

DATE: September 2, 2021

FILE:

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: Request to Waive Fees for City of Courtenay Residents Yard Waste Drop-Off

Purpose

To respond to the City of Courtenay's (City) August 26, 2021 request to waive the tip fees for yard waste drop-off at the Comox Valley Waste Management Center (CVWMC) for the residents of Courtenay in response to the recent curbside collection service disruptions experienced by the City's contractor Emterra Environmental (Emterra).

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Comox Strathcona Waste Management service continue to support the receipt and processing of yard waste pursuant to Bylaw No.170 being "Solid Waste Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 170, 2011" to fund the cost of the service.

Executive Summary

The City has requested that the Comox Strathcona Waste Management (CSWM) service waive the yard waste tipping fee for Courtenay residents at CVWMC in response to the recent service disruptions experienced by the City's curbside waste collection contractor, Emterra.

- The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and City of Campbell River all have separate waste collection contracts with Emterra for the provision of curbside garbage, recycling and organics waste collection services.
- Emterra has been challenged by labour shortages, which has negatively impacted service levels across the Comox Valley and Campbell River. While all municipalities are feeling the impacts of the service disruption, the effects are more pronounced in Courtenay given its size and the collection frequency of the three waste streams.
- The local government staff in the Comox Valley and Campbell River have worked collectively and issued letters of expectation for a commitment of operational stability and a sustained action plan to provide residents with the confidence of reliable and consistent service moving forward.
- In effort to re-establish regular curbside collection service, the City has taken extraordinary measures to address the issue of missed collections by temporarily deploying public works staff to collect yard waste from residential properties the week of August 23, 2021.
- Since the start of the pandemic, the CVWMC has been challenged with significant increases in both vehicle traffic and waste volumes, particularly for yard waste and grass clippings. Based on data from January to August 2021, yard waste and grass clipping volumes have increased approximately 35 per cent, respectively, compared to the same time period in 2019.

- Grass clippings is accepted free of charge but the yard waste tipping fee of \$65/tonne is charged on a cost recovery basis to cover third party processing costs to the CSWM service, as well as staff and equipment costs to support this diversion activity.
- Furthermore, there are traffic delays due to Cell 2 and bin wall construction activities at the landfill and the water main construction along Bevan Road, which further exacerbates the congestion onsite.
- Emterra has acknowledged the decline in service levels are not to the standards set forth in the collection contracts and has committed to taking the following actions to remedy the situation in the short term and to implement sustained solutions for the future:
 - Staff to 100 per cent of optimal staffing level by mid-September;
 - Brought in a temporary staffing agency to provide short term staffing until all vacancies are permanently filled;
 - Establish regional contingency labour pool to provide staffing levels to 100 per cent of optimal as needed across British Columbia;
 - Addition of one new collection truck to the fleet to provide additional capacity; and
 - Increase employee retention measures including financial incentives.
- The CVRD and member municipalities have started to see improvements and the reestablishment of curbside collection service across the region.

CSWM staff are not recommending waiving tipping fees for residents of Courtenay as it:

- Results in an administrative burden and potentially create conflicts for CVWMC staff to police the origin of materials;
- Results in a further increase of small vehicle traffic to the CVWMC, adding additional pressures on the facility and staff;
- Requires the material management costs for this stream to be funded through alternative means, possibly subsidized by other facility users; and
- Does not address the root of problem which is actively being managed by Emterra.

As such, Courtenay residents are encouraged to continue to utilize their curbside collection service for the proper management of yard waste, which is the most operationally efficient method of disposal.

Prepared by:

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Vivian Schau
Senior Manager of CSWM Services

Concurrence:

M. Rutten

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

Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

City of Courtenay	
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