

Solid Waste Services Service Enhancement Bear Awareness Recommendations

Description:

At the April 7, 2025 Council meeting, Council directed Administration to refer Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 from the “Review of Committee Recommendations to Improve Bear Awareness” report to the 2026 budget discussions.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION 1:

1. That Council:

- a) *ESTABLISH a City staff position with a focus on sustainable waste management that includes achieving Provincial Bear Smart Status and reducing human-wildlife conflict; and*
- b) *COMMITTS to sustained financial support for this position for each year of the 2025 to 2029 5-Year Operational Financial Plan.*

The annual labour budget for the proposed Sustainable Waste Coordinator position is approximately \$124,142 in salary and benefits.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION 2:

2. That Council DIRECT Administration to establish a Bear Aware Technical Committee that meets regularly with membership to include at least:

- a) *a City staff whose operational focus is related to the Bear Smart Program and bear awareness.*
- b) *one (1) member of each of the following stakeholders: i. Northern Bear Awareness Society; ii. University of Northern British Columbia; iii. Lheidli T'enneh First Nation; iv. British Columbia Conservation Officer Service; v. Regional District of Fraser-Fort George; vi. Wildlife Biologist from Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship; vii. Other City staff members as required.*

The non-labour expenses to support the Sustainable Waste Coordinator function is approximately \$25,000. Recommendation 2 is contingent upon the approval of Recommendation 1.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION 3:

3. That Council:

- a) *DIRECTS Administration to incorporate multiple automated bear-resistant solid waste garbage bins based on industry standards as a two-year pilot project to select a brand compatible with City operations and to be established in areas known to have high-bear encounters; and*

- b) *DIRECTS Administration to return a report to Council within two months following the end of the pilot project advising on the results and budget implications for implementing bear-resistant bins city-wide, with a priority roll out on high bear conflict areas. The report should also propose incentive strategies for bear-resistant bin participation and consider allowing temporary opt-out provisions for homeowners/tenants with secure garbage storage, with the end goal of all residents having bear-resistant bins that are always secure, including on pick-up days.*

Expenses related to implementing a pilot project that trials multiple different manufactured bear-resistant carts would require a minimum purchase of 1,000 carts in total. Using a unit rate of \$450 for the purchase, shipping and distribution of those carts, equates to an approximate budget of \$450,000.

The Sustainable Waste Coordinator would lead the Bear Aware Technical Committee in the creation of relevant educational materials and provide support to events fostering community engagement aimed at reducing bear-related issues. Recommendation 3 is contingent upon the approval of Recommendation 1 and 2.

Financial Cost of Enhancement:

Description	Cost
Recommendation 1 - Waste Reduction Coordinator	\$124,142
Recommendation 2 - Non-Labour Operating Funds	\$25,000
Recommendation 3 - Pilot Project Implementation	\$450,000
Total	\$599,142

These costs would be funded by the Solid Waste Reserve, which is funded by the user fees of that utility. This means those costs would not affect the tax levy but would impact utility bills instead.

The annual operating costs of the proposed Sustainable Waste Coordinator position, and the non-labour expenses to support a new committee is \$149,142. This translates to a 2.5% increase in future solid waste rates and would have an approximate impact of \$4/\$6/\$7 on small, medium and large garbage containers.

The capital costs of the pilot project would be funded by the Solid Waste Reserve. While the reserve has enough money to fund the purchase of the first 1,000 carts, it does not have enough to purchase the other approximately 25,000 carts to replace the City's bin inventory should the pilot project be successful and Council wishes to implement the carts for all users. MFA debt would be required to purchase the remaining carts and the annual debt servicing costs for the purchase would be approximately \$850,000, which translates to a 15% increase in solid waste rates. This would have an impact of \$26/\$34/\$41 on small, medium and large garbage containers.

Measurement of Service Level Increase:

The addition of a waste reduction coordinator will affect the amount of refuse being landfilled annually. Key indicators will be measured by total weights, tipping fees, cart set out rates and residential cart size reduction requests. Increased human/wildlife education and enforcement of existing bylaws will help reduce the number of negative wildlife interactions reported annually to the Conservation Office, which in turn should reduce the number of bears destroyed within city limits.