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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 - 2023-307**

Meeting Date: November 28, 2023

Subject: **Special Collections – Options for Consideration**

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### **Recommendation**

That Item CCW 2023-307 dated November 28, 2023 regarding special collections options for consideration be received; and

That curbside collection of textiles and electronics cease in 2025 and textiles be added to the existing bulky collection program as generally outlined within Item CCW 2023-307; and

That staff initiate a public procurement process to obtain current costing related to the service level for curbside collection of leaf and yard waste contained herein and report back to Council for further direction.

### **Executive Summary**

This item provides an assessment of special curbside waste collections as per the recommendation in the Solid Waste Management Strategy 2023 Update. Through this review, staff have investigated the feasibility of expanding leaf and yard waste collection services and have reviewed the overall efficacy and sustainability of other special collection services (Christmas trees, textiles, and electronics). While all of these programs represent important opportunities to divert materials from the landfill, they vary in their sustainability, the extent to which they are utilized by residents, and the presence of alternatives.

The special collection programs are under one contract and are comprised of leaf and yard waste, Christmas trees, textiles and electronics collection; which is why these programs are evaluated together. As a point of clarity, battery collection is not included in

this review. Battery collection, while a special collection event, is included within the regular collection (garbage, recycling and organics) contract. The current special collections contract expires in 2026 however due to new collection vehicles taking up to two years (from order to delivery), staff will need to initiate a procurement process now in order to secure a collection contractor for 2026.

Staff recommend that Christmas tree collection be maintained at existing service levels, and textiles and electronics collection events cease in 2025 (prior to the start of the new contract). Justifications for these recommendations may be found in the body of this report. Staff also recommend that pricing be obtained through the competitive bidding process for four options with respect to the level of service for leaf and yard waste collection:

- Option 1: Maintain the current level of service for Christmas trees (four weeks in January) and leaf and yard waste (eight weeks in spring, four weeks in summer and ten weeks in fall). This option provides eleven leaf and yard waste collections annually to each serviced unit;
- Option 2: Maintain Christmas tree collection (four weeks in January) and expand leaf and yard waste through spring, summer and fall seasons. Collection would commence on the second full week of April and conclude generally by the beginning of December. This would provide thirty-four weeks of collection annually, whereby each serviced unit receives seventeen leaf and yard waste service events annually;
- Option 3: maintain the current level of service for both Christmas trees and leaf and yard waste with collections in two week increments to be added to existing weeks at the discretion of County Council; and
- Option 4: maintain Christmas tree collections at current levels and reduce leaf and yard waste collections to only mandated requirements with spring (eight weeks) and fall (ten weeks) collections and remove summer collection. This option provides nine leaf and yard waste collections annually to each serviced unit.

In consideration of provision of additional weeks of leaf and yard waste service Council should also consider the impacts to promotion and education, customer service, environmental sustainability, and the ability to process the additional material collected with County resources (outlined further in the report). Staff notes that municipalities are mandated through Regulation 101/94 to provide leaf and yard waste (including Christmas trees) services at a rate that meets the municipal needs. The quantity of material historically collected during July is significantly less than the quantity collected during the spring and fall events. Once results of the procurement process are received for leaf and yard waste services, staff will report back to council with the advantages and disadvantages of the above levels of service and the associated costs.

## Background/Analysis/Options

### Current Special Collection Contract

The County of Simcoe, through a contracted service, provides curbside collection of leaf and yard waste, Christmas trees, textiles and electronics at specific times of the year. The current contract was negotiated with the existing curbside collections contractor in 2021 following a public procurement process that yielded one bid submission that was significantly over budget. Industry information cites increased costs related labour and operations along with the cost of specialized collection vehicles as the drivers of these significant increases. Under our existing contract, the collection schedule is as follows:

Collection Event	Start Dates	Number of Collection Events per Unit	Number of Weeks of Service
Christmas Trees	First full week of January	2	4
Spring Leaf & Yard	Second full week of April	4	8
Textiles	First full week of June	1	2
Electronics	Third full week of June	1	2
Summer Leaf & Yard	First week of July	2	4
Fall Leaf & Yard	First week of October	5	10

The current service contract expires in March 2026 and due to the long lead times of collection vehicles (up to two years), staff wish to proceed with a public procurement process now in order to secure a special collections contractor for 2026. In anticipation of the issuance of a Request for Proposal, staff has reviewed the efficacy of these special collection programs against participation and the alternatives for the diversion of this material.

### Current Status and Future Recommendations by Program

Staff has evaluated each program within the special collections contract and provide the following recommendations.

#### *Christmas Trees*

The County offers the bi-weekly collection of Christmas trees for four weeks, starting the first full week of January with each serviced unit receiving two collections. This material is collected manually, service may not occur on a resident's regular collection day and residents are to have their Christmas tree curbside by 7 a.m. on the Monday of their collection week. Christmas tree collection is mandated by the province and while it could be limited to just two weeks of collection (one per serviced unit), staff do not recommend altering this service, nor its collection schedule.

### *Textiles and Electronics*

The County of Simcoe offers the collection of textiles the first two full weeks of June and electronics collection the last two weeks of June. Each serviced unit receives one collection of each annually which is collected on their regular waste collection day. Acceptable items for each of these programs can be found on the County's website.

Curbside audits reveal that participation is approximately 6% for each program. As outlined below, participation rates, as well as the total tonnage, has decreased since 2021 in both programs. Residents have the opportunity to divert this material through other means such as County of Simcoe Waste Drop-off Facilities, third party businesses, as well as, not for profit organizations; some of which offer certain areas with curbside/front porch pick up services. Textiles and electronics are accepted free of charge at all eight Waste Drop-off Facilities.

Year	Textile Collection			Electronics Collection		
	Tonnage	Percent Change	Kg/Service Unit	Tonnage	Percent Change	Kg/Service Unit
2018	66.83	0%	0.45	77.44	0%	0.52
2019	122.07	45%	0.82	Cancelled due to labour shortages	N/A	N/A
2020	Cancelled due to COVID-19	N/A	N/A	Cancelled due to COVID-19	N/A	N/A
2021	282.59	140%	1.90	160.54	107%	1.08
2022	91.07	-68%	0.61	102.88	-36%	0.69
2023	90.49	-0.64%	0.61	90.06	-12%	0.60

The collection for these materials requires a different type of truck (historically rented by the collection contractor) compared to leaf and yard waste and different labour considerations which adds complexity and costs to operations both to the contracted service provider and to the County. Removing these materials may increase the competitiveness of bids submitted for maintaining or expanding leaf and yard waste services, should County Council make that decision. It is further noted, that should County Council choose to increase the frequency of leaf and yard collection, the staff required to collect the electronics and textiles will not be available for that purpose, significantly adding to the cost to the County.

Considering the number of kilometres the contractor travels, with 6% participation, and since there are other methods for residents to divert material, staff recommend ending these collection events; educating residents of alternatives including bringing the items to

one of the eight Waste Drop-off Facilities in the County free of charge; and adding textiles to the Bulky Collection Program. Should textiles be added to bulky collection residents could book a bulky collection event whereby five clear bags of clean, odour free textiles equates to one bulky item (current fee is \$50 for five items). Electronics are presently an accepted material within the Bulky Collection Program, regular fees apply per item.

The 2024 collection calendar currently advertises the textile and electronics collection in June 2024 therefore staff are recommending that we remove the collection of textiles and electronics in 2025, prior to the end of the existing contract and further not to procure for these collections for the 2026 contract. To reduce costs for the 2024 collection, the operating budget reflects the removal of the purchasing and distribution of the specialized bags for this collection and as such County staff will be advertising to residents to place material into clear bags for collection. Should Council approve the cessation of textiles and electronics collection for 2025 this savings would be reflected in the 2025 operating budget. By removing textiles and electronics from the procurement for the 2026 contract this will decrease the impact of potential total cost increases expected for maintaining or expanding leaf and yard waste collection.

### *Leaf and Yard Waste*

The County offers leaf & yard waste bi-weekly collection services three different times throughout the year; in the spring (eight weeks starting the second full week of April); summer (four weeks starting the first week of July); and fall (ten weeks starting the first week of October). Each serviced unit receives collection on eleven different occasions. Residents must place their material curbside by 7 a.m. on the Monday of their collection week as collection does not occur on their regular waste collection day. Details on how to set out the leaf and yard waste and what is accepted can be found on the County website.

Municipalities are mandated through Regulation 101/94 to provide leaf and yard waste (including Christmas trees) services at a rate that meets the municipal needs. Leaf and yard waste is a highly seasonal material; where demand can fluctuate throughout the year; as well as year to year. A review of tonnages, and the small number of residential inquiries received during non-collection weeks indicates that service, if extended, would not necessarily capture additional tonnage. The below table shows total tonnage of material collected both at the facilities and curbside by month, on average from 2019 (when the County introduced summer collection) until 2022, with months containing curbside collection highlighted. January collection weeks denote Christmas tree collection, where the remaining reflects leaf and yard waste collection.

Month	Facilities (tonnes)	Curbside (tonnes)	Total (tonnes)	Weeks of Collection	Curbside Collected Tonnes/ Week
January	39.3	55.5	94.8	4	13.9
February	14.6	0	14.6	0	
March	246.7	0	246.7	0	
April	1,014.6	1,888.6	2,903.2	4	472.1
May	3,574.5	2,868.1	6,442.6	4	717.0
June	1,193.2	0	1,193.2	0	
July	1,074.8	913.5	1,988.3	4	228.4
August	1,281.3	0	1,281.3	0	
September	1,305.7	0	1,305.7	0	
October	8,947.3	2,165.4	11,112.7	4	541.3
November	1,724.7	2,671.9	4,396.6	4	668.0
December	241.9	213.4	455.3	2	106.7
Total	20,658.6	10,776.4	31,435.0	26	

Approximately 34% of material collected and processed by the County of Simcoe is received through the curbside collection program. When collection is not available this material is acceptable at County Waste Drop-off Facilities or alternatively residents can mulch or take part in grass-cycling (which is widely held as a more environmentally friendly alternative to collection, especially during the summer months). This allows for residents to dispose of material that they may have outside of peak times, or in the case of weather events.

Staff recommend that through the procurement process costing for the following options be requested:

Option 1: Maintain the current level of service for Christmas trees (four weeks in January) and leaf and yard waste (eight weeks in spring, four weeks in summer and ten weeks in fall). This option provides eleven leaf and yard waste collections annually to each serviced unit;

Option 2: Maintain Christmas tree collection (four weeks in January) and expand leaf and yard waste through spring, summer and fall seasons. Collection would commence on the second full week of April and conclude generally by the beginning of December. This would provide thirty-four weeks of collection, whereby each serviced unit receives seventeen leaf and yard waste service events annually.

Option 3: Maintain Christmas tree collection and current leaf and yard waste service levels plus expand the existing leaf and yard waste schedule in two week increments (to service all zones). The number of additional two-week service events (i.e. two, four, or six additional weeks) would be determined by Council. The two weeks could be added to the end of the spring, either side of the existing summer or the beginning of fall events with the

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service approved by Council being maintained for the duration of the contract. The reason for adding to existing scheduled service rather than allowing two service weeks to stand alone is that it would be difficult for a contractor to lay off and rehire workers multiple times in one season.

Option 4: maintain Christmas tree collections at current levels and reduce leaf and yard waste collections to only mandated requirements with spring (eight weeks) and fall (ten weeks) collections and remove summer collection. This option provides nine leaf and yard waste collections annually to each serviced unit.

In evaluation of the options Council should consider the following impacts to adding additional weeks of leaf and yard waste service (the more weeks that are added will result in greater impacts for each):

Promotion & Education – additional weeks will require additional promotion and education to ensure that residents are aware of the increase in service. These costs will be outlined in the future report.

Customer Service – call volumes will increase with increased weeks of service as residents will call to confirm when they will be collected, for information on the acceptable materials and preparation instructions, and if they feel they have been missed for collection.

Environmental Sustainability – additional weeks of service results in the trucks having to travel every serviceable road in the County which increases the County's overall greenhouse gas emissions. Consideration should be given to the quantity of material collected vs the environmental impact of the trucks. Staff feel that the quantity of material collected in July does not necessitate curbside collection as there are other options for residents. Of note is that much of the material collected over the summer is grass that can be handled through grass-cycling (leave the clippings on the lawn) which is an environmentally beneficial and superior option as opposed to collection. Further, County Waste Drop-off Facilities are available any time of year for residents to drop off leaf and yard waste material.

Processing Impacts - the County processes all our own leaf and yard waste at five facilities. The facilities currently in place have been expanded but are reaching capacity. If additional leaf and yard waste is received, staff will need to expedite plans to manage the additional tonnage and may be required to ship the material to privately-owned processing facilities (at a significant increase to cost). Should the County continue to process the increased volume of material, additional costs for equipment, staff and transfer costs would be incurred. Summer leaf and yard collection mainly consists of grass, which when composted has a higher potential to cause odours.

Once results are received from the procurement process staff will report further on the advantages and disadvantages of adding additional service, including associated costs,

for County Council to decide on the number of weeks of yard waste they wish to provide residents.

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

Should County Council approve the removal of textile and electronics collection in 2025 this would be reflected in the 2025 operational budget.

The financial implications of leaf and yard waste service options will be determined through a competitive bid process, and the level of service that is pursued by County Council's direction. The results of the procurement process including financial impacts will be brought to Council in a future report.

### **Relationship to Corporate Strategic Plan**

This item aligns with the Corporate Strategic Plan predominately through Environmental Sustainability by working to preserve, conserve and safeguard our environment and natural resources, while recognizing opportunity, innovation and the needs of the community.

### **Reference Documents**

There are no reference documents associated with this Item.

### **Attachments**

There are no attachments to this Item.

**Prepared By**                      John Williams, Contract & Collections Supervisor  
   Laura Barrett, Collections Manager

### **Approvals**

Rob McCullough, Director, Solid Waste Management

Rob Elliott, General Manager, Engineering, Planning &  
Environment

Trevor Wilcox, General Manager, Corporate Performance

Mark Aitken, Chief Administrative Officer

### **Date**

November 10, 2023

November 16, 2023

November 19, 2023

November 20, 2023