

## Solid Waste Management Plan Update: Initial Draft Solid Waste and Recycling Industry Advisory Committee Feedback Session

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

Virtual / Hybrid

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Metro Vancouver is updating its regional solid waste management plan, building on the strengths of the current plan and identifying ways to accelerate waste prevention and recycling, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and advance a circular economy. Metro Vancouver is currently receiving feedback on the initial draft solid waste management plan.

On February 10, 2026, Metro Vancouver held a feedback session on the initial draft plan at a Solid Waste and Recycling Industry Advisory Committee meeting. The session included two components – a round-robin opportunity for each member to provide comments summarizing their main feedback on the initial draft plan, followed by small-group discussions.

Prior to the meeting, Metro Vancouver polled members to identify priority parts of the plan for small group discussion. Final small group topics were:

- Targets and Metrics
- Regulatory Strategy
- Residual Waste Management Strategy
- Recycling and Waste Centre Strategy

### Round-Robin Individual Feedback Summary

Below are the results of the round robin individual feedback, grouped by themes and topics. Verbatim notes are retained as part of the feedback records for the solid waste management plan update. Feedback will be considered as the draft is revised in preparation for providing to the Zero Waste Committee and GVS&DD Board. Following Board consideration, there will be an additional opportunity for comment prior to submission of the draft to the Ministry of Environment and Parks for approval.

#### **Need for clarity and specificity**

Committee members consistently felt the draft plan lacked sufficient detail to understand how goals will be achieved, what they will cost, and what assumptions back them. Many comments described the plan as “a plan to make a plan,” with unclear metrics, blended diversion rates, and limited supporting data. Targets around diversion, carbon neutrality, recycling infrastructure, and financial projections were viewed as unrealistic or inadequately justified.

#### **Financial transparency and cost implications**

Members raised concerns regarding rising costs, debt projections, unclear financial assumptions, lack of cost allocation by activity, and the potential burden on taxpayers especially in the context of affordability

and cost-of-living pressures. Feedback focused on improving transparency, inclusion of year-over-year cost-per-tonne schedules, and realistic accounting of capital costs and financing.

### **Disposal capacity and long-term planning**

Committee members highlighted uncertainties surrounding long-term disposal capacity, processing and infrastructure needs for a rapidly growing population, and the relationship between waste-to-energy and landfill operations. They want clear long-term planning horizons (30+ years) and detailed contingency strategies.

## **General Feedback**

### **Plan clarity and specificity**

- Wording lacks clear expectations and actions.
- Many goals appear aspirational without actionable pathways or costed implementation steps.
- Lack of concrete actions for upstream waste reduction, disposal bans, or for meeting diversion targets.
- Unclear metrics and blended diversion rates that inflate performance.
- “Plan to make a plan” sentiment – insufficient detail on how targets will be achieved.
- Need for realistic, fact-based analysis.
- Statistics included were viewed as incorrect or misleading.
- Need for clarity on linkages to other Metro Vancouver strategies and plans (climate action, net-zero, etc.).
- Low incorporation of specific Industry Advisory Committee feedback to date.
- Request for clarification on recycling facility roles, pilot projects for organics, and technology improvements.

### **Financial transparency and assumptions**

- Concerns about Metro Vancouver taking on excessive new debt within five years.
- Rising waste disposal revenues imply high rate increases for taxpayers.
- Perception that budget increases exceed what is reasonable for current inflation rates.
- Need for year-by-year cost-per-tonne schedule in the appendix.
- Insufficient allocation of costs to activities or targets; no “true cost accounting.”
- Lack of clarity about financial incentives for municipalities to participate in Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs.

- Concern about taxpayer burden and consequences of these plan decisions lasting decades.

#### **Disposal capacity, Waste-to-Energy, and District Energy**

- Need to clarify and detail Vancouver Landfill’s projected 2050 closure date within the plan.
  - Include conditions that could extend landfill life beyond 2050 (e.g. how might increasing diversion impact the anticipated closure date).
- Need for clarification on the District Energy System’s claim of tripling energy recovery.
- Mixed views on continued use of the Waste-to-Energy Facility; some believe it should be phased out and some support incineration over landfilling.
- Concern that the long term District Energy commitment is a way of Metro Vancouver trying to fund new waste-to-energy capacity.
- Waste-to-energy and landfill should be separated in the plan since only one is a Metro Vancouver-owned asset.
- Need to distinguish between materials recovery vs. energy recovery to avoid conflating diversion with fuel-burning.
- Importance of ensuring low-cost disposal options in-region and in-province.

#### **Diversion rates, recycling, and EPR**

- Need for municipal-level breakdowns of recycling numbers for comparison.
- Diversion targets seen as overly optimistic or padded.
- Distinguish between diversion via materials recovery and recovery through incineration.
- Need more transparency on EPR reporting about collected products.
- Clarification requested on pathway to improving processing infrastructure for a growing population, especially multi-family.

#### **Enforcement, hauler licensing, and source control**

- Strong emphasis on shifting enforcement upstream rather than at recovery sites.
- Support for rewarding generators who “do the right thing.”
- Need for more enforcement and facilitation of waste audits including support for clear waste bags.
- Comment that more information is needed about scope of hauler licencing for the committee to meaningfully comment on it – what would this look like? Regulatory mechanisms should be described in more detail if included in the plan.

### **Developing markets**

- Support for research and technology to improve diversion and reduce contamination.
- Need to ensure recycling is focused to where end markets exist.
- Plan does not sufficiently facilitate development of end-market capacity.

### **General feedback**

- Positive feedback on plan organization by hierarchy.
- Recognized as a useful reference for municipalities to stay aligned.
- Formatting issue noted in Appendix B (line misalignment).
- Concern that legal or structural complexities (e.g., First Nations jurisdiction) could affect disposal capacity projections.

## **Summary of Small Group Discussion Feedback**

Below are notes from the small group discussion, categorized by the small group topics. Feedback will be considered as the draft is revised in preparation for providing to the Zero Waste Committee and GVS&DD Board. Following Board consideration, there will be an additional opportunity for comment prior to submission of the draft to the Ministry of Environment and Parks for approval.

### **Topic: Targets and Metrics**

Most important topics in this area:

- Current diversion numbers do not reflect actual recycling and rely heavily on unregulated materials (e.g., concrete, asphalt) that inflate performance.
- True residuals and recovery rates are not being measured, resulting in inaccurate reporting and unrealistic targets.
- Metrics and targets are not grounded in operational or market reality, creating credibility issues.

What needs to be strengthened:

- Accuracy and transparency of measurements – track what is actually recycled, including residuals leaving facilities and material shipped overseas.
- Evidence-based target setting to align targets with physical limits of recyclability and market conditions; acknowledge that realistic diversion rates are in the 20–30% range.
- Cost transparency that outlines the cost per tonne or per unit of diversion for proposed initiatives and provide cost–benefit analysis for major actions.
- Differentiation between diversion and recovery. Track recovery separately, do not count recovery as success.

What's missing:

- A clear explanation of how targets will be achieved (e.g. sequencing, strategies, or implementation plan)
- Tracking and reporting of facility-level residuals, including organics and construction and demolition materials processing.
- Analysis of downstream environmental impacts such as organic residual contamination of farmland.
- Consideration of affordability impacts, especially on multi-family building residents.
- A plan for addressing declining or stagnant recycling markets for plastics, wood waste, and cardboard.
- A new baseline methodology that reflects actual conditions rather than aspirational metrics.

Other comments:

- Some participants expressed frustration with having the same conversation about numbers.
- Stakeholders voiced concerns that current reporting mimics other jurisdictions but is not ideal for the Metro Vancouver region.
- Zero waste is seen as unattainable, and municipal responsibility should focus on efficiency and affordability rather than aspirational targets.

**Topic: Recycling and Waste Centre Strategy**

Most important topics in this area:

- Recognizing and duplicating the United Boulevard model, which is viewed as the regional standard for service quality.
- Ensuring recycling and waste centres support extended producer responsibility integration, reuse opportunities, and access for all residents, including those in high-density areas.

What needs to be strengthened:

- Clear direction on the role of organics at recycling and waste centres and how to integrate commercial organics handling without displacing private sector operators.
- Improved planning for equitable access, particularly for dense urban areas where residents cannot drive 30+ minutes to a site.
- A more transparent approach to mixed waste processing (is it being considered, what studies exist, and what feasibility looks like, etc)
- Standardization or simplification for extended producer responsibility product handling, including disposal ban enforcement and reducing the burden on haulers.

What's missing:

- A clear articulation of the capacity of existing processors in the region.
- A stronger plan for active transportation access to sites, beyond conceptual statements.
- Structural barriers to reuse (e.g., scavenging policies) that may need policy adjustments.
- A clear regional approach to managing extended producer responsibility materials entering the residual waste stream.

Other comments:

- Want more clarity on how transfer stations fit within the broader system.
- Some noted that disposal ban inspectors often put responsibility on haulers, which should shift upstream to generators.
- Suggestions were raised about exploring a municipal bylaw to improve enforcement of sorting at source.

**Topic: Residual Waste Management Strategy**

Most important topics in this area:

- Residual waste management is the largest cost driver in the system and must be managed strategically.
- Increasing amount of residuals, especially from multi-family housing, require new approaches to measurement, material separation, and long-term disposal planning.
- Ensure that environmental impacts (air emissions, pollutants, hazardous waste) are minimized and controlled.

What needs to be strengthened:

- A clear framework for measuring residuals from all streams (curbside, transfer stations, recycling facilities, and organics processing).
- Transparent information about future landfill capacity, including Vancouver Landfill timelines, renegotiation requirements, and how diversion affects landfill lifespan.
- A financial outline of disposal approaches including projected cost per tonne and long-term financial implications.
- Stronger emphasis on resilience, such as managing more residuals within the region to avoid dependence on external jurisdictions.

What's missing:

- The Waste-to-Energy Facility should not be in the plan long-term – the plan does not present a clear business case for continuing to use the Waste-to-Energy facility: why it is included, what purpose it serves, and whether its costs and risks are justified.

- Details on hazardous waste management where no extended producer responsibility options exist.
- A detailed understanding of the constraints on Vancouver Landfill, including:
  - level of accuracy of the 2050 estimated lifespan
  - post-settlement height limits
  - tonnage thresholds (e.g., 750,000 tonnes)
- Explicit listing of contingency landfill options instead of general references to “contingency sources.”

Other comments:

- Members want more focus on upstream solutions, such as product design changes informed by waste composition.
- Some requested that mixed waste processing be reconsidered given the increasing multi-family waste stream.
- Recognition that residuals from organics processing facilities must be accounted for.

**Topic: Regulatory Strategy**

Most important topic in this area:

- The regulatory strategy lacks operational detail, does not reflect industry realities, and may introduce regulation without solving root problems (contamination, system complexity, lack of infrastructure).

What needs to be strengthened:

- Clear explanation of what new regulations would do, how they would improve outcomes, and how benefits outweigh costs.
- Greater integration of private sector expertise and clarity on the role of industry in implementing the plan.
- Stability and predictability in regulation so private operators can plan investments confidently.
- A more realistic understanding of system complexity and how it affects both residents and haulers.

What’s missing:

- An appendix or outline of potential regulatory actions being considered.
- Consideration of why some residents cannot participate, and how regulatory design could address those barriers.
- Explanation of how mandatory source separation or hauler licensing would actually increase diversion.

- A realistic acknowledgement of system limitations, including lack of infrastructure for post-collection separation.

Other comments:

- Some felt the strategy appears to reflect input from people who don't understand how waste flows or are not as aware of how the system works
- Industry participants felt unheard and that past input was not reflected.
- Concerns raised about "mission creep" and excessive red tape.
- Emphasis that more regulation will increase system costs, which are already high.
- Members noted the need for opportunities for the private sector to innovate, own infrastructure, and deploy technology.

