

Best Practice

Keeping It Green

CONTACT

City of Lloydminster
Karen Dela Rosa
P. 306-825-4581
Email. kdelarosa@lloydminster.ca
4420 50 Ave., Lloydminster, AB/SK, T9V 0W2
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THE PRACTICE

Since 1997, it has been status quo in Lloydminster for curbside collection. Garbage and recycling were collected on the curb manually; there was no limit on the number of bags on the curb. Residents embraced curbside recycling with an average monthly tonnage of 63 tonnes in 2008. This system worked, but it had some issues.

The city's growth means more waste, filling expensive engineered landfill cells more quickly than projected. The manual collection of waste was also compromising safety of municipal employees. There was the physical work of collecting 20 or more bags per residence, but also exposure to hazardous materials in the bags, such as improperly disposed needles, household hazardous waste, and broken glass. Stray animals and birds were also getting into bags – often set out the night before collection day – and spreading waste around the streets.

Even with the curbside recycling program, waste diversion was a mere 12 per cent. The city conducted a waste audit and found 49 per cent of waste going to the landfill is actually organic (food and yard waste) that could be diverted from the waste stream.

The city surveyed residents in May 2010 about what they wanted to see curbside.

- 97 per cent of respondents think the city should continue to provide curbside recycling services
- 77 per cent of respondents wanted to divert more waste from the landfill
- 60 per cent of respondents wanted a cart system for curbside collection
- Respondents identified collection of organics as an important initiative that the city needs to consider

This led to the city launching the Keeping it Green program in April 2013. It introduced three-stream collection (waste, organics, and recyclables) to increase diversion from the landfill. Waste and organics are collected in carts, and recyclables in blue bags. With the carts limiting the amount of waste residents can put on the curb, it encourages them to divert more waste into the blue bag or organics cart.

THE PROCESS

The project began with a survey and waste audit (mentioned above). They then launched an 18-month organics collection pilot project, commissioning Ever Green Ecological Services to do organics collection in Lakeside. Take up was good in the neighbourhood, with 90 per cent of households participating, and 83 per cent indicating that they would use the program if the city offered the service.

Administration then put out a Request for Proposal to provide three-stream curbside collection service to all households in Lloydminster. With a contractor selected, total cost of curbside collection and processing went up by \$2.25, including the cost

of carts, collection, and processing organics. After the contract was approved by council, administration began planning for roll out. Preparation included behind-the-scenes administrative changes, and an education/communication portion.

Municipal council provided direction for the project, and reviewed the recommendation from administration to adopt the system city wide. Council also served as program liaison to residents and the media.

THE RESULTS

In the first five months of the program, more than 1,800 tonnes of recyclables and organics were diverted from the landfill. This number represents 40 per cent of materials put out on the curb for collection – a 233 per cent increase in diversion.

Since all the materials are contained in the carts, strays and other animals are kept from getting into the waste put on the curb for collection. This also prevented wind-blown litter keeping streets cleaner. The carts are collected by a robotic arm, making it safer for the collection crew.

Keeping It Green has also given Lloydminster residents a sense of pride and fulfillment that they are doing their part to keep the environment healthy for the next generation.

With the carts needing a one-meter clearance on all sides to be serviced, there are some issues with parking demands. A six-point strategy was developed and presented to council. Half were implemented during roll out, and the others will be implemented once evaluation is done and it is deemed necessary.

Feedback on cart size (90 gallons) has been mixed – some believe it is too big to store, others believe it is too small to hold all their waste. Feedback from residents who cannot physically move the carts was also received. Together with the city's curbside contractor, a free special walk-up service was developed for residents who are mobility challenged.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Change will always be difficult. Trying to find one system that fits all will be nearly impossible. The program has to evolve and be dynamic enough to respond to resident's needs. It is critical to listen to feedback, evaluate it, and implement solutions when necessary.
- Benchmarking with other communities who have launched a similar program was very beneficial. Learning what worked for them and what didn't help prepare for the challenge of driving change.
- A two-week grace period was given to residents to adjust to the new system. In the two-week period, overfull carts were still tipped; extra bags on the curb were picked up. After the grace period, strict implementation of the program began. The contractor started putting stickers on the carts that did not comply with curbside collection rules. It helped residents to put their carts out right the next time.
- Use clear, explicit messaging for critical information. The launch information said "beginning April 1," but when carts were delivered in March, some began using them immediately. The new contractor had to begin service sooner than anticipated, as the previous contractor did not service the carts. A "Do not use until April 1" sticker on carts would have been a simple solution to the confusion.
- Prepare for the number of phone calls. During the open house, staff noted questions from the public, and developed an FAQ sheet. The sheet was posted on the city website, and given to front-line staff so they could answer calls. This would have been even more useful earlier in the program – before ads and marketing materials went out.
- Choose the pilot area carefully. Cart collection logistics were evaluated based on the pilot project, but it is a newer neighbourhood with wider lots, garages, or driveways. During city-wide implementation, residents with narrow lots and/or no driveways had challenges putting out the carts. This problem may have been evaluated sooner if the pilot area represented the mix of different households in the city.