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Residents in the Region Talk Trash

Nearly 750 people shared their thoughts with the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George about recycling and waste management in the region. Over the past week, the Regional District held an on-line survey and invited public input on recycling, composting and illegal dumping as part of a review of the Solid Waste Management Plan.

"We were overwhelmed by the response," says Petra Wildauer, General Manager of Environmental Services with the Regional District. "It's obvious that this is an issue that people are passionate about and have many ideas about how we should be handling our waste," says Wildauer, who adds that a total of 749 surveys were received during the one week on line survey process.

The Regional District has launched the review of its Solid Waste Management Plan – the plan that determines how we will recycle, compost and dispose of our garbage for the next 10-20 years. The existing plan was completed in 1997, and focused on regionalizing the district's landfills and reducing the amount of waste disposed by 50%.

In the last ten years, the RDFFG has closed 19 landfills and replaced them with transfer stations. The majority of the waste is now disposed at the Foothills Boulevard Regional Landfill, with a small portion still being taken to four remaining smaller landfills. Recycling levels have increased to roughly 28%.

The review is a three-phased process. The first phase is underway now, and includes the public input portion, as well as an evaluation of the current system and status of the 2007 plan. The second phase takes the information from the evaluation along with the feedback from the public, and starts to develop potential options for improving waste management. The final phase of the project involves bringing selected options back to the public for further consultation. The third phase also includes a draft report to the Regional District Board, and pending approval, sending the plan to the Ministry of Environment. The entire process is expected to last four – six months.

The feedback from the survey still has to be analyzed, but a few highlights include:

- 60% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the current garbage collection
- 90% responded that they would like to see a curbside recyclables collection service
- 64% indicated that the compost should be upgraded to accept food waste
- 69.5% indicated that items that can be recycled should be banned from landfill

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