

Provincial Advocacy for Recycling Regulations**Report Purpose**

To provide Council with a report on opportunities for advocating to have the Government of Alberta amend the current recycling regulations and enable a provincial wide policy to strengthen recycling systems and outcomes.

Recommendation

1. THAT the Request for Decision, as set out in Enclosure 2, be approved as Strathcona County's submission to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) Spring 2018 Municipal Leaders' Caucus; and that _____ be selected as the elected official spokesperson, on behalf of Strathcona County, to introduce the Request for Decision at the AUMA Spring 2018 Municipal Leaders' Caucus.
2. THAT the resolution, as set out in Enclosure 3, be approved as Strathcona County's submission to the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties' (AAMDC) 2018 Spring Convention resolutions session; and that _____ be selected as the elected official spokesperson, on behalf of Strathcona County, to introduce the resolution at the AAMDC 2018 Spring Convention resolutions session.
3. THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Strathcona County, sign the letter of support for the City of Calgary's Request for Decision, as set out in Enclosure 4.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: Alberta municipalities and taxpayers bear the responsibility and most costs associated with recycling in their communities. Many of the provincial recycling stewardship programs are financially strained, resulting in municipalities and taxpayers subsidizing these programs. With the necessary amendments to the recycling regulations, and a shift to a provincial extended producer responsibility (EPR) policy, municipalities and taxpayers would no longer carry the burden of these programs.

Governance: Municipalities need to collectively advocate the Province to strengthen recycling in Alberta. Strathcona County has an opportunity to take lead on these issues and cooperatively work with other municipalities in the region to ensure more effective and efficient provincial programs. Strathcona County administration regularly discusses these issues with municipalities from the Capital Region Waste Minimization Advisory Committee (CRWMAC) and the Calgary Region Waste Group, in addition to industry members through the Recycling Council of Alberta. There is much support for provincial action across Alberta municipalities.

Social: Residents have come to expect recycling services within their own community. Should some provincial programs fail, some municipalities may need to decide whether they continue to subsidize these programs or remove them entirely from their community. Strengthening these programs and enabling an EPR program increases social awareness of recycling and creates social consciousness about consumption and packaging.

Culture: n/a

Environment: Strengthening provincial recycling programs will ensure higher environmental outcomes in terms of waste diverted from landfill, design for the environment and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: The Governance Advisory Committee was notified of the recommendations being brought forward, however the tight time frame for both Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties' (AAMDC), it was determined to bring the request directly to Council.

Interdepartmental: The issues and resolutions have been drafted in partnership with Intergovernmental Affairs and Legislative and Legal Services.

Summary

Provincial programs and regulations stagnant

In 2013, the Province consulted on a number of regulatory changes that were required to ensure existing provincial programs continue to be sustainable. For additional background information related to provincial programs and regulations, refer to Enclosure 1. Despite consultations around these proposed amendments, no further progress has been made by the Province, causing the programs to become financially strained and adding extra financial burden on municipalities.

Municipalities provide the collection point for these programs, and thus are the connection between the Province's recycling programs and residents. Through the recycling fees that are collected at point of purchase for all of these materials, these programs were originally intended to fully fund collection, transportation and processing. These fees are set and stuck in regulation making it difficult for the stewardship organizations to adjust their programs based on economic fluctuations. As a result, municipalities are left to subsidize these programs. For example, the paint program has been in financial deficit for the last couple of years resulting in municipalities subsidizing about 50% of the costs.

Due to some other required changes in the recycling regulations, industry understands that the Government of Alberta will be opening the regulations in the next six months; however they may not be making the needed adjustments to the fees and program expansions that are required for the long term sustainability of these programs.

Lack of provincial policy on extended producer responsibility

There is a movement in the recycle industry to shift the responsibility of end-of-life management of products to the producers. This policy approach is called extended producer responsibility (EPR) and is typically applied at the provincial or national level, however has great benefit to municipalities that will reduce their costs and mitigate the risks of recycling programs. For further background information related to EPR, refer to Enclosure 1.

In 2009 Alberta was a signatory on the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) Action Plan for EPR in order to take a harmonized approach across Canada. The provincial government has not taken any actions despite this commitment.

Advocacy

Being a specialized municipality, Strathcona County is in a unique position to advocate the province and rally other municipal voices through mechanisms that are available in both AUMA and AAMDC organizations. In addition, Strathcona County has the ability to strengthen the campaign by supporting other recommendations that are being rallied by other municipalities in the province.

Communication Plan

Administration will communicate with regional and provincial municipalities to ensure that there is awareness that these issues will be brought forward to the AUMA and AAMDC forums.

Enclosure

- 1 Background information
- 2 Member Request for Decision (RFD) – AUMA Mayor’s Caucus
- 3 Resolution – AAMDC Spring Convention
- 4 Letter of support for City of Calgary RFD