

Winter Green Cart Collection Schedule

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The volume of food and yard waste set out by Calgarians decreases significantly in the winter months, dropping from a peak of almost 12,000 tonnes in October to 5,000 tonnes in December 2017. Waste & Recycling Services (WRS) planned for this decrease in tonnage by adjusting the size of the green cart collection routes for the winter months. However, there is an opportunity to achieve additional program cost savings by moving to an every-other-week collection frequency for Green Cart Program in the winter months (November to April).

Adjusting the green cart collection frequency to every-other-week from November to April, would realize cost savings in areas such as labour and fuel of approximately \$2 million annually. WRS will continue to incur fixed costs, including: fleet lease and maintenance costs, ongoing capital repayment and compost facility costs, regardless of the collection frequency. Cost savings will be included in the Green Cart Program charge and presented to Council as part of the One Calgary indicative rate and fee process.

The benefits to changing green cart collection to every-other-week include: a reduction in the Green Cart charge for residents, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, increased collection system efficiency and an opportunity to increase truck repair and maintenance activities during the November to April period.

There are some risks to changing green cart collection to every-other-week in the winter. There is risk with Calgary weather; an early spring or a late start to winter could lead to collection issues for excess materials and the potential for increased odours.

WRS reviewed seasonal green cart service levels in 14 Canadian municipalities. In Alberta, most municipalities have every-other-week winter collection. Locally, Airdrie's and Cochrane's green cart programs have every-other-week winter collection, while Chestermere has weekly, year-round collection.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

That the Standing Policy Committee on Utilities and Corporate Services direct Administration to:

1. Implement every-other-week green cart collection over the winter months (November to April) starting 2018 November; and
2. Return to the 2018 April 25 Strategic Session of Council with a Green Cart Program charge included as part of WRS' indicative rates and fees for 2019-2022.

And further, that Report UCS2018-0303 be forwarded as an item of Urgent Business to the 2018 March 19 Combined Meeting of Council.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON UTILITIES AND CORPORATE SERVICES, DATED 2018 MARCH 14:

That the Administration Recommendations contained in Report UCS2018-0303 be approved.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2014 November 24, Council approved Action Plan 2015-2018, including WRS' operating budget, which included the funding proposed to implement a Green Cart Program, with weekly collection, in 2017.

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BACKGROUND

Calgary's city-wide Green Cart Program for single detached dwelling units began service on a quadrant by quadrant basis starting July 2017. Residents in southeast communities were the final group to receive weekly food and yard waste collection early in October.

Every-other-week collection in the winter months was not tested in the Green Cart pilot communities as 120 litre (L) carts were used for the pilot program. With the introduction of the 240 L cart for the city-wide Green Cart Program, WRS recognized that there may be an opportunity to adjust the collection frequency seasonally, coinciding with the reduction in household generation of green cart materials.

While every-other-week collection of food and yard waste in the winter months was considered as part of the city-wide program launch, adjusting the program schedule in November 2017 would have meant that this change would occur less than a month after southeast communities received their green carts. It was deemed important to offer a full year of consistent service, allowing time for the program to mature and residents to adapt to the new service before implementing any changes to collection frequency.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Calgary's Green Cart Program has been very successful; Calgary residents contributed over 37 million kilograms of food and yard waste in 2017 to the new compost facility, 47 per cent higher than the predicted 25 million kilograms.

Since the roll-out of the Green Cart Program, several members of Council have indicated that Calgarians would support reduced green cart collection frequency in the winter months. Reasons cited for acceptance include reduced volumes of material (specifically yard waste) in winter and that cooler temperatures reduce the likelihood of odour issues.

Adjusting the green cart collection frequency to every-other-week collection from November to April, would realize cost savings in areas such as labour and fuel of approximately \$2 million annually. Staffing levels would be reduced in winter and additional seasonal hiring would be required to transition back to summer service levels. WRS would continue to incur fleet lease, ongoing capital repayment and compost facility costs regardless of the collection frequency. Communications costs would increase slightly to ensure citizens are aware of changes to their service levels and their new collection schedule.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

This report is in response to questions raised by members of Council who support pursuing an efficiency opportunity for the Green Cart Program in the winter months. To inform this response, WRS reviewed seasonal green cart service levels in 14 Canadian municipalities. In Alberta, most municipalities have every-other-week winter collection. Locally, Airdrie's and Cochrane's green cart programs have every-other-week winter collection, while Chestermere has weekly year-round collection. The remaining municipalities had a more even distribution between weekly winter service and every-other-week winter collection.

Internal stakeholder engagement and research includes confirmation of program costs and savings by the Finance Business Unit.

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Strategic Alignment

The Leadership Strategic Plan includes commitments to strengthen The Corporation's financial position. Action Plan 2015-2018 includes Strategic Action W2 – Be as efficient and effective as possible, reducing costs and focusing on value-for-money and related Business Unit Action and W2.1 – Continually improve on plans and practices to manage financial health.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

Diverting materials from landfill requires changes in behaviour by Calgary residents, industry and businesses.

Environmental

Diverting waste reduces greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), redirects natural resources back into the economy, reduces future contamination and environmental liability, and increases the life of landfills. Aligning collection frequency with reduced volumes of food and yard waste materials in the winter months reduces WRS' fuel consumption. Fewer trucks on the road for approximately five months of the year will reduce WRS' GHG.

Economic (External)

Cost savings achieved by reducing green cart collection in the winter months will be passed on to Calgary residents.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

Reducing the frequency of green cart collection in winter months will reduce Green Cart Program expenses by approximately \$2 million annually. Savings will be passed on to customers in the Green Cart Program charge in the 2019-2022 business cycle.

For 2018, the potential savings from the reduced frequency of green cart collection in November and December will reduce the tax support required for the Green Cart Program and will be contributed to the corporate budget savings account.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

The seasonal green cart collection frequency reduction does not impact WRS' capital budget.

Risk Assessment

There are risks to this service level reduction; the change could decrease citizen participation and satisfaction with the Green Cart Program, resulting in decreased tonnes diverted via the Green Cart Program impacting overall residential diversion targets.

WRS will continue to incur fixed program costs such as fleet lease and maintenance costs, ongoing capital repayment and facility costs, which will impact the level of savings residents would expect to see reflected in the monthly rate.

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In moving to every other week black cart collection, WRS has experienced increased contamination rates in the Blue Cart Program, with contamination increasing from 7 per cent to 10 per cent. In reducing green cart collection frequency, WRS may see even further blue cart contamination and increased costs associated with higher contamination rates.

Calgary's weather also poses a risk. An early spring or a late start to winter could lead to collection issues for excess materials and the potential for increased odour issues.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

The recommendations from the report will achieve Green Cart Program savings for Calgary residents and align winter collection frequency with the reduced volume of green cart material generated in the winter months.

ATTACHMENT

None.