

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

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**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.

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

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**ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix A: Letter to School Districts – September 2025
- Appendix B: Solid Waste Management Plan – Proposed Actions to Support for School Districts