



# Regional Board Report

## Request for Decision

**To:** Regional Board  
**From:** Associate Director, Engineering Services  
**Date:** February 22, 2024  
**Subject:** Curbside Food Waste Collection – Engagement Results

**Voting Entitlement:** *All Directors - Unweighted Corporate Vote - Simple Majority (LGA s.208)*

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**Purpose:** To provide the Board with results from recent engagement on a curbside food waste program and confirm RDCO Board support for continued food waste collection discovery.

### Executive Summary:

On April 20, 2023, the Board was presented with a food waste collection engagement framework to engage residents on potential curbside collection changes to include food waste and to gauge if such a program is socially acceptable to residents in the Central Okanagan. In June 2023, Urban Systems was hired to develop a Food Waste Collection communications & Engagement Strategy which was completed in Sept 2023. Staff has since undertaken two engagement steps identified in the strategy including a statistically valid survey and engagement through the Regional Districts engagement platform [yoursay.rdco.com](https://yoursay.rdco.com) to determine level of support for a curbside food waste collection program. The results of this initial phase of engagement and in particular the statistically valid survey, show strong support for a curbside food waste collection program, with the largest concerns being around service cost, wildlife conflicts and biweekly collection of waste.

Based on the public input relating to potential service options, and the Food Waste Feasibility Study, the most acceptable curbside service design will likely include:

- Yard waste and Food Waste (organics) collected at curbside in the existing organics container.
  - Weekly organics curbside collection
  - Biweekly garbage curbside collection

Next steps are focused on defining how food waste that is collected will be processed, and initiating engagement with Councils for community specific feedback on draft service designs.

### Recommendation(s):

**THAT** the Regional Board receive the report Curbside Food Waste Collection – Engagement Results from the Associate Director of Engineering Services, dated February 22, 2024 for information.

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Report Approved by:

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Travis Kendel, Associate Director, Engineering Services

Approved for Agenda:

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Sally Ginter, Chief Administrative Officer

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**Strategic Plan Alignment:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency preparedness  | <input type="checkbox"/> Truth and reconciliation                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health and wellness     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environment and climate – Regional priority only |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Growth and development – Electoral Area priority only       |
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**Background:**

A key initiative in the 2020 Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) is to re-evaluate organic waste diversion opportunities while considering the need to maintain landfill gas. With curbside yard waste collection already well established, food waste diversion was identified as the next step to increase overall organics diversion in the region. The SWMP also requires that any organics diversion program be socially acceptable to the residents.

The first step in re-evaluation organics diversion was to conduct a Food Waste Feasibility Study. On February 2, 2023, the Board was presented with the Food Waste Feasibility study which identified adding food waste to existing residential curbside yard waste carts as the preferred option. The study also included recommendations for public engagement to determine acceptance for a food waste diversion program. At that meeting, the Board resolved that staff initiate next steps to implement a regional curbside co-mingled food and yard waste collection program and be presented with the consultation and engagement strategy for approval prior to engagement with residents and municipal Councils.

The Food Waste Collection – Engagement Framework was presented to the Board on April 20, 2023, and proposed the following:

- Build community awareness and understanding of the current state of curbside collection of garbage (which includes food waste) and yard waste.
- Provide information on key considerations that will be used for decision-making about future curbside options for garbage, food waste and yard waste.
- Identify resident priorities, concerns and preferences for future curbside options garbage, food waste and yard waste.
- Identify level of acceptance for food waste collection as a new program
- Seek feedback on draft service options.

In June 2023, staff hired Urban Systems to prepare a comprehensive Food Waste Collection Communication & Engagement Strategy. The intent of this document was to outline ongoing communication and engagement strategies throughout all phases of the food waste collection program, from initial public consultation to potential implementation. This strategy also included pre-interviews with partners including staff from member municipalities, our current waste hauler Environmental 360 Solutions and RDCO elected officials as well as a jurisdictional scan to gain insight into the experiences of other local governments who have implemented permanent or pilot collections program or have proposed similar food waste programs.

In the fall of 2023 first steps to engage the public were undertaken through a statistically valid survey as well as education and engagement opportunities through the regional districts engagement platform [yoursay.rdco.com](https://yoursay.rdco.com). The purpose of this initial consultation was to gain understanding of public acceptance of a curbside food waste program as well as identify concerns residents may have.

## Pre-interview and Engagement Research Results

Pre-interviews with municipal staff, RDCO staff, Environmental 360 solutions and the RDCO Board Chair and Vice Chair were conducted, and results helped to form the questions asked in the survey as well as information provided through the Your say page.

Key themes identified included:

- residents had low knowledge of landfill activities and current composting that takes place (i.e., yard waste diversion)
- residents who relocated from other areas, where food was collected curbside, want to see a similar program here.
- Concerns over wildlife, cost, odours, and overall implementation
- Curbside food waste program could extend the life of the landfill, reduce methane emissions and help the region move towards a circular economy
- Distance to processing facility and need for a transfer station and a transfer stations proximity to residential areas

A review of other communities who have moved forward with curbside food waste collection, the top concerns or issues those communities identified include:

- attracting wildlife and mitigated conflict with wildlife
- increased costs and new fees
- changes to garbage collection frequency (i.e., weekly organics, bi-weekly garbage collection)
- odour, pests and bins storage and logistics.

Implementation recommendations from other communities with existing food waste collection programs include:

- teaching residents how to manage excess material and mitigating wildlife interactions
- how to create bin liners to reduce odours
- make sure education is ongoing for a successful program

## Survey Results

A comprehensive mail in survey was conducted with a random sample of 1800 Central Okanagan residents in November 2023. Questions were structured so that they would inform the resident before the specific question was asked. Residents were asked to provide feedback on current behaviour, satisfaction with current services and comment on proposed new curbside collection services under consideration to accommodate food waste collection. There was an 30% response rate to the survey and it is considered statistically valid and representative of the region.

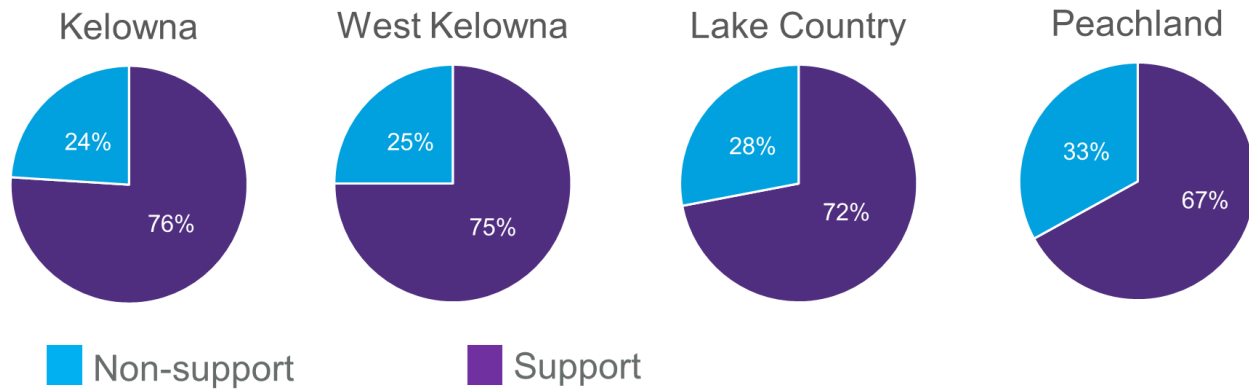
## Overall

As a region, 73% would support a curbside food waste program and 83% said they would likely participate in a food waste program if it was implemented. Chart 1 below shows level of support by community. Electoral area East and West were also surveyed however the sample sizes is too small to statistically confirm support or non-support for food waste collection.

Based on the public input relating to potential service options, and the Food Waste Feasibility Study, the most acceptable curbside service design will likely include:

- Yard waste and Food Waste (organics) collected at curbside in the existing organics container.
- Weekly organics curbside collection (increased from one every two weeks)
- Biweekly garbage curbside collection (decreased from every week)

## Chart 1: Support by municipality



### Top Concerns with a food waste program

#### Cost

Cost was identified as something important to consider to 93% of respondents. Sixty-three (63%) percent would be willing to pay more depending on the cost as follows:

- 37% would not be willing to pay anything more for food waste collection.
- 54% would support an increase of \$50/year
- 27% would support an increase of \$100/year
- 13% would support an increase of \$150/year

#### Nuisance of wildlife, rodents and odour

Residents have expressed a need to understand what can be done to minimize conflict with wildlife and rodents. Managing potential odours is also a concern.

#### Scheduling

Biweekly (every other week) garbage collection is seen as a concern however those that were concerned felt they could manage using cart upgrades or tag-a-bag if needed for extra waste.

#### Your say Summary

The RDCO's Your say engagement web page, which will remain open to the general public, provided residents with information on how our food waste is currently managed and copies of the Food Waste Feasibility Study and Solid Waste Management Plan. Your say also included potential service options (weekly food waste collection in existing yard waste carts and biweekly garbage collection) for residents to consider. Visitors of the Your say page had the opportunity to ask questions, make comment or participate in a discussion forum. Most visitors who engaged used the question tool to either make comments or ask specific questions.

- 2700 visited the Your say food waste page
- 579 visited multiple sections of the Your say platform including downloading provided documents or viewing multiple pages
- 157 commented through the question and answer or discussion forum
- The majority of those that visited the Your say page (53%) were in strong support of a food waste program, many having experienced this type of service in other communities

