



Regional Board Report

Request for Decision

To: Regional Board
From: Travis Kendel, Associate Director of Engineering
Date: July 17, 2025
Subject: Curbside Food Waste Collection Program Update

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

Purpose: To report back the outcome of the Board's direction to formally request Municipal Council support and participation in the RDCOs Curbside Food Waste Collection Program.

Executive Summary:

The Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) received approval from the Ministry of Environment in early 2020, contingent upon the inclusion of an evaluation for organic waste diversion. The Regional Board subsequently endorsed the amended SWMP unanimously, initiating a multi-year process to assess and potentially implement curbside food waste collection. This process began with a waste characterization study and a preliminary costing analysis, which estimated probable service costs for curbside food waste collection at \$60.30 per household per year.

Between 2021 and 2023, the Food Waste Feasibility Study was incorporated into the financial plan and further developed through collaboration with the Solid Waste Technical Advisory Committee (SWTAC) and municipal stakeholders. The final report, presented in late 2022, recommended implementing a regional co-mingled food and yard waste curbside collection program at a cost of \$63 per household annually and addressing multifamily sectors separately via differential tipping fees and landfill organics bans, (excluding multifamily residences from the initial program phase). Early in 2023, the Board endorsed this approach and instructed that comprehensive consultation and community engagement be conducted before public outreach began.

Accordingly, throughout 2023 and 2024, staff focused on planning, scoping, costing, and stakeholder engagement related to the initiative. The City of Kelowna excluded the Glenmore Landfill from the program, resulting in the selection of a transfer station with off-site composting as the only feasible option. Upon completion of Phase 1 public engagement in February 2024, feedback revealed a near even split in support for the program at the revised cost of \$66 per household per year. Technical assessments indicated a possible requirement for a second transfer station which drove estimated cost in a range of \$66 and \$90 per household per year. These findings, along with public engagement results, were presented to municipal Councils in September 2024. A subsequent review by the RDCO's consultant confirmed that a second transfer station was not required as a single transfer station could support the program over the next 25 years.

The City of Kelowna Council, after reviewing the Climate Resilient Kelowna Strategy (2030) on September 23, 2024, identified alignment with the RDCO on expanding residential curbside food waste collection as a high-priority action. On November 28, 2024, the RDCO Board resolved to continue developing the Curbside Food Waste Program and directed staff to seek confirmation of participation

from all municipal councils by July 31, 2025, to advance work on program development, infrastructure, land acquisition, and implementation strategies.

In early 2025, the program's estimated cost was validated as \$63 per household per year. This estimate included the expense of the single required transfer station. Delegations to all four municipal councils were completed by RDCO staff in June 2025. The City of Kelowna Council was first to consider participation. Its decision not to participate eliminated economies of scale and significantly altered the program's financial viability for the remaining 3 municipal partners. The principal concern articulated by the City of Kelowna was cost, concurrently citing an interest in addressing multifamily sector needs. Following this decision, partner municipalities (City of West Kelowna, the District of Peachland, and the District of Lake Country), declined participation after being informed of the increase in costs driven by the City of Kelowna declining to participate.

Throughout the planning and implementation phases for the Curbside Food Waste Program, key milestones were undertaken with RDCO Board support. The City of Kelowna's non-participation—citing chiefly cost considerations and the exclusion of multifamily residences—renders the Board's Strategic Priority "*Implement a curbside organics collection program*" as unattainable. In response to collective municipal feedback, staff recommend pursuing landfill diversion of food waste as a regional service in the forthcoming Solid Waste Management Plan update. This approach would encompass multifamily, single-family, and commercial waste streams, and be formally integrated into the 2030 Solid Waste Management Plan.

Recommendation(s):

THAT the Regional Board remove the implementation of an expanded curbside organics program from the RDCO 2023 – 2026 Board Strategic Priorities.

AND THAT the Regional Board direct staff to incorporate landfill diversion of food waste from multifamily, single family, and commercial sectors into the Solid Waste Management Plan for the Regional District, including the City of Kelowna, City of West Kelowna, District of Lake Country, and District of Peachland, during the next Solid Waste Management Plan update.

Respectfully submitted by: Travis Kendel, Associate Director of Engineering Services

Report Approved by: Danielle Noble-Brandt, Director of Development & Engineering Services

Approved for Agenda: Sally Ginter, Chief Administrative Officer

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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Introduction

The Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) update began in 2017. After consultation, a draft was sent to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, garnering conditional approval in February 2020 with required amendments. The Solid Waste Technical Advisory Committee made the directed changes, and on February 2, 2020, the Regional Board approved the updated SWMP and finalized its endorsement.

On October 8, 2020, the RDCO Governance and Services Committee asked staff to schedule a workshop to review and consider alternatives to the current recycling program. Staff collaborated with the Solid Waste Technical Advisory Committee, which recommended continuing current initiatives and studies under the SWMP, prioritizing those that align with Strategic Priorities.

On April 8, 2021, staff presented options for improving regional waste management, such as curbside recycling and food waste collection. An estimated average cost for curbside organics collection was \$60.30 per household per year (ranging from \$52.68 to \$120). Staff advised further analysis was warranted to determine feasibility, costs, and community benefits. The Governance and Services Committee adopted the following recommendation:

- ***THAT the Governance & Services Committee receive for information the Solid Waste Management Plan Initiatives (SWMP) Update report.***
- ***AND FURTHER THAT the Governance & Services Committee recommends to the Regional Board that the initiatives and timelines as outlined in the Solid Waste Management Update Report of April 8, 2021 be supported.***

Feasibility Analysis

In Fall 2021, the proposed curbside organics program was officially integrated into the RDCO's 2022–2026 Financial Plan. Concurrently, the City of Kelowna expressed interest in exploring innovative approaches, including countertop composting units and participation in a municipal pilot program facilitated by a local business. Consequently, the scope of the Food Waste Feasibility Study was broadened to assess the potential of incorporating countertop composting.

To guide the study an evaluation framework was collaboratively developed by RDCO staff, the City of Kelowna staff, and the project consultant. This team conducted thorough reviews of draft reports and collectively steered the direction of the research. The Solid Waste Technical Advisory Committee (SWTAC) evaluated the framework in early 2022, after which it was further refined into a formal evaluation matrix by mid-2022 to facilitate a systematic and transparent assessment process for potential solutions. The comprehensive Food Waste Feasibility Report was submitted to the RDCO and City of Kelowna project team in November 2023. The report concluded that co-mingled food waste collection is the most effective solution for regional adoption. After the SWTAC reviewed the study in early 2023, the findings were presented to the RDCO Regional Board on February 2, 2023, thereby informing subsequent decision-making and paving the way for future program implementation.

Within the February 2, 2023 report, RDCO staff proposed several next steps. These included confirming social acceptance through resident and member Council engagement, validating degrees of acceptance relative to service rate changes, developing strategies to foster community understanding and gather feedback regarding food waste collection, undertaking design level effort to accurately estimate service expenses and service details, and developing a consultation and communication strategy. On February 2, 2023, the Board directed staff to initiate the outlined next steps to implement a regional curbside co-mingled food and yard waste collection program.

The scope of the food waste program was confirmed to be inclusive of all existing curbside customers. Multifamily users would be considered as part of future services, and in the meantime, would be addressed through private haulers using strategies like organic waste bins or differential tipping fees at the Regional Glenmore Landfill. In March 2023, the City of Kelowna confirmed that the proposed Food Waste Program could not be accommodated at the Glenmore Landfill, necessitating the inclusion of a transfer station and reliance on out-of-community composting facilities to move forward. To enable public engagement, RDCO staff presented a Strategic Communications Strategy to the Regional Board on April 20, 2023. Shortly thereafter, the Board adopted its 2023–2026 Strategic Priorities, which included the implementation of a curbside organics collection program as a key initiative.

Timeline Milestones

Following the RDCO’s adoption of the 2023–2026 Strategic Priorities to expand curbside organics collection, several key milestones were reached:

- **Early 2023:** Staff concentrated on financial planning and contract development for the new food waste service.
- **Mid-2023:** Preliminary rates for waste services were negotiated and reviewed, resulting in recommended amendments introducing flexible pricing for combined food and yard waste.
- **November 2023:** Regional contracts were updated to incorporate optional pricing for food waste collection, providing a transparent cost structure to support future planning.

Phase 1 Engagement (Fall 2023)

- The first round of public engagement was launched, with surveys and outreach revealing strong community support (76% in favour) and captured feedback regarding scheduling, wildlife, and costs. The feedback gathered was instrumental in shaping subsequent planning steps.

Phase 2 Engagement (June 2024)

- The second engagement phase focused on specific topics such as options for a transfer station location and collection frequency. This phase saw over 4,200 survey responses, more than 8,000 visits to the project website, and 500+ participants at in-person events.

A summary of the process timeline follows, showcasing these major achievements.



The results from Phase 2 indicated ongoing robust support for the curbside food waste collection program, with 76% of respondents expressing approval. Notably, 70% supported or strongly supported

transitioning to bi-weekly garbage collection in conjunction with weekly food and yard waste collection. Key findings include:

- 50% of respondents are willing to pay at least \$66 per year for the service.
- 27% support the program but do not favour increases to taxes or utility fees.
- 19% indicated opposition to the initiative.
- 72% voiced concerns regarding wildlife and pest issues.
- Residents prioritized cost-effectiveness, pest/wildlife management, and odour mitigation when assessing potential transfer station locations.
- Public feedback was instrumental in refining the program, and revised recommendations were presented to municipal councils and the Regional Board in fall 2024.

Prior to broader municipal engagement, regional Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) received briefings on both public and technical consultation processes pertaining to the curbside food waste collection initiative, ensuring alignment and preparedness for subsequent phases of stakeholder engagement.

Following a presentation and engagement session with Kelowna City Council on September 9, 2024, the Council reviewed and adopted the Climate Resilient Kelowna Strategy (2030) on September 23, 2024. This strategy prioritizes collaboration with the RDCO to expand the organics program, including residential curbside food waste collection. This objective is closely aligned with the RDCO's strategic environmental initiatives and Policy 13.7.1 of the City of Kelowna's 2040 Official Community Plan, which seeks to extend the lifespan of the Glenmore Landfill by supporting waste reduction and diversion measures.

On November 28, 2024, RDCO staff delivered a comprehensive report to the Regional Board summarizing all findings to date, including insights from public consultations, technical studies, council input, inter-municipal coordination, and current conservative cost estimates (\$66–\$90 per household per year). The Board resolved:

- ***AND THAT*** the Board directs staff to continue progress on the Curbside Food Waste Program, encompassing program development, transfer station infrastructure and land acquisition, as well as implementation strategies;
- ***AND THAT*** the Board instructs staff to formally request participation from all municipal councils in the Curbside Food Waste Program, seeking confirmation of their support and involvement by July 31, 2025.

In April 2025, an RDCO consultant verified that a single transfer station would adequately support the program for a minimum of 25 years. Subsequent analysis confirmed the financial viability of the initiative, with projected annual costs estimated at approximately \$63 per household

Following Board direction, RDCO delegations attended municipal council meetings on June 9, 10, and 17, 2025, to formally seek council endorsement and participation in the curbside food waste program. These efforts aimed to promote municipal alignment and secure a unified regional commitment, thereby advancing collaboration and shared accountability for the program's forthcoming implementation.

Accordingly, municipal Councils passed the following resolutions.

- **City of Kelowna (June 9, 2025):**
 - ***THAT*** Council receive, for information, the report from the Utility Services Department, dated June 9, 2025, regarding adding food waste to the materials collected in the City of Kelowna's curbside organics collection program;

- **AND THAT** Council not support the City of Kelowna's participation in the Regional District of Central Okanagan's proposed Curbside Food Waste Program;
 - **AND THAT** Council direct staff to ensure that food waste diversion from landfill is included in the 2030 update to the Regional Solid Waste Management Plan;
 - **AND FURTHER THAT** future food waste diversion include consideration of multi-family residential as well as commercial properties
- **City of West Kelowna (June 10, 2025):**
 - **THAT** City of West Kelowna Council not support the City of West Kelowna's participation in the Regional District of Central Okanagan's Curbside Food Waste Program at this time.
 - **District of Peachland (June 10, 2025):**
 - **THAT** District of Peachland Council not support the District of Peachland's participation in the Regional District of Central Okanagan's Curbside Food Waste Program at this time.
 - **District of Lake Country (June 17, 2025):**
 - **THAT** District of Lake Country Council not support the District of Lake Country's participation in the Regional District of Central Okanagan's Curbside Food Waste Program at this time.

The City of Kelowna opted not to support the program, citing concerns regarding costs and the exclusion of multifamily residences. This decision differs from the broader regional objectives put forth by the Board, which advocates comprehensive and inclusive waste diversion strategies, as well as Kelowna's own commitment to implementing curbside residential food waste collection by 2030. This divergence highlights challenges in aligning municipal operational decisions with RDCO Board strategic priorities which offer long-term sustainability objectives, balancing fiscal responsibility with environmental priorities, and equitable service provision.

Regional services play an essential role in enabling oversight by multiple governing bodies. When the Regional District and municipalities collaborate as partners, consistent service delivery is ensured across all communities. A unified regional strategy provides all residents—regardless of their location—with equal access to high-quality services. Such collaboration streamlines both policy development and implementation, facilitating timely adjustments when necessary. It also fosters innovation by creating a forum where experts and forward-thinking representatives from local governments and communities can address common challenges. A shining example of this kind of regional approach is the Regional Emergency Management Program. For these reasons, RDCO staff remain optimistic that the objective of regional waste diversion will be realized at a future date via the Solid Waste Management Plan update.

Next Steps:

- RDCO staff will revise the 2025 workplan to include outstanding Solid Waste Management Plan initiatives.
 - If the Curbside Organics Collection Program is removed, staff will expedite the current Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP).
 - As the SWMP update is required before 2030, staff will leverage the SWMP to inform future food waste diversion.
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Considerations:

Organizational/External:

- RDCO Staff prioritize Solid Waste related activities to align with the Board's Strategic Priorities and the Solid Waste Management Plan.

Considerations not applicable:

- Legal/Statutory Authority
 - Financial
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Attachment(s):

1. Food Waste Decision Summary
 2. Food Waste Presentation
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