

**Region of Waterloo**  
**Engineering and Environmental Services**  
**Waste Management**

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**To:** Sustainability, Infrastructure, and Development Committee

**Meeting Date:** October 7, 2025

**Report Title:** Curbside Waste Collection Implementation Update

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**1. Recommendation**

For information.

**2. Purpose / Issue:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the upcoming 2026 curbside collection changes. The report outlines progress on education and outreach, cart roll-out, and program supports. It also highlights coordination with area municipalities, feedback received from the community, and next steps of program implementation in March 2026.

**3. Strategic Plan:**

The curbside waste collection change meets the 2023-2027 Corporate Strategic Plan priorities to steward our natural environment and shared resources as we grow: We will work to protect the region's natural environment, biodiversity, trees, and water under Strategic Priority 2, Climate-aligned growth.

**4. Report Highlights:**

- Staff have engaged with over 15,000 people at various community and pop-up events from March to the end of August
- A cart selection portal was available from June 30 to September 5. This resulted in the selection of over 16,500 small garbage carts by property owners
- Assisted Waste Collection and Medical Exemption programs will continue to support residents with accessibility or medical needs, ensuring compliance with accessibility regulations and minimizing risk to service equity

**5. Background:**

The transition to cart-based curbside waste collection has been in development for several years and builds upon earlier Council decisions. Refer to Council Reports EES-

WMS-23-003, COR-TRY-24-013 and EES-WMS-25-001 for more information.

## **Progress:**

### **Education and outreach**

Education and outreach have been a priority to prepare the community for the transition to cart-based collection. Dedicated staff resources along with a variety of communication tactics have been used to ensure consistent messaging and widespread awareness.

- From March to end of August, staff have attended 201 community engagement activities including farmers' markets, family-friendly events, landfill tours, school presentations, retail booths, and static displays at municipal facilities (e.g. recreation/community centres and libraries). More than 15,000 people have been directly engaged.
  - Waste Discovery Day (May 10) attracted over 630 residents to the Waterloo Waste Management site. Attendees viewed the new carts, asked questions, and watched a live cart collection demonstration by contractor, Emterra Environmental
- Communication tactics used include news releases, newsletter articles, postcards, newspaper and online ads, radio and TV interviews, signs and billboards, and social media campaigns
  - Social media content across Facebook, Instagram, and X generated more than 1.6 million impressions with approximately 143,500 resident engagements to date
- An EngageWR page ([engagewr.ca/carts](https://engagewr.ca/carts)) for frequently asked questions was launched in June. This provides consistent answers to common questions and continues to be updated throughout implementation
- Uptake of the Waste Whiz App has grown significantly, with almost 6,880 new downloads from May to end of August. There are currently over 106,500 active users for 55,700 properties in Waterloo Region. The cart selection app campaign had 12,385 interactions. More messages to follow during pivotal stages of the roll-out
- A dedicated email address ([carts@regionofwaterloo.ca](mailto:carts@regionofwaterloo.ca)) was launched in May, and by end of August, staff have responded to over 3,000 resident inquires specifically related to carts
- The 2026 collection calendar with new collection days will be distributed in early 2026, as January and February 2026 have been included in the existing 2025 calendar

### **Cart selection**

A green cart for organics (one size only) and a large black cart for garbage will be

delivered to properties who receive Region waste collection before March 2026. If households prefer the small black cart, they were given the ability to select the appropriate black cart for their needs.

- The online cart selection portal was open from June 30 until September 5. Over 16,500 small garbage carts were selected during this timeframe
- All households are required to use the carts provided for at least six months. A one-time, no-cost exchange will be offered in fall of 2026 for households wishing to change black cart sizes
- Information kits will accompany cart deliveries. These kits will include program details, sorting guidelines, cart placement instructions, and directions to online resources
- The Region required deadlines for cart selection to ensure cart-based collection launches on time in March 2026

### **Cart deliveries**

Cart delivery is one of the most visible steps in the transition to cart-based curbside waste collection. The delivery schedule is being coordinated to ensure timely, efficient and accurate distribution across the Region by the contractor.

- Emterra Environmental has received multiple shipments of carts and remains on schedule to begin deliveries in the fall of 2025. Approximately 340,000 garbage and organics carts will be distributed to over 170,000 residential properties by February 2026
- Residents cannot use the carts until the new program begins on Tuesday, March 3, 2026

### **Old Garbage Containers and Green Bins**

- Residents are welcome to keep their green bins and re-use them as storage for soil, mulch, sports equipment, pet food or other household goods
- Residents are encouraged to reuse green bins as yard waste containers (yellow sticker required) as of March 2026
- There will be a drop-off location for unwanted green bins after March 2026. More information on this program will be announced at a later date
- If residents do not want their garbage can, secure a sign on the can that says "Garbage please take" and place out for bulky item collection on collection day after launch in March 2026

### **Additional program support**

The Region continues to recognize the importance of supporting residents who may require additional assistance or accommodations. Support programs are being updated to ensure equitable access to waste services while complying with all applicable

regulations and respecting confidentiality.

### **Assisted Waste Collection**

- Service for residents unable to place carts curbside and without a household member who can assist
- Currently, there is one active participant and three pending applications. Staff have seen an increase in inquiries about the program, and it is anticipated this will continue as awareness grows
- The service is for black (garbage) and green (organics) carts only. Yard waste, bulky items, or appliances are not included. Residents can inquire with Circular Materials and their contractors whether assisted blue box collection is offered
- The application process will transition to an online application form. Applications will still require medical confirmation and a site visit before approval
- Staff engaged with the Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) to gather feedback on the program, outreach strategies, and the Assisted Waste Collection application process. Staff will be using this information to streamline the service

### **Medical Exemption**

- Eligible households generating extra non-hazardous garbage due to medical conditions receive a supply of 30 garbage tags annually
- Applications must be renewed annually. All submissions are processed confidentially
- In 2024, there were 85 users of the program

## **6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public**

**Area Municipalities:** Staff engaged with the Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee to share information on the carts program and gather input on accessibility considerations.

Staff also presented at the All-Councils June 2025 meeting, informing area municipalities of program details, timelines, and resident supports. These discussions have supported alignment, increased awareness, and consistent messaging across the Region. Staff will continue to work with area municipalities to prepare for the change.

**Public:** See update provided in this report.

## **7. Financial Implications:**

There are no financial implications with this report.

	<b>Current Year</b>	<b>Future Year(s)</b>
<b>Budget Impact?</b>	No new impact	No new impact
<b>Capital Plan Impact?</b>	No new impact	No new impact

**8. Conclusion / Next Steps:**

Next steps include:

- Complete cart deliveries by February 2026
- Continue education and outreach into 2026
- Launch one-time no-cost garbage cart exchange in Fall 2026
- Monitor the program, resident experience, and contractor performance post-implementation

**9. Attachments: N/A**

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