

Are you “waste wise?”

City of St. Albert's Curbside Waste Education Program

SWANA Northern Lights Chapter
The Next Generation Conference & Tradeshow

Date
May 11, 2018

Presented by:

Olivia Kwok
Supervisor, Waste & Diversion Programs
Utilities & Environment



Hi! A little about me...

I'm Olivia Kwok

- Supervisor, Waste & Diversion Programs
- From Guelph, Ontario
- Graduated from the University of Waterloo, Geography and Environmental Management
- Worked for the City of Guelph and City of Regina



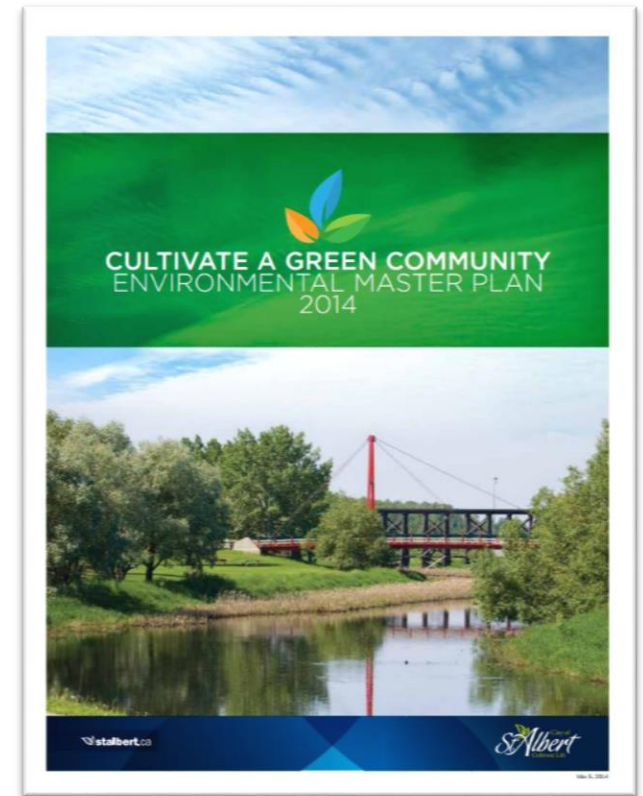
City of St. Albert

- Located in Edmonton Metropolitan Region
- Population of 64,645
- Waste & Diversion Programs
 - Curbside collection
 - Drop-off locations
 - Seasonal waste programs
 - Education and outreach
- 20,000 households receive City curbside collection services



What was going on?

- Environmental Master Plan (2014) goals
 - Reduce solid waste generation to 105 kilograms or less per person, per year by 2020; and
 - Increase diversion rate to 75% by 2020
- Noticed ongoing improper waste sorting and set out by households
- Staff tagged carts and bags with stickers
- Extra effort to be placed on education and outreach in 2017



Not a great article in the local paper...

St. Albert Gazette, Wednesday, February 08, 2017 - 5

Plastics plague city compost

Fines imminent if city doesn't clean up, says manager

BY KEVIN MA
Staff Writer

St. Albert may soon have to pay steep fines for its organic waste because too many plastic bags – and too many green carts – are ending up in the city's dump.

The *Gazette* learned this week that Roseridge Landfill was on the verge of levying a \$150 per truckload fine on the City of St. Albert due to ongoing contamination problems with its green cart curbside organics program.

Roseridge manager Gerard Duffy said this week that there was a significant amount of non-compostable material coming in from St. Albert's green carts.

"We're seeing a lot of plastic bags coming through that aren't biodegradable," he said, as well as black trash bags and blue bags full of recycling. He estimated that about 15 per cent of St. Albert's organics loads were contaminated this way.

"It's coming in every week."

Duffy said that while this problem had been happening for years, the landfill recently changed its practices to better track the source of each load of waste, which made the St. Albert problem more obvious.

Another clue was the fact that many of these contaminated loads contained actual City of St. Albert green carts.

Duffy said his crews have spotted many green carts in loads from St. Albert in recent years, which were presumably dropped into the collection trucks by accident.

"It's more than I can count," he said of the carts, guessing that there had been a few dozen.

City environment director Leah Kong-

srude contested this, saying that her quick scan of last year's cart exchange/replacement requests suggests that about 35 were due to "missing" carts. She estimated that about five may have been "eaten" by trash trucks, noting that the city's contractor has to report all such incidents.

Duffy said contaminated loads mean more work for the landfill, as crews have to repeatedly flip them with heavy equipment to break open the plastic bags and then remove them by hand before the organic waste can be composted.

Duffy said he had discussed the matter with the city and would soon impose a \$150 fine per truckload of contaminated organics as well as a \$10 per tonne higher rate unless the problem was addressed. Last week was supposed to be the last straw, but he has decided to work with the city some more.

"Obviously, I want to work with people and not penalize, but it's been going on too long," he said.

Morinville Coun. Stephen Dufoe, who represents that town on the Roseridge board, said in an email that he was "absolutely disgusted" by the continuing contamination of the organics pile at Roseridge.

"I'm absolutely disgusted by what some St. Albert residents deem to be organics – bags of garbage, microwaves, boots, and other items," he said.

Dufoe said Roseridge administrators have told him that St. Albert's contamination rate was about 30 per cent higher than that of other Sturgeon County communities with organics collection.

Dufoe questioned whether St. Albert's decision to switch to bi-weekly trash col-



ROSERIDGE LANDFILL/Photo

UNACCEPTABLE – An example of extensive plastic contamination, including two entire green bins, found in organic waste from St. Albert deposited at Roseridge Landfill. Landfill staff say that about 15 per cent of the organics loads from St. Albert have uncontrollable materials in them, and are on the verge of imposing stiff fines on the city as a result.

lection had actually encouraged waste diversion as claimed or if residents were simply using their organics cart as an alternate trash can.

"St. Albert needs to walk the waste-reduction game, not just talk it."

St. Albert waste and diversion programs co-ordinator Olivia Kwok defended the city's efforts, saying that it had diverted some 11,000 tonnes of waste through the green cart program last year.

"From time to time there may be things that go inside the cart that don't belong there," Kwok said, adding that the city recently revamped its online guide on what should and shouldn't go in the green bin.

Drivers try to save green carts that

fall into their trucks before the crusher engages, but aren't always successful, Kwok said. Residents receive free replacements if their carts are destroyed this way. When they spot contaminants in carts, drivers leave those carts at the curb along with an orange tag so residents can learn why the cart wasn't collected.

Duffy urged St. Albert residents to only put compostable bags and waste into their green carts.

"Put waste in its place. If it doesn't look like it will break down, don't put it in the compost."

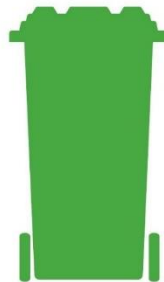
Visit stalbert.ca/waste for a guide on what to put in the green cart.

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Curbside Waste Education Program

Goals

- Encourage proper waste sorting by households
- Encourage proper waste set out of carts and bags at the curb
- Be available to answer questions from residents in their neighbourhoods on their pick-up days
- Gather information on common waste questions to improve information provided to residents



Planning and Coordination

- Researched other municipalities programs
- Developed and designed door hangers and stickers
- Created spreadsheet for data tracking
- Shared CWE schedule with Administration staff and Collections staff
- Anticipated the Green Organics Cart to have the most contamination

Planning and Coordination

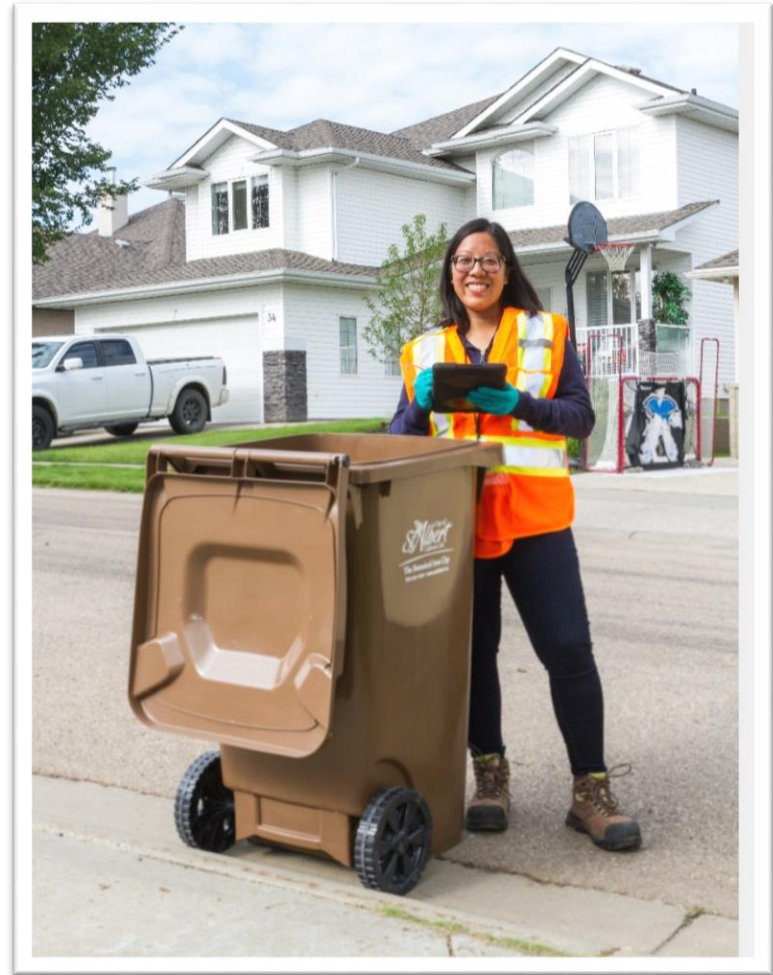
- Lots of education and outreach while CWE Program was executed
- Advertising the CWE Program in newspapers and social media

The collage features three main components:

- Twitter Post:** A tweet from the City of St. Albert (@CityofStAlbert) dated 2017-08-14, 7:00 AM. The text reads: "Curbside Waste Education Team in neighbourhoods this summer. They will leave door hangers and stickers with tips. ow.ly/7yQQZ30elHqg".
- Flyer:** A flyer titled "BeWasteWise" with the subtitle "Curbside Waste Education Program | City of St. Albert" and the website "stalbert.ca". The flyer features a green leaf icon and various waste-related icons.
- Diagram:** A diagram showing how to fold a door hanger. It includes labels "A", "B", and "C" for the corners and "FOLDED EDGE" for the central fold. An arrow points to the "old corner of C to middle of A and B". Below the diagram, text says "Open the liner and place into the food scraps container." and an illustration shows a green food scraps container with a white liner being placed inside.

Curbside Waste Education Program

- Visited 1,219 households on 41 streets
- Five weeks from August 14 to September 15
- Left informational door hangers and “Thank You” stickers



“Thank You! You’re Waste Wise!”



239 “Thank You” stickers were put on
resident’s Green Organics Carts!

“Oops! What Goes Where?”

The back of the sign is white with a green header that says 'BeWasteWise'. The main title is 'WHAT GOES WHERE?'. Below that, it says 'PLEASE ENSURE YOUR:'. There are three sections, each with a checkbox and text: 1. Brown Garbage cart does not contain: (checkbox) 2. Green Organics cart does not contain: (checkbox) 3. Blue Recycling bag does not contain: (checkbox). At the bottom, there are icons of a brown trash can, a green trash can, and a blue recycling bin. Below the icons, it says 'For more information, visit stalbert.ca/waste'.

Unacceptable waste in...

- Brown Garbage Cart: 72
- Green Organics Cart: 81
- Blue Recycling Bag: 444

Total: 597 errors

“Oops! Extra Garbage”



Overfilled...

- Brown Garbage Cart: 81
- Green Organics Cart: 16

Total: 97 errors

“Oops! Curb your Cart”

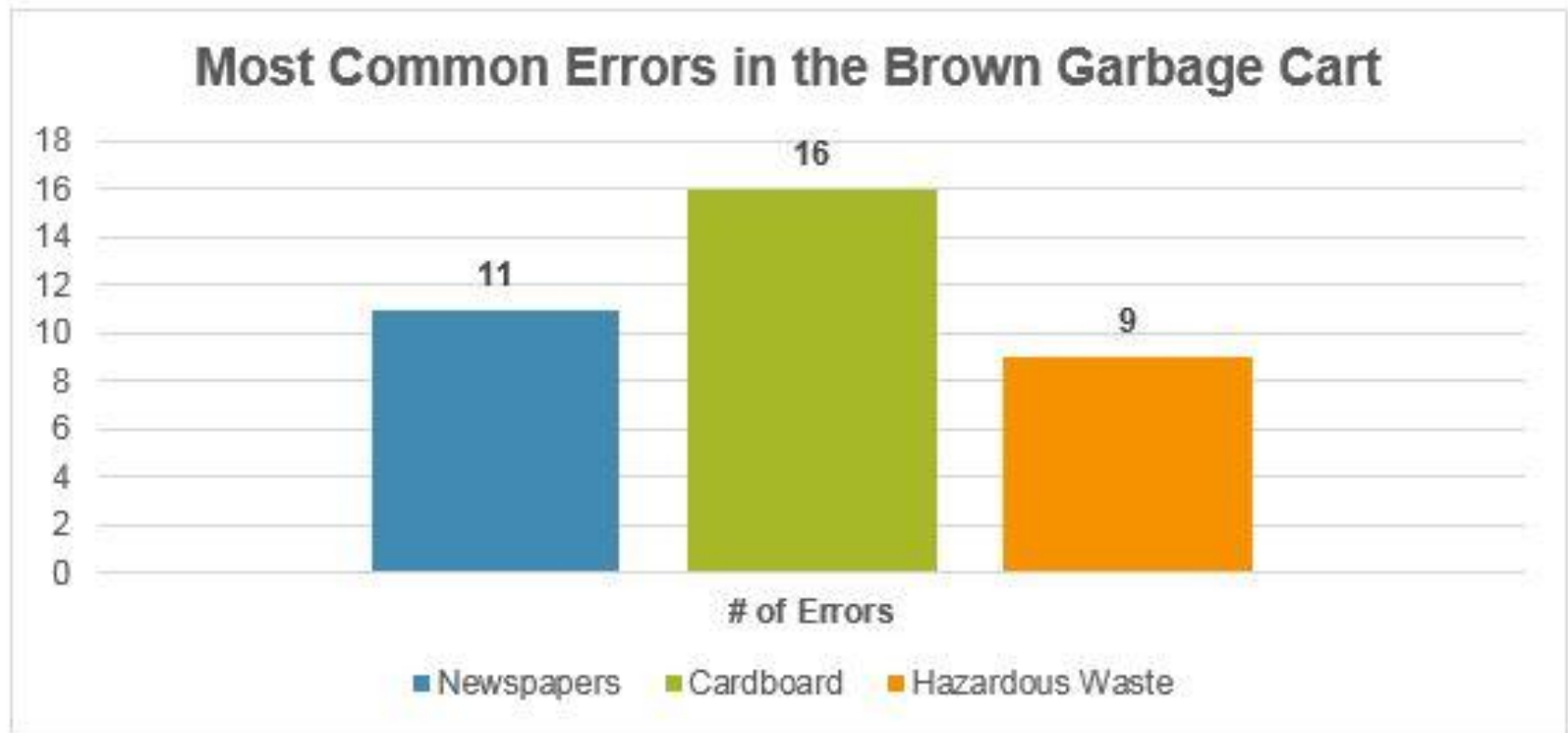


Carts that were...

- Parked Wrong: 3
- Pointed Wrong: 2
- Spaced Wrong: 28

Total: 33 errors

Brown Garbage Cart Sorting Errors

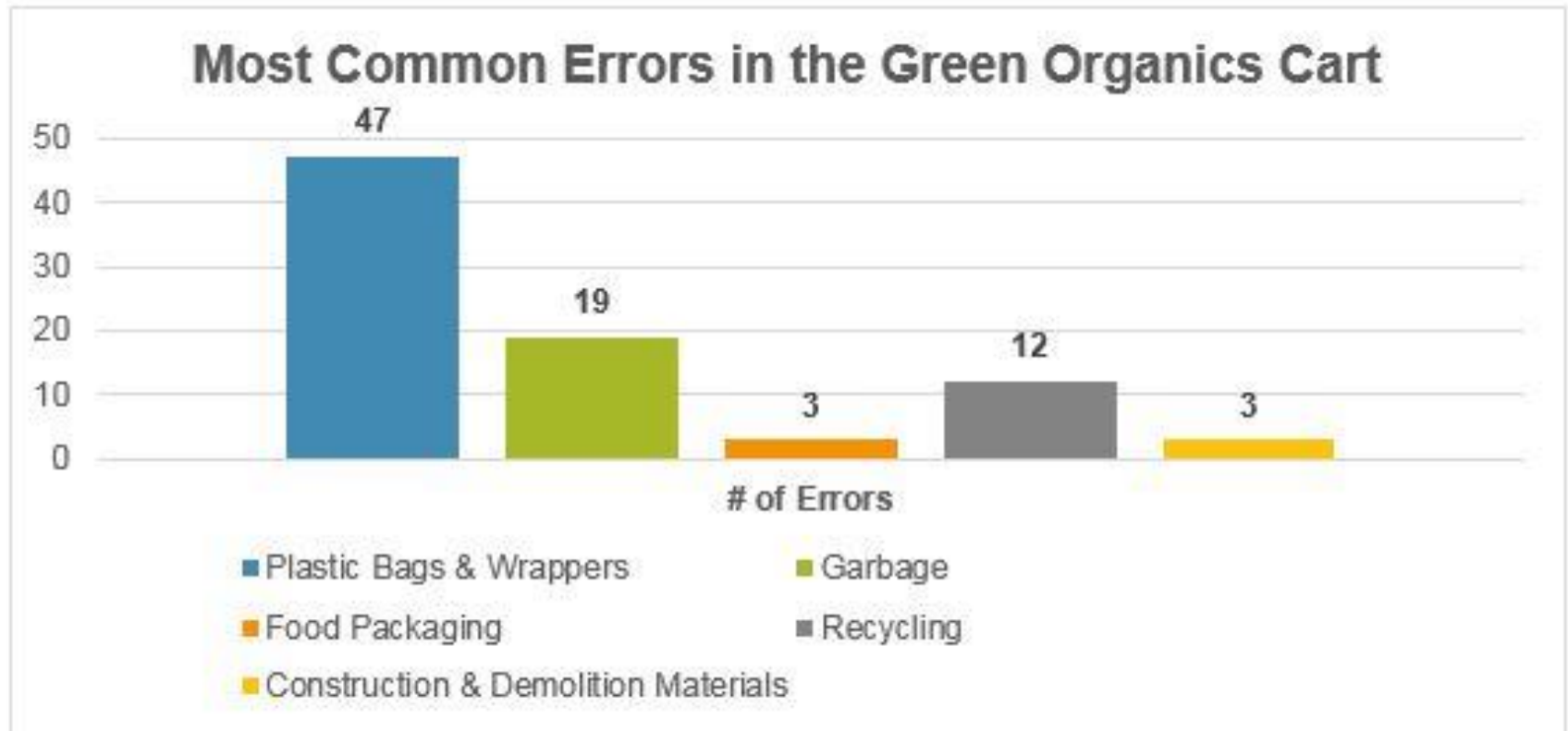


Note: Brown Garbage Cart materials are usually bagged, so we couldn't see all the contents.

Brown Garbage Cart



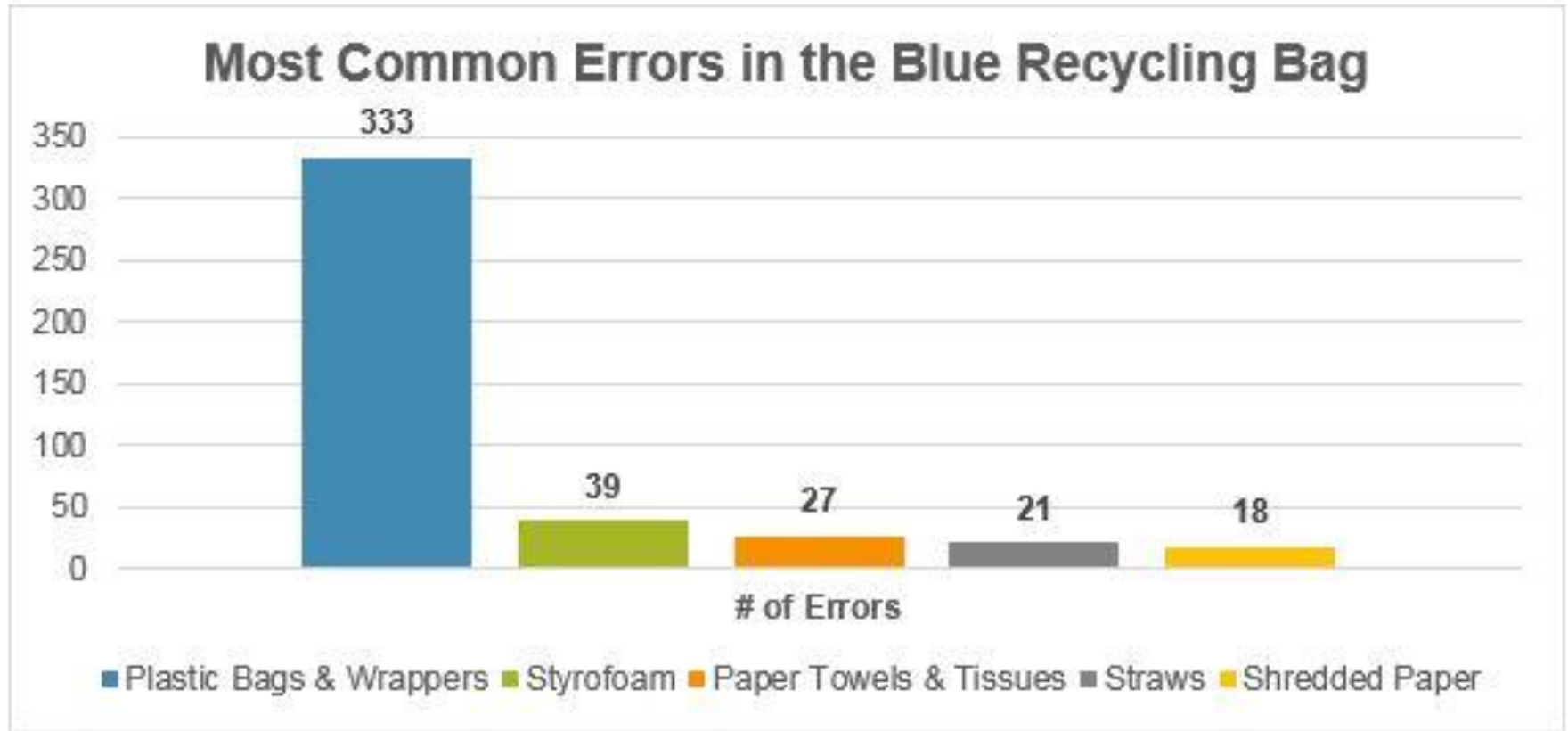
Green Organics Cart Sorting Errors



Green Organics Cart



Blue Recycling Bag Sorting Errors



Blue Recycling Bag

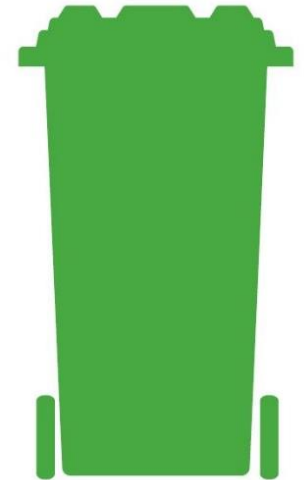


Feedback from Residents



Lessons Learned

- Data collection with iPads
- Loss of data due to accidental collection
- Hazardous waste and excessive contamination in the Green Organics Carts
- Weather and program timeframes



Better articles in the local paper!

Are you waste-wise?

Trash inquisition coming to your street

BY KEVIN MA
Staff Writer

City crews are rummaging through your trash this month to see how wise St. Albert is when it comes to waste.

Two city employees are inspecting St. Albert's trash this summer as part of a month-long curbside waste education program. The inspections started Aug. 14 and are set to continue into September.

"We want to encourage proper waste-sorting," explained city waste and diversion program supervisor Olivia Kwok, who is one of the two inspectors.

Kwok said the city has done a lot of public education events on waste-sorting this year to encourage residents to divert waste from the landfill. As a pilot, she and a co-worker have been visiting random St. Albert streets on trash day to see if people are putting the wrong materials in their bags and carts, overstuffing them or putting them in the wrong place on the curb. When they spot these problems, they hang a flyer on the homeowner's doorknob that says "Oops!" along with a description of the problem and how to avoid it.

Kwok said she has not seen many plastic bags in the city's green bins so far. (Plastic bags were so common in the bins earlier this year that the Rosedale Landfill was threatening fines.) The most common problem was people putting plastic bags or wrappers in their blue bags. Those items aren't recyclable and should go in the brown trash cart.

"We've also seen a lot of houses that have been sorting and setting out their waste perfectly," she noted. These homes get a fancy "waste-wise" sticker they can put on their carts.

Kwok said her crew had inspected about 575 homes as of Thursday and awarded about 80 waste-wise stickers – there were more than 80 homes with perfect waste technique, but only homes that had



DAN REDD/ALBERTA GAZETTE

TOO CLOSE – Olivia Kwok, left, supervisor, waste and diversion programs at the City of St. Albert Public Works and Emily Holden, waste and diversion programs assistant, demonstrate that these bins are too close together.

both a blue bag and their brown and green bins out on inspection day qualified for stickers.

Kwok said she was keeping the inspection schedule secret so as to not tip-off homeowners, but said inspectors would go out early in the day before the garbage trucks arrived and would be festooned

with safety vests and city logos, ready to answer questions.

"Hopefully they (the residents) won't be scared of us."

Kwok said she would report to council on the inspections later this fall and hoped to run a similar program next summer.

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AT HOME

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St. Albert Gazette, Saturday, July 15, 2017 - 31

OPEN HOUSES

For a listing of the open houses scheduled for this weekend, see pages 40 and 41.

Composting through the city

BY MARIA SILVA
Staff Writer

Composting at home is thought to be a hard task, but St. Albert is trying to make it easy for residents to turn their organic waste into city compost.

The city provides a green organics cart for residents to collect organic waste from their homes and that the city picks up. Items can include fruit/vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags and grass clippings. The city program also accepts items like meat, bones, cooked cooking oils, and dairy products.

The program reduces the amount of household garbage that ends up in the landfill and turns residents' kitchen waste into rich compost city residents can use in their gardens.

Olivia Kwok, Supervisor of Waste & Diversion Programs, said the city compost waste program diverted 11,240 metric tonnes of organics through the Green Organics Cart program and Compost Depot in 2016.

"We've also been doing education and outreach these last few months to educate residents on the green organics cart. We've set up information kiosks at various city facilities, giving away compostable bags and teaching visitors on how to make an organics cart out of their own waste."

This information reminds residents to use only the appropriate bags and liners in the program," says Kwok. Residents can make liners out of newspapers or cardboard to line their green carts, so that there is no residue left at the bottom of the carts. Most plastic bags are not compostable and should not be placed in the organics carts.

There are specialized compostable plastic bags that are BPI certified which can be found at your local grocery store and used in your green organics cart.

The materials inside the green organics cart are brought to Rosedale Waste Management Services Commission to be processed. At their site, the materials are composted through an open window system. Once the materials have been turned into compost, the city offers the compost giveaway program. Residents can pick up free compost in the spring and fall at the Mike MacNeil Recycling Depot," Kwok says.

City residents can turn in their kitchen waste all year round as green organics carts are collected weekly from April to the end of October and bi-weekly from



JOHN COOK/ALBERTA GAZETTE

ORGANICS – The City of St. Albert began its compost waste recycling program back in 2011 and encourages residents to pick up compost bins to collect fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags and grass clippings to name a few. The organic waste is then turned into compost suitable for fertilizing gardens.

November to the end of March. Diverting compostable kitchen waste reduces pressure on the city landfill site. It is estimated that more than half the waste in landfills in North America comes from materials that could be composted.

For more information or to learn more about your composting options, please visit <https://stalbertainvest.ca/waste> or email wm@stalbertainvest.ca



JOHN COOK/ALBERTA GAZETTE

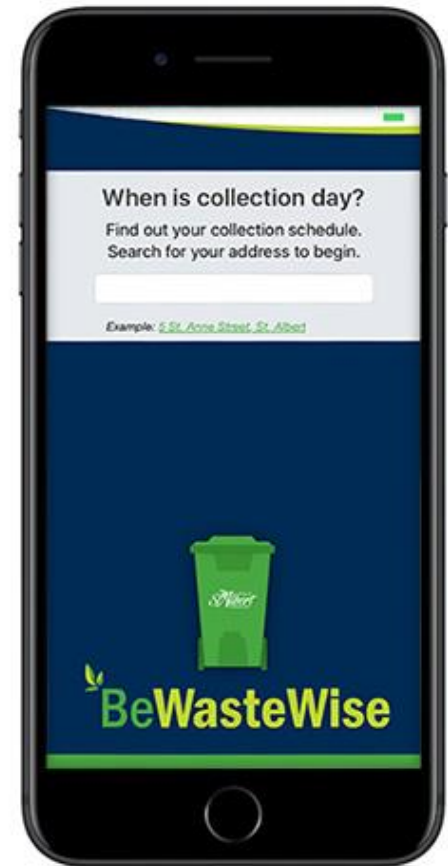
RICH – Organic material collected from St. Albert's green recycling bins is turned into highly enriched compost that the city gives back to residents for use in gardens.

In conclusion...

- Valuable project to see how households were sorting and setting out their waste
- Opportunity to educate households and give specific and direct tips
- Collaboration between City and Contractors
- Data and information used to improve future education and outreach
 - Blue Recycling Bags had the most contamination

What's next for St. Albert?

- Continue education and outreach
 - Information booths
 - Promote the Be Waste Wise App
 - Curbside Waste Education Program in July and August
 - Option to self-elect household or street to participate
- “Oops! What Goes Where?” campaign



“Oops! What Goes Where?”

 **BeWasteWise**

OOPS!

Keep plastic toys
out of your recycling.

What Goes Where?

stalbert.ca/waste



“Oops! What Goes Where?”

 **BeWasteWise**

OOPS!

Keep hazardous items
out of your waste.

What Goes Where?

stalbert.ca/waste



“Oops! What Goes Where?”

 **BeWasteWise**

OOPS!

Keep plastic straws
out of your recycling.

What Goes Where?

stalbert.ca/waste

Suggestions for Other Municipalities

- Present the audit program as a fun, friendly education campaign
- Utilize iPads to collect your data
- Use paper door hangers, and write direct and specific tips for the household
- Take lots of photos



Suggestions for Other Municipalities

- Remember to reward households that are doing a great job
- Learn what items your community are improperly sorting
- Share your findings and observations with all stakeholders



Thank You!

Questions?

Olivia Kwok

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