

Date: Monday, March 17, 2025

From: Niall Lobley, CAO

Subject: Public Engagement on Waste Collection Services

Report#: CAO2025-018

This document and its attachments are public and available in an accessible format upon request.

Recommendation

That report CAO2025-18 be received for information

Background

Georgian Bluffs currently provides a curbside collection of household waste and recycling from the majority of properties in the Township. These services are provided through a contract with a third party, Waste Management. The contract with Waste Management is scheduled to expire in 2026 and procurement for a new vendor is ongoing.

Residential waste collection services are changing because of industry shifts, environmental pressures, and responding to legislative changes. The *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016*, has led to a number of regulatory changes both to the funding for waste collection, and how waste materials are managed.

Through these changes, successive provincial governments are seeking to reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill. They are seeking to do this through waste reduction programs, moving to a 'Producer Pay' model whereby the producers of common waste items pay toward their recycling and reuse, thereby incentivizing less materials that become waste, and by implementing waste diversion programs, such as supporting additional recycling and reuse initiatives, and programs to prevent waste items from being disposed of.

As the regulatory, environmental and financial context of managing waste shifts, municipalities and the communities that rely on municipal services are shifting likewise. With awareness that effective in 2026, Georgian Bluffs would no longer be undertaking recycling collections, and that a new household waste program would be being sought,

the Township solicited community insight into priorities around waste management to help inform development of the RFP for new waste services.

Analysis

Statistically Valid Survey (representative)

In August, 2024 as part of the development of the Strategic Plan, a [statistically valid survey](#) was completed. Approximately 400 residents were contacted and responses were mapped to ensure a representative sample of gender and age groups (matched to census data) were collected. Responses also included a reflective geographic sample.

Questions were asked on a range of topics, including waste collection services.

- Waste collection services were rated as 'fair'; aligned in satisfaction levels with the Townships approach to sidewalks, economic development, and community events.
- Waste collection improvements toward quality of life improvements were placed sixth in priority focus for service improvements below infrastructure improvements (roads, sidewalks), water and sewerage improvements, community events, environmental protection and climate action and recreational and park improvements.
- Waste collection rated low on community priorities over the next five years; placing 14th out of 15 priority areas.
- Overall, 74.5% of respondents indicated that they rated services by the Township as Excellent or Good, with 9% rating services as Poor.

Overall, based on the statistically valid survey, waste collection and recycling are seen as valuable services that do support a quality of life in Georgian Bluffs; however the current service level is deemed to be adequate or better, and is not seen as a priority for change by community when compared to other priority areas indicated by community.

Self Selected Survey (non-representative)

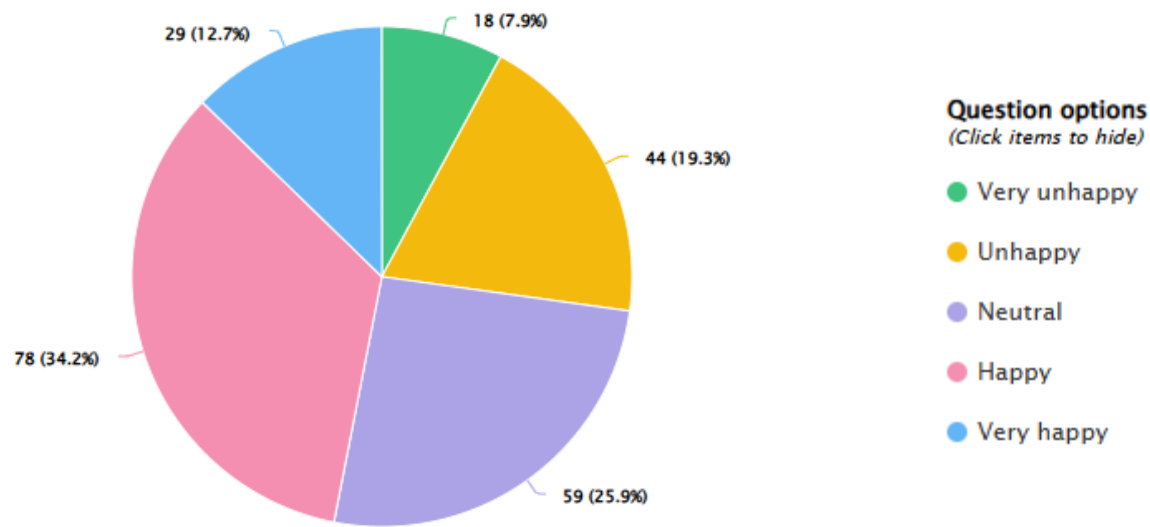
Between May and July 2024, staff undertook engagement with community to seek feedback on waste collection services in the Township. Opportunities were provided online, via EngageGB and through the Connect and Collaborate event at Grey Roots Museum.

Through this process approximately 550 residents (around 10% of households) were aware the engagement, and 218 provided feedback to the survey.

A full report of responses is appended to this report.

It is noted that the survey and engagement were promoted widely in press and media releases, on social media and by direct outreach to residents that have sought to be kept informed of engagement opportunities. However, like other similar engagements, residents' self selected to answer and provide feedback. As with all self-selected responses, these tend to be biased towards receiving feedback from those with stronger feelings on a service area (positive or negative). The survey does not reflect a statistically valid perspective on behalf of community in respect to priorities for future service delivery.

Approximately 73% of respondents indicated that they are neutral to happy with the current program, with almost 50% stating they are happy or very happy with the current services. 8% indicated that they were very unhappy with the existing services.



When asked why they had answered the way that they had, the 204 comments fell into key themes.

Collection Frequency and Schedule:

- Comments were split over preferences to remain on a weekly collection or move to a bi-weekly collection.
- Comments were split over preferences for weekly or bi-weekly recycling collection.

- A large number of comments praised collection reliability, however a number of comments also shared frustration about missed pick ups and inconsistency of time of pick up during each collection day.
- There was a common theme for less frequent garbage collection, particularly if this was paired with more frequent recycling and/or organic collection services.

Service Reliability and Quality

- There was a general satisfaction with service with comments noting the reliable, dependable nature of the service.
- However, frustrations around inconsistent pick-up times, incomplete collections, communications, and apparent vehicle and operations issues were noted

Waste and Recycling Practices

- Questions around why recycling did not need to be sorted by households were common.
- Requests for increased range of items able to be recycled were made, including a number of calls for green bin or organic collection to be included.
- There were a number of complaints that reliance on black plastic bags rather than using garbage containers did not support less plastic use.
- There was a common theme to see changes made to services to enhance recycling, reduce waste, and separate organics.

Convenience and Accessibility

- There was strong support for the curbside nature of collections.
- There were concerns that reliance on bagged waste was challenging, particularly for those with accessibility needs or longer driveways.
- Residents noted that storing recycling in blue boxes was challenge over two-week periods as it needed space inside, not being in a closed garbage container.

Customer Service

- Comments were highly mixed with comments in support and concerns with the lack of customer service.



- There was frustration around not knowing about missed pick ups and the need for clearer information on waste.

Environmental and Waste concerns

- Strong support for environmentally supportive practices that reduced need for plastic, enhanced recycling, and addition of organic collections
- Comments seeking more flexibility and range of items to be recycled and more frequent collection of these were common.
- Concern over reliance on landfills and need to reduce waste were common.
- Several comments noted the value of relying on local services rather than trucking garbage to distant locations.

Other comments

- Some comments did not fit into the above groups and included:
 - Concerns over lack of care taken in collection resulting in roadside litter.
 - Concerns about inability to use garbage containers in current program.

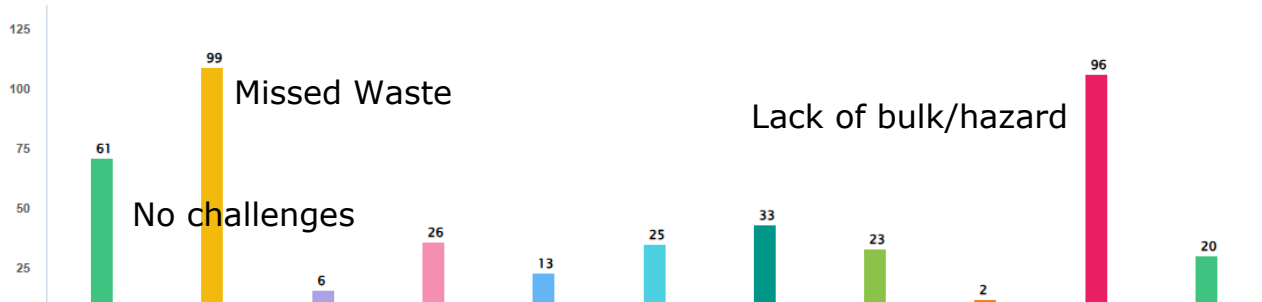
When asked to rank the most important elements of household waste collection services, there was a broad spread of responses, with no single issue being seen as particularly more important than others. Respondents ranked **cost, frequency, wide range of materials collected, convenience and environmental concerns** as more important and **responsive customer service** as least important. Among the most important elements, cost was ranked slightly more important.

OPTIONS	AVG. RANK
Cost (to taxes and for garbage tags)	3.15
Frequency of Collection	3.16
Ability to pick up a wide range of materials	3.30
Convenience (ease of placing out garbage)	3.41
Environmental Impact (incentives to reduce waste, where waste goes, vehicles collecting it etc.)	3.60
Responsive Customer Service	4.38

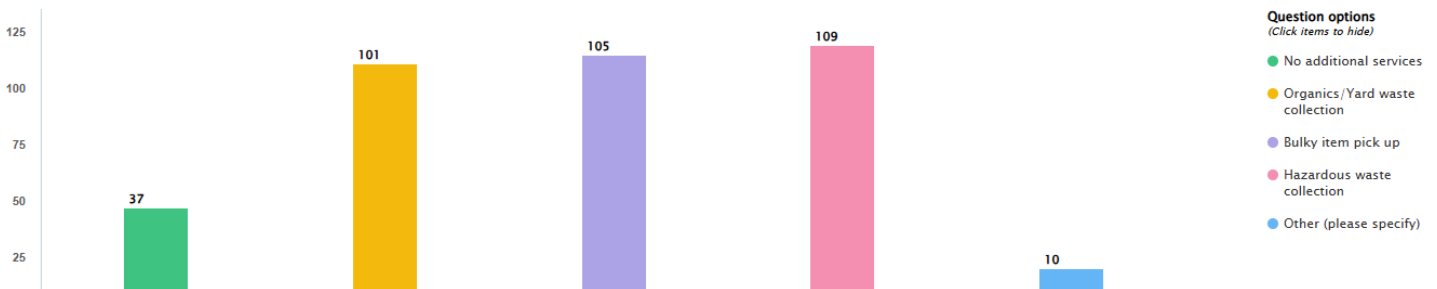
When asked what the most common challenges encountered with the current service were, missed collections and lack of access to bulk waste and hazardous waste were



clearly highlighted as challenges, with the next highest response being that no challenges had been encountered.



When asked what, if any changes residents would like to see in future, there was an equally strong desire to see better access to hazardous waste, bulky waste, and organic waste collections services, with a smaller number of responses seeking no changes.



Lastly residents were asked to provide any additional comments to help in considering a new service.

- More frequent collection of recycling.
- Move to biweekly garbage collection (often combined with a request for organic collection).
- Expand recycling to include things such as milk bags, Styrofoam and film plastics.
- Add green bin and organic collection.
- Incentivize recycling and waste reduction.
- Comments praising township for compost and FoodCycler initiatives.



- More hazardous waste days, more frequent and closer drop offs or curbside programs – lines are long at Owen Sound. Noted these are only accessible to those with cars.
- Support for engaging a local contractor.
- Frustration with bags and a desire to move to a container-based collection over bagged waste with multiple comments indicating a desire to move to wheeled carts.
- Comments were made on costs with a divide between those that would like to see more costs borne by users and off the tax base, and others seeking to see garbage collection fully tax supported. Further, several comments expressed concern at increased costs if services are changing. Other comments suggested that residents would not mind paying more, if services were enhanced.
- Desire for bulk item collection, noting that these were only accessible to residents with larger vehicles.
- Comments provided both support for current service and a desire to see improvement.
- Support for enhanced communication, better customer service hours and more responsive communications.
- Strong support for reducing/eliminating single use plastic bags in waste collection.
- Strong support for enhancing composting options and reducing landfill waste.

Customer Calls – 2024 Analysis

Alongside the feedback received through engagement, staff have analysed data in the ContactGB system collected in 2024. Over the course of 12 months approximately 300 concerns were raised in respect to waste and recycling services out of more than 1000 entries in the same period. The majority of these 300 concerns were in respect to missed collections.

It should be noted that the Township completes approximately 285,000 collections of garbage a year; 300 represents approximately 0.1% of collections. If there were 10 missed collections for every 1 that was reported, this would still reflect around 1% of the Townships total collections completed each year.

Staff have analysed these concerns. There are patterns that can be identified, and concerns can be group into themes.

Repeat missed collections

There are certain areas of the Township that appear to experience repeat missed collections. Two issues appear to be at play:

- Areas tend to be located at the start of routes or end of routes; if a truck starts collection a little earlier than expected it results in missed collections, or if routes take longer or there is more garbage for collection, routes may have to be finished before collection is completed.
- Properties on dead end roads, and remote properties that may only place waste out irregularly – and these issues compound.

Refused Collections

- Residents have expressed concerns about waste not being collected, and on investigation it appears waste was placed at the curbside without following set out guidelines. This is particularly frustrating to residents who may have placed waste out the same way for years and suddenly find a problem with set out.
- Refused collections where there is no reason left as to why a collection was not picked up.

Driver Familiarity

- The Township has some lightly travelled roads that drivers may miss through lack of familiarity with the area
- The Township has seen seasonal issues with residents using wildlife containers and bear bins and drivers failing to collect from these through lack of awareness
- As drivers become familiar with routes, collection issues seem to decrease, so with high turnover in drivers, the Township has faced consistency issues

Outside the key themes, there are many concerns that related to one off missed collections, for which a reason or rationale has not been identified. These issues do not appear to re-occur.

In combination, these challenges have created a stark difference in residents experiences with collections. While many residents report high levels of satisfaction with collections both in respect of the mechanisms of collections and reliability, being in areas and properties that rarely, if ever, experience missed collections, there are others who have strong feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration as they have faced repeated and ongoing challenges with waste collection.

As staff have been working to try and resolve these challenges within the current contract, many of these issues could be mitigated, better managed, and helped with greater access to technology, such as GPS systems, and collection monitoring processes that would allow for easier real time tracking of waste collection services and progress. In addition, more responsive real-time customer support services would help alleviate much of the frustration and double-handling of resident's concerns. Lastly, clearly defined performance parameters and a system of penalties for performance failure would enable better contract management.

In developing an RFP, staff have reviewed the existing contract and collection issues and challenges, and considered legislative changes and environmental pressures, including commitments within the Corporate Climate Action Plan, Committed to Change. As well as these issues, the RFP has been developed in such a way as a contract can be designed with the successful proponent that is responsive to the priorities that community have shared.

In order to help ensure that the new waste contract can address all or some of these issues, staff have ensured that within the RFP, responses have been sought that indicate to what extent proponents can deliver on the following issues:

- The ability to deliver a manual collection, including collection from smaller, non-wheel waste containers and automated collections which could utilise larger wheeled carts.
- The costs that could be associated with a organics collection program.
- The cost benefit of changing frequency of collection to biweekly, and/or single side road collections.
- If contractors can provide hazardous waste and bulky item collections and if so, at what cost.
- Cost recovery mechanisms to replace bag tags if garbage containers are used, to help support waste collection services, or to aid incentivizing reductions in waste.
- The technology that companies can deploy to better track and monitor route completion and residential pick ups, and how this could be used to inform residents of pick-up schedules.
- The customer service support that companies use, and how it can be dovetailed with Township systems to provide more effective customer support.
- The environmental credentials of the companies including commitments to address climate change and how waste is handled and processed.

- Laying out performance expectations and a schedule of Liquidated Damages should performance not meet expectations.

Based on the RFP response, a preferred vendor will be selected and based on the feedback of Council and community, a new contract will be developed with the vendor that is responsive to the needs of community.

Next Steps for Engagement

Staff is aware of the important nature of waste management services to residents and the fact that this is one of the largest areas of service delivery and one of the largest annual expenses of the municipality. As such, community engagement will continue to play a key role as services change between spring 2025 and summer 2026.

At a minimum level, engagement will be in the form of the active provision of information. This will likely include online information and direct mailed information to residents to share changes as they are coming. Public information sessions in communities to share changes to waste management service delivery will be provided before changes are implemented to ensure residents are aware of changes and know what to expect. These engagement opportunities are aligned with an 'inform' approach to ensure that community are aware of future changes.

Staff have considered options for additional community engagement and feedback in helping to shape a future waste collection service. On April 9th, Council will provide feedback in respect to future service provision priorities. In addition to this, staff could engage a statistically valid survey of residents to explore in a non-biased and statistically relevant way, priorities across community for future service provision. In 2024, staff undertook a statistically valid survey as part of the engagement process on the Strategic Plan and based on this, staff estimate a survey on future waste services could be undertaken for between \$7,000 and \$10,000.

Seeking additional community feedback in this way would see the municipality move toward an 'involved' approach to engagement where community has the ability to help shape future services through their input and feedback.

Optional Recommendation:

That staff be directed to undertake a statistically relevant survey of Georgian Bluffs residents, informed by the Council strategic session priorities, to seek further community feedback on future provision of services and,

That staff be directed to report back to Council with recommendations for future contract priorities for waste management services based on Council input and the results of community feedback, and,

That Council direct staff to allocate up to \$10,000 from the Waste Management Reserve to support undertaking the survey through a third-party vendor.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact associated with this report. If Council so directed, a statistically valid survey could be completed with a financial impact of no more than \$10,000 to be funded from the Waste Management Reserve.

Strategic Priorities

Enhancing Service Delivery: Excellence in Every Interaction

Improving how residents can engage and communicate with the Township

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

Through seeking resident and community engagement and feedback, Georgian Bluffs is seeking to inform the development of waste collection services that meet the needs of community in a sustainable, accessible, and equitable fashion.

Truth and Reconciliation

No positive impact arises from this report.

Climate Change

Through engagement this report reflects the community priority of environmentally based decisions that support action by the Township in respect to climate change.

Conclusion

Given the significant impact of household waste collection as one of the primary services of a municipality and the significance of the budgetary impact of household waste services to the Township, a community engagement process was undertaken in 2024 to help inform the development of an RFP for waste collection services. This report shares the findings of the engagement process to help inform discussions on the RFP.

Respectfully Submitted: Niall Loble, CAO