

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, to our health, our environmental future and the appearance of our cities and towns.

The challenge now 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. Another critical challenge is to extend waste reduction and recycling practices to all of 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, it is vital that municipalities retain accountability, flexibility and control over their solid waste services. When services are delivered publicly they are efficient, more committed to service and environmental sustainability, and more accountable to the public.

As provincial governments consider Extended Producer Responsibility as a way to make the private sector more responsible for final disposal of waste they introduce into the system, it is critical for municipal governments to retain control over waste collection and recycling. 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.

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 should support, not undermine, effective universally accessible public systems.

In British Columbia, legislated change in 2011 created a new agency, known as Multi-Materials British Columbia, to meet Extended Producer Responsibility targets under the province's new recycling regulations. MMBC is being implemented with limited consultation and a problematic pricing structure, and took effect on May 19, 2014. Municipalities across the province – including Delta, Comox and Fort St. John – are declining to participate. MMBC has cut some municipalities out

of participation, like Kamloops. Further, MMBC has been set up outside the jurisdiction of the auditor general and the provincial *Financial Administration Act*.

Reputable 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 private sector waste collection is less costly and more efficient than waste collection provided by public employees. This is confirmed by recent experience across Canada.

Sherbrooke, Quebec

The City of Sherbrooke announced in March 2011 that it was bringing garbage collection services in house, saving the city \$750,000 annually. Successful recycling and composting programs enable the city to reduce garbage collection to once every two weeks and its own employees can take over the service with the addition of one new employee and one new truck. Prior to this, city workers collected garbage in the city core only while private contractors handled the outlying areas.

Ottawa, Ontario

In 2006, the City of Ottawa brought solid waste services back in house in one of its six "zones". Each year the public service has been more efficient. Ottawa's Auditor General reported in February 2011 that an independent auditor's report found that the in-house services had saved more than \$5 million in four years.

In a February 2010 report to the city's planning and environment committee, 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]." The auditor reported that overall financial performance "reflects continued operational efficiencies, and the productivity of dedicated and experienced staff." In November 2011, the city renewed the first in-house contract, and voted to bring a second zone back in house.

Port Moody, B.C.

In 2009, the City of Port Moody brought solid waste and recycling services back in-house after 10 years of private provision. The contractor missed pick-ups every week 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, Newfoundland and Labrador

After 30 years of using a private contractor, the Town of Conception Bay South has decided to bring its residential garbage collection services in house. The town is going to provide the service using its own workers, on a five-year trial basis.

Hamilton, Ontario

Since amalgamation in 2000, City of Hamilton employees have collected garbage in half the city, and a private contractor in the other half. The city's in-house operation has consistently been more economically efficient than the contractor's, even though city employees serve the older downtown

core. An April 2011 report to the Public Works Committee confirmed that publicly-delivered solid waste services cost \$1.15 less per household than the private service.

Contracting out garbage services means municipalities lose control and flexibility for implementing new waste diversion programs like recycling and composting. Contractors earn more money collecting and disposing of more garbage, not less.

Let's keep solid waste services public for clean, green cities and quality services we can depend on.



CUPE / Canadian Union
of Public Employees