

## **Additional Information on Opt-Out Options**

### Option for Current Composters to Opt-Out of Citywide Organics Program

The Administration conducted research and surveyed several municipalities on opt-out options for curbside organics programs.

The majority of municipalities, including Calgary, Red Deer, Burnaby, Halifax, and Toronto do not offer or allow an opt-out option, largely based on the premise that everyone shares in the costs and keeps the program costs affordable for all. In addition, some municipalities state that green cart programs are considered complementary to backyard composting as they offer options for materials that aren't included in backyard composting like meat, bones and dairy. Lastly, optional programs generally have a lower participation rate and are not as successful in achieving the same level of diversion as citywide programs.

Three municipalities, Seattle, WA, Gibsons, BC, and Lloydminster (all utility funded), offer different opt-out options for their curbside organics programs.

Seattle uses a self-reporting honour system whereby residents call in to have their cart removed and are subsequently exempt from paying the corresponding utility fee. Approximately 3% of eligible households in Seattle have opted out.

Residents in Gibsons, BC are only able to opt-out if they already compost 100% of their green waste. Those requesting exemption must submit a request to opt-out with a description or photographic proof that they are able to divert organic waste. Applications are reviewed by staff prior to approval for removal from the program. If organic waste is discovered in an exempted household's garbage bin, a levy is applied and that household then becomes a participant in the program. Approximately 4% of eligible households in Gibsons, BC have opted out of the program.

Lloydminster residents are given the option to opt-out of participating in their curbside organics program however they are not allowed to opt-out of paying the monthly utility fee for this service.

One municipality, Davis, CA (property tax funded) offers an opt-out option for households to return their green cart however no rate adjustment is provided. Residents may also be required to prove that they are separating their organics from their garbage.

The following are some considerations for an opt-out option for a property tax funded curbside organics program in Saskatoon:

- Would require resources to develop opt-out parameters and to review and administer applications for exemption. This could range from approving phone call or email requests, to conducting inspections at individual households.

- Residents could choose to opt-out and either return their green cart or have it picked up by the City. As the program is property tax funded, a rebate option would be problematic.
- Opt-out options could be provided for select curbside properties like legal suites that may not require an additional cart or townhouse complexes that have their yard waste managed by private companies.
- There could be capital and operating savings associated with purchasing fewer carts and processing fewer tonnes of organics. There may also be increased costs associated with collection inefficiencies and administering an opt-out option.
- Based on the 2017 Waste Awareness and Behaviour Survey, 26% of curbside residents stated that they compost their yard waste in their backyard and 30% stated that they compost their food waste in their backyard. It is difficult to estimate how many households might request to opt-out once a year round curbside organics program is available.
- The citywide program is expected to have benefits compared to a home composting program including:
  - A wider range of materials will be accepted including meat, bones, dairy, soiled paper/cardboard (i.e. pizza boxes), small branches, and weeds;
  - Home compost bins tend to fill up, especially over the winter or during peak use (spring and fall).

Should City Council wish to investigate a potential opt-out program further, the Administration would need to conduct further review on the potential legal implications associated with an opt-out program.