



Standing Committee Report

REPORT NUMBER 134-2026-Infrastructure & Operations-Environment

DATE

PREPARED

April 10, 2026

FILE

STANDING

COMMITTEE

April 28, 2026

MEETING DATE

SUBJECT

Solid Waste Management Strategy Annual Update

PURPOSE

For information only.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the recent positive progress made in implementing the Solid Waste Management Strategy (SWMS).

In 2025, the City successfully rolled out automated cart-based collection for the garbage stream to approximately a quarter of single-family households. This 'soft launch' of carts was an important first step towards modernizing the City's waste collection system.

Initial steps were taken to initiate development of a City-owned organic waste processing facility. This work provides a path for the City to implement its first Food and Organic Waste (Green Bin) Program at the Mapleward Solid Waste and Recycling Facility.

The curbside leaf and yard waste collection program was expanded from three to four collections annually in support of the City's goals of improving organic waste diversion and there was an expansion of the public space waste and recycling receptacles in the community. The City also successfully negotiated the continued operation of the 900 Walsh Street recycling depot with Circular Materials.

2026 SWMS objectives include rolling out automated cart-based garbage collection to all remaining single-family households and advancing work on the City-owned organic waste processing facility.

Administration will also be engaging in advocacy efforts with the Province around the City's recycling depot operations and further expanding the network of public space waste and recycling receptacles in the community and related pick-up.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

City Council approved the SWMS in principle in 2014. The SWMS is a blueprint that provides strategic direction for managing residential, multi-residential and Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional (ICI) sector waste management activities. It established a practical and sustainable policy framework for solid waste management in the City of Thunder Bay over the short, medium and long-term planning periods.

As Administration continues to work towards implementing the SWMS, the following outlines the progress made in 2025 and key planned objectives for 2026.

2025 Progress

Food and Organic (Green Bin) Waste Diversion – Program Implementation Work

In 2025, Council gave direction to Administration to proceed with development of a City-owned organic waste processing facility at the Mapleward Solid Waste and Recycling Facility. Since then, Administration has initiated a project scoping exercise to identify required property development, site studies, approvals and public consultation requirements necessary prior to facility construction. This organics processing facility, once built and operational, will be a first of its kind not only for the City of Thunder Bay but all Northwestern Ontario.

Automated Cart Based Collection – Program Implementation

Automated cart-based collection for the garbage stream was successfully rolled out as a 'soft launch' to approximately a quarter (approximately 10,000) of single-family households in September 2025. City waste collection staff did a great job embracing the change and Administration has received positive feedback from residents that are using the carts. All garbage cans collected as part of the City's take back program for unwanted cans have been re-purposed and distributed back into the community.

Another key objective achieved was the procurement and award to supply carts for both garbage and Green Bin materials.

Leaf and Yard Waste Curbside Collection – Expansion

Through the 2025 Budget process, Council approved the expansion of the program from three to four collections annually. The program now consists of two collection events in the spring and two in the fall. The program expansion has been a huge success resulting in a 42% increase in the amount of leaf and yard waste material collected at the curb since the program expanded to four collections annually. The expanded program is part of the Food and Organic Waste (Green Bin) Implementation Plan and is the least expensive option to partially meet the 50% diversion requirement for Green Bin waste.

Public Space Litter Receptacles - Expansion

New public space waste and recycling receptacles were added to both the City's north and south cores in 2025. The goal of the new units was to expand receptacle locations, standardize unit design, and help beautify walking corridors. In total, 61 new units were added, both as part of the north core revitalization project and through a partnership with the Clean, Green and Beautiful Committee.

2026 Key Objectives

Food and Organic (Green Bin) Waste Diversion – Continued Program Implementation

The key objective for 2026 is to advance work on the City owned organic waste processing facility. Work will include completing the project scoping exercise. Conceptual site plan design work will then be completed, leading to the issuance of a formal Design, Build Operate (DBO) procurement process. The capital cost of this important project has been included in the 2026/27 capital budget.

The revised estimated Green Bin program start date is now 2029. This updated timeline reflects project complexity and the required undertakings.

Automated Cart Based Collection – Continued Program Implementation

Automated cart-based collection for the garbage stream will be rolled out to all remaining single-family residential households (approximately 30,000) starting the first week of June 2026. Cart delivery to households will commence the first week of May, with cart delivery concluding no later than the last week in May. A multi-media promotion and education campaign is being implemented to get the message out to the community. Once the program is fully operational, it will represent a monumental transition in how the City manages curbside waste.

Another key objective is securing appropriate in-cab vehicle software to support the program management of the automated collection carts and routing requirements. Work on this objective is underway.

Blue Box Program Transition – Depot Operations and Program Expansion

In 2026, Council approved (Report 103-2026) that the City enter into a formal operating agreement with Circular Materials for the 900 Walsh Street recycling depot effective January 1, 2026. Circular Materials is the administrator of the common collection system in Ontario on behalf of Producers. Council also approved as part of the 2026 operating budget the required funds to continue operation of the City's 85 Front Street and Landfill Site recycling depots. All three of the City's recycling depots will continue to operate in 2026.

The key objective this year is for Administration to assess its depot operations in conjunction with the Circular Materials site, engage in advocacy efforts with the province, and provide a more informed decision to Council on the future of depot operations for 2027 and beyond.

In addition, starting January 1, 2026, the Province expanded the list of acceptable items allowed to be recycled in the blue box program. Administration continues to assist Circular Materials, where applicable, in supporting messaging around the program. The City’s website and communication materials have been updated to promote the new list of acceptable materials.

Public Space Litter Receptacles – Continued Expansion

In the 2026 Capital Budget, Council approved additional funding to further expand the network of public space waste and recycling receptacles. The focus of these additional units will be to ensure there is sufficient public space litter infrastructure in the City’s core areas. The units will provide further opportunities for residents to dispose of their litter and recycling away from home.

Waste Reduction Trends

As Administration continues to implement components of the SWMS, positive results in overall waste reduction in the community have been realized. The table below summarizes waste reduction trends from the last five reporting years:

Waste Reduction Trends 2021-2025:

Description	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total residential waste generated (Metric Tonnes)	47,641	45,928	45,240	44,932	46,621
Total residential waste diverted (Metric Tonnes)	11,697	12,202	12,352	12,499	13,003
% of residential solid waste diverted from landfill	25%	26%	27%	28%	28%

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

The costs associated with program development work outlined in this report are accounted for in the 2026 Solid Waste and Recycling Services Capital and Operating Budgets.

BACKGROUND

At the April 7, 2014, Committee of the Whole meeting, a resolution was passed relative to Report 2014.017 (Roads) – Solid Waste Management Strategy requesting that Administration report back to Council on an annual basis on the progress of the Solid Waste Management Strategy.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

None.

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04/17/2026