

2023-15 Composting and an Organics Disposal Ban for Winnipeg's Metropolitan Region

Mover: Green Action Centre

The Province of Manitoba should announce a deadline of 2026 for a full organics disposal ban in the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region.

The Province of Manitoba should support the transition to improved organics management by:

- A. Offering a financial incentive to approved transfer stations and facilities that compost organic material in the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region.
- B. Introducing and enforcing a phased fine for any organic material that is landfilled in the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region after 2024, with an initial threshold of 25% organic matter landfilled and decreasing to 5% by 2026.
- C. Making municipal waste management plans that include the diversion and composting of organic materials mandatory for the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region.
- D. Creating a provincial waste management plan that builds on the community expertise gathered in earlier government consultations.
- E. Implementing policies, funding and social procurement programs to support small businesses, social enterprises, and community initiatives that meet environmental, social and economic goals (i.e. diverting organics from landfills, improving community sustainability resources and providing local training and jobs).

The City of Winnipeg should approve a curbside composting pick up program for all residences across the City by:

- A. Reinstating Winnipeg's Waste Diversion Advisory Committee to review best practices and evaluate potential measures.
- B. Framing organics diversion as responsible waste management (like sewage treatment) to avoid negative environmental impacts and resource loss, not as an optional personal service. Evaluate proposals for their ability to divert organics, reduce GHGs and other impacts, and recover organic matter for beneficial use.
- C. Seeking federal and provincial green infrastructure funds to help with capital expenditures for a composting facility.
- D. Containing collection costs by reducing rather than increasing the number of home pickups as Toronto does (e.g. weekly green bin collection, and alternating biweekly recycling and garbage pickup).
- E. Taking advantage of the infrastructure and expertise that exists in this city (i.e. Master Composters, community composting sites, and non-profit organizations that coordinate such programs). Model this city's waste reduction efforts after the New York City Compost Project, where the Department of Sanitation uses volunteers and community compost bins to complement their municipal composting program.
- F. Ensuring that the curbside composting pick up program aligns and complies with the City's Sustainable Procurement Action Plan, potentially serving as one of 10-15 piloting examples of Sustainable Procurement practices.

Because: In signing the Vancouver Declaration, Premier Pallister has committed Manitoba to implement greenhouse gas mitigation policies that meet or exceed Canada’s 2030 target of a 30% reduction below 2005 levels of emissions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that the global warming potential (GWP) of methane is 28-36 times greater than carbon dioxide over a 100-year period, and the GWP of nitrous oxide is nearly 300 times that of carbon dioxide.

Because: Manitoba’s two largest emitters of greenhouse gases are Koch Fertilizer Plant and Brady Road Resource Management Facility. Chemical fertilizers release nitrous oxide into the atmosphere, and the anaerobic decomposition of organic matter in landfills releases methane into the atmosphere. Aerobic composting not only eliminates methane emissions, it creates a natural fertilizer that sequesters carbon from the atmosphere.

Because: Organics make up approximately 40% of Winnipeg’s residential waste stream, but only an estimated 30% of Winnipeg households compost their organic waste. Winnipeg’s waste diversion rate doubled from 17% to over 30% after the introduction of a yard waste collection program, but Winnipeg is still significantly below the waste reduction rates of other major Canadian cities. Per capita, Canadians are one of the highest waste-producing OECD countries, and Manitobans are the third highest waste producers in this country, exceeded only by Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Because: There is a strong correlation between provincial policies and municipal action when it comes to the management of organics. Nova Scotia has the lowest per capita waste generation rate among the Canadian provinces, thanks to a full organics ban introduced in 1998 that diverts all compostable material (including yard waste and food scraps) from the landfill. In the absence of a full provincial organics ban, a regional ban can provide crucial leadership without insisting that a one-size-fits-all approach can address the unique requirements for composting in northern regions of Manitoba.

Because: The Winnipeg Metropolitan Region (WMR) includes 18 municipalities and represents roughly two-thirds of Manitoba’s population. The WMR has identified two goals in its action plan that are directly compatible with an organics ban: i) implement programs and incentives that promote waste diversion, resource recovery, and composting, and ii) reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Because: Winnipeg is the largest city in the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region, and the last city of its size in Canada without a residential composting program. In Manitoba, green bin programs exist in Brandon, Morden, Winkler, Carman, Morris, and Altona. Progress on implementing curbside organics collection in Winnipeg has been stalled multiple times, and these delays have indirect costs for taxpayers. Elected officials continue to suggest that composting is an optional route for disposal, rather than an urgent necessity for mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Because: The Province of Manitoba estimates that every 10,000 tonnes of organic waste composted instead of going to a landfill, will create seven new jobs. Approximately 87,140 tonnes of organic waste collected from residential sources in Winnipeg is sent to the Brady Road Landfill annually. As long as composting organics remains optional, most businesses will continue to send compostable waste to the landfill. This discourages the development of composting businesses and social enterprises that can support municipalities by serving the industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI) sector. Implementing policies, funding and social procurement programs supportive of small businesses, social enterprises, and community initiatives that meet environmental, social and economic goals will encourage the growth of composting businesses and social enterprises within local economies.

Because: Local communities and businesses have been diverting organics from the Brady Road Resource Management Facility for at least 15 years, providing employment and improving community volunteerism, yet these efforts are rarely supported by provincial and municipal policies or funding. Requests for waste management proposals continue to rely on outside expertise, stunting the growth of local expertise within existing community and non-profit organizations, social enterprises and small businesses. Green Action Centre launched Compost Winnipeg in 2016 - a social enterprise offering organic waste collection services for residences, businesses, and multi-unit dwellings. The social enterprise is diverting organics from the landfill, providing local employment at a fair wage, and is improving community sustainability resources; demonstrating an example of what other social enterprises can form from supportive provincial and municipal policies or funding.

Because: Encouraging composting and an organics disposal ban fits within the Tackling Climate Change theme, particularly relating to ecological health through waste management. Organics management through composting is an important part of a CED agenda, reducing emissions while supporting fair, local economies, local job creation, and being an important part of Manitoba's just transition to a more sustainable future.

How the Resolution will be Advanced: Green Action Centre has been the leader working with the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba to attempt to move this resolution forward. Green Action Centre has been coordinating responses to media inquiries and from the public, delivering presentations to City Council, and coordinating and participating in meetings related to a residential composting program, all while citing best practices and the information in the resolution above. CCEDNet members looking to support this resolution should contact Green Action Centre for information about getting involved.