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TAMRMS#: B05

INFORMATION REQUEST (IR) - Cost of Curbside Christmas Tree Collection

Requested by: Councillor Clark

Date of Request: May 12, 2026

Date Response Due: June 12, 2026

Confidential Response: No

QUESTION

What is the cost of the Curbside Christmas Tree Collection and how many trees were collected in both January 2025 and January 2026. Instead of curbside collection, would it be financially advantageous for the City to encourage residents to cut up and dispose of Christmas trees in their compost bins for regular/routine pickup.

Regarding Curbside Leaf Pickup, has there been a drop in participation since moving to only collecting paper leaf bags and if so, are we seeing an increase in grass/leaf drop-off at the compost facility?

RESPONSE

Curbside Christmas tree collection:

Each year, the City of St. Albert picks up natural Christmas trees from the curbside in January. Residents can place their natural Christmas trees at the curb on their designated zone days. Public Works sends crews into these areas to remove the trees and turn them into compost, typically on overtime.

In 2025, there were 989 trees collected.

In 2026, there were 983 trees collected, using approximately 41 hours of staff time.

Approximate 2026 wage cost for the curbside pick up was \$3,082.60 equating to \$3.14 per tree (this does not include vehicle and equipment costs). Residents can also drop off trees on weekends at the compost depot; however, the number of trees dropped off is not tracked as it is not always staffed and the trees are part of the brush pile.

While encouraging residents to cut their trees into smaller pieces and place them in compost bins may appear financially advantageous, there are some practical challenges:

- Residents would need to:
 - Remove branches from the trunk

- Cut the tree into smaller pieces to fit into compost bins
- This presents several issues:
 - Mess and inconvenience (needle drop, handling large trees)
 - The tree trunk would likely remain and still require disposal
 - Work would be done in winter conditions, when:
 - Temperatures are very cold
 - Snow and ice make handling and cutting more difficult

These barriers could lead to low participation, improper disposal, or increased complaints, potentially offsetting any operational savings.

Curbside Leaf Pickup:

Curbside leaf pickup occurs both in the early summer and in the fall and must be placed in paper bags or reusable bins. Paper bags have grown in popularity over the last several years and are available from multiple locations. There has been no noticeable change in the volume of organics collected since the removal of plastic bags as an appropriate container, however, leaf volume is not tracked independently therefore the data is limited. If residents do use plastic, these can be taken to the compost depot, emptied, and the bags can be disposed of on site.

Volumes of organics collected are influenced by many factors including seasonal differences in materials, annual weather patterns and City waste education programs.

- Seasonal material differences
 - In spring, collected material includes:
 - Leaves
 - Significant volumes of grass from power raking
- Weather conditions
 - In dry years, grass growth is reduced → lower volumes of clippings
 - Moisture content greatly impacts recorded weight:
 - Wet material = heavier
 - Dry conditions (as recently experienced) = lighter loads
- Waste education program trends
 - Encouragement of grasscycling (leaving clippings on lawns)
 - Changes in yard maintenance practices, low maintenance vegetation

- Promotion of leaving yard debris over winter as habitat
- Some residents store yard waste to place in the brown bin over time

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