

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE**Sort and Save Initiative Update****Report Purpose**

To provide Priorities Committee with an update on the Sort and Save Initiative (formally named, Pay As You Throw Initiative) and proposed rate model.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 4 - Ensure effective stewardship of water, land, air and energy resources

Goal 6 - Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents

Goal 2 - Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure

Report

The current Green Routine program is a 'one size fits all' service for households in Strathcona County. It currently does not provide differing service levels based on waste generation, which means that all households regardless of size and amount of waste they are placing out for collection are paying the same amount. Despite waste collection fees being distributed as a utility fee, the current structure does not provide variability based on consumption like other utilities that charge based on what the household uses, like power, gas, water, and internet.

A 'Pay As You Throw' (PAYT) system for Strathcona County based on cart size would allow households who reduce the amount they throw away and sort their recyclables and organics to switch to a smaller cart at a lower monthly cost. This variable system would give residents greater control over their waste costs, while allowing the flexibility to increase or decrease their waste capacity with household changes.

History:

As part of the 2020 budget process, Council approved two strategic business plan initiatives for the Utilities department:

1. INIT 154 - Waste Management Roadmap – A high-level strategy that outlines a collective, community-wide commitment to rethinking waste and diverting more from landfill. It prioritizes an expanded waste hierarchy: rethink, reduce, reuse, recycle, recover and residual, which moves the community towards a circular economy and leading practices in waste management.
2. INIT 155 – Green Routine Pay As You Throw – Exploring a new model for Strathcona County's waste program is a key step in achieving higher diversion targets. Utilities proposed to do specific engagement on this topic with Green Routine users, as well as conduct an environmental scan and research best practices.

With the approval of the outcomes in the Waste Management Roadmap, there was support for shifting to an 'equitable waste management system that maximizes efficiencies and promotes waste prevention, while improving environmental behaviours and flexibility for users'.

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Background:

Best practices indicate that residential systems, in which households are charged on the basis of the quantity of waste generated, encourage waste reduction and diversion strategies since the more you throw away, the more you pay. User-pay systems achieve a number of economic, environmental, and social objectives. Simultaneously, a best practice for high-performing waste programs also holds users accountable for the waste they generate and enforces compliance for program expectations, especially in behaviours that should be discouraged. These rules need to be equitably and consistently enforced to ensure buy in from participants.

Through the Roadmap engagement process as well as a 2022 specific survey exploring PAYT, residents identified the importance of a shared responsibility, equity and accountability in the system and a positive, incentive-based approach to motivate behaviour change and increase diversion practices. Participants indicated that if they could save money on their utility bill that they would be willing to improve their diversion practices.

Objective:

Moving towards implementing an equitable, flexible user-pay program that includes compliance of existing program expectations. This model would include offering a smaller waste cart at an incentivized rate, while also shifting the rate model to discourage use of larger or multiple waste carts. This program shift will strive to balance Roadmap objectives, leverage opportunities, and address known challenges.

Rate Model:

In preparation for the 2023 budget discussions, Utilities wanted to provide detailed information related to the proposed rate model and roll out expectations. The rate model takes into consideration uptake assumptions for a sort and save program, incentives to increase diversion and operational inflationary impacts. Utilities has proposed a balanced approach for the roll out of this new initiative and will reassess if other financial strategies are required for future years.

Council and Committee History

June 21, 2022	Provide Priorities Committee with an update on the "Pay As You Throw" initiative and feedback on recent public engagement.
September 14, 2021	Council approved the nine themes and associated outcomes in the Waste Management Roadmap.
March 24, 2015	Council approved Waste Management Bylaw 30-2014 repealing Bylaw 41-2013.
April 1, 2008	Council approved the Integrated Waste Management Plan and supported the implementation of the Green Routine program.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Financial/Budget: Utilities Fees and Charges

Legislative/Legal: Waste Management Bylaw 30-2014

Interdepartmental: Communications, Finance, Legal and Legislative Services

Master Plan/Framework: Waste Management Roadmap

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Lead Department: Utilities

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Communication Plan

Communication goals: Strathcona County is a leader in waste management, taking an effective approach to waste reduction and diversion. Stakeholders perceive value in Strathcona County's waste management services and want to take ownership as leaders.

A communication plan specific to the launch of the Sort and Save initiative will be developed following budgetary approval for implementation in 2023.

Enclosure

- 1 Waste Management Roadmap – Sort and Save Initiative Update presentation