

**Region of Waterloo**  
**Engineering and Environmental Services**  
**Waste Management**

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**To:** Sustainability, Infrastructure and Development Committee

**Meeting Date:** February 11, 2025

**Report Title:** 2026 Curbside Waste Collection Changes Implementation

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**1. Recommendation**

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo take the following action with respect to the upcoming 2026 curbside waste collection changes as set out in report EES-WMS-25-001, dated February 11:

- a. Amend the 2025 Waste Management Division Operating Budget to include an expenditure of \$1.25 million to prepare for the implementation of the new collection contract, to be offset from the estimated one-time 2025 revenues relating to the Blue Box Program transition to Extended Producer Responsibility with no tax levy impact.
- b. Include expenditures of \$1.49 million in 2026 and \$452,000 in 2027 to the Waste Management Division Operating Budget, funded from the Waste Management Reserve Fund with no tax levy impact.
- c. Add 18 temporary (up to two-year) FTEs to support the successful implementation of the new waste collection contract.

**2. Purpose / Issue:**

The purpose of this report is to provide information for the implementation plan, and for approval of dedicated resources for the upcoming 2026 curbside waste collection changes.

**3. Strategic Plan:**

The curbside waste collection change meets the 2023-2027 Corporate Strategic Plan priorities to steward our natural environment and shared resources as we grow: We will work to protect the region's natural environment, biodiversity, trees, and water under Strategic Priority 2, Climate-aligned growth.

#### 4. Report Highlights:

- An extensive communication, education and outreach campaign will be required starting in 2025 for impacted residents, businesses and property owners about the upcoming curbside waste collection changes starting March 2, 2026.
- The Waste Management Division will be working collaboratively with internal communication staff and the Creative Multimedia Services team to develop and implement communication and education materials. These tools will align with Region branding standards and support our diverse community.
- Eighteen temporary staff comprised primarily of co-op students and part-time Community Connector outreach positions, are required to ensure the successful planning and implementation of the new collection contract and levels of service. These staff will support education and outreach for the carts, the cart roll-out, the change to a four-day collection schedule, and changes to collection day to residents and downtown businesses.
- The Region will be working with Downtown Business Improvement Area Executive Directors and staff from the area municipalities to determine cart sizes, number of carts, set-out locations and collection days in the 10 designated Downtown BIAs.

#### 5. Background:

In February 2023 (EES-WMS-23-003) Council established new service levels for the next curbside waste collection contract, specifically the use of carts and a four-day collection week. A new curbside waste collection contract is required to be in place by March 2026 to align with the end of the existing contract.

In May 2024 (COR-TRY-24-013) Council accepted the proposal of Halton Recycling Ltd. Dba. Emterra Environmental for the P2023-33 Automated Cart-Based, and Manual Waste Collection, and Supply, Initial Distribution and On-Going Maintenance of Carts Within the Region of Waterloo for a contract period of eight years starting March 2, 2026 through March 3, 2034, with the option to renew for two additional one-year periods.

In August 2024 (EES-WMS-24-003) Council approved the Region to continue to administer and fund the waste collection, processing and disposal services for Industrial, Commercial & Institutional (IC&I) properties located in designated Downtown areas.

As directed by Strategic Planning and Budget Committee as part of the 2025 Plan and Budget process, this report outlines the additional resources required to plan, implement and monitor the approved curbside waste collection changes that will start March 2026. The scope of the work is significant and cannot be undertaken successfully with the existing resourcing complement who will be continuing to administer the existing waste

collection contract.

### **Planned Work for the Successful Implementation of the March 2026 Waste Collection Contract**

The upcoming curbside waste collection changes will impact over 165,000 residential properties and 1,500 Downtown Business Improvement Area properties in the Region. Education and outreach will be required for all phases of the implementation plan, and Waste Management staff will be working collaboratively with our internal Communications and the Creative Multimedia Services teams to develop and implement communication and education materials.

Key considerations for this plan include:

- Supporting the delivery of over 330,000 garbage and organics carts to 165,000 residential properties over a four-month period to ensure collection begins on March 2, 2026;
- Engagement with over 1,500 businesses on determining cart sizes, number of carts, set-out locations and collection days in the 10 designated Downtown BIAs in the Region;
- Educating businesses in the Downtowns on the new organics Green Bin program, including how to sort their waste;
- Communicating the timeframes of when a resident can choose their garbage cart size or exchange their garbage cart after the trial period;
- Communicating collection day changes for residential properties impacted due to the residential waste collection schedule changing from five days (Monday to Friday) to four days (Tuesday to Friday) collection. This includes, supporting residents to adjust to their new collection day;
- Provision of solutions to potential changes in medical exemptions, extra garbage bag tags and assisted collection services; and
- Educating residents and businesses on sorting, storage and set out of carts alongside bulky items and Christmas trees.

A variety of traditional and digital communications tactics will be used to reach residents and business owners across the Region. Some of the tactics include information and public notices on our website and social media channels, printed brochures, flyers and calendars, videos, newspaper and radio advertisements, waste truck decals, curbside error stickers, and cart information kits. These tools will align with Region branding standards and support our diverse residential and business community. QR codes on our materials will direct residents to our website to read our information in the language of their choice.

Waste Management staff will also inform and educate impacted residents, businesses and property owners via phone, email and in-person at pop-up events (information

booths, presentations, meetings, tours, curbside street team, etc.). Staff will be available to explain the program changes and answer questions throughout all phases of the change. Event participation will be based on the ability to connect with the Region of Waterloo community who receive our waste management services.

### **Proposed Implementation Plan**

The Region consulted with a number of municipalities such as the City of Guelph, City of Edmonton, Peel Region and Simcoe County, that have transitioned their curbside waste collection service from manual bag-based to cart-based collection. Through their experience, learnings and feedback, and in addition to our own learnings from previous successful contract rollouts, this information was used to form the proposed implementation plan, including staff resources.

The proposed implementation plan and communication campaign (dates are approximate) will be completed in the following stages:

#### **Phase One – Awareness – March to June 2025**

- Share information with impacted residents, businesses and property owners about the upcoming changes to curbside waste collection. This phase will focus on who is affected, what is changing, why the change is happening and how waste will be collected in the future.
- Remind the community that Blue Box recycling is no longer a part of the Region's waste management services and is not impacted by this change.
- Educate about supporting services such as medical exemptions, extra garbage bag tags, and assisted collection services. These will be promoted to assist residents who may require help with their waste collection. Waste Management staff will also meet with the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee and Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee during this phase.
- Communications in this phase will include news releases, newsletter articles, flyers, newspaper and online advertisements, and social media campaigns.
- Pop-up events and stationary displays will be used to reach members of the community where they live.

#### **Phase Two – Preparation – June 2025 to February 2026**

- Residential properties eligible for Region waste collection will be issued a large garbage cart, and a small organics cart before March 2026. If the property owner would like a small garbage cart, they will be able to order one through the website provided by the contractor, or by contacting the Region's Service First Contact Centre from June to the end of July 2025.
- Carts will be delivered to properties between October 2025 to February 2026. We will share information with residents to not use the new carts until March 2, 2026. Switching to a cart-based collection for garbage and organics will require

education on sorting, storage, and how to set out the carts (e.g. location, spacing, avoiding obstructions, etc.) alongside other materials such as bulky items, yard waste and Christmas trees.

- Residential waste collection is changing from five days (Monday to Friday) to four days (Tuesday to Friday). Communication will be required to ensure properties know which day of the week to set out their waste as of March 2026.
- Cart sizes, number of carts, set-out locations, collection days, etc. for properties in the downtown areas are yet to be determined. The Region will be working alongside interest holders, such as the Downtown Business Improvement Area Executive Directors and staff from the area municipalities to determine these details.
- Communications in a variety of ways, supporting tools, pop-up events and stationary displays will continue during this phase.

### **Phase Three – Implementation – March to September 2026**

- Residential and business (Downtown and BIA) properties will begin using their garbage and organics carts as of March 2, 2026. Temporary staff members will provide education to residents at the curb to correct any errors and provide reminders (through conversation or education tools like stickers) on how to sort and set out their waste.
- In collaboration with the Service First Contact Centre, customer service support will be a priority to ensure the success of the cart implementation.
- Contract management of the new contractor will begin in this phase, monitoring their performance and service as per the contract requirements and service level standards.
- After six months of use, a one-time exchange for garbage carts will be available should households prefer another size. Properties will request a change on the website provided by the contractor, or through contacting the Service First Contact Centre during a specified period in 2026. On-going maintenance of the carts (repair, replacements and exchanges) will be available, but limits and restrictions may apply.
- Monitoring and review of the Downtown BIA collection frequency and service will be completed at this time. Any adjustments will follow this review process.
- Communications in a variety of ways, supporting tools, pop-up events and stationary displays will continue during this phase.

### **Phase Four – Reinforcement and Retention – Fall 2026 to Spring 2027**

- Customer service and contract management enters “day to day” on-going operations.
- Education and outreach, including pop-up events, will continue during this phase. Temporary staff members will support residents via phone, email and in-person

at pop-up events. This includes:

- Supporting the community during the first full winter season of using carts – ensuring proper placement and successful waste collection
- Reaching new residents to the community (e.g. new subdivisions/developments, off-campus housing areas), so they are aware of the Region’s waste management services.
- Continued support of existing residents and businesses to ensure successful collection of their carts.
- Feedback will be collected to determine if any adjustments or changes are required for the curbside waste collection service.

### **Proposed Temporary Staff Resources**

During the four phases of the proposed plan, a staff team, comprised of four temporary contract waste coordinators, and up to ten co-op students and four part time community connector staff, will be utilized to plan, implement and monitor the program and service.

Details of the temporary staff positions and work to be performed is provided in Attachment A.

## **6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public:**

**Area Municipalities:** In Q1 2025, staff will reach out to affected local interest holders (e.g. area municipalities, Downtowns, etc.) to clarify potential impacts and how best to proceed to ensure a seamless and effective transition as possible. As mentioned above, a working group will be established for the Downtown Business Improvement Areas where BIA Executive Directors and area municipality staff will be involved in the planning and implementation of the downtown program.

**Public:** An extensive communication and public awareness campaign will be required starting in 2025 to inform and educate impacted residents, business and property owners about the upcoming curbside waste collection changes. Waste Management Division staff will connect with various interest groups such as accessibility advisory committees, post-secondary institutions, newcomer groups, seniors’ groups, etc. Overview of the phases are listed in the background of this report.

## **7. Financial Implications:**

With the Region’s transition of the Blue Box Program to full Extended Producer Responsibility in March 2024, the Waste Management Division entered into an agreement with Circular Materials (CM), the producer responsibility organization responsible for operating the new blue box program, to support on-going recycling education and outreach. The Waste Management Division also entered into an agreement with CM’s service provider to receive and load blue box materials for transfer to offsite processing facilities from the Region’s Waste Management facilities, while the

construction of a private transfer station is completed. These agreements are only in place during our transition period from March 2024 to the end of January 2025, when the new private waste transfer station is expected to become operational.

It is estimated that it will require one-time operating costs of approximately \$1.25 million in 2025, \$1.49 million in 2026 and \$452,000 in 2027 to implement the curbside waste collection changes. The 2025 revenues associated with the agreements described above to support the Blue Box Program transition will offset the 2025 operating costs of the proposed implementation plan. 2026 and 2027 costs will be funded from the Waste Management Reserve Fund. There is no tax levy impact.

Included in the above costs is education and outreach (e.g. brochures, calendars, signage, advertising, waste truck decals, etc.) and for resources including vehicle rentals, equipment and temporary staff on contracts for up to two years to support the implementation of the curbside waste collection changes.

#### **8. Conclusion / Next Steps:**

Upon approval of this report, Waste Management Division staff will proceed with the phased implementation plan and prepare to hire the temporary resources to support the upcoming 2026 curbside waste collection changes.

#### **9. Attachments:**

Appendix A: Roles and Responsibilities of Temporary Staff for Curbside Waste Collection Changes

Appendix B: 2026 Curbside Waste Collection Changes Implementation Presentation

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