

Organic waste

Organic waste, such as food scraps, yard trimmings, and soiled paper products, accounts for roughly 40 per cent of the residential waste stream in Winnipeg.¹ Under the City's proposed curbside organics collection program, service would be focused solely on single-family homes, leaving a large proportion of residents in multi-family dwellings, such as apartments and condominiums, with organic waste that is uncollected and unaccounted for. By not serving these households, the City endures avoidable economic and social costs. Edmonton's decision to expand curbside organics collection to include apartments and condominiums provides a strong model for Winnipeg to follow, showing that comprehensive, citywide programs can and should overcome logistical and financial barriers. Ultimately, expanding organics collection to all residents reduces climate inequities and those living in multi-family units cannot and should not be left out.

Limited scope, limited impact

Winnipeg's waste diversion efforts have long lagged behind those of other major Canadian cities. When the City eventually launches its curbside organics collection program, residents of multi-family dwellings are currently not planned to be serviced. In 2021, Winnipeg had 330,325 occupied private dwellings, of which 60 per cent were single-detached houses.² This means that as many as 40 per cent of households may fall outside this category, potentially representing a significant portion that could be missed by single family-focused initiatives. Without an inclusive



Compost Winnipeg bins at Corydon and Pembina / Alanna Yuen

organics collection program, the City will never reach its 50 per cent waste diversion goal as set out in its council-approved Comprehensive Integrated Waste Management Strategy (CIWMS).³ Restricted by the City's curbside organics program, these households will have fewer alternatives for diverting large amounts of compostable waste from landfills. This narrow scope leaves out a substantial portion of the City's population and risks undermining waste diversion efforts as well as the program's overall success. Furthermore, the limited scope weakens the credibility of the City's ability to demonstrate meaningful progress toward effective waste management and reduction. Ultimately, the proposed organics collection program will have limited impact and misses an opportunity to establish composting as a standard household practice across Winnipeg.

Environmental and social costs

When organic waste decomposes in landfills, it releases the greenhouse gas methane. Averaged over 100 years, methane is 34 times more potent than carbon dioxide.⁴ By excluding select households from curbside collection, the City will endure preventable environmental costs through increases in emissions, leachate, and landfill expansion. Every unit of compostable material that is diverted represents not just a reduction in waste volume, but a tangible step toward climate mitigation. By limiting organics collection to single-family dwellings, the City is effectively discouraging renters and low-income individuals who wish to make an environmental impact, but are unlikely to be able to access private compost services. While property managers for apartments and condominium boards certainly have the ability to establish their own independent composting programs for their residents, these self-led initiatives are typically uncommon due to barriers such as cost, limited space, lack of signage, lack of infrastructure, lack of interest, and so on. Currently, multi-family dwellings in the City are reported to divert only 14 per cent of their total waste.⁵ This concerning low rate highlights the urgency of prioritizing composting and organics collection in these settings. Overall, the absence of multi-family inclusion in the City's proposed organics collection program makes collaborative participation to tackle climate change virtually unattainable. An inclusive curbside organics program would reduce environmental and social costs while making composting a shared civic practice that is accessible to all Winnipeggers, regardless of income or housing status.

Lessons from Edmonton

The city of Edmonton provides a model for how Winnipeg can implement an effective organics collection program that services both single and multi-family dwellings. Since launching its Green Cart program in 2021, Edmonton has offered citywide organics pickup for nearly all single-family homes while providing online resources to ensure high participation rates.⁶ Edmonton continues to complete a phased rollout to multi-family dwellings that mandates a three-stream waste collection (garbage, recycling, and food scraps) at all buildings by the end of 2027.⁷ A phased approach allows the city of Edmonton to scale this promising initiative at a gradual pace. Edmonton's waste services operate as a self-funded

utility, meaning costs are covered through user fees rather than taxation. Monthly waste utility rates are \$38.95 for single-family dwellings and \$27.92 for multi-family dwellings, and are expected to decline in 2025 as efficiencies improve.⁸ Overall, Edmonton's curbside organics collection program demonstrates that a universal composting program is both logistically and financially feasible. The program has not only been environmentally transformative, but significantly reduces the volume of residential waste sent to landfills. With careful planning and phased implementation, the City of Winnipeg can achieve similar outcomes.

Actions

- **The AMB will** implement citywide organics collection to include multi-family dwellings, ensuring all 330,325 occupied private households have access to curbside composting. This program expands on the City's proposal for single-family rollout and reduces inequities in waste diversion opportunities, while supporting Winnipeg's waste diversion goals.
- **The AMB will** procure and deploy organics carts for multi-family units, estimating costs at \$79.87 per 35-gallon bin plus signage and labels for proper sorting.⁹ Bins will be distributed to shared collection areas in apartment and condominium buildings, ensuring that every resident can participate. Estimated expenditures for bins and signage totals \$600,000 based on municipal procurement data.
- **The AMB will** cover the scaled initial operational budget operating costs of collection and hauling for multi-family dwellings, totaling approximately \$2,000,000 annually for Winnipeg. This estimate is based on the \$5,000,000 estimated Annual Operating Costs for single family dwellings, pro-rated to 40 per cent to reflect the proportion of residents in multi-family dwellings.¹⁰ Winnipeg has not yet published specific cost estimates for multi-family organics collection. However, peer-city utility models that include multi-family organics (such as Edmonton's) provide a useful reference point for estimating incremental operating costs. Winnipeg's Solid Waste Utility Financial Plan is transitioning waste services to a fee-funded model for multi-unit properties; if organics collection is included in the plan, the costs will likely be recovered through utility fees once expanded organics programs are implemented.¹¹

- **The AMB will** fund public education and outreach for residents of multi-family dwellings to encourage participation and reduce contamination, at an estimated \$150,000 annually. Other peer cities such as Edmonton recognizes Waste Education and Outreach as a crucial area to fund for their organics collection plan.¹² Possible expenditures include designing and running waste minimization campaigns and funding community grants to local groups and businesses for composting projects. Supporting education and outreach is a key component to support effective multi-family participation and contamination reduction in expanding Winnipeg's organics program.

Notes

- 1** City of Winnipeg. (2015). "Organics Diversion Strategy Symposium Feedback Report Water & Waste Department." September 2015. https://legacy.winnipeg.ca/waterandwaste/pdfs/garbage/projects/organics/feedback_report.pdf
- 2** Statistics Canada. (2022). "Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census of Population." <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?topic=3&lang=E&dgu id=2021S0503602>
- 3** Gordichuk, Michael. (2021). "2020 Comprehensive Integrated Waste Management Strategy (CIWMS) Annual Report." City of Winnipeg Water and Waste Department's Solid Waste Services.
- 4** Gorski, Jan. (2021). "The case for raising ambition in curbing methane pollution." Pembina Institute. August 4, 2021. <https://www.pembina.org/reports/case-for-raising-ambition-in-methane.pdf>
- 5** City of Winnipeg. (2022). "Recycling Strategy for Apartments and Condos." https://engage.winnipeg.ca/recycling-strategy-for-apartments-and-condos?tool=guest_book
- 6** City of Edmonton. (2021). "Waste Services 2021/2022 Annual Service Plan." City Operations. <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/2021-2022-Waste-Services-Annual-Service-Plan%C2%A0.pdf>
- 7** City of Edmonton. (2023). "Waste Collection at Apartments and Condos: A Guide for Property Managers." August 2024. <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/Communal-Waste-Collection-Property-Manager-Guide.pdf>
- 8** City of Edmonton. (2025). "Budget and Finances." https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/budget-and-finances
- 9** City of Toronto. (2024). "2024 Solid Waste Rates and Fees" <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/94af-2024-Solid-Waste-Rates-and-Fees.pdf>
- 10** Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–MB. (2022). "Organic Waste." Winnipeg at a Crossroads: Alternative Municipal Budget. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/wp-content/uploads/attachments/13.%20Organic%20Waste.pdf>
- 11** City of Winnipeg. (2025). "2025–2027 Revised Sewer Volume Rates and Solid Waste Utility Financial Plan." <https://www.winnipeg.ca/news/2025-03-04-public-service-present-2025-2027-revised-sewer-volume-rates-and-solid-waste-utility-financial-plan>
- 12** City of Edmonton. (2022). "2023–2026 Waste Services Utility Budget and Plans." December 2022.