
Subject: Waste Management 2025 Operating Budget and Requisition

Report to: Budget Review Committee of the Whole

Report date: Thursday, October 17, 2024

Recommendations

1. That the Waste Management Services net operating budget increase (inclusive of program changes related to staffing resources for service delivery) of \$416,952 or 0.9% **BE APPROVED**;
2. That \$350,000 **BE TRANSFERRED** from the Waste Management Stabilization Reserve in order to fund one-time costs included in the 2025 Waste Management Services operating budget;
3. That the 2025 Waste Management Services gross operating budget of \$53,029,717 and net budget of \$45,584,715 as per Appendix 1 to Report CSD 44-2024 **BE APPROVED**;
4. That the net budget amount of \$45,584,715 **BE APPORTIONED** between the local area municipalities in accordance with the methodology approved in PWA 55-2011 and outlined in Appendix 2 to Report CSD 44-2024;
5. That the necessary by-laws **BE PREPARED** and **PRESENTED** to Council for consideration; and
6. That a copy of Report CSD 44-2024 **BE CIRCULATED** to the local area municipalities.

Key Facts

- The proposed Waste Management Services (WMS) net operating budget represents an overall increase of \$416,952, or 0.9% over 2024 as shown in Appendix 1 to Report CSD 44-2024.
- Key drivers to the 2025 budget include inflation, fuel pricing, increased contract pricing, people strategy support, inclusion of supplemental taxes revenue, and an updated reserve strategy.
- Approximately 80% of all services provided by WMS are being executed through external contracts, therefore the budget is subject to inflation volatility.

- Assessment growth for Niagara Region and Area Municipalities has not been finalized; however, estimated assessment growth of 1.5% is included in Appendix 2 to Report CSD 44-2024. The estimate of 1.5% for 2025 results in the net requisition decrease to be approximately 0.6% (0.9% less growth of 1.5%) with an estimated average typical annual residential decrease of \$0.32 per year.
- The net requisition amount has been allocated in accordance with the methodology approved in PWA 55-2011. The impacts by municipality in Appendix 3 to Report CSD 44-2024 are affected by the budget increase, growth in households by municipality and the enhanced services as requested and selected by each Local Area Municipality (LAM).

Financial Considerations

The gross operating expenditures are \$53.0 million, which net of revenues equates to a net requisition of \$45.6 million. This represents approximately \$0.4 million or 0.9% (0.9% for base operating and 0.0% for staffing program changes) increase over the 2024 net requisition as outlined in Appendix 1 to Report CSD 44-2024. A thorough review of operating needs and key contract assumptions has been completed which resulted in a reduction from the 2025 Budget Planning Strategy.

Table 1 – Summary of Proposed WMS Budget (in millions of dollars)

Waste Management 2025 Budget Summary	2024	2025	Increase (%)
Base Operating Expenses Net of Revenues	\$40.6	\$41.3	1.7%
Capital Transfers (Note 1)	4.6	4.6	
Transfers from Reserve for One-Time Costs	-	(0.3)	
Base Net Budget Requisition	\$45.2	\$45.6	0.9%
Program Changes	-	(0.0)	0.0%
Total Net Budget Requisition before Assessment Growth	\$45.2	\$45.6	0.9%
Total Net Budget Requisition after Assessment Growth			(0.6%)

Note 1 – Includes the annual base budget transfers to the Landfill Liability Reserve and the Capital Reserve of \$2.4 million and \$1.8 million, respectively.

A schedule providing the budgeted revenues and expenditures for 2024 and 2025 by type of expenditure is included as Appendix 1 to Report CSD 44-2024.

A contributing factor of the budget increase is inflation of the Consumer Price Index (“CPI”) and diesel fuel prices, both of which are components of the cost escalations of contracts administered by WMS. Another contributing factor to the budget increase relates to tenders awarded for operating contracts where increases have a direct impact on WMS operating budget. Further details are outlined in the Analysis section under Base Budget Increases, Pressures and Mitigations.

Through this budget process, staff updated the reserve strategy (last updated in 2018) considering the 2021 Asset Management Plan and updated capital data available on post closure costs of landfills. In late 2023, accounting standards changed to require the Asset Retirement Obligation (ARO) for the landfills to consider the full contaminating lifespans of the landfills instead of being capped at 40 years. As a result, post closure cost estimates were updated for the full post closure contaminating lifespan instead of a rolling 40 years and assumptions refreshed. Staff updated the financial funding model based on this newly available information with the goal of establishing a consistent annual contribution to reserve that would meet the post closure landfill needs over the landfill’s lifespan. This approach ensures the post closure landfill needs can be met while prioritizing annual stability of taxes to the ratepayers. The updated strategy supports the existing annual contribution of \$2.8 million to the Landfill Liability Reserve and aligns with the Average Annual Renewal Investment (AARI) concept for capital reserve needs.

Analysis

Base Budget Increases, Pressures and Mitigations

The 2025 operating and multi-year budgets are impacted by a number of operational challenges such as the EPR transition ending in 2025 and external factors, such as escalating fuel prices, CPI rates, and contracted services.

Approximately 80% of the operating-related costs are in the form of outsourced costs and are subject to contract escalations and conditions. The remaining operating-related costs are associated with program-related purchases, budgeted repairs and maintenance, utilities, labour related costs, program support, consulting, and other administration costs. Of the budgeted operating-related expenditures, approximately 3.0% are considered discretionary.

The pressures in operations that contribute to the operating increases are:

- \$0.2 million net increase in contract costs for organics processing, drop-off depots, household hazardous waste, and collections
- \$0.2 million increase in Niagara Road 12 landfill operations services due to award of a tendered contract approved by Regional Council through PW 21-2024
- \$0.2 million increase in labour related costs to support the people strategy
- \$0.2 million increase in corporate support costs
- \$0.2 million net increase in consulting costs to prepare for future collection contract
- \$0.2 million increase in leachate processing costs due to internal rate increases

The pressures noted above have been partially offset by favourable variances which are comprised of the following:

- \$0.7 million net reduction due to inclusion of supplemental taxes revenue
- \$0.1 million net increase in user fees

Program Changes

Included in the above base budget details are the program change requests to support staffing resources for service delivery outlined below. The net financial impact of these changes is fully offsetting and does not contribute to any budget increase. Business cases for these changes can be found in Appendix 5 to Report CSD 44-2024.

- Capital Coordinator required to support GIS database, asset management program, project deliverables, operational support for 12 closed and 2 open landfill sites - this represents an increase of 1 permanent full-time equivalent (FTE) funded 50% by capital.
- Waste Exemptions Representative required permanently to address the sharply increasing volume of waste exemptions applications (e.g. diapers, medical) that continue to grow annually – this represents an increase of 0.7 permanent FTE and decrease of 0.7 temporary FTE resulting in no net overall impact.
- Internal Allocations reduction from customer service division as a result of one less staffing resource required in the call center due to lower call volumes with the elimination of the blue/grey box program.

One-Time Expenditures

The 2025 Waste Management Services operating budget includes \$0.3 million for a one-time consulting engagement to conduct household waste composition studies which are essential for obtaining accurate data on the types and quantities of waste (garbage and green bin organics) being generated to enable informed decision-making regarding waste diversion strategies, program improvements, and the development of new initiatives. This will be funded by the Waste Management Stabilization Reserve and therefore has no overall impact on the proposed 2025 Waste Management Services net requisition for this one-time expenditure.

Reserve Strategy and Forecast

For 2025, the budget recommends maintaining the annual base budget transfers to the Landfill Liability Reserve and Capital Reserve in the amount of \$2.8 million and \$1.8 million, respectively. With the change to ARO and the updated Landfill Liability Reserve strategy, this reserve is now funded to align with the AARI over the contaminating lifespan of each landfill. The Capital Reserve remains funded to align with the 2021 Asset Management Plan with a 10-year AARI strategy.

As part of Niagara Region's Reserve and Reserve Funds Policy (C-F-013), minimum and maximum funding targets have been established for reserves. For stabilization reserves, such as the Waste Management Stabilization Reserve, the funding target is 10% to 15% of operating expenditures not including debt repayments. Based on the forecasted balance at the end of 2024 of \$8.9 million, the reserve balance will be deemed to be adequately funded based on 2024 operating expenditures.

Appendix 4 to Report CSD 44-2024 shows the forecasted Waste Management Reserve balances.

2025 Waste Management Requisition

The net requisition amount will be allocated to the LAMs in accordance with the methodology approved in PWA 55-2011. As such, base WMS costs will be apportioned based on the 2023 percentage of residential units in each municipality, with the enhanced collection of services and associated disposal costs to be apportioned to the requesting municipalities.

The year-over-year increase in requisition amount by municipality before assessment growth equates to a range of a 0.3% decrease to a 2.4% increase with an average

increase of 0.9% as outlined in Appendix 2 to CSD 44-2024. The net requisition change by municipality after the 1.5% forecasted assessment growth (as of October 3, 2024) equates to a range of a 1.6% decrease to a 1.4% increase with an average decrease of 0.6% as outlined in Appendix 2 to CSD 44-2024. The range is the result of the difference in household growth between LAMs as well as net assessment growth. The WMS levy is collected as a special levy with the Region establishing the tax rates for each municipality (with the exception of Niagara-on-the-Lake).

Appendix 3 to Report CSD 44-2024 provides the impacts of the WMS requisition for 2025 in comparison to 2024 on a cost per typical residential unit basis by area municipality. The 0.6% decrease on the budget net of assessment growth of 1.5% will impact the average annual residential property from a decrease of \$3.00 to an increase of \$2.85 depending on the municipality (average decrease of \$0.32 per year).

Multi-Year Forecast

2025 will be the second of the two years representing the transition period of the extended producer responsibility (EPR) which ends on December 31, 2025. The multi-year forecast to 2027 reflects this impact along with inflation, contract pressures, people strategy, and updated reserve strategies. The forecast reflects annual increases of 5.2% for 2026 and 2.8% for 2027. There are many assumptions and unknowns included in these forecasts, and staff will re-evaluate the long-term budget and reserve strategies with the budget cycle each year. Reports will be brought forward in Q4 2024 to the Public Works Committee and Council for consideration and deliberation as to whether recycling collection from non-eligible sources should continue following the end of the transition period. Financial impacts of this decision will be considered for the 2026 WMS operating budget as part of the annual budgeting process.

The key assumptions affecting the multi-year forecast are as follows:

- 2026
 - Reduced funding of \$0.6 million from Circular Materials Ontario (“CMO”) due to the end of EPR transition period
 - Increased pressures of \$0.7 million for inflation and fuel prices on the collection contract
 - Increased landfill operations contracted service pressures of \$0.5 million
 - Continued investment in the People Strategy of \$0.3 million

- 2027
 - Increased pressures of \$0.7 million for inflation and fuel prices on the collection contract
 - Continued investment in the People Strategy of \$0.2 million

Risk and Opportunities

The proposed budget, like any other budget, has a number of risk and opportunities. However, due to the EPR transition changes, the risks to post 2025 transition have yet to be estimated in the multi-year and will be based on future Council direction. The most significant risk to 2025 is the inflationary pressure of the collection contract, as well as several other contracts managed by WMS containing annual contract cost adjustments related to fuel prices and CPI. If these factors exceed the forecasted amounts, this could result in variances to the proposed budget. However, the adequately funded stabilization reserve would help address any variances that may occur.

Alternatives Reviewed

None.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The 2025 Waste Management Services proposed budget aligns with Niagara Region's 2023 – 2026 Council Strategic Priorities supporting an Effective Region, a Green and Resilient Region, and an Equitable Region.

Other Pertinent Reports

PWA 55-2011 Waste Management Services Financing Study
(Please contact the Niagara Region if a copy is required)

[PWC-C 24-2021 – Residential Blue Box Program – Final Producer Responsibility Regulation](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=9aa51b17-536f-4a78-a67f-8d4065f60dd1&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English>)

Confidential PW 37-2023 Recycling Collection from Non-Eligible Sources under Blue V Box Regulation (O.Reg 391/21)

[PW 21-2024 – Niagara Road 12 Landfill Site Operations Contract](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=bb190b0b-08e1-49d3-8ff8-b3c82ae14fe6&Agenda=Merged&lang=English>)

[CSD 29-2024 - 2025 Budget Strategy](#)

(<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=5ea2c44e-e03a-4ef1-91b8-f5f6a188db45&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English>)

Prepared by:

Melanie Steele, MBA, CPA, CA
Associate Director, Reporting & Analysis
Financial Management & Planning

Recommended by:

Dan Carnegie
Commissioner / Treasurer
Corporate Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Mackenzie Glenney, Program Financial Specialist and Renee Muzzell, Manager, Program Financial Support and reviewed by Beth Brens, Associate Director, Budget Planning & Strategy, Catherine Habermebl, Director, Waste Management Services and Terry Ricketts, Commissioner, Public Works.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 2025 Waste Management Schedule of Revenues and Expenditures by Object of Expenditure
- Appendix 2 Proposed 2025 Requisition by Municipality
- Appendix 3 2025 Waste Management Requisition for Typical Residential Property by Municipality
- Appendix 4 2024 to 2027 Forecasted Waste Management Reserve Balances
- Appendix 5 2025 Waste Management Services Operating Business Cases