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**TO:** Larry Gardner  
Manager, Solid Waste Services

**DATE:** April 5, 2016

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**MEETING:** RSWAC, April 14, 2016

**FILE:** 5365-00

**SUBJECT:** Solid Waste Management Education

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#### **PURPOSE**

This report is for information only for the Regional Solid Waste Advisory Committee (RSWAC) regarding the current Solid Waste Management Education strategy in the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN).

#### **BACKGROUND**

Both the City of Nanaimo and the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) undertake promotion and education related to solid waste management in a variety of formats. All Solid Waste Management programs include an education component and any new programs introduced by the RDN include an education and outreach component.

#### *Websites*

The RDN has information related to solid waste management planning, bylaws, disposal and transfer facilities, and zero waste programs on the Solid Waste and Recycling pages of the RDN's website.

A website dedicated to providing information on curbside recycling in the region was developed in partnership with the City of Nanaimo. Both organizations partner to co-host two distinct websites focusing on recycling in our region ([www.recycling2016.ca](http://www.recycling2016.ca)) and curbside composting ([www.beyondcomposting.ca](http://www.beyondcomposting.ca)). Although the CoN and RDN operate separate collection programs, there are efficiencies in having a central location to visit for locally relevant information which is the basis for establishing the co-hosted website.

#### *Social Media*

Solid waste staff routinely posts information on the RDN Facebook and Twitter feeds. These media are used to promote solid waste related events, newsletters and reminders of program changes. In November 2014, a new curbside collection reminder app and web feature was launched to provide an added level of service to RDN curbside customers. In addition to collection day reminders, the app is a portal for information on materials accepted at the curb. The app is available by keying in "RDN Curbside" through the Apple App Store, or for Android devices through Google Play.

#### *Utility billing insert (2014) & Recycling Brochure (2015)*

An information insert outlining the changes to curbside recycling was prepared to accompany the 2014 utility billing inserts sent to Regional District curbside program recipients. In partnership with RDN Finance staff and those at Lantzville and Qualicum Beach, over 22,400 registered property owners received the information. Timing of the Parksville billing cycle precluded the insert being sent to

residents in that municipality. On Parksville collection routes, the contractor's collection staff kept the literature on hand and provided it to residents seeking recycling information.

The content was refreshed in 2015 to create a "Recycling In Our Region" brochure. This is provided to new residents, those seeking additional recycling information, and is available at outreach events.

#### *Newsletters*

Three Zero Waste Curbside Program newsletters are produced annually and distributed by Canada Post to 24,000+/- homes receiving RDN curbside service. The 2014 and 2015 editions featured content explaining and promoting the new recycling stewardship program and its impact on our curbside collection program. The newsletters are also accessible via the RDN website and social media feeds.

Additionally, the RDN Solid Waste Services also produces and distributes a bi-yearly Solid Waste Management newsletter region-wide containing updates on the Solid Waste Management planning progress, bylaws, regional trends and zero waste goals.

#### *Curbside Setout Inspections*

Utilizing money received from MMBC for administration and education, the aim of the curbside outreach activity is to reach out to residents to clarify common issues and concerns resulting from the MMBC changes to curbside collection, to reinforce residents' good recycling practices, and to provide encouragement where there was room for improvement. RDN Staff from the Solid Waste Service casual labour pool who are comfortable interacting with the public and knowledgeable about recycling within the RDN were employed for the task. Duties included inspection of recyclables set out at the curb for collection, identifying and tagging non-compliant recyclables, talking with residents, and distributing information regarding curbside collection.

The outreach program was well received by many of the residents who had direct contact with the field staff. Many residents indicated they were not aware of the changes to the curbside program or were confused as to what materials were accepted under the program. A small number of interactions involved angry and verbally abusive residents; in those situations the staff did what they could to diffuse the anger and moved on to another street. Some of those tagged as having non-compliant recycling did contact the RDN office or the collection contractor seeking clarification, or to complain that they were singled out. These conversations were opportunities for additional education.

#### *Collection Staff*

As part of their collection contract, Progressive Waste Solutions staff both on the trucks and those providing customer service play an important education role. The diligence of the collectors on the routes tagging and leaving behind the most obvious non-compliant materials is critical to reinforcing messages regarding acceptable materials (in all three material streams collected, not just recycling).

#### *School Education Program*

The RDN contracts a 3<sup>rd</sup> party non-profit agency to deliver a zero waste school education program which provides free classroom workshops to schools throughout the RDN. Facilitators bring examples of things made from recycled material to show how recycling is helping work towards the goal of Zero Waste. They discuss how a landfill works and show the results of a recent waste audit using a Garbage Pizza.

Participants learn about natural resources and the importance of wisely using renewable resources. The Zero Waste workshop can be tailored to adults who want to improve home or office recycling.

### *City of Nanaimo*

The City of Nanaimo operates their budget for solid waste education in the city. The City of Nanaimo distributes a “Trash Talk” newsletter to all City addresses in the spring and fall of each year; has a dedicated web page on the City’s website that includes information related to the City’s residential collection services, a link to the RDN recycling directory along with a list of reuse and recycling organizations operating in the City; and promotes solid waste campaigns through traditional print ads, signage (i.e. trucks and bus stops), radio, cinema ads and regular media releases as well as online social media to engage residents in solid waste related topics. Annual curbside collection schedules are also distributed to all serviced homes in the City of Nanaimo. The City has recently started to attend public events to promote and gauge public satisfaction with current services provided. They host and promote an annual “Reuse Rendezvous” event which is a city wide swap meet where residents are encouraged to place unwanted items at the curb for collection by freebie hunters. In 2014, they hosted and promoted the first annual “Zero Waste Challenge” where residents were encouraged to compete to slim their bin and in the Fall of 2015 the City has plans to launch a “Keep Nanaimo Clean” anti-littering campaign. The City works regularly with Shaw TV to produce light hearted and informative solid waste news stories.

### *Identified Gaps in Current Education Strategy*

Based on feedback from our stakeholders including the public, RSWAC, industry and other municipal partners some of the gaps in education that have been identified in the RDN and the City of Nanaimo are:

- *Multi-family Buildings:* Particularly in cities lots of people are living in multi-family buildings and are completely unaware of the services available to them in the region. Most buildings have garbage and some form of recycling collection. In 2010, the RDN conducted a study of multi-family building recycling and found that 86% of complexes in the region were meeting the requirements of the RDN’s landfill bans. It is the responsibility of building managers and/or private haulers to increase waste services to these buildings. The City, RDN and Nanaimo Recycling Exchange are currently conducting a pilot program with The Beacon (118 unit high rise strata condo building in downtown Nanaimo) to introduce organics collection to the residents. As part of the pilot program a “Tool Kit” will be compiled to assist other building managers and residents to implement similar programs in their buildings.
- *Depot Items:* The RDN contributes funds to the Recycling Council of British Columbia to provide communications on stewardship programs that exist in our region however, unless residents are aware of RCBC the RDN typically fields these calls. There is no real comprehensive method of informing residents about what they can take to the depots. In this region, local government does not partner with the various stewardship agencies to provide take-back locations; the depots have taken on the important role, however it is difficult to explain because some depots accept more items than others and the RDN does not control what is and is not accepted at these locations. The RDN does maintain an online recycling directory which includes depot locations through the region but it can be hard to navigate for certain items. Maintaining an up to date directory is an ongoing challenge.
- *New Residents:* People moving into the region do not always receive information about our programs and services. The RDN currently mails out new information to owners of newly constructed homes located in electoral areas or if a single family home has changed hands. The

zero waste newsletters are currently the only tool for reaching new residents with program and service information for rentals or other dwelling units.

### **OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

A number of considerations would need to be made in targeting public education including but not limited to staffing, program development and program delivery.

As an example the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) provides adult education through a contract with Cowichan Green Community. The contract is funded by three CVRD divisions and offers workshops on sustainable transportation, water conservation and waste reduction to community groups by request as well as at public events. The RDN could consider partnering with other departments to put out a joint RFP for public education.

Alternatively the RDN could consider hiring a full or part time staff person to work under a public education role. Such a role could include writing/editing of zero waste newsletters, development and delivery of public workshops/event displays and focused campaigns/strategies for multifamily or ICI sector, and maintaining an active social media presence.

The RDN could also consider improvements to its current online recycling directory. By partnering with the City of Nanaimo both organizations could implement a Waste Wizard widget similar to the current Online Collection look up feature which could be used online or through the RDN Curbside Collection App. The widget would allow residents to enter the item they are interested in disposing of and the results would produce a list of locations that accept that item for recycling and/or disposal. The widget would require regular updating of information to maintain accurate database but would be locally relevant and easy to use for residents and regional staff. This widget would provide background analytics to help support future outreach and communication based on frequently searched items.

Alternatively, the RDN and City could more actively promote the use of the BC Stewards Recyclepedia App which has a series of drop down lists for EPR items in BC.

### **COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS**

Depending on the type of adult education delivered to the public there could be improved support/use of current services and facilities for solid waste (both private and public) with no required changes to existing service levels.

There are already a number of organizations and NGOs that provide adult education opportunities in the region, including but not limited to:

- Home Depot: delivers workshops on DIY and reuse projects to promote reuse in the community
- Repair Café: delivers workshops to the community on basic repairs to a variety of household items to promote reuse.
- Stewardship Groups: A number of the stewardship groups in BC visit the region to host displays at public events promoting recycling of stewarded items.

The RDN could explore more opportunities to partner with other organizations to further solid waste education in the region. Other conduits to channel solid waste related information to an adult audience include service clubs, seniors' associations, residents' associations, having a presence at locations such as grocery stores, hardware stores and retailers, and through promoting solid waste messages through schools (with the expectation some or all of the message will make it home to the parents).

**IMPACT ON DIVERSION**

The impact of more education on diversion is difficult to predict and measure as the number of interactions or participants does not always correlate with a change in behaviour (i.e. higher diversion). It can take time for a behaviour change to become an established habit, meaning messages have to be delivered repeatedly through a range of media formats and kept fresh so as not to become ignored or overlooked.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Not all costs listed below would be required, however they are provided for information only as a form of comparison for selecting future education strategies. Please note the information provided here is based on the current RDN program only (with most funded through the curbside collection user fee). Table 1 summarizes the existing solid waste management education budget for 2016.

Table 1: Current Solid Waste Management Education Budget

<b>Current Education Expenses funded by Curbside Collection User Fees</b>	<b>Yearly Budget</b>
Curbside Program Newsletter (3x per year)	\$42,000
Operations and Maintenance for ReCollect collection reminder system	\$8,000
Promotional Materials (Curbside)	\$10,000
Review and upkeep of relevant curbside collection content available on three websites (Beyond Composting, Recycling2016, main RDN site)	\$10,000 major* \$2,000 minor
Advertising Budget (Curbside)	\$10,000
<b>Current Education Expenses funded by RDN Tipping Fees</b>	<b>Yearly Budget</b>
Region Wide Zero Waste Newsletter (2x per year)	\$54,000
RCBC Hotline	\$5,000
Compost Program	\$5,000
Nanaimo Recycling Exchange School Education Program Contract	\$30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$166,000</b>

\* In 2016 the RDN has budgeted for a major review and update of website content however most years only require minor updates.

Additionally, the City of Nanaimo has a yearly budget of \$60,000 for solid waste education and promotion.

If the RDN chose to increase the profile of public education as part of the solid waste management plan it is expected to cost in the range of \$20,00-\$40,000 depending on the method of deliver (i.e. contract, part-time staff). This amount is in addition to targeted education as a component of options previously discussed by the RSWAC (i.e. curbside, ICI & Multi-Family Diversion, CD ). Table 2 provides a summary of these solid waste management options specially targeted at education:

Table 2: Potential Solid Waste Management Education Options

<b>Option</b>	<b>Yearly Budget</b>
Compliance and Enforcement to Improve Diversion in Curbside Collection	\$36,000
Industrial, Commercial, Institutional & Multi-Family Diversion	\$20,000
Construction Demolition	\$20,000
Increased Solid Waste Public Education	\$20,000-\$40,000


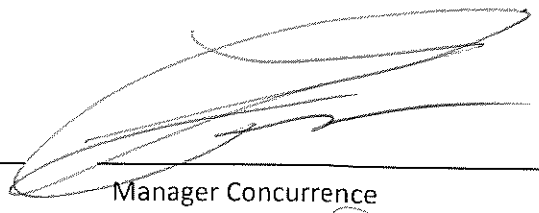
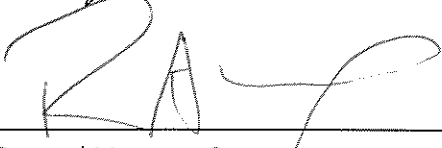
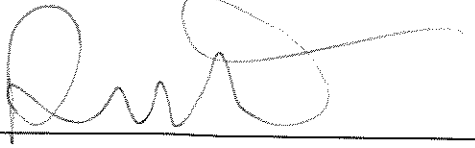
**REGULATORY AUTHORITY**

No new regulatory authority would be required by the RDN to include an enhanced level of education and outreach within the action items of the Solid Waste Management Plan.

**SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS**

Education and promotion related to solid waste management practices and programs is currently provided through a variety of formats, and funded through the existing solid waste budgets for approximately \$166,00/year. A greater emphasis could be placed on “pushing” relevant information to targeted adult audiences through traditional and social media, as well as being more active in locations where the solid waste message would be well received. Increasing the profile of solid waste public education would cost an additional \$20,000-\$40,000/year.

A variety of options are available to the RDN to enhance education, ranging from boosting or refocusing the current education offerings, contracting out for such a service, to employing a staff person to take a proactive role in overseeing and delivering education and solid waste related communications.

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