

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2022**

SUBJECT Residential Curbside Recycling Program – Update

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide the Environmental Services Committee with an update on the status of the Capital Regional District's (CRD) residential curbside recycling program.

BACKGROUND

Since 2014, the CRD has been contracted by Recycle BC, the not-for-profit organization that is responsible for residential packaging and paper product recycling in BC, to provide residential curbside recycling services in this region. In turn, the CRD contracts Emterra Environmental to provide the actual collection service. All collected recyclable materials are owned by Recycle BC and it maintains a separate contract with GFL Environmental to receive, process and market its recyclable materials. Between mid-November 2021 and February 2022, the curbside recycling program experienced challenges with the daily completion of service due to a variety of weather and pandemic related conditions.

This began with the flooding that occurred in November that resulted in collections in Sooke being suspended on November 15 due to road corridors in to and out of the community being flooded. Flooding in the Fraser Valley also resulted in Recycle BC's glass recycler being flooded for approximately two weeks, meaning glass collection had to be temporarily suspended in the capital region and province-wide for a comparable period of time. When glass collection was renewed, there was a significant backlog of glass that needed collecting that, when all backlogged glass was placed out for curbside collection, strained Emterra's ability to fully complete each day's routes. The flooding also severely impacted BC's road system and resulted in Recycle BC not being able to truck some recyclable materials to end-markets. This resulted in recyclable material having to be stockpiled at the local processing facility, straining the facility's ability to consistently receive additional recyclable materials until the backlog of material could be cleared.

The challenges experienced due to flooding were followed by the impacts of snowfall in the region, beginning on December 27 and continuing into mid-January 2022. Snowfall resulted in the complete cancellation of all collection on three days and collection only where possible for several other days. Those residences that were not able to be serviced were asked to hold on to their recyclables until their next scheduled collection day, or to take it to a depot, where possible. While some residents did drop-off their recyclables at a depot, the vast majority simply held on to their materials and added to their stockpile in between collections. When combined with the increased volumes resulting from the holiday season, it resulted in very high volumes of materials being placed out for collection on subsequent collection days, again straining Emterra's ability to complete each day's collections. This knock-on effect continued for several weeks until the backlog could be fully cleared.

In addition to the flood and snow service disruptions, Emterra's ability to provide collection was also impacted over the same time period by:

- difficulties with keeping collection trucks operating due to an inability to obtain parts, as a result of global supply chain issues
- a labour shortage due to a surge in staff falling ill with the Omicron variant of COVID-19
- challenges with recruiting and retaining staff in a competitive labour market, particularly for truck drivers; and
- a labour disruption on February 15 and 16

Emterra's issues were further exacerbated by challenges experienced by Recycle BC's processing contractor happening at the same time, including the breakdown of essential processing equipment, and difficulties with being able to transport recyclable materials to end-markets that gave rise to storage constraints.

Both Emterra and Recycle BC responded to the conditions that arose, and the curbside blue box program has now returned to normal operations. Emterra responded by bringing in additional collection trucks and crews from off-island, retaining a dedicated in-house mechanic and raising wage rates. Recycle BC and its processing contractor GFL Environmental responded by securing additional storage and seeking to diversify their end-markets. In recognition of the extraordinary circumstances that resulted in these service disruptions, the CRD supported efforts to clear the backlog of recyclable materials and stabilize the program by requesting and funding two dedicated special Saturday collections in January.

CONCLUSION

Between mid-November 2021 and February 2022, the curbside recycling program experienced challenges with the daily completion of service due to a variety of weather and pandemic related conditions. The CRD's collection contractor, and Recycle BC's recyclables processing contractor, both made extraordinary efforts to respond to these circumstances by adding additional resources and modifying their operating practices. With the end of inclement weather and easing of pandemic conditions, these efforts have helped to restore residential curbside recycling service to normal levels.

RECOMMENDATION

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That this report be received for information.

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