

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2024**

SUBJECT **Solid Waste Market Research and Engagement Study**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To present the results of the 2024 Solid Waste Market Research and Engagement Study

BACKGROUND

In 2023, staff worked with the Solid Waste Advisory Committee to develop performance indicators and metrics to better enable the monitoring of progress towards meeting the Capital Regional District's (CRD) 2021 Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) goals and targets. Gaps in available data and metrics were identified leading to a proposed three-year cycle of studies designed to collect relevant metrics and compare progress throughout the life of the SWMP. The 2024 Solid Waste Market Research and Engagement Study is the first study to be completed under the new three-year cycle.

The 2024 Solid Waste Market Research and Engagement Study gathered information on – and measured public attitudes, knowledge of and behaviours toward – solid waste management, in relation to achieving Goal 3 of the SWMP: *Have informed citizens that participate effectively in proper waste management practices*. R.A. Malatest and Associates, Ltd. (Malatest) were contracted to conduct the study. The objectives of the study were to:

- establish a set of baseline data, identify key performance indicators (KPIs);
- evaluate the effectiveness of current CRD waste reduction and behaviour change strategies; and
- understand the public's attitudes, knowledge and behaviours in relation to the SWMP, the general waste system and available services within the capital region.

The intention is to use the KPIs identified in the report to monitor progress towards achieving Goal 3 of the SWMP on an annual basis and to conduct the full study once every three years to allow for comparisons between years.

The study was conducted from May to October 2024 using three surveys targeting residents, Hartland Public Drop-Off Depot users and businesses located in the capital region. These surveys were developed to assess behaviours, attitudes, programs, resources and communication strategies related to solid waste. Survey questions were designed to gauge effectiveness of existing policies and programs, as well as to gather insight into opportunities for improvement. Survey results, along with historical data, such as program participation, scale data, Infoline data and the solid waste stream composition study, were analyzed to develop the baseline assessment, identify gaps and generate recommendations.

Residential Survey Highlights

Over 1,000 residents were surveyed to assess behaviours and attitudes towards solid waste management themes such as reducing waste, knowledge of best practices and disposal habits. A few highlights and identified KPIs include:

- 74% of residents reported positive attitudes (i.e., agree or strongly agree) across five waste management behaviours, including reducing waste, supporting circular economy, composting, confidence in their waste disposal knowledge and supporting community initiatives.
- While most residents reported no barriers to disposing of general refuse, recycling and organic waste, significant barriers exist for "Other recycling" such as Styrofoam and soft plastics. These barriers include a lack of knowledge on where and how to dispose of these materials and difficulty in transporting to disposal sites.
- Virtual and online resources were most frequently used by respondents, with 56% reporting use of the CRD website and 31% reporting use of the Recycle CRD App.

Hartland Public Drop-Off Depot Survey Highlights

Over 100 surveys were completed by residents using the Hartland Public Drop-Off Depot. Results provide a snapshot of the types of materials being disposed by residents. A few highlights from survey responses include:

- Visits to dispose of general refuse have increased by about 5% annually, slightly higher than population growth.
- Visits related to recyclables have increased by an average of 20% annually, with a notable spike in 2022 following the introduction of the Express & Go drop-off for refundable beverage containers.
- Materials most commonly being brought for drop-off included metals (63%), plastic products (59%) and foam packaging (55%).

Business Survey Highlights

Over 200 business representatives were surveyed and asked about the types of waste their businesses produce, their disposal methods and ability to comply with local regulations. A few highlights and identified KPIs include:

- Most businesses produce paper (92%), plastic (75%) and organic waste (62%).
- When comparing the type of wastes generated with recycling options provided on site, we begin to see discrepancies in disposal methods. For example, 100% of businesses that produce paper also have bins on site for its collection, however, only 74% of businesses that produce soft plastic have collection methods in place.
- About half of the businesses experience challenges complying with local waste management regulations, citing limited disposal options (32%) and high costs (18%).
- Businesses prefer communications surrounding new regulations (73%), incentive programs (62%), and detailed guidelines for specific waste types (61%).

The full report is attached as Appendix A for information. Results from the 2024 Solid Waste Market Research and Engagement Study established a baseline assessment of how citizens interact with and understand current solid waste management systems, identified areas for improvement, and gauged the effectiveness of existing engagement activities. Additionally, it offered insights on how to refine communication strategies and programs, with an aim to significantly enhance waste reduction efforts (in both the short and long-term) across the capital region. When used in conjunction with results from future studies, such as a waste generator study and solid waste composition study, as well as regular operational data, results from the Market Research and Engagement Study will aid in the design and implementation of programs and initiatives focused on achieving SWMP target and goals.

CONCLUSION

The Capital Regional District commissioned Malatest to conduct the 2024 Solid Waste Market Research and Engagement Study. The study was designed to measure public attitudes, knowledge of and behaviours toward solid waste management, in relation to achieving Goal 3 of the SWMP. The study will be conducted on a three-year cycle and staff will use results in conjugation with other data inputs to monitor progress towards achieving targets set out in the SWMP and to inform the design of future programs, policies or initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Solid Waste Market Research and Engagement Study: Final Report – Malatest
(October 2024)