

COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMO

Date: December 6, 2021

To: Civic Operations Committee

From: J. Fretz, Civic Operations Director

RE: Curbside Organic Waste Collection Program Update

COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

This memo supports Council's strategic priorities and areas of focus regarding:

- **Governance and Accountability**
 - Asset Management: We proactively plan for the repair and replacement of our infrastructure.
 - Community Engagement: We are committed to engaging and connecting with Kamloops residents and stakeholders.
- **Environmental Leadership**
 - Climate Action: We enhance the City's resiliency and capacity for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.
 - Sustainability: We implement strategies that reduce our impact on the environment.

The purpose of this memo is to update the Civic Operations Council committee on the curbside organic waste collection pilot program.

Background

Administration began Phase 2 (collection pilot) of a three-phase curbside residential organic waste collection program in September of 2021, testing organic waste collection along five collection routes servicing approximately 2500 households. The pilot is testing a new collection model that is common in other communities with organics programs, with weekly organics collection and alternating bi-weekly garbage and recycling collection. Tracking, monitoring, and participant engagement are the key components of the pilot. Staff have also applied for funding for the pilot program.

Phase 2 Highlights

Funding Update

Staff applied to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities through the Green Municipal Fund for a pilot program grant in August 2021 and have been in dialogue with the funder on the application. To date there have been no further details on the outcome of the application.

Pilot Participant Engagement

Pre-Pilot Communication

Participants for the pilot program were selected using a methodology applied to public engagement survey results to select one collection route in each of the City's five collection zones. Routes were selected to provide staff an understanding of the potential volumes (high and low) and potential challenges (wildlife, laneways) associated with curbside residential organic waste collection.

Prior to undertaking collection, letters notifying residents that they had been selected to participate in the pilot program were mailed in July to all households on pilot routes; in cases where a household was a rental property, letters were mailed to the owner of the property as well.

In the weeks following the delivery of the letter, staff followed up with door-to-door engagement along the pilot routes to ensure residents had received the letter and were aware of the coming changes to their solid waste collection services. Contact was made with nearly 800 residents during this engagement (over 30% of participants). Staff left door-hangers with information about the coming changes at homes where contact was not made with a resident.

Carts, kitchen bins and information packages were delivered to all homes on pilot routes at the beginning of September. A total of 2307 carts were delivered, with 34 residents refusing a cart upon delivery.

Communications during pilot

The initial letters, door-hangers, and direct engagement (doorstep, phone calls, emails) encourage pilot participants to subscribe on the [Kamloops.ca/OrganicsPilot](https://kamloops.ca/OrganicsPilot) web page to receive communication about the program through e-newsletters. Paper versions are available through the mail for residents who do not use computers. Other methods to try to reach the targeted pilot audience also included advertisements in City Page, in the City Newsletter (utility bill insert), a paid radio ad campaign, press release and subsequent media articles, email to relevant Neighbourhood Associations, e-newsletter to subscribers following the Let's Talk Organics page and internal communication via City Net. The web page contains information about the program, links to maps that show the pilot routes, resources, and details on how to report issues and share feedback.

As of November 8th, 959 residents subscribed to receive email or mail updates for the organics program on the City's website, which represented 767 unique addresses, or 34% of total homes on pilot routes. The route in Upper Sahali and the route that includes Juniper and parts of Valleyview have the highest subscription rates (46% and 44% of households on the routes are subscribed, respectively). The two routes on the North Shore have lower subscription rates (23% each), and the route in Westsyde has a subscription rate of 36%.

Newsletters are sent to residents who have subscribed to the pilot program: four newsletters were sent in the first three months of the pilot, with another planned for late November/ early December.

Participant Survey

A survey of pilot participants was launched on September 22nd and was open until October 29th. The survey gathered baseline data of attitudes towards organic waste collection, as well as resident behaviour related to organic waste management. Staff plan on performing two more surveys to assess changes in attitudes and behaviours as the pilot progresses.

A total of 535 participants completed the survey, of the 959 residents who received it. Upper Sahali area residents represented 31% of the completed surveys, followed by Juniper West and

Valleyview Drive area (27%), Westsyde area (17%), North Kamloops/ McDonald Park area (14%), and the Brock/ North Kamloops area (11%).

The survey showed similar results to the community-wide survey completed in the Spring 2021 with respect to the level of support and number of backyard composters. The complete survey results are attached to this memo (Attachment A), with some highlights presented below.

- 79% of respondents support organic waste collection, 8% do not support and 13% were neutral
- 39% of respondents stated that they compost at home, with 73% these respondents who support organic waste collection, 14% do not support, and 13% were neutral
- 65% of respondents stated that they have a dog or cat, with 80% of this pet waste going into the garbage and 11% compost it at home (note that the pilot does not accept dog or cat waste in organics collection)
- 55% of respondents are not concerned about bi-weekly garbage
- 49% of respondents are not concerned about bi-weekly recycling
- 89% intend to participate in the program, 7% do not intend to participate
- Top concerns among respondents who intend to participate were:
 1. Cart cleanliness/ keeping my cart clean (71% noted this as a concern)
 2. The possibility of attracting fruit flies (70% noted this as a concern)
 3. The possibility of attracting rodents (65% noted this as a concern)
- Top reasons respondents noted they do not intend to participate were:
 1. I already compost (48% noted this as a reason for not participating)
 2. Cart cleanliness/ keeping my cart clean (35% noted this as a reason for not participating)
 3. The possibility of attracting rodents (33% noted this as a reason for not participating)

Direct Requests from Participants

The Civic Operations Call Centre received over 400 requests from residents related to the pilot program since the initial letters were sent to residents in mid-July. About a quarter of the requests were for residents requesting additional kitchen bins for household suites, and the remaining requests were from residents with concerns about the program. Concerns about the program were primarily around the bi-weekly schedule for garbage and recycling collection, concerns about attracting wildlife, and concerns from backyard composters who do not feel a need for the service.

Tracking and Monitoring

Staff have been tracking and monitoring participation in the program through inspections, observing set-out, documenting weight of organics collected each day, organics cart tip counts, and instances of excess garbage or recycling set out for collection.

Total Organics Collected

Organic waste collection began on September 20, 2021. For the period from September 20 – November 10, a total of 92,590 kg of organic waste was collected from households on pilot routes, an average of 2500 kg (2.5 tonnes) per day.

Although it is still early in the pilot, with only three full weeks worth of data for garbage collection, analysis of garbage weights from pilot routes show that the average reduction in garbage collected over the same period (Sep–Nov) showed that garbage weights have reduced on average by 41%.

Participation Rates

Staff are also tracking the number of households on pilot routes setting their solid waste carts out for collection based on the pilot collection schedule:

- 64% of households are setting their organics cart out each week.
- 95% are setting their garbage cart out every other week
- 75% are setting their recycling cart out every other week

Excess Garbage and Recycling

Residents on pilot routes are allowed to set out excess garbage and recycling for collection (garbage on the days that garbage is collected and recycling on the days that recycling is collected). Operators track how many households set out excess materials on their load tracking sheets.

On average, 14 households per day set out excess garbage and 10 households per day set out excess recycling, out of approximately 470 homes collected on each route (3% set out excess garbage and 2% set out excess recycling). While bi-weekly collection is a concern for many households, data shows that households can adapt to the new collection schedule.

Next Steps:

In mid-December staff will be conducting composition audits to compare the contents of garbage carts on pilot and non-pilot routes, and to assess contamination in organics carts. The results of the composition study will allow staff to better understand how the curbside residential organics collection program is working and to work more effectively with pilot participants to ensure a proper understanding of what is included in the program, and what is not.

Staff will be conducting additional pilot participant surveys prior to the end of the pilot. The intent of these surveys is to measure changes in attitudes and behaviours related to the curbside residential organic waste collection program. They can also provide an insight into participant understanding of what materials are accepted in the program and what materials aren't accepted.

Staff will prepare a report to Council in spring 2022 that provides an update on all aspects of the curbside residential organic waste collection program, including waste diversion data, public engagement information, pilot participation data (e.g. cart set-out, contamination, etc.), potential costs for community-wide implementation and the results of all funding opportunities pursued to date.



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Attachment