



Administrative Report

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Melissa Ryan, CPA, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Subject: Green Bin Organics Recycling Program - Summary of County Council Direction and Funding

Report #: 2026-0204-FIN-R04-MR

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide County Council with a consolidated and chronological overview of the key Council decisions, directions, and related communications that have shaped the current scope, funding, billing, and implementation of the Regional Food and Organics Waste (Green Bin) Program.

This report is intended to:

- Outline the policy and governance decisions made by Council over several years;
- Clarify how the County arrived at the current billing framework and cost allocation approach; and
- Serve as a reference document for Council and the public regarding the evolution of the program and the communication steps undertaken to date.

Background

The Regional Green Bin Program has evolved over multiple years in response to provincial waste diversion requirements, operational and equity considerations across local municipalities, and Council direction regarding funding fairness and cost transparency.

Throughout this period, Council has been required to balance:

- Legislative compliance and long-term diversion risk;
- Consistency of service across municipalities;
- Fairness in cost recovery, particularly the principle that only those receiving the service should pay for it; and
- The County's limited tools for billing residents directly.

As a result, the Green Bin Program was developed as a standalone regional service, operationally delivered by the Essex-Windsor Solid Waste Authority (EWSWA), with funding and billing coordinated through the County in accordance with Council-approved direction.

Discussion

Since October 2021, County Council has considered and provided direction through a series of public reports and resolutions that collectively informed:

- The decision to proceed with a regional Green Bin program;
- The inclusion of both urban and rural households;
- The phased rollout of service based on existing collection contracts; and
- The adoption of a user-fee-based billing approach to ensure costs are borne only by households able to receive the service.

While public attention has increased in anticipation of the Green Bin charge appearing on property tax bills, the program's structure, funding approach, and implementation timeline are the result of multiple deliberate policy decisions made by Council over several years.

Billing for the Green Bin Program has not yet commenced. For Phase 1 municipalities, the first Green Bin charge will appear on the final 2026 property tax bill, to be issued in June 2026, providing residents with advance notice prior to billing.

What follows is a summary of the key reports and decisions that brought the County to the current implementation and billing framework.

Key Council Decisions and Direction – Timeline Summary

October 20, 2021 – Provincial Direction and Regional Approach

- Council received an ESWWA report outlining provincial organics diversion targets and anticipated future landfill bans.
- A regional approach was identified as the most effective and future-proof solution.
- Council directed that a regional approach be further explored and reported back.

March 16, 2022 – Decision to Proceed with a Regional Green Bin Program

- Council confirmed that all Essex County municipalities would participate in a regional organics program, at a minimum for urban settlement areas.
- This decision was driven by compliance timelines, operational risk mitigation, and consultant recommendations.
- Costs were understood to flow through ESWWA's existing cost-recovery framework at that time.

2022–2023 – Exploration of Regional Waste Management

- Council directed Administration to examine broader regionalization opportunities, including waste collection, funding models, and governance.
- Multiple reports confirmed that while efficiencies were possible, funding methodology remained the key policy consideration.
- Ultimately, Council chose not to proceed with full regional waste collection, while maintaining commitment to a regional Green Bin program.

June 5, 2024 – Scope of Service (Urban and Rural)

- Council was presented with the first detailed and comparable cost information for urban and rural Green Bin collection following procurement.
- Council directed that both urban and rural households be included to ensure service consistency, equity, and long-term efficiency.
- This decision expanded the program scope and associated costs.

June 5, 2024 – Funding Model Direction

- Council considered user fee, levy-based, and hybrid funding options.
- Council explicitly directed that:

- The program be funded at the County level; and
- Only households eligible for the service should pay.
- This direction necessitated a user-fee-based billing approach.

July 2024 – EWSWA Cost Estimate Communication

- EWSWA, as part of its slogan launch, estimated that the cost of the green bin program was \$2 to \$3 per week per household.

December 4, 2024 – EWSWA 2025 Budget

- Council approved the EWSWA budget, which explicitly incorporated the launch of the Green Bin Program.
- Program costs, cost components, and preliminary future-year estimates were presented.
- Council was advised that Green Bin represented a new structural cost not contemplated in earlier balanced-budget assumptions.

August 2025 – Public Information and FAQ Launch

- A County of Essex Green Bin Billing FAQ webpage was launched to provide residents with program details, rollout timing, and operational information.
- At that time, per-household costs were not included, as final program costs and user fees had not yet been established through a user fee by-law.
- Administration intentionally avoided publishing preliminary or estimated household charges to prevent the dissemination of inaccurate information and potential public confusion should figures change.

December 17, 2025 – Green Bin Program Billing Updates

- Council received an information report confirming:
 - Use of a user fee model;
 - Appearance of the charge as a separate line item on property tax bills ("CTYBIN"); and
 - That billing would begin in June 2026, approximately 8.5 months after service launch.
- A coordinated communications plan was outlined, including:
 - County and EWSWA web-based FAQs;
 - Tax bill inserts;

- Social media messaging; and
- Coordination with local municipalities.

December 17, 2025 – EWSWA 2026 Budget

- Council approved a budget reflecting full program implementation.
- Total Green Bin program cost for 2026 was identified.
- Reserve usage was noted as necessary to manage transition-year timing differences.

February 2026 – Green Bin User Fee By-law

The final 2026 user fee Green Bin rates for each municipality will be presented to Council for approval through a user fee by-law in February 2026. Once adopted, these rates will be posted on the County's website to provide residents with clear, up-to-date information on program costs and billing.

Financial Implications

This report is provided for information purposes only and does not introduce any new or incremental financial impacts.

The costs to be reflected on the 2026 Final Tax Bills for Phase 1 municipalities are based on:

- Council-approved program scope and funding direction;
- EWSWA's adopted budget and full cost recovery model; and
- The phased rollout schedule of the service.

Any changes to the funding model, billing approach, communications strategy, or use of reserves would require further direction and formal approval from Council.

Although the Green Bin Program became operational in October 2025, billing was intentionally deferred until June 2026. While it would have been technically possible to include the charges on the June 2025 Final Tax Bill, the service had not yet started, and it was considered unfair for residents to pay in advance for a service that had not yet started. The timing of June 2026 better aligned charges with service delivery and accommodated limitations within the municipal tax billing system.

Final per-household user fees are set through a user fee by-law and will not be finalized until formally adopted by Council.

Consultations

Michelle Bishop, General Manager-EWSWA

Strategic Plan Alignment

Working as Team Essex County	Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence	Building a Regional Powerhouse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation <input type="checkbox"/> Focusing "Team Essex County" for Results <input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County's Fair Share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact <input type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County <input type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive report number 2026-0204-FIN-R04-MR, Green Bin Organics Recycling Program - Summary of Council Direction and Funding Decisions, as information.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Ryan

Melissa Ryan, CPA, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Concurred With,

Sandra Zwiers

Sandra Zwiers, MAcc, CPA, CA, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix	Title
A	Updated County of Essex Green Bin Program FAQ