

February's Elbow Park Community Safety Bulletin

Neighborhood Bottle Drive Project

Calgary Police Services are currently working with the Elbow Park Safety Committee on an initiative to reduce transient bottle pickers and the amount of refundable containers going into our blue bins. A good way to reduce the attractiveness of our alleys to transient bottle pickers is to not put deposit items in recycling bins, and to add a sign or sticker on top of the bin that states, NO REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS. The committee is currently looking into obtaining stickers that can be distributed to residents. Additionally, keep your blue bins in your garage until pick-up day.

Calgary police are hearing more complaints that bottle pickers are raiding blue recycling carts, digging around for refundable containers and in some cases, getting into verbal confrontations with homeowners or chasing people who approach them. The number of confrontations will continue to increase as bottle pickers discover there is money to be made in our neighborhood. Some individuals have also been known to be unpredictable and the smallest thing can sometimes set them off.

The other issues that potentially come with these visits to the alley and are seldom talked about are the chances that your yard, house or garages are also now being viewed for items that could be carried away. As well, papers from the recycle bin that haven't been properly shredded could be used for identity theft purposes if placed in the wrong hands. Additionally, thefts might be more likely if it is evident from your garbage that recent purchases have been made or if no garbage or recycling is put out that you are out of town. If the source for income dries up, there is a greater likelihood that the bottle pickers will not visit the neighborhoods looking for bottles, backyard items, paperwork or receipts.

With this in mind and trying to keep our neighborhoods safe, Calgary Police Services and the Safety Committee are working to answer the following:

- What does a refundable collection program look like for Elbow Park?
- Who would use it?
- Is there an interest by those currently throwing refundable containers in the Blue Bins?
- How do we make it easy, safe and convenient for residents to share the refundable containers with the various charities who might be interested in funding their cause or activities?
- Who are the groups we wish to share this initiative with?
- What is a reasonable amount of time between recycling days for residents to hold onto refundable containers so that they don't clutter up garages, etc?
- What does the program look like? (Pick-up by groups at residents porches, drop off at the community hall on a weekend, continuous drop off at a local secure bin at the park?)
- How much volunteer time is required for the various scenarios and the Pros and Cons of each?

- Can we secure a company who will sort the refundable containers regularly and give a cheque to the organization right away for their efforts?

We are also looking at other neighborhoods that have started similar initiatives and sharing the lessons from their hard work. We encourage you to please share your views with the Safety Committee members as we need your input to make this program a success. Stay tuned as we further refine the program.