Sunday Jan 30

- VanCollect: "Service Alert" to be issued to VanCollect subscribers (approx. 65k addresses subscribed, 178k users receive reminders)
- Collection schedules will be updated on the City's VanCollect app and digital "look up your collection schedule" tool
- Social media posts on all platforms

- Web updates and notification banners will be added throughout vancouver.ca
- 3-1-1 Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) will be briefed and an automated notice to be added to 3-1-1 phone lines
- Statement to media (TBD)

Messaging in response to questions from media or the public:

- Due to a staff shortage resulting from COVID-19 we are making a temporary scheduling change to green bin collection for the month of February.
- Starting the week of January 31, green bins will be collected every two weeks on your regular garbage day in February.
- The staffing shortage is in our Sanitation and Fleet Maintenance areas and is due in part to ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and staff absences, coupled with excessive amounts of overtime over the past 2 months as these teams supported our snow/ice response.
- Green bin volumes are much lower during the winter months due to minimal need for yard waste and trimmings coupled with colder temperatures that minimize the potential for odours. This change is temporary and we anticipate regular green bin service to resume at the end of February.

Our operational teams have done extraordinary work over the past month to maintain service delivery through the Omicron wave and a period of challenging weather conditions. In considering the above service changes, we are working to balance the implications for residents with the capacity and well-being of our staff teams during this unprecedented phase in the pandemic.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or Lon.

Best,
Paul

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.