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To: **Committee of the Whole**

Agenda Section: Corporate Services  
Division: Engineering, Planning and Environment  
Department: Solid Waste Management

Item Number: **CCW - 2023-273**

Meeting Date: October 24, 2023

Subject: Multi-Residential Organics Pilot Program

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### **Recommendation**

That Item CCW 2023-273 dated October 24, 2023, regarding the multi-residential organics pilot program be received; and

That an 18-month multi-residential organics pilot program be approved as outlined within Item CCW-2023-273; and

That Staff report on the results of the pilot program and future recommendations for multi-residential organics to Council by the end of the pilot program.

### **Executive Summary**

In 2018, the Government of Ontario released the Food and Organic Waste Policy statement, which includes targets for Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (IC&I) and multi-residential properties within the County. Multi-residential properties (6 or more units per property and condominium properties) are identified as having to achieve 50% reduction and recovery of food and organic waste by 2025. While the County of Simcoe is not mandated to provide waste collection services to these properties, without assistance from the County, it may be challenging for multi-residential locations to achieve the organics diversion targets outlined in the policy. Presently, private organics collection options are limited and costly when compared to private garbage servicing.

To assist multi-residential properties in achieving these targets, and to promote increased organics diversion within the County, Staff are proposing the implementation of an 18-month multi-residential organics pilot program commencing spring of 2024. The objective of the pilot program will be to assess the collection of organics from multi-residential properties and determine if the County should consider a permanent County-wide program. The pilot program is anticipated to cost a total of \$45,000, which will cover

promotion and educational content (brochures, kitchen catchers, etc.), auditing supplies, and the collection of organics from the selected properties. Staff are expecting a total of 8-12 buildings to be selected by Staff to participate, for an approximate total of 600 multi-residential units. Properties will be serviced through a combination of front-end bins and curbside collection carts, as delivered through current service providers, under contract by the County of Simcoe for existing programs.

If approved, each selected multi-residential property would be provided a building specific organics management plan and every unit an organics kit (kitchen catcher bin with educational content). Staff would be present at each building during implementation (delivery of organics kits and information sessions), would have constant communication with the building maintenance staff throughout, and would conduct regular auditing before, during and after the pilot to monitor the program's success.

Prior to the conclusion of the 18-month pilot program Staff will return to Council with a report on the results of the pilot program and recommendations on how to proceed in the future.

### **Background/Analysis/Options**

In 2018, the Government of Ontario released the Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement (Policy Statement) to support the Province's transition to a circular economy and to increase waste reduction and recovery of food and organic waste. The policy statement includes targets for the County itself, as well as Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (IC&I) and multi-residential properties within the County. As previously noted in Item [CCW 2023-162](#), multi-residential properties (6 or more units per property and condominium properties) are identified as having to achieve 50% reduction and recovery of food and organic waste by 2025. While the County is not obligated to collect organics from these locations, it would be beneficial for the County to assist in creating an opportunity for these properties to divert organics from landfill. While there are options for private organics collection within the County, these options are limited and costly when compared to private garbage servicing. Without assistance from the County, it may be challenging for multi-residential locations to achieve the organics diversion targets outlined in the policy.

At the time of this report, there are 14,560 multi-residential and condominium units in the County. Of those, only 3,346 units (23%) meet the design requirements and are currently being serviced by the County through the regular collection contract. Generally, multi-residential properties have less "ownership of waste", the concept that individuals who place their waste out for collection take responsibility for their waste and are educated at the curb resulting in higher likelihood of low contamination in the organics stream of waste. Each property has their own variations in infrastructure, demographics, and property oversight which can make standard waste collection and additional waste segregation (i.e. organics) challenging to implement.

Multi-residential properties that are not serviced by the County are responsible for coordinating their own private collection services, and may be eligible for the Waste Subsidy Program. This program currently only requires that a property is receiving garbage and a reasonable level of recycling service. There is very little evidence of properties coordinating and maintaining their own private organics collection.

Based on the potential for provincial enforcement of organics collection in the multi-residential sector, the limited accessibility to organics diversion opportunities, and the County's overall intent to increase the diversion of organics from landfill, Staff are proposing the implementation of a multi-residential organics pilot program. The objective of the pilot program will be to assess the collection of organics from multi-residential properties and determine whether the County should pursue a permanent program that may be expanded across the County. A pilot program would also provide the opportunity to identify best practices and permit experimentation within the program so that the County may adopt a guideline for the implementation of organics collection for other multi-residential units within the County.

To provide information on how best to proceed with the pilot program, Staff contacted other Ontario municipalities that have implemented multi-residential organics programs. It was observed from the research that each municipality had varying methods for determining the type of collection servicing that each property received (i.e. front end bin collection vs. curbside collection). Commonalities were observed in the challenges and keys to success, and are summarized as follows:

- Challenges:
  - Resistance from condo boards, property management and/or maintenance staff and their lack of support throughout the program
  - Odour complaints
  - Improper sorting and high contamination rates
  
- Keys to Success:
  - Regular communication with building staff
  - Regular audits followed by site inspections
  - Increased promotion and education (including information sessions for residents and posters throughout building)

Based on the research from other municipalities, and a tour of multiple County social housing complexes, Staff have prepared the following County-specific multi-residential organics pilot program approach.

### Pilot Program Approach

The pilot program will target 8-12 multi-residential properties of varying property sizes and types with an estimated 600 total units. These properties will include a mixture of both County social housing buildings and private locations with varying demographics, site layouts, and waste storage areas. Each property will be designated to receive either front

end bins or curbside organics carts, for their consolidated organics collection, which will be serviced through existing collection contracts. Staff will engage with property owners to determine the best approach for organics collection at each location.

If approved to proceed, Staff will begin by contacting all properties currently receiving the waste subsidy. Interested properties will be required to complete and return a survey by a specified date that requests information on the property's units, current waste collection services and ability to accommodate organics services. It is imperative that the property managers are the main contact as they will be essential to coordinating the implementation of the program. While residents may be keen to participate in the program, it is important to ensure that property managers indicate whether a program is viable at their location or not. The selection of the properties that are to participate in the pilot program, will be at the discretion of Staff and the collection contractors. To fulfil the objective of the pilot, staff will choose properties with varying infrastructure and demographics to analyze a number of factors that will be essential in reviewing the feasibility of a County-wide program. It is important to note that while a property may express interest in participating, they may not be selected to participate. Selected locations will be required to sign an official agreement noting the limitations to the pilot program. Specifically, that once the 18-month pilot program term concludes, organics collection through the County of Simcoe will as well; unless otherwise directed by Council at the conclusion of the pilot program.

If approved, the pilot program is projected to commence in the spring of 2024, and will operate for 18 months. This will accommodate any unforeseen logistical and collection issues during the initial stages of the program and will ensure that accurate data is collected for at least one (1) full year. Staff will assess organics collection during all seasons of the year, as other municipalities have noted that participation in the program tends to vary throughout. This will also provide insights into participation trends and may allow for program adjustments in an effort to increase resident participation.

Each property will be provided a building specific organics management plan and every unit (approx. 600) will be provided an organics kit, which will include one (1) kitchen catcher bin with information on the pilot program, educational content on what to include in their organics bins, and sample compost bags. Staff will also provide a thorough educational program throughout the pilot to encourage all units to participate. Aside from the individual organics kits for each unit, Staff will also incorporate electronic advertisements on common area TV screens (if applicable) and posters for waste storage areas (including garbage chutes and common areas). During the initial start up of the pilot, Staff will attend each property and provide informative presentations and/or set up information tables to engage with residents on their way in and out of the building.

Additionally, Staff will complete waste audits to track the participation in the program and to monitor contamination. This will include a baseline audit completed prior to the pilot program commencing, as well as audits (physical and visual) throughout the pilot term. Near the pilot's conclusion, a final audit will determine the overall success at each of the buildings, and all findings will be summarized in a Council report.

Finally, prior to the conclusion of the 18-month pilot program Staff will bring a report back to Council on the results of the pilot program to date, with recommendations, on whether to proceed with a County-wide implementation of a multi-residential organics collection program.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

Overall, Staff estimate that the pilot program will cost a total of approximately \$45,000 over 18 months. This includes costs for promotion and educational content (brochures, kitchen catchers, etc.), bags and auditing supplies, and in the collection of organics from each location. Staff are expecting 3 front end bins and approximately 25 carts will be required to collect organics from all participating locations. While the cost of the front end bins and their collection have been reflected in the total cost of the pilot program, Miller Waste, the County’s contracted waste collector, has opted to waive any additional fees for providing organics cart collection at participating pilot program properties. This will allow Miller Waste to determine the impact of a County-wide program and those associated costs. The pilot program costs will be managed through the 2024 and 2025 Solid Waste Management Operating Budget.

Additional operational costs will be incurred in the haulage and processing of the organics collected through the pilot program. Currently, it is unknown the quantity of materials that will be collected. These expenses will be funded from operating surplus or Waste Management Contingency Reserve in 2024. Staff plan to monitor costs and ensure that the 2025 Operating Budget is updated accordingly to accommodate the costs for the remaining time period of the pilot. A more fulsome review of all costs will be completed near the conclusion of the pilot program, once more details are known, and once more collection data has been collected. These costs will be reported back to Council, along with the impacts of expanding to a permanent County-wide program.

**Relationship to Corporate Strategic Plan**

This item follows the direction of Environmental Sustainability, as the County increases the recovery of organics and ensures the diversion of these materials from landfill.

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<b>Approvals</b>	<b>Date</b>
Rob McCullough, Director, Solid Waste Management	October 6, 2023
Rob Elliott, General Manager, Engineering, Planning and Environment	October 11, 2023
Trevor Wilcox, General Manager, Corporate Performance	October 17, 2023
Mark Aitken, Chief Administrative Officer	October 17, 2023