

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2026**

SUBJECT Recycling in Schools – Opportunities for Diversion

ISSUE SUMMARY

To report back on how the Capital Regional District's Solid Waste Management Plan can be leveraged to support school districts in implementing and maintaining effective recycling programs.

BACKGROUND

At its September 2025 meeting, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board directed staff to report back on how the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) could be leveraged to extend recycling programs to schools as well as other institutional customers. The Board also directed staff to write letters to all school districts in the region to inform them of their obligation to divert certain materials from landfill disposal to comply with existing municipal or regional bylaws (Appendix A).

ANALYSIS

Provincial Regulations and Programs

Through its Recycling Regulation, BC's *Environmental Management Act* requires producers of regulated products to create Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs that collect, manage, and process a range of recyclable materials once they reach end-of-life. Recycle BC is the stewardship agency responsible for managing the residential packaging and paper products (PPP) included in BC's EPR program. The CRD is contracted by Recycle BC to collect PPP materials from single-family homes through its curbside blue box program.

While many packaging materials generated by schools are similar to those collected through the CRD's curbside program, these recyclables are commercial sector materials when disposed of through non-residential collection systems and consequently are not included in existing EPR programs. Schools fall within the industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) sector and therefore cannot be included in the CRD's current statement of work with Recycle BC. Schools must contract waste management services from private service providers.

Regional Authority and Bylaws

The CRD does not currently have regulatory authority to mandate source separation for the ICI sector or direction to request this authority from the Province in the region's current SWMP. The CRD's primary solid waste regulatory authority under the Environmental Management Act is the banning of materials from disposal at Hartland Landfill and does not have the authority to mandate source separation of waste. In BC, it is municipalities that have source separation authority under the Local Government Act. Pursuing the regulatory authority to mandate source separation for all sectors could be included as a strategy option in the CRD's next draft SWMP for Board and public consideration.

The primary bylaw relevant to the ICI sector and, by extension, school districts operating in the region is the Hartland Landfill Tipping Fee and Regulation Bylaw No. 3881, which prohibits the disposal of certain materials like garbage. Prohibited materials, most likely to be generated in schools, include corrugated cardboard, mixed paper, beverage containers, electronics and electrical materials, and kitchen scraps. Enforcement of this bylaw is carried out through tickets and fines if loads brought to the landfill contain these banned materials.

Solid Waste Management Plan Direction

The CRD's Solid Waste Management Plan includes several strategies and actions that can be leveraged to support recycling programs in schools. Appendix B outlines new initiatives that could be offered in connection to strategies 1C, 1D, 6D, 9A, 9B and 11A of the SWMP, with Strategy 9 specifically targeting increased ICI diversion (recycling).

Engagement with School Districts

In response to Board direction, staff issued letters to the four school districts operating in the region (Appendix A) to remind schools of their role in diverting banned materials from Hartland Landfill. This letter also invited each school district to share information about their current waste management practices, diversion challenges and the opportunities they see for improvement. Three of these four invited school districts (75%) met with CRD staff to discuss their challenges in implementing effective recycling systems.

Several key barriers were identified in these conversations, including:

- the high cost of collection services and infrastructure
- competing operational priorities that limit available resources and staffing for program implementation
- managing contamination and pests
- accessing ICI recycling services, especially in remote areas like the Southern Gulf Islands

Through follow-up discussions with school district staff and a review of both current CRD activities and examples from other jurisdictions, staff identified several opportunities to support schools in their diversion efforts (Appendix B). These proposed activities include assisting elementary schools with pack-in/pack-out strategies which help route recyclable materials back to existing residential systems; funding waste audits to provide baseline data for designing effective strategies; and providing funding for adding new recycling streams, piloting initiatives, or improving sorting infrastructure such as waste sorting stations and signage.

Due to the range of campus models and the differing needs of student age groups, pack-in/pack-out supports would be provided for elementary schools, while waste audits and infrastructure funding would largely be directed towards middle and secondary schools. These proposed activities were presented to and validated by participating school districts in January 2026.

NEXT STEPS

Pending Board direction, staff will work with school districts to implement new initiatives to support their diversion efforts in addition to the established educational programs that the CRD already maintains, including classroom outreach, landfill tours and workshops delivered by the Compost Education Centre. Grant funding is currently available for schools wishing to complete projects related to waste reduction.

In alignment with the SWMP, staff will continue to investigate options for the mandatory source separation of waste across sectors and advocate for the expansion of EPR programs to the ICI sector.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That staff offer the recycling program supports outlined in Appendix B to all school districts operating in the capital region.

Alternative 2

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

Collaborating with schools to increase waste diversion aligns with Strategies 1C, 1D, 6D, 9A, 9B and 11A in the CRD's current Solid Waste Management Plan.

Financial Implications

The activities associated with these recommendations will be funded by Environmental Resource Management's core operations budget (1.521) through an existing \$700,000 allocation for community support programs. As per the table below, for 2026, up to \$100,000 could be used to support these ICI activities while still leaving surplus funds for other ad hoc community support opportunities in 2026. 2026 committed funds primarily consist of Rethink Waste Grants and the new Beyond the Curb initiative. Based on anticipated participation and costs associated with the school district support work in 2026, a portion of the 2027 community support allocation could be used to continue supporting school diversion initiatives.

Community Support Budget Allocation (2026)	
Total Budget	\$700,000
Committed to date	\$546,000
Uncommitted Funds	\$154,000
Available funds for supporting school districts	\$100,000

As funding and staff resources allow, excess Community Support budget funds will be used for other ICI diversion initiatives highlighted in Strategy 9 of the CRD Solid Waste Management Plan.

Service Delivery Implications

There are no significant service delivery implications. The recommended approach can be funded and implemented within the existing ERM budget and human resources.

CONCLUSION

Staff were directed by the Board to report on how the Solid Waste Management Plan can be leveraged to support school recycling programs and to write a letter to school districts to outline the requirement to comply with existing landfill disposal bans. Staff reviewed current supports, engaged with school district staff to understand barriers and identified opportunities to enhance diversion through educational materials and funding. Staff will work with school districts to provide targeted support and ensure that the implementation of these new initiatives supports the goals and targets outlined in the Solid Waste Management Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That staff offer the recycling program supports outlined in Appendix B to all school districts operating in the capital region.

Submitted by:	Russ Smith, Senior Manager, Environmental Resource Management
Concurrence:	Luisa Jones, MBA, General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Letter to School Districts – September 2025

Appendix B: Solid Waste Management Plan – Proposed Actions to Support for School Districts



Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services
625 Fisgard Street, PO Box 1000
Victoria, BC, Canada V8W 2S6

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September 24, 2025

File: 2320-20
Correspondence

Deb Whitten
Superintendent
Greater Victoria School District No. 61
556 Boleskine Road
Victoria, BC V8Z 1E8
Via email: whitten@sd61.bc.ca

**RE: INVITATION TO COLLABORATE ON WASTE DIVERSION AND REDUCTION INITIATIVES
IN SCHOOLS**

Dear Deb Whitten:

I hope the new school year has started well in School District 61.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board, at its September 10, 2025 meeting, directed staff to connect with each school district in the region to exchange information, to better understand current waste practices and to discuss potential areas of collaboration that will improve waste diversion from schools.

With that in mind, I'm writing to invite School District 61 to meet with the CRD this fall so we can learn about your current programs and understand what role the CRD could have in helping school districts reinforce consistent waste diversion programs that align with the CRD's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and the operation of Hartland Landfill.

The CRD owns and operates Hartland Landfill, the region's only landfill. As required under provincial legislation, regional districts in BC must develop and implement SWMP's long-term strategies designed to reduce waste and manage materials according to the 5R Pollution Prevention Hierarchy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recovery and Residuals Management).

Our current SWMP aims to extend the life of Hartland Landfill beyond 2100 by minimizing the amount of waste that is deposited each year. Schools play a key role in this effort, both as generators of waste and as influential learning environments that can inspire lifelong sustainable habits across a broad community.

As institutions, schools are also expected to comply with the Hartland Landfill Tipping Fee and Regulation Bylaw No. 3881, which prohibits certain materials from being disposed of as garbage in the landfill, including:

- Kitchen scraps
- Corrugated cardboard and mixed paper
- Beverage containers
- Electronics and electrical materials

Ensuring that these recyclable materials are separated at the source for collection not only helps avoid potential fines but also demonstrates environmental leadership and sets a positive example for students, staff and families.



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We recognize that many schools face unique challenges when it comes to implementing effective diversion programs. To that end, our team is committed to learning more from your staff and collaborating on practical solutions. We invite your school district to:

- Participate in a detailed discussion with CRD staff to exchange information, review current practices and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Provide feedback on a range of existing and potential tools, resources and programs that the CRD could develop to assist with implementing or enhancing waste diversion initiatives; and
- Share insights on the specific challenges schools are facing so we can tailor our support accordingly.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing leadership in shaping sustainable practices in our region. Please contact Melanie Tromp Hoover (Manager, Policy & Planning) at 250.360.3197 or mtromphoover@crd.bc.ca with any questions or to set up a meeting to discuss the above points in detail.

We look forward to collaborating with School District 61 on advancing waste diversion and helping create a model of environmental stewardship for our students and communities.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Smith', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Russ Smith,
Senior Manager, Environmental Resource Management

c.c.: Luisa Jones, General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services, CRD
Melanie Tromp Hoover, Manager, Policy & Planning, Environmental Resource Management, CRD



September 24, 2025

File: 2320-20
Correspondence

Paul Block
Superintendent
Sooke School District No. 62
3143 Jacklin Road
Langford, BC V9B 5R1
Via email: pblock@sd62.bc.ca

**RE: INVITATION TO COLLABORATE ON WASTE DIVERSION AND REDUCTION INITIATIVES
IN SCHOOLS**

Dear Paul Block:

I hope the new school year has started well in School District 62.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board, at its September 10, 2025 meeting, directed staff to connect with each school district in the region to exchange information, to better understand current waste practices and to discuss potential areas of collaboration that will improve waste diversion from schools.

With that in mind, I'm writing to invite School District 62 to meet with the CRD this fall so we can learn about your current programs and understand what role the CRD could have in helping school districts reinforce consistent waste diversion programs that align with the CRD's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and the operation of Hartland Landfill.

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We look forward to collaborating with School District 62 on advancing waste diversion and helping create a model of environmental stewardship for our students and communities.

Best regards,

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Russ Smith,
Senior Manager, Environmental Resource Management

c.c.: Luisa Jones, General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services, CRD
Melanie Tromp Hoover, Manager, Policy & Planning, Environmental Resource Management, CRD



September 24, 2025

File: 2320-20
Correspondence

Dave Eberwein
Superintendent
Saanich School District No. 63
2125 Keating Cross Road
Saanichton, BC V8M 2A5
Via email: deberwein@saanichschools.ca

**RE: INVITATION TO COLLABORATE ON WASTE DIVERSION AND REDUCTION INITIATIVES
IN SCHOOLS**

Dear Dave Eberwein:

I hope the new school year has started well in School District 63.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board, at its September 10, 2025 meeting, directed staff to connect with each school district in the region to exchange information, to better understand current waste practices and to discuss potential areas of collaboration that will improve waste diversion from schools.

With that in mind, I'm writing to invite School District 63 to meet with the CRD this fall so we can learn about your current programs and understand what role the CRD could have in helping school districts reinforce consistent waste diversion programs that align with the CRD's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and the operation of Hartland Landfill.

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We look forward to collaborating with School District 63 on advancing waste diversion and helping create a model of environmental stewardship for our students and communities.

Best regards,

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Russ Smith,
Senior Manager, Environmental Resource Management

c.c.: Luisa Jones, General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services, CRD
Melanie Tromp Hoover, Manager, Policy & Planning, Environmental Resource Management, CRD



September 26, 2025

File: 2320-20
Correspondence

Dr. Jill Jensen
Superintendent
School District No. 64 (Gulf Islands)
112 Rainbow Road
Salt Spring Island, BC V8K2K3
Via email: jjensen@sd64.org

**RE: INVITATION TO COLLABORATE ON WASTE DIVERSION AND REDUCTION INITIATIVES
IN SCHOOLS**

Dear Dr. Jensen:

I hope the new school year has started well in School District 64.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board, at its September 10, 2025 meeting, directed staff to connect with each school district in the region to exchange information, to better understand current waste practices and to discuss potential areas of collaboration that will improve waste diversion from schools.

With that in mind, I'm writing to invite School District 64 to meet with the CRD this fall so we can learn about your current programs and understand what role the CRD could have in helping school districts reinforce consistent waste diversion programs that align with the CRD's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and the operation of Hartland Landfill.

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We look forward to collaborating with School District 64 on advancing waste diversion and helping create a model of environmental stewardship for our students and communities.

Best regards,

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Russ Smith,
Senior Manager, Environmental Resource Management

c.c.: Luisa Jones, General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Environmental Services, CRD
Melanie Tromp Hoover, Manager, Policy & Planning, Environmental Resource Management, CRD



Solid Waste Management Plan – Proposed Actions to Support School Districts

<u>SWMP Strategy*</u>	<u>SWMP Actions</u>	<u>Proposed New School Initiatives (black)</u> <u>Enhance Existing School Initiatives (grey)</u>
Strategy 1 Continue and Enhance Education Programs	1C. Expand education programs to multi-family and ICI sectors.	Assist schools in implementing or refreshing pack-in / pack-out policies.
	1D. Enhance K-12 school program to include concepts of zero waste and circular economy.	Continue to provide teaching resources for waste reduction.
Strategy 2 Encourage Waste Prevention	2B. Establish a community-based waste reduction grant program.	- Continue to promote the CRD's ReThink Waste grant program to school districts and committees. - Continue to share successful school-based projects and ideas with education sector stakeholders.
	2D. Promote sustainable and/or packaging-free purchasing options.	Pack-in/pack-out strategies encourage more sustainable and packaging free options so that families will have less to manage and students will have less to "pack-out".
Strategy 3 Support Reduction of Avoidable Food Waste	3A. Continue to support residential food waste reduction through education campaign and composting promotion.	Continue to partner with <i>Love Food Hate Waste (LFHW) Canada</i>, which seeks to reduce avoidable food waste. LFHW will be releasing new resources to guide families on reducing avoidable food waste from packing lunches.
Strategy 6 Continue and Enhance Policy Development	6D. Investigate regulatory mechanisms to manage MSW and recyclable materials in the region.	Continue to investigate mandatory source separation and supporting regulations for ICI sector.
Strategy 7 Increase Residential Diversion	7A. Continue to promote residential diversion of recyclable materials (including organics), ensuring that education campaigns strive to minimize contamination in these streams.	Pack-in/pack-out programs encourage families to use residential recycling systems available for their materials. Packaging from lunches can be incorporated into available residential recycling programs when at the household level.

<u>SWMP Strategy*</u>	<u>SWMP Actions</u>	<u>Proposed New School Initiatives (black)</u> <u>Enhance Existing School Initiatives (grey)</u>
	7B. Collaborate with municipal and private sector service providers to support depot diversion efforts in the region for non-curbside materials.	- Investigate options for including flexible plastics in the CRD's residential curbside program for single-family homes. - Partner with municipalities and private sector service providers to expand drop-off options for recyclable materials that are not included in the curbside program.
Strategy 9 Increase ICI Diversion	9A. Allocate resources to increase ICI diversion, for example, a business waste reduction liaison.	- Fund waste audits for schools. - Designate funding for implementing new recycling streams, piloting new diversion initiatives, or improving sorting infrastructure. - Focus staff resources for ICI waste reduction towards schools.
	9B. Advocate to expand the PPP EPR to the ICI sector.	Advocate to the Ministry of Environment and Parks to consider including schools in EPR programs.
Strategy 11 Increase Organics Diversion and Processing Capacity	11A. Continue to promote organics waste diversion.	- Continue to provide educational resources funding through Compost Education Centre. - Continue to make grant funding available for school composting projects.

**While schools are considered part of the industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) sector, actions relating to enhancing residential programs have been included in this list because successful pack-in/pack-out strategies rely heavily on residential recycling systems.*