

Results of Public Consultation Plan Regarding Options to Modify the Waste Utility Rates

Maintain existing rate structure

Recommendation:

That the June 19, 2012, Financial Services and Utilities report 2012IS8626, be received for information.

Report Summary

This report contains results of the Public Consultation Plan in which residents were asked to identify their preference relative to five proposed rate options.

Report

Further to the Infrastructure Services report 2012IS1976 (Public Consultation Plan Regarding Options to Modify the Waste Utility Rates for Low Volume Generators) presented at the February 28, 2012, Utility Committee, Administration developed a Public Consultation Plan to collect input from residents on five rate options for waste management services.

Results from the public consultation provided a majority opinion: maintain the existing method of financing waste management services.

By receiving this report for information, Administration will retain the status quo and no further action is required by City Council with respect to the Waste Management Utility rate structure.

Public Consultation Plan

- The Public Consultation Plan was developed and executed to obtain public input specific to modifying the waste utility rates for low-volume generators in the single-family sector.
- The five options presented for discussion are outlined in Attachment 1.
- The results of the Public Consultation Plan are summarized in Attachment 2, which presents public input from 2,087 citizens.
- Four methods were used to obtain input from residents. In each of the four separate consultation methods, between 50% and 72.2% of the respondents supported the current rate structure. The four consultation methods were:
 1. Independent Professionally Administered On-line Survey – 803 interviews were conducted by Leger Marketing between April 3 - 12, 2012, to provide statistically representative data with a margin of error of $\pm 3.5\%$, 19 times out of 20. Attachment 3 contains comments from this survey.
 2. Four Open Houses – 112 residents attended:
 - April 10, at Ukrainian Youth Centre (36 attendees)
 - April 11, at Central Lions Senior Centre (32 attendees)
 - April 12, at MacEwan University South Campus (22 attendees)
 - April 16, at Fantasyland Hotel (22 attendees).
 3. Open Website Survey – 1,136 surveys were completed on-line.
 4. Calls and e-mails to various offices (311, Council, Waste

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- Management Customer Support)
– 36 comments were received through calls and direct e-mail.
- Administration has sought public input specifically on volume-sensitive fees on four previous occasions. In each instance, a majority of residents supported the current system.

Social Marketing Program to Foster Waste Reduction

- Grasscycling and backyard composting have been promoted since the early '90s as effective ways to reduce the amount of household waste set out for collection.
- In 2005, the focus on grasscycling was bolstered with a social marketing program. Through ongoing public education and outreach activities, household participation in grasscycling has increased from 26% in 2005 to 52% in 2011.
- In late fall 2012 and spring 2013, the Utility will launch a social marketing program that builds on previous successes and will encourage residents to reduce their waste further. This program will pull together several of the Utility's ongoing messages around grasscycling, backyard composting and reuse under the umbrella message of waste reduction.
- While the social marketing program will reach all Edmonton households, it will have as its primary target audience those households that produce large volumes of waste.
- Outreach activities, volunteer support and various other methods will be used to directly target households with larger than normal

volumes. The program will include information about how to reduce waste and the benefits of reducing waste.

- As with all the social marketing programs administered by Waste Management Utility, results will be measured and shared with residents.
- The Public Consultation Plan found that 68% of respondents are "interested in learning more about ways that I can reduce my own household's waste (both garbage and recycling)"; and 76% supported continually improving targets for household waste reduction (both garbage and recycling).

Policy

C527 – Waste Management

Corporate Outcomes

The Way We Green, Edmonton's Environmental Strategic Plan:

- Partnerships with citizens, communities and organizations are leveraged to improve Edmonton's environmental health

Public Consultation

A Public Consultation Plan was developed and delivered April 3 – 12, 2012, in accordance with Policy C513. Results of the Plan are contained in this report.

Budget/Financial Implications

- Given that in each of the four consultation processes, the majority of respondents supported the current rate structure, the 2013 – 2015 Business Plan update does not propose any changes for low volume generators.

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- The anticipated expenditure in 2012 to develop and execute a social marketing program as described will be small and is expected to be accommodated in the approved 2012 Operating Budget of the Waste Management Utility. Full implementation will take place over 2013 and 2014, with an estimated cost of \$150,000 per year. These expenses will be budgeted in the 2013 and 2014 Operating Budgets of the Waste Management Utility.

Attachments

1. Five Options
2. Results of Public Involvement Plan
3. Comments from the Professionally Administered Survey

Others Reviewing this Report

- L. Rosen, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer

Background Information Available on Request from the Department

1. Full report on results of the Open Website Survey
2. Full report on results of the Professionally Administered On-line Survey
3. Completed Surveys from Open Houses

Five Options

Option 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All single family households pay the same monthly rate. • There is no change in how garbage and recyclables are set out and collected. 	One Rate: Same for all = \$33.20/mth
Option 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single family households can register to be on the low volume program and pay a lower monthly rate. • Participating households are allowed to set out one container each of garbage and recyclables on each collection day. • Regular rate households will have no change in how garbage and recyclables are set out and collected. 	Two Rates: 1. Regular = \$34.75/mth 2. Low Volume = \$29.50/mth
Option 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single family households can register to be on the low volume program and pay a lower monthly rate. • Participating households are allowed to set out one container each of garbage and recyclables on each collection day. • Twice per year on specified collection days, they can set out additional garbage and recyclables. • Regular rate households will have no change in how garbage and recyclables are set out and collected. 	Two Rates: 1. Regular = \$35.75/mth 2. Low Volume = \$30.50/mth
Option 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single family households can register to be on the low volume program and pay a lower monthly rate. • Participating households are allowed to set out one container each of garbage and recyclables on each collection day. • Tags will be available for purchase to set out additional garbage and recyclables on any collection day. • Regular rate households will have no change in how garbage and recyclables are set out and collected. 	Two Rates: 1. Regular = \$35.50/mth 2. Low Volume = \$30.25/mth plus tags as needed at \$3.50 per tag
Option 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All single family households pay a reduced monthly rate. • All households are allowed to set out one container each of garbage and recyclables on each collection day. • Tags will be available for purchase to set out additional garbage and recyclables on any collection day. 	One Rate: Same rate for all for a base level of service = \$30.75/mth plus tags as needed at \$2.25 per tag

Results of Public Involvement Plan

The public involvement process for the waste financing review included an online panel survey conducted by Leger Marketing and an open link survey available to the general public, four open houses, and comments received through 311 and by direct e-mail.

1. Professionally Administered Online Survey

803 interviews were completed by Leger Marketing's online panel members with reported results representing Edmonton's demographic profile. Respondents indicated their support of the five options as follows:

Option 1	61.3% supported the current flat fee system.
Option 2	14.9% supported a system with regular and low volume rates and no amnesty for residents who registered as low volume producers
Option 3	12.3% supported a system with regular and low volume rates and two amnesty periods for residents who registered as low volume producers
Option 4	7.7% supported a system with regular and low volume rates and purchased tags as needed for residents who registered as low volume producers
Option 5	3.8% supported a base level rate for everybody allowing one container of garbage and one container of recycling with purchased tags as needed for all residents

2. Open Houses

Four open houses were held between April 10 and April 16, 2012. In total, 78 people completed questionnaires at the open houses with the following results:

Option 1	50% supported the current system.
Option 2	20.3% supported regular rates and low volume rates with no respite
Option 3	12.2% supported regular and low volume rates with two amnesty periods
Option 4	2.7% supported regular and low volume rates with tags as needed over the limit
Option 5	14.9% supported same rate for all for a base level of service plus tags as needed

3. Comments Received through calls and e-mail.

In total, 36 phone calls or internet emails were received.

Option 1	72.2% (26) supported the current system
Option 2	16.7% (6) supported regular and low rates with not respite.
Option 3	2.8% (1) supported regular and low volume rates with two amnesty periods
Option 4	0% supported regular and low volume rates with tags as needed over the limit.
Option 5	8.3%(3) supported same rate for all for a base level of service plus tags as needed

4. Open Website Survey

In total 1136 website surveys were completed.

Option 1	64% supported the current system
Option 2	13% supported regular and low volume rates with no respite.
Option 3	9% supported regular and low volume rates plus two amnesty periods
Option 4	5% supported regular and low volume rates with tags as needed over the limit
Option 5	9% supported same rate for all for a base level of service plus tags as needed

Comments from the Professionally Administered Survey

Interviewees

803 Edmonton residents were interviewed from Leger Marketing's online panel between April 3rd and 12th, 2012.

Comments

One third of residents did not provide additional comments however of those that did, these were received:

- People will start dumping their garbage/recycling/This system is more easily abused = 16%
- Tags are inconvenient = 14%
- Don't change the current system = 9%
- The flat rate fee is the best method = 8%
- I already pay enough for waste services / I do not want to pay more = 7%
- This system will result in greater administrative costs = 6%
- The volume based fee is the best method = 6%
- The incentives/penalties are too low to have an effect = 5%
- Asking garbage/recycling crews to keep track of individual household's volume is not feasible = 5%
- The low-volume limit is unachievable / not worth the savings = 4%
- Other = 3%
- Don't know = 1%

Perceived Effectiveness of Waste Reduction Strategies

Residents were asked to rate effectiveness (completely/somewhat effective) of education, incentives or penalties as a means to encourage a reduction in household waste. Residents responded that these methods would be at least somewhat effective:

- Knowing more about small things I can do to produce less waste = 78% (31% / 47%)
- Knowing more about why Edmontonians need to reduce household waste = 64% (20% / 44%)
- Lowering the fee for households that produce less waste = 61% (26% / 34%)
- Raising the fee for households that produce above-average amounts of waste = 54% (22% / 32%)