
Motion – Councillor Loewen – Improving Solid Waste Systems

Recommendation

That the report of the Acting General Manager, Utilities & Environment Department, dated April 1, 2019, be received as information.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a response to the recommendations and information contained in Canada's Ecofiscal Commission (the Commission) report titled "Cutting the Waste: How to save money while improving our solid waste systems".

Report Highlights

1. The issues and recommendations outlined in the Commission's report on waste are generally applicable to Saskatoon's waste management systems.
2. Much of this information has been included in previous waste reports to City Council.

Strategic Goals

The information in this report supports the strategic goals of Asset and Financial Sustainability, including the strategy to 'reduce reliance on property tax' and 'utilize public funds efficiently and effectively'; and Environmental Leadership, including the strategy to 'optimize solid waste diversion and landfill operations'.

Background

At its meeting held on November 6, 2018, the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services, considered a motion put forward from Councillor Loewen and resolved:

"That the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services refer the report entitled "Cutting the Waste: How to save money while improving our solid waste systems" from Canada's Ecofiscal Commission to the Administration for a report in response to the recommendations and information contained in the report."

Report

In October 2018, the Commission released a report titled "Cutting the Waste: How to save money while improving our solid waste systems". The report focused primarily on identifying and addressing public policy issues through market-based tools to improve solid waste management in Canada. More specifically, the report addressed six key policy issues (see Table 1) with respect to solid waste management, and made five recommendations (see Table 2) on improving solid waste management. Generally, the report argues that "policy changes can make our waste systems more efficient and less costly"; for more details see Attachment 1 -"Cutting the Waste" Executive Summary.

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Table 1 illustrates the status of the six key issues identified by the Commission within Saskatoon’s context. Many of these issues and impacts have been previously reported to City Council (Attachment 2 - Saskatoon Context on “Cutting the Waste” Issues) or are being addressed in current work plans.

Table 1 - Ecofiscal Commission’s Solid Waste Management Issues

Key Issues with Solid Waste Management Systems	City of Saskatoon Current State
1. Most Canadian households do not pay directly for waste management.	Saskatoon households do not pay directly for waste management as it is a combination of property taxes, utility charges and user fees. City Collections, responsible for collecting household waste, are not charged landfill tipping fees. This was equivalent to \$6.5 million in uncharged tipping fees in 2018.
2. Landfills do not charge large waste generators the full cost of disposal.	At \$105 per tonne, landfill tip fees are designed to cover the \$59-\$75 per tonne landfill airspace value, however, due to residential waste that is not subject to tipping fees the actual revenue per tonne of buried waste in 2018 was \$44 which is lower than the value of landfill airspace.
3. The porous boundaries of solid waste management systems make it difficult for municipalities to price waste disposal at its full cost.	There are three regional landfills in Saskatoon: one City-owned and operated and two private. The City of Saskatoon (City) has not reduced fees to compete for customers and commercial use of the Saskatoon landfill has decreased more than 47% since 2014.
4. Markets alone may provide inadequate waste diversion opportunities for some materials.	Market changes have recently impacted how plastic, glass and paper are sorted and processed in Saskatoon’s waste management system.
5. Municipal pricing policies have limited effect on upstream goods manufacturers.	The City’s pricing policies have no documented effect on upstream goods manufacturers.
6. Extracting and processing natural resources generate negative environmental externalities further upstream.	Saskatoon is developing a triple bottom line policy framework to better account for environmental sustainability in city activities.

To address these issues, the Commissions’ report makes five recommendations. The recommendations and the Administration’s position on them are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Ecofiscal Commission Recommendations

Five Recommendations for Improving Waste Management	Administration’s Position
1. Municipalities should charge tipping fees that reflect the full costs of disposal, including environmental costs.	<p>This recommendation was addressed in the Landfill Airspace Value report in 2018 which demonstrates that Saskatoon’s tipping fees reflect the full cost of disposal.</p> <p>To ensure that all landfill users pay the tipping fee, recommendations for disposal costs for residential garbage have been proposed for inclusion in the annual budget for Waste Handling Services. This would provide sustainable financing for operations and long-term liabilities such as landfill closure, environmental monitoring and replacement.</p>
2. Municipalities should implement pay-as-you-throw programs and charge households directly for waste disposal.	<p>In December 2018, City Council voted to not support a variable bin-size (pay-as-you-throw) program. Options for households to directly pay for waste management will continue to be assessed.</p>
3. Provincial governments should expand, reform, and harmonize extended producer-responsibility programs (EPR).	<p>Expanded provincial waste programs are supported. In 2017, a letter was sent to the Ministry of Environment advocating for a provincially legislated EPR program for household hazardous waste.</p>
4. Provincial and municipal governments should implement policies that improve how organic waste is separated, managed, and designed according to their own context.	<p>A curbside residential organics program is in development. Further work is underway to determine a path forward to address organics in the multi-family and the Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional sectors. Administration supports provincial action on organic waste. Organic waste diversion is included in the Low Emission Community Plan.</p>
5. To improve the evaluation, assessment, and transparency of waste-management policies, federal and provincial governments should expand and standardize data-collection methods and make these data more available to the public.	<p>Provincial and federal roles in waste data-collection are supported.</p> <p>The City participates in the Statistics Canada Waste Management Industry Survey: Government Sector. The City also participates in solid waste benchmarking through the National Solid Waste Benchmarking Initiative and makes waste management data available publically through the Integrated Waste Management Annual Report.</p> <p>Options to track waste disposal and diversion from the Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional sector are being assessed, due to an absence of this information currently.</p>

The Commission’s recommendations are generally supported. Three of the five recommendations have been addressed in previous reports to City Council (see Attachment 2 - Saskatoon Context on “Cutting the Waste” Issues). The remaining two recommendations, which are targeted at the provincial and federal governments, are supported. These recommendations can be accomplished through continued advocacy, partnerships and information sharing among all orders of government. The

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Administration will continue to evaluate, and where possible, work to address the issues and recommendations advanced by the Commission’s Report as it reviews, designs, develops and implements solid waste management policies and programs.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no policy, environmental, financial, privacy or CPTED implications or considerations.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

There is no follow-up planned after this report.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachments

1. “Cutting the Waste” Executive Summary
2. Saskatoon Context on “Cutting the Waste” Issues

Report Approval

Written by: Ben Brodie, Special Projects Manager

Reviewed by: Amber Weckworth, Manager of Education & Environmental Performance
Jeanna South, A/Director of Sustainability

Approved by: Trevor Bell, A/General Manager, Utilities & Environment

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