

QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES YOU CAN COUNT ON



Create clean, green cities



Municipal solid waste services are fundamental to the quality of life in our communities, our health and our environmental future.

The challenge is to continue to reduce the amount of residential waste we create, and to capture the value of any waste created as another public resource. We must also extend waste reduction and recycling practices to all commercial and industrial activity. We cannot keep digging and filling up holes with our garbage, or releasing toxins from its disposal into our air and water.

In order to meet these challenges municipalities must retain accountability, flexibility and control over their solid waste services. Contracting out garbage services means municipalities lose control and flexibility to implement waste diversion programs like recycling and composting.

Provincial governments are considering Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) as a way to make the private sector more responsible for final disposal of waste they introduce into the system.

Companies must take responsibility for excess packaging and other waste by supporting comprehensive local recycling programs, but only publicly controlled and delivered programs will put the public interest first. It is critical that municipal governments retain control over waste collection and recycling.

The introduction of industry-specific programs would reverse progress that public systems have made in diverting waste from landfill, creating a fragmented approach that takes resources away from effective public diversion programs. Stronger waste reduction, reuse and recycling programs aimed at private industry must support effective, universally-accessible public systems.

In British Columbia, legislated changes have created a new agency, known as Multi-Material British Columbia (MMBC), to meet EPR targets under the province's recycling regulations. MMBC has been implemented with limited consultation and a problematic pricing structure. Kamloops and a number of municipalities in the Central Kootenay region have been left out of the program. Municipalities that do participate have seen MMBC privatize their recycling collection, most recently in Vancouver. Further, MMBC has been set up outside the jurisdiction of the auditor general and the provincial *Financial Administration Act*.

Independent studies conclude that solid waste services delivered by municipal employees are comparable in cost and

efficiency to privately contracted services. There is no consistent evidence showing that contracted-out waste collection is cheaper and more efficient than public waste collection. This is confirmed by recent experience across Canada.

Calgary

The City of Calgary recently reaffirmed a completely public model for its garbage and recycling collection. A 2015 city-commissioned report on Calgary's residential solid waste services recommends against contracting out solid waste collection services, finding no evidence contracting out will deliver significant cost savings. The same report finds that Calgary's per-pick up cost of \$1.27 is well within the range of comparator cities (a mix of municipalities with fully public, fully private and combined public-private delivery), and is less than areas where waste collection is fully privatized.

Toronto

In 2012, the City of Toronto contracted out solid waste collection services in the western half of the city, and in early 2017 council considered a staff report that recommended contracting out the city's remaining solid waste collection. But the city had also recently received a report from consultant Ernst & Young that showed in-house collection is competitive in both cost and performance.

Moreover, an earlier staff report and the Ernst & Young report both found that the current model delivers high value and quality of service, and that the public sector is doing a better job than privatized service delivery when it comes to complaints, diversion, and cost. Instead of approving the staff recommendation to contract out the remaining solid waste collection in the city, council shelved the report and directed staff to produce better “performance data and financial metrics” concerning contracted-out and in-house solid waste collection.

Sherbrooke

In 2011, the City of Sherbrooke, Que. brought garbage collection services in house, saving the city \$750,000 annually. Successful recycling and composting programs allowed the city to reduce garbage collection to once every two weeks. This meant city workers could take over the service with one new employee and one new truck. Prior to this, city workers collected garbage in the city core while private contractors handled the outlying areas.

Ottawa

In 1998, Ottawa contracted out solid waste collection in four zones, and retained in-house collection in a fifth zone. The city is gradually contracting its garbage, compost, and recycling services back in, having faced rising contractor costs and declining public satisfaction. In 2011, an independent audit found in-house services had saved more than \$5 million in four years. Ottawa’s auditor attributed the savings from using public employees to “route optimization, managing labour costs and the benefits of a new fleet [reduced maintenance costs].” In 2011, the city renewed the first in-house contract, and voted to bring a second zone back in house. In the first year of the new contracts, in-house collection led to further savings of \$677,530.

Port Moody

In 2009, the City of Port Moody, B.C. brought solid waste and recycling services back in house after 10 years of private provision. The contractor missed weekly pick-ups and provided such poor service that the city sent municipal employees out to clean up their mess. Two years later, the city’s in-house waste collection won Port Moody a 2011 Solid Waste Association of North America Award of Excellence. The bronze award “recognizes outstanding solid waste reduction programs,” in this case for a communications project to change public attitudes about recycling. The city credits its staff as “recycling ambassadors” for getting the word out.

Conception Bay South

After 30 years of using a private contractor, the Town of Conception Bay South, N.L. has brought its residential garbage collection services in house. The town is now providing the service using its own workers, and the town’s CAO says they’re saving about \$230,000 a year – \$1.15 million over five years. Moreover, recycling has also been introduced, as an in-house service, and the town has taken steps to make the working conditions experienced by collections staff safer.

Nanaimo

In April 2017, city council in Nanaimo, B.C., announced the city would be moving to a new automated curbside

collections system. Health and safety of the workforce was a big factor in the decision: injuries to the collections workforce cost the city more than \$400,000 in lost time in 2014, and virtually every permanent employee had suffered a workplace injury of some sort. With automated trucks the city hopes to completely eliminate injuries caused by heavy lifting. The move to automated trucks will also allow the city to terminate its contract for recyclables collection, saving an additional \$800,000 annually.

Hamilton

Since amalgamation in 2000, City of Hamilton, Ont. employees have collected garbage in half the city, and a private contractor in the other half. In-house collection has consistently been more economically efficient than the contractor, even though city employees serve the older downtown core. An April 2011 report confirmed publicly-delivered solid waste services cost \$1.15 less per household than the private service. The positive role of the public sector in residential collection was reaffirmed in a 2012 report, which found that savings from the split public/private model could add up to \$60 million between 2013 and 2020. The study noted Hamilton’s model would also provide “increased service levels” and “the opportunity to increase diversion from landfill.”

Public solid waste services are efficient, more committed to service and environmental sustainability, and more accountable to the public. Let’s keep solid waste services public for clean, green cities and quality services we can depend on.



CUPE / Canadian Union
of Public Employees