

Waste Management Roadmap Online Focus Groups What We Heard Report

DATE: September/October 2020



Strathcona County has embarked on a project to develop a 2021-2031 Waste Management Roadmap. The overall intent of the project is to develop a way forward for how we manage waste in the County for the next ten years.

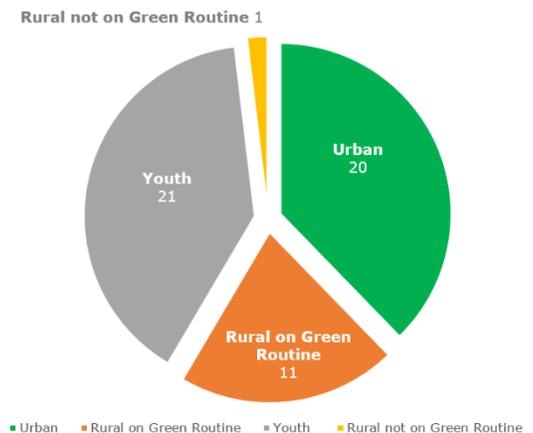
Engagement / Focus Group Results

Online Focus Group Participants

In September 2020, Strathcona County residents were invited through numerous communications channels to participate in online waste management focus group discussions. From September 29 to October 14, 2020, the County facilitated six sessions overall with the following number of residents participating:

- Urban: 20
- Rural on the Green Routine: 11
- *Rural not on Green Routine: 1
- Youth: 21 from Salisbury High School and the Strathcona County Youth Advisory Group

**One rural resident responded to the invitation and was granted a one-on-one interview. The results of this interview are not statistically representative of this rural resident group; however, the County will be incorporating this person's general ideas for change into the overall Waste Management Roadmap public engagement feedback set.*



Themes from the discussions were determined based on a third-party analysis of participant inputs.

Main Themes

- 1) The County should be a **leader in waste management.**
- 2) The County needs to invest in developing **commercial/business sector waste management policies or programs, or a combination of both.**
- 3) Any **pay-as-you-throw program** developed should carefully consider all issues before implementation.
- 4) **Incentive programs** are preferred to motivate all County audiences to improve waste management behaviour.

Background, Questions, and Themes

Online focus groups were held to get further detailed input on specific topics from the survey and the online discussion forums held in June 2020. Since we already had decisive input on the desire to a) have increased recycling convenience at the curb and b) have the County continue to participate in pressure to influence manufacturers and suppliers to introduce fewer non-recyclables into the market (i.e., single-use plastics), we did not ask focus groups to weigh in on these topics any further.

Participants were prompted for discussion during the online focus groups with the following information.

Urban and Rural Groups (on Green Routine)

FUTURE OF WASTE MANAGEMENT



Information: We shared this graphic to the left, plus a case study on a leading municipality in waste management practices.

What We Heard: The majority of participants in both sectors (urban and rural) were vocal about Strathcona County continuing to be a leading place to live in our province. Most participants shared that they would like our County to continue to be leaders in waste management while also paying close attention to other priorities at the County that make our municipality a great place to live.

COMMERCIAL

Information: We shared the County's Managing Waste Together in the Community video (https://youtu.be/B6wHG6_mTmQ), and explained how the commercial sector currently does not have a formal role in the County's Green Routine program.

What We Heard: Discussion centered around ensuring that everyone in the County should be playing a role in effective waste management. Many participants were surprised that the commercial sector is not required to participate in a formal County waste management program like the Green Routine. The vast majority of participants in both sectors (urban and rural) indicated that the County should be doing more to help develop formal waste management programs for businesses. The groups also shared that a formal program for the commercial sector should be introduced collaboratively and gradually, based on incentives rather than punitive measures. The majority of participants in both sectors (urban and rural) stated that knowing whether a business participated in a formal waste management program would influence where they shop.

PAY-AS-YOU-THROW

Information: We shared the County's Making Changes video (https://youtu.be/B6wHG6_mTmQ), and explained how we needed further input into this topic as the survey and discussion boards indicated pay-as-you-throw is an important point of discussion for the Waste Management Roadmap.

What We Heard: Participants in both sectors (urban and rural) indicated that there were possible issues relating to the possible implementation of a pay-as-you-throw system. The major issues stated were illegal dumping, neighbours using others' bins, and implementing a fair system for all groups, including households with larger families. Discussions included what type of user-pay system would work best for our County. The majority of participants in both sectors (urban and rural) preferred an

incentive-based system vs. a punitive system. They shared that steps should be taken by the County to gradually introduce a user-pay system founded in motivating people to improve waste management behaviours, as a punitive-based system would likely create unneeded backlash. Participants were not sure about what amount of a monetary incentive would motivate people, but a point of reference was “at least \$10.”

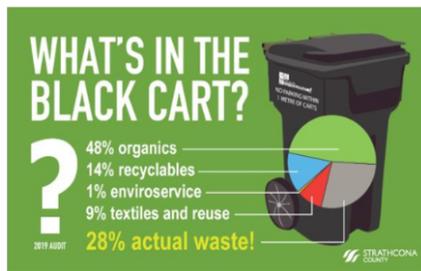
SPECIAL RURAL QUESTION

Information: We shared that the County is one of the only municipalities in Alberta offering roadside collection services to rural households and that approximately 60% of rural residents (including hamlets) use Green Routine services.

What We Heard: Participants were pleasantly surprised about the above information and shared appreciation. When the topic of specific waste management challenges related to rural living came up, a handful of shared answers were brought forward: it is easier to compost and grass cycle in a rural setting, there are different waste management rules for urban residents vs. rural residents, and access to recycling centres is less convenient for rural residents vs. urban residents.

Youth Groups

ASSESSING WASTE MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOUR



Information: We shared the graphic to the left and the County’s Managing Waste Together: Talking Out the Trash video (<https://youtu.be/vhZ9vAdWCuU>).

What We Heard: The participants initially discussed how well they thought they were doing themselves regarding waste management behaviours in their home. The participants were split on this topic, with some youth telling others how to do it in their homes, and others saying they could do better. In discussion on how they could do better, some youth found the

“rules” to be confusing at times as to what goes where and what can be recycled. Discussions took place on how information and education could be enhanced so they could be reminded and better informed about waste management guidelines and rules. When it comes to willingness to improve waste management behaviours, the participants overwhelmingly were willing to change their habits.

COMMERCIAL

Information: We shared the County’s Waste: A Shared Responsibility video (https://youtu.be/B6wHG6_mTmQ), plus information on consistency in the community related to the commercial sector currently not having a formal role in the County’s Green Routine program.

What We Heard: Discussion took place on how the participants manage their waste when out in the community. The majority of youth indicated that they look for opportunities to recycle and/or compost their waste when they are out in the community. They also overwhelmingly shared that recycling and organics bins should be everywhere. They indicated that if there were more bins in convenient areas, they would improve waste management practices. The discussion around the commercial sector and waste management focused more on whether the participants were concerned if businesses offered eco-friendly options. The participants were split between “absolutely, it is very important” and “only if it doesn’t cost more.”

FUTURE OF WASTE MANAGEMENT

Information: We shared information on the history of the Green Routine in the County and shared a case study on a leading municipality in waste management practices.

What We Heard: A large majority of participants were vocal that Strathcona County should “absolutely” continue to be a leader in waste management. Comments included that there are other important issues as well, improve the commercial sector’s involvement in waste management, and possibly partner with adjacent and other municipalities. This discussion took place in combination with comments on how proud the participants are to live in our County.

What’s Next?

Input received through the waste management survey, discussion boards, and online focus groups will form the foundation of a final report, scheduled for presentation to the County Council in early 2021.



**DID YOU KNOW: FIND MORE INFORMATION
ABOUT WASTE MANAGEMENT AT STRATHCONA.CA**

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