



REQUEST FOR DECISION

MEETING DATE: September 26, 2022

TITLE: Solid Waste Service Levels

DIVISION: Planning & Infrastructure

SUMMARY:

Administration is requesting Council confirm service levels to be delivered for the City's residential curbside solid waste program in advance of tendering for solid waste collection and disposal services in early 2023.

The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan has an objective to "enable residents and businesses to reduce their environmental impact" and an action to "provide recommendations on waste management options".

PROPOSED MOTION:

THAT Administration be directed to procure contracted services for curbside solid waste services to March 31, 2026, and that existing service levels be maintained except for the elimination of extra organics collection.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

The current levels of solid waste service are listed below:

Service	Volume	Service Frequency
Household Garbage	240 Litre Black Cart/120 Litre Black Cart	Weekly
Organics	240 L Green Cart	Weekly from Mid-April to Mid-November & Monthly from December to March
Extra Organic Waste	Unlimited paper or compostable bags	Weekly from Mid-April to Mid-November & Monthly from December to March
Recyclables	Blue Bag (No limit)	Weekly
Large Item Collection	3 Large Items	Annual
Shred-4-Free	All listed paper items	Annual
E-roundup	All listed electronic items	Annual

In November of 2021, as part of finalizing the 2022-24 Corporate Plan, Council made the decision to maintain existing curbside solid waste service levels for one year and requested Administration bring a report back to Council in 2022. Administration negotiated rates and extended all solid waste contracts until March 31, 2023.

The business case that Administration put forward for Council's consideration in November 2021 recommended the shift to every other week garbage collection, every other week blue bag collection and every other week organics collection in the winter. Organics collection in the summer was to continue on a weekly schedule.

Every other week garbage collection is intended to reduce the waste that ends up in the landfill by providing an incentive for residents to use recycling or organics more frequently. It is the most common model in the Edmonton Metro Region and has reduced the cost of collection in other municipalities. At the City, cost reductions associated with moving to bi-weekly collection for the garbage stream were projected to be relatively low based on the last contract tender. The potential savings on a single account paying \$28.50 per month would be approximately \$1.28 per month, or 4.5% of \$28.50. This level of savings is because many contractor costs are fixed and the solid waste fee charged to residents encompasses several utility expenses including the collection and landfilling of garbage, the collection and processing of recyclables, the collection and processing of organics, the large item program, and the expenses related to utility administration and Eco Centre operations. There are minimal savings when reducing one type of expense (collection). In addition, over the years, the City has initiated community conversations and surveys and the resident reaction to bi-weekly garbage collection has been

mixed. Another risk of bi-weekly garbage collection is that increased contamination across waste streams can occur if not managed properly.

In June 2022, the City's Residential Waste Audit found that approximately 40% (by weight) of the material in the garbage could be composted instead of sent to landfill. Overall, residential diversion rates have remained relatively unchanged over 2016, 2019, and 2022 audits. June 2022's audit showed that most garbage carts were full and most organic carts were half full. Less than half of residents set out recycling bags. On the positive side, the City currently enjoys a low contamination rate in recyclables and has improved from 17% in 2016 to 8.3% in 2022. Contamination in organics is very low - ranging between 0.6% and 1.2% over the last three years.

Proposed levels of solid waste service:

Service	Volume	Service Frequency
Household Garbage	240 Litre Black Cart	Weekly
Organics	240 L Green Cart	Weekly from Mid-April to Mid-November & Monthly from December to March
Extra Organic Waste	Resident provided compostable bags	Discontinue in 2023
Recyclables	Blue Bag (No limit)	Weekly
Large Item Collection	3 Large Items	Annual
Shred-4-Free	All listed paper items	Annual
E-roundup	All listed electronic items	Annual

Administration is recommending that the City discontinue the practice of collecting extra organics. This service has proven to be expensive (approximately \$180,000/year) and provides issues for an automated curbside program within a utility that seeks to be equitable (equal service for all account holders by volume) while encouraging diversion. Extra organics placed for collection are typically yard waste and are not helpful with diversion issues related to food waste. Residents who produce a large amount of yard waste have options to reduce their waste through mulching (grass cycling), reserving waste and placing in carts during subsequent collections, or taking excess yard waste to the Eco Centre.

Past educational campaigns and the “Trim your Trash” App have intended to be helpful on “what goes where” and made some progress but have had a limited impact on overall diversion. In the future, the City could increase resident engagement with targeted messaging to key in on areas with greatest potential to improve diversion rates. Food wastes currently account for 24% of landfilled (black cart) waste.

- a. Communicate success stories and make residents aware of how they are making a difference. For example, the capture rate for compostable paper has increased from less than 30% in 2016 to almost 60% in 2022. In addition, the single-use plastic item reduction bylaw has more than halved the number of single use items in the 2022 audit as compared to the 2019 audit.
- b. Communicate areas for improvement according to the waste audit, with a focus on organics.

The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system implementation is still uncertain and dynamically changing, as are the final details of the EPR Regulation. Organics are not part of the schedule, and not typically part of EPR as it is difficult to pin-point the “producer”. EPR is part of a movement to a circular economy, but in itself, is not a “silver bullet” for all waste reduction issues.

Multiple levels of government are considering both place-based (local) and overarching strategies to reduce waste and move toward a more circular economy. In addition to citizen awareness campaigns, policy options often include a mixture of bans and bylaws, incentives, technology, labelling, and other fiscal tools.

In addition, an effective way to increase diversion is through education and resident engagement programs. Building resident knowledge about the goals and benefits of diversion through engagement while developing strong waste sorting habits and sustainable behaviors has long been part of the path to higher diversion rates.

OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES:

Council could consider moving to bi-weekly waste collection, which would enable residents to reduce their environmental impact. Administration recommends this option proceed when sufficient advance public engagement, education, and communication has taken place.

CONSULTATION / ENGAGEMENT:

Over the years, the City has initiated community conversations and surveys on a small scale. Reaction to bi-weekly waste collection has been mixed.

IMPLEMENTATION / COMMUNICATION:

Any changes to curbside solid waste services are to be implemented on April 1, 2023. Pending the results of the tendering process, administration may bring back an earlier review (spring 2023) on solid waste utility rates rather than through the newly established annual utility rate review process (fall 2023) as part of the annual corporate plan development.

IMPACTS:

Properly sorted waste materials translate to a reduction of landfill use and carbon footprint. Currently, landfilled organic waste contributes 2.4 per cent of the City's total GHG emissions (currently estimated at 4 MtCO₂eq and projected to grow).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The current cost of delivering the curbside program (residential garbage, organics, and recycling collection and disposal) is approximately \$2.2 Million.

The utility offers a service with a small garbage cart (120 L) for \$25.25 per month and a service with a large garbage cart (240 L) for \$28.50 per month. Exchange of a large cart for a small cart is offered at no charge.

The financial implications for the utility of the upcoming tendering process are uncertain but a review of utility costs will be conducted post-tender to determine if there is an opportunity to reduce the fees for the 120L black cart service by as much as 20% to further incentivize waste sorting and improve diversion rates. If Council approves, this work would be included in the 2023 Utility Rates review and updates.

Costs for organics processing and disposal have increased from \$60/tonne to \$90/tonne due to the closure of the Cleanit Greenit facility, increasing the projected costs of organics disposal to approximately \$300,000 from \$200,000. GFL has now taken over the procurement of processing, in addition to the collection of organics. The collected organics must now be hauled a greater distance for processing at this increased cost.

Eliminating expenses incurred to collect and process extra seasonal organics would save the utility approximately \$180,000/year.