

DATE: November 7, 2019

FILE: 5380-02

TO: Chair and Directors
Comox Strathcona Waste Management Board

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Comox Strathcona Waste Management depot update

Purpose

To update the Comox Strathcona Waste Management (CSWM) Board (Board) on the status of the CSWM non-Recycle BC depots and to recommend a strategy for moving forward.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Strathcona Gardens, Sports Plex, Canex and Courtenay Country Market recycling depots be closed effective July 2020;

AND FURTHER THAT staff pursue the possibility of converting the Quadra Island and Oyster River depots to Recycle BC depots, and work with those communities to improve depot performance.

Executive Summary

The CSWM service provides six unstaffed, non-Recycle BC depots for the collection and recycling of cardboard, paper, plastic containers and metal cans. Unfortunately experience shows high levels of contamination and rising costs to deliver the service. The main challenges are:

- High levels of contamination (approximately 18 per cent compared to 3.5 per cent for our Recycle BC depots) due to no attendant being present to control the product, and to the depots being open and accessible to the public 24/7. The high level of contamination often results in the entire bin being landfilled.
- Two of the depots are located on leased or rented land and property owners are frustrated and have expressed interest in having the depots removed;
- Due to lack of staff supervision and 24/7 access approximately 446 tonnes of unrecyclable material and garbage was illegally discarded at the depots in 2018;
- A shifting global market for recyclables, resulting in challenges and lack of transparency to determine if materials outside of the Recycle BC stream, are being recycled in a responsible or ethical manner ([CBC Marketplace investigation](#)).
- The condition and use of these depots are not reflective of the CSWM standards in our other locations.

Four of the depots (Strathcona Gardens, Sports Plex, Courtenay Country Market, Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Comox Canex) are located in close proximity to full Recycle BC municipal curbside collection programs and/or Recycle BC Return-it depots. Previous resident surveys indicate that these depots are predominantly used by residents that have easy access to these other recycling programs.

Continuing to operate all six of the services depots will result in increased annual costs of \$265,000 for status quo and up to \$824,000 if the depots undergo the following changes:

- reduced hours of operation to daytime hours only
- improved fencing, paving, lighting, security
- full time staff for all open hours of operation

If the Board supports the recommendation to close the Strathcona Gardens, Sports Plex, Canex and Courtenay Country Market depots, the closure will be supported by an extensive communications program to inform the public and educate on alternatives. The two remaining depots (Quadra Island and Oyster River) are rural and provide the only local option for recycling. It is recommended that staff work with Recycle BC to convert, or find Recycle BC options, within these areas.

The incredibly challenging recycling markets show that the Recycle BC program has found end markets for materials collected when others cannot.

- The Recycle BC program is a full producer responsibility program for the collection of residential packaging and paper.
- The program is a rigorous processes demanding verified results, commitments to transparency, and a steadfast focus on environmental outcomes.
- The benefit to the service is that the program covers all the shipping costs from the depot.
- Within our municipal collections systems, the more that is collected will provide greater financial incentives back to the community to fund the recycling program, yet the depots outside actual take money out of the municipal pockets.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

Concurrence:

M. Rutten

Stephanie Valdal
CSWM Services Coordinator

Jesse Lee, B.Sc.
Manager of CSWM
Operations

Marc Rutten, P.Eng.
General Manager of
Engineering Services

Background/Current Situation

The CSWM service provides six unstaffed non-Recycle BC depots for the collection of cardboard, paper, plastic containers and metal cans. The depots are located at Courtenay Country Market, CFB Canex, Oyster River, Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex, Campbell River Sports Plex and Quadra Island. The CSWM service currently has lease agreements in place with Courtenay Country Market and Oyster River. With the exception of CFB Canex, all depots are accessible twenty four hours per day, seven days per week. The Canex depot is locked by a security contractor and is only accessible between 7:00 am and 9:00 pm, seven days per week.

In 2018, the six CSWM depots collected approximately 1,800 tonnes of material. The contamination rate is approximately 18 per cent (compared to 3.5 per cent for Recycle BC depots), which equates to approximately 325 tonnes of unrecyclable material, which is landfilled. In 2018, 121 tonnes of garbage was dropped off at CSWM depots, including household and commercial garbage, furniture, lightbulbs, large and small appliances, yard waste, dog feces, fish guts, motor oil and paint. The disposal of garbage into the bins not only contaminates the recyclable materials, but poses a health and safety issue for patrons and staff, resulting in increased operating costs for this service. In addition, the garbage collected at the depots equates to a loss of approximately \$58,000 in tipping fee revenue.

These depots have the following characteristics:

Strathcona Gardens (225 South Dogwood, Campbell River)

- Unstaffed, non-secure, open 24/7
- Within the City of Campbell River that has weekly unlimited curbside collection of all of the materials accepted at this depot
- Eight minute drive to full service return-it depot, 1580 Willow St., Campbell River BC

Sports Plex (1800 South Alder, Campbell River)

- Unstaffed, non-secure, open 24/7
- Within the City of Campbell River that has weekly unlimited curbside collection of all of the materials accepted at this depot
- 13 minute drive to full service return-it depot, 1580 Willow St., Campbell River BC

Courtenay Country Market (5352 N Island Hwy, Courtenay)

- Unstaffed, non-secure, open 24/7
- Just north of City of Courtenay in Electoral Area C, Puntledge – Black Creek
- Seven minute drive to full service return-it depot, 493 Puntledge Road, Courtenay BC

Canex (1625 Military Row, Comox)

- Unstaffed, well fenced with gates, opened at 7 am and closed at 9 pm, seven days per week
- Within the Town of Comox that has bi-weekly unlimited curbside collection of all of the material accepted at this depot
- Five minute drive to full service return-it depot, 678 Anderton Road, Comox BC

The operational agreement with the Emterra Group (Emterra) for the depots, has a provision of a two year extension. Emterra has requested an increase of \$240,000 for 2020 to provide the service and advised that there is the potential of an additional increase in 2021. The contamination and changing global recycling markets is the main contributing factors for the increase.

Four of the depots (Strathcona Gardens, Sports Plex, Courtenay Country Market, Canex) are located in close proximity to full Recycle BC municipal curbside collection programs and/or Recycle BC Return-it depots. Through previous customer surveys, the Comox Valley Regional District has learned that the vast majority of users live within municipal boundaries and have access to full, unlimited curbside recycling collection. The City of Campbell River offers this service on a weekly basis while the Town of Comox and City of Courtenay offer it on a bi-weekly basis. In addition, these depots are typically within a short drive to Recycle BC Return-it depots.

Continuing to operate all six of the services depots will result in increased annual costs ranging from \$265,000 for status quo with continued high levels of contamination, to \$824,000 for improved depots with (see financial factors section):

- reduced hours of operation to daytime hours only
- improved fencing, paving, lighting, security
- full time staff for all open hours of operation

Based on the above it is recommend that the CSWM service close the non-Recycle BC depots from the services programs. Initially, in 2020 it is recommended that the Strathcona Gardens, Sports Plex, Courtenay

Country Market, Canex be closed. This closure will be monitored for one year with a report back to the board on implications. The recommended closure will be supported by an extensive communications program to inform the public and educate them on alternatives.

Two of the depots (Quadra and Oyster River) are rural depots and provide the only local option for recycling. It is suggested that these depots not be included in the phase out.

Policy Analysis

The CSWM service can assist achieving targets set out by Recycle BC by supporting the extended producer responsibility (EPR) program and ensuring all materials are funnelled through the provincial Recycle BC program. This also provides the best value to the taxpayer. EPR programs drive a cradle to cradle or circular economy approach to recycling, versus cradle to grave or lineal economy and design approach. A circular economy is one that mimics the natural processes of the earth, protecting and enriching ecosystems, encouraging the use of non-toxic materials, focusing on regenerative design rather than down cycling materials.

Options

The Board has the following options:

1. Status quo – continue to operate all six non-Recycle BC depots as is and incur \$265,000 of additional contractor costs.
2. Install critical improvements, reduce operating hours and staff the four depots in Campbell River and the Comox Valley and incur \$824,000 of capital and staffing costs. Continue to operate the depots on Quadra Island and Oyster River as is.
3. Close the CSWM depots located at Strathcona Gardens, Sports Plax, Courtenay Country Market, Canex. Continue to operate the depots on Quadra Island and Oyster River as is and pursue Recycle BC agreements.
4. Pursue a phased approach for the initial closure in 2020 of the Strathcona Gardens and Courtenay Country Market depots. Continue to operate other depots as is.

The recommendation to close four depots has not taken lightly and staff understand the importance the board has put on providing the opportunity to conveniently recycle. The changing markets for recycling have impacted the importance of clean product. The depots cannot continue to be operated without significant changes and costs. Other options in the communities are available and will support of these will be communicated as the sites are closed.

Financial Factors

The current 2019-2023 Financial Plan has a recycling depot operational budget of \$315,000 for 2020 the options consider would have the following impact.

Option 1 above would result in an increase of \$240,000 to the 2020 Financial Plan for a total of \$555,000. The total cost to provide the service of the six depots which includes maintenance, leases and security is \$580,000.

Option 2 above would increase the budget by \$497,000 for 2020 for a total of \$824,000. There would also be an estimated capital cost of \$350,000.

Option 3 above would result in a savings of \$455,000 based on the proposed increase from Emterra. The cost to continue to operate the depots on Quadra Island and Oyster River would be approximately \$100,000 per year.

Option 4 a phased approach would reduce the budget increase from \$240,000 to \$140,000, and the budget would be \$455,000 in 2020.

Intergovernmental Factors

CSWM staff will work closely with member municipalities and electoral areas to ensure residents are aware of the closures and their alternatives for recycling.

Citizen/Public Relations

Recycle BC advertises glass, foam, film and flexible packaging are recyclable at eligible Recycle BC depots, however the average resident is not aware there is a difference between a Recycle BC depot and a CSWM depot. Despite efforts to have educators at the depots to educate residents, those who are dumping garbage are confrontational.

A communications plan will be developed to inform and educate residents to use the Recycle BC depots or their curbside programs. By using these programs residents ensure that their material is actually recycled and will therefore be diverting a larger volume of material than if continuing to use CSWM depots.