

## RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO CURBSIDE WASTE MANAGEMENT

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## Pay-as-You-Throw (PAYT) Waste Utility

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### What will the cost of the PAYT bins be?

Fees for garbage will be based on cart size, not by weight or number of collections. If City Council supports the PAYT program, there are additional decisions to be made before a recommended fee structure can be presented. A report to support these decisions is being prepared for consideration in September and includes items such as:

- whether to include the cost of landfilling in the fees (most municipalities have accounted for these costs in either a property tax-supported budget or in utility fees; Saskatoon currently relies on landfill fees to cover these costs);
- and whether to use the difference in costs to distinguish the fees for each cart size or whether to create a greater price difference between the fees for each cart to incentivize smaller carts and greater waste diversion (a practice used by some but not all municipalities with PAYT programs today).

Lower fees will be associated with smaller carts.

### How will this impact property taxes?

There are a number of programs that make up the waste management system and City Council has yet to decide which of these programs should be funded through utility fees and which ones will remain on the property tax. A report identifying options for structuring utility fees (including the amount that will transfer off of property taxes and onto the utility) will be presented to the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services in September.

The projected 2019 costs for residential garbage collections and landfilling is approximately \$9.9 M per year; this is not all funded by property taxes as waste management is underfunded. Spread out evenly across the 70,000 households served by these programs, this works out to approximately \$12 per household per month.

The 2019 rates for recycling were previously established by City Council at \$5.66 per household per month. Decisions on how this fee may change in relation to the proposed changes to curbside residential waste management services are yet to be made.

Organics program details cannot be confirmed until costs for developing more sophisticated processing of organic material in the Saskatoon region is known. If City Council supports proceeding with the city-wide organics program, a Request for Proposals (RFP) will be issued to confirm these costs and utility fees proposed based on this information.

## **What will the collection frequency be?**

Collection frequency will be determined in September, an organics program may make it possible to have bi-weekly collection of garbage in the summer months.

Most municipalities provide weekly organics collection through the summer. This is what the Administration will recommend to the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services in their September report.

## **Will residents be charged regardless of whether their bin is picked up or not?**

Yes, charges will be based on cart size, not by weight or by number of collections.

Charging by variable cart size is the simplest to implement and ensure residents receive accurate bills.

Once the PAYT utility is more mature, the option of introducing charges based on the number of collections will be explored.

## **Will people be charged extra if they exceed their PAYT bin size? Will the City refuse to collect?**

There is an option today to enter into a contract with the City to pay for a second cart. It is anticipated that this program will continue into the future.

If a cart is overflowing, it will not be collected. This is not a change over current practice.

How and how often residents may be able to change cart sizes will be explored in a report to the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services in September.

## **Are residents allowed to put locks on their PAYT bins to prevent someone from adding to their cart? Will locks be provided by the City?**

Locked bins cannot be collected, bins must be unlocked and placed out for collection on collection day. However, residents are encouraged to store their bins in a secure location on their property (i.e. garage, shed, backyard) between collections.

## **How are you going to address illegal dumping? Will the PAYT system not lead to more offenses?**

Illegal dumping is a concern in all municipalities with or without variable pricing, including Saskatoon. It is estimated that the City spends approximately \$300,000 per year on cleaning up and managing illegally dumped waste. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, communities that have implemented variable pricing have found that illegal dumping is less of a concern than anticipated. One study found that 48% of cities and towns saw no change in illegal dumping, 6% felt it declined, and 19% saw an increase (27% had no information).

Providing adequate capacity for recycling and composting, educating effectively on the expectations of the program, and providing resources to enforce the rules are all strategies that can help minimize illegal dumping. The Administration will also explore opportunities to introduce a 'bulky item' collection service to make it more convenient for residents to dispose of items they cannot get to the landfill on their own.

Changes to the Waste Bylaw were recently made (effective January 1, 2018) to increase fines for illegal dumping, and we have added a new reporting tool online or by phone so that residents can inform our Environmental Protection Officers if they witness illegal dumping. We also continue to make improvements to our education and enforcement of the Waste Bylaw and we appreciate feedback from residents on how to make this better.

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## **How will you address those who can't afford to pay?**

Responsiveness to citizen ability to pay is among the values established for the design of any future waste utility. Ability to pay can be partially addressed through the design of the utility fees. Additional options that could be explored, include:

- expanding the City's property tax deferral program to low income households (i.e. provide this program to all age group, not just seniors);
- and providing discounts for garbage, recycling, or green carts for low income residents. Administration notes that this approach, especially if the discount is applied to the garbage cart, is counter to the goals of a waste utility (i.e. user control of costs to incentivize waste reduction).

## **What will happen to the old garbage carts if someone opts for a smaller cart?**

We are currently exploring how old carts will be dealt with; whether they will be recycled, reused, or landfilled.

## **Will there be GST and PST on top of the utility cost?**

No, waste management services are exempt from GST and PST.

## **Why shouldn't I throw recyclables in the Landfill?**

Keeping recyclables out of the Landfill helps us save valuable resources, space and tax dollars.

10% of single family residential garbage still consists of recyclable products, despite having well-established curbside and multi-unit residential recycling programs. Recyclable materials are valuable resources which can be used over-and-over again.

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# Organics Program

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## What size will the organics bins be?

The cart sizes for organics will be recommended to Council in September. The recommendation will consider how often the carts will be collected (eg. Weekly or biweekly) and the estimated amount of organics that each household generates.

## What will organics bins cost?

Organic program costs will be finalized later this year.

## How will medical waste and diapers be dealt with?

More details on medical waste and diapers will be available in September. They are likely to be considered garbage for at least the next several years.

## Will there be GST and PST on top of the utility cost?

No, waste management services are exempt from GST and PST.

## Why shouldn't I throw organics (food and yard waste) in the Landfill? Don't they break down there?

A recent study shows that 58% of single family residential garbage in Saskatoon consists of organics such as food and yard waste. Keeping organics out of the Landfill helps us save valuable resources, space and tax dollars.

Putting organics in the landfill causes them to break down slowly while releasing methane, a potent greenhouse gas (GHG) 25 times stronger than carbon dioxide. When organic material has adequate oxygen in a compost pile, it breaks down faster and produces a usable material for lawns and gardens.