

Curbside Organics Program Update – Communications and Education Strategy

ISSUE

Preparations continue for the launch of the Curbside Organics Program in May 2023, and this report focuses on the communications and education strategy to support the program launch and operations until the end of 2023.

BACKGROUND

At its January 10, 2022 meeting, the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services (EUCS) received the [Curbside Organics Program Update](#) report and approved, in part “That Administration provide the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services with a review of all curbside organics education materials prior to them being distributed”.

At its April 11, 2022 meeting, the Standing Policy Committee on EUCS received the [Curbside Organics Program: Cart Size](#) report and approved “That consideration be included in the report for Communications of the rollout of the Green Cart Program for the Council members to provide insights from their knowledge of their Wards to support an effective rollout of the program”.

CURRENT STATUS

Administration is preparing for the implementation of the Curbside Organics program in May 2023. In preparation for the launch of the new program, City Council approved service level changes to curbside residential collection services, which are taking place effective January 1, 2023, including:

- The transition of curbside black cart garbage program to bi-weekly year-round collection; and
- The end of the seasonal subscription green cart program in preparation for the launch of the city-wide curbside organics program.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Curbside Organics Program Communications and Education Strategy

A multi-phase Curbside Organics Communications and Education Strategy (the Strategy) has been prepared to support the roll-out of the new Curbside Organics Program, the organics utility, and associated curbside waste collection service level changes. Communications and education for the 2024 roll-out of a variable rate garbage utility will build off of this Strategy and will be completed in Q3 2023. The Strategy is available in *Appendix 1 – Curbside Organics Program Communications and Education Strategy*.

Resident awareness of the program through robust education and communications has been identified as key to the implementation and long-term success of the program. The combination of education and communications activities into a single strategy will promote better alignment of messaging and educational programs during the crucial first

year of the program and mirror the successful approach used in annual planning for recycling education and communications.

The phases, timelines, and desired outcomes of the Strategy are summarized in the table below.

Phase	Timeline	Desired Outcomes
Phase 1 – 2022 Project Updates and Service Level Changes	Present – December 2022	<p>Prior to the program being launched, residents will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of the upcoming changes to curbside waste services, including year-round bi-weekly garbage collections and the end of the subscription green cart program.
Phase 2 – Building Anticipation	January – February 2023	<p>Prior to the program being launched, residents will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of the upcoming changes to curbside waste services (continued); • Informed on the reasons for the upcoming changes.
Phase 3 – Cart Deployments and First Collections	March – May 2023	<p>As the program prepares to launch, residents will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared for green cart deployment and first collections; • Knowledgeable on use of the green cart; • Understand the costs associated with the introduction of the curbside organics utility fee; • Understand what has not changed and are comfortable in the aspects of the program that have remained consistent with current curbside programs.
Phase 4 – Seasonal Support and Early Corrections	June – December 2023	<p>Throughout the first year following the program launch residents will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build knowledge and confidence in what is accepted in the program; • Be prepared to address potential seasonal issues as they arise, such as materials freezing, pests, odours, and excess quantities.
Phase 1 – 4	Present – December 2023	<p>Throughout the life of this strategy adjustments will be made to continuously provide other sectors the support and information that may be required to make this, and other waste diversion initiatives a success.</p>

At the end of 2023, communications and education will transition to an operational program, similar to how current residential recycling programs operate.

Communications Strategy

The Communications Strategy outlines the information that will be communicated to program users and other stakeholders about the program’s roll out and how to properly participate. Grounded in past research, performance of the City of Saskatoon’s (City)

recycling communications and case studies from other jurisdictions, this strategy takes a multi-phase approach to provide timely information at the right level of detail so that audiences can take appropriate action.

Appendix 1, pages 3-7 outline the communications scope, alignment with the desired outcomes and the associated key messages for each phase. As details of each phase of the program are finalized, a detailed Communications Plan will be developed outlining the specific tools, tactics and timelines.

Education Strategy

The Education Strategy outlines the programs that the City currently operates or plans to develop to educate residents on the city-wide curbside organics program. The Education strategy builds on the many existing education programs and explores opportunities to design new programs.

Table 4 in Appendix 1 outlines the existing education programs along with opportunities for expansion. Table 5 in Appendix 1 introduces new organic specific education program opportunities that are being explored along with expanding the general waste diversion programs to target harder to reach segments.

Research and Data Informing Education and Communications

The Strategy is grounded in the tools to support behaviour change as outlined in the Solid Waste Reduction and Diversion Plan, best practices from other jurisdictions, and Saskatoon-based data on waste diversion including disposal practices, knowledge, satisfaction, levels of support, and current performance of communications and education programs. Appendix 2 provides a summary of this supporting research and data, including how it is proposed to be applied in education and communications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The communications and education activities outlined in the Strategy's phases 1 – 4 are funded through the Curbside Organics capital project (P.02599).

Annual operating costs for education and communication will be included in the organics utility rate for 2024 and onwards.

NEXT STEPS

Phase 1 roll-out of the Strategy is underway, focusing on project updates, service level changes in 2022, and preparation of an overview of the curbside residential waste collection changes over the next few years.

Work continues on the logistics of full program implementation. In Q1 2023, a report on specific timelines for curbside organics program implementation will be provided to the Standing Policy Committee on EUCS. As part of that work, Administration will share additional information on program roll-out and cart deployment and an update on communications, including plans for delivering smaller carts to eligible townhouse complexes. City Councillors will have an opportunity to provide ward specific feedback as part of that work.

APPENDICES

1. Curbside Organics Program Communications and Education Strategy
2. Research and Data Informing Education and Communications

Report Approval

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