



What We Heard

On household waste disposal options for Braeburn, Johnson's Crossing, Keno, and Silver City

Results of engagement conducted from July 2023 to January 2024

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Introduction

This What We Heard (WWH) report summarizes the results of engagement conducted in 2023 on household waste disposal options with Braeburn, Keno, Johnson’s Crossing, and Silver City residents. The meetings, held between July and November, discussed waste disposal options due to the Government of Yukon’s solid waste system modernization.

Throughout this timeframe, and extending into early 2024, Yukon government staff also engaged with First Nation governments to provide an overview of the solid waste system modernization process and an opportunity for the Yukon government to address any possible concerns.

Background



Since 2009, the Yukon Government and municipalities have worked on modernizing and improving the territory’s solid waste management system. Initiated by the Yukon Solid Waste Action Plan¹, it directed the Department of Community Services to work with municipalities and communities on resource sharing and partnerships.

¹ The Solid Waste Action Plan is an extensive review of the government’s solid waste operations with the objective of modernizing and improving solid waste management in the territory. [yukon_solid_waste_action_plan.pdf \(gov.yk.ca\)](https://www.gov.yk.ca/yukon-solid-waste-action-plan.pdf)

In late 2012, under the Our Towns, Our Future initiative¹, the Yukon government and the Association of Yukon Communities established a working group on solid waste. The group's findings were compiled in the 2013 report titled "Solid Waste Working Group Findings Report." The report's findings include standardization of services across the Yukon, ensuring financial sustainability, and using best practices adapted to the northern context.

In 2015, the Association of Yukon Communities (AYC) formed another working group on solid waste to address municipal waste needs. Their 2016 report, "Solid Waste Management: Vision for a Sustainable Model for Yukon's Communities," outlined a vision for a more sustainable, integrated, and effective waste management system. Key components include the following:

- Increased user responsibility for waste management costs;
- Community landfills with sufficient resources and complementary standards;
- An integrated approach with communities and Yukon government implementing changes in unison; and
- A phased approach with doable steps.

The AYC report identified challenges in the existing system and proposed a roadmap to transition to a more sustainable, integrated waste management system based on best practices and modern philosophies. At the time of the report, Yukon's annual waste management costs were just over \$6 million. However, these costs have since doubled, exceeding \$12 million.

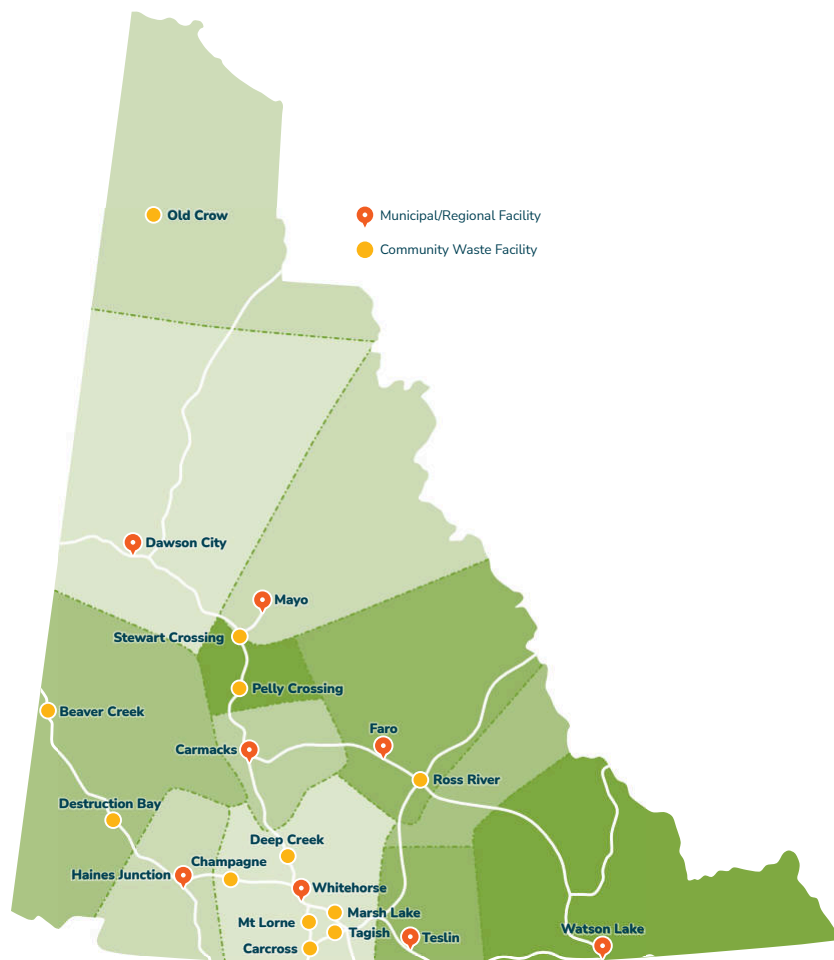
Formed in 2017, the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste aimed to review Yukon's waste management system, offer recommendations for a modern and sustainable system, and advise the Minister of Community Services. The committee's recommendations were endorsed for implementation by the Yukon Government in 2019.

¹ Our Towns, Our Future was a 2010 year-long partnership-based review of municipal sustainability. It covered 18 themes including provision of local services, revenue generation, and regionalization.

An implementation committee was formed to make the necessary changes to transition to a more financially and environmentally responsible system, including regionalization of solid waste facilities across the Yukon, increased efforts to remove organics from the waste stream, implementation of best practices that include gates and attendants, and a user-pay model at all facilities.

Vision

The Yukon will have a waste management system that is adapted to the North, environmentally sustainable, and cost-effective, and ensures proper disposal of solid waste. To get there, the Yukon government is working with municipalities on regional agreements to assist them in providing a standard level of service, while bringing Yukon facilities to the same standard.



How did we engage?

The objective of this engagement was to consult with residents of Keno, Johnson's Crossing, Silver City and Braeburn to determine household waste disposal options tailored to the needs of the individual communities. Additionally, the engagement served as a platform for affected residents to raise concerns to the Department of Community Services that might not have been considered during the waste management modernization planning process.

An engagement webpage was established with information about the process and included background information, methods to share feedback, and information about the engagement sessions.

The **engagement process** comprised both online and in-person activities to ensure all affected residents could share their feedback and included the following:

- A **dedicated email** to share written feedback at any time throughout the engagement process;
- **In-person meetings** with affected residents and First Nation governments; and
- **Virtual meetings** with affected residents.

In-person and virtual meetings

Between July and November 2023, the Department of Community Services held 8 public meetings, both in-person and online, with affected residents from Johnson's Crossing, Keno, Silver City and Braeburn. In-person meetings were advertised in the *Whitehorse Star* and *Yukon News* and targeted emails were sent to residents in each location. Email lists were gathered from previous engagement work and updated during in-person meetings. Posters advertising the meetings were placed at local transfer stations, landfills, and gathering places, such as local gas stations. Online meetings were held to ensure accessibility for participants unable to attend in person.

An additional online workshop was held for Silver City participants that brought in experts in recycling, waste, compost, and wildlife management.

Table of public engagement meetings

Date	Target audience	Location	Number of Participants*
2023/07/26	Keno residents	Keno Community Library	15
2023/08/29	Johnson's Crossing residents	Johnson's Crossing Lodge	8
2023/08/30	Braeburn residents	Braeburn Lodge	12
2023/08/31	Silver City residents	Outpost Station	30
2023/09/19	Johnson's Crossing residents	Virtual	6
2023/09/20	Braeburn residents	Virtual	0
2023/09/21	Silver City residents	Virtual	11
2023/11/22	Workshop for Silver City residents	Virtual	20

*Participants included residents of the affected areas and residents from neighbouring communities.

Meetings with First Nation governments

Throughout the public engagement sessions in late 2023 and early 2024, Yukon government staff held targeted meetings with First Nation governments to discuss waste disposal options for citizens and answer questions regarding the regionalization process. During the meetings, Community Services provided an overview of the coming changes to waste management within each First Nations' traditional territory and addressed concerns.

Table of meetings held with First Nation governments

Date	Audience, Location and Details
2023/07/31	<p>Champagne Aishihik First Nation (CAFN) and Kluane First Nation (KFN) LYNN BUILDING, WHITEHORSE Meeting held with natural resource management staff and included discussion on Silver City transfer station.</p>
2023/11/08	<p>Teslin Tlingit Council (TTC) VIRTUAL Meeting held with TTC land and environment staff and included discussion on the Johnson's Crossing transfer station.</p>
2023/11/16	<p>Champagne & Aishihik First Nations and Kluane First Nation VIRTUAL Meeting held with natural resource management staff and included an update on the Silver City transfer station.</p>
2024/01/17	<p>CAFN council CAFN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, HAINES JUNCTION Meeting held with Chief and Council to provide information about changes to solid waste management in the Yukon and the Champagne solid waste facility. Yukon government staff also provided an update regarding the Silver City transfer station.</p>
2024/01/18	<p>KFN Chief and Council JACQUOT HALL, BURWASH LANDING Meeting held with Chief and Council to provide information about changes to solid waste management in the Yukon and the Destruction Bay solid waste facility. Yukon government staff also provided an update regarding the Silver City transfer station.</p>

What we heard

The following section summarizes the feedback, opinions and input collected during the public engagement process.

Waste Management Engagement: **Common Solutions and Concerns**

Access and Operational Suggestions:

- Gates and keys for local users.
- Modifying hours of operation of regional facilities for convenience.
- Improved signage at facilities.
- Bearproof bins to deter wildlife access.

Waste Disposal Suggestions:

- Large household waste items pickup day.
- Household waste pickup during regular waste pickup routes to other facilities.
- Recycling depots to assist with waste diversion.
- Manual compactor for recycling volume reduction.
- Composting options, including individual and community facilities.
- Dehydrators/grinders to manage organic waste.
- Storage totes or bins for recycling separation and transportation.
- Consideration of incinerators for onsite waste disposal.
- Exploration of waste management practices in other jurisdictions.

Common participant concerns:

- Desire for transfer stations to remain open and be upgraded.
- Wildlife management concerns, including impacts and deterrents.
- Higher than stated user numbers for facilities, including tourists, hunters, seasonal residents, and businesses.
- Opposition to hauling waste to regional facilities due to travel costs and winter road conditions.
- Concerns about increased illegal dumping with closures.
- Questions about wildfire risks associated with burning waste.
- Anticipation of higher greenhouse gas emissions from residents traveling for waste disposal.
- Effect on local businesses, waste generation, travel time, and costs.
- Inconvenience of closed regional facilities after business hours.

Johnson's Crossing • Perspectives and Recommendations

In addition to the previously outlined solutions and overarching community concerns, participants from Johnson's Crossing highlighted specific points:

- **Questioning closure:** Participants sought clarification on why the Johnson's Crossing facility faces closure, while others, such as the Champagne waste facility, did not.
- **Bearproof bins:** There was an interest in the provision of bearproof bins for waste storage if alternative options were not available.
- **Bridge construction consideration:** Participants suggested waiting for the completion of the Nisutlin Bay bridge construction before closure, citing lengthy wait times for crossing.
- **Toad River model:** Participants shared images of Toad River, B.C., as a potential model for facility upgrades, urging further investigation.
- **Closure replacement proposal:** Despite acknowledging environmental reasons for closure, participants recommended to replace the facility with an alternative that maintains service levels.

Keno • Perspectives and Recommendations

In addition to the previously outlined solutions and overarching community concerns, participants from Keno highlighted specific points:

- **Odour concerns:** Residents, whose waste is collected bimonthly by Hecla (a mining company), expressed worries about odours accumulating between pickups. Hecla agreed to switch to weekly pickups during the summer months.
- **Signage updates:** Participants voiced concerns about waste generated by tourists and miners and requested updated signage to address the issue.
- **Large item disposal:** Participants explained challenges in disposing of bulky items like fridges, emphasizing the difficulty in managing such large volumes of waste.

Braeburn • Perspectives and Recommendations

In addition to the previously outlined solutions and overarching community concerns, participants from Braeburn highlighted specific points:

- **Tourist-related expenses:** Participants expressed concerns about tourists dumping waste in their bins and being left with the financial burden of managing that cost.
- **Recycling revenue inquiry:** Participants inquired about recycling revenue and suggested utilizing it to offset transfer station costs.
- **Residential pickup request:** Participants advocated for a dump truck or similar pickup service instead of relying on a transfer station for household waste disposal.

Silver City • Perspectives and Recommendations – Public meeting

In addition to the previously outlined solutions and overarching community concerns, participants from Silver City highlighted specific points:

- **Consultation process and closure concerns:** Participants emphasized a desire to retain the transfer station and requested consultation before any closure announcements. Population growth considerations were suggested, indicating that closure decisions did not account for potential Silver City area growth.
- **Rest area and illegal dumping concerns:** Concerns were expressed about the removal of garbage disposal facilities at highway rest areas and campgrounds, with fears it might contribute to illegal dumping.
- **Destruction Bay pickup inquiry:** Participants questioned the possibility of the waste compactor truck servicing the Destruction Bay facility picking up waste in Silver City on its return to Whitehorse.
- **User-pay system:** Participants indicated their willingness to pay for waste disposal.

Silver City • Perspectives and Recommendations – Workshop

- **Workshop initiation:** During the initial public engagement session in Silver City, residents expressed a desire for Community Services to organize a dedicated workshop focused on exploring waste disposal options for the community. The residents sought expertise in recycling, waste, compost, and wildlife management, identifying these areas as key concerns they wished to address.
- **Expert participation:** The Yukon government organized an online workshop on November 22, 2023, featuring experts in recycling, compost, solid waste, and wildlife management. Presenters included owners of P&M Recycling and Boreal Enterprises, the Yukon government's Director of Operations, and a Conservation Officer for Haines Junction.
- **Combined solutions approach:** Yukon government presented options for compost, waste and recycling and sought feedback from attendees on these options. The presented options were not standalone but could be combined with other solutions, emphasizing a holistic waste management approach.

Specific Solutions and Feedback

Compost Options

- Four composting options were presented, including personal composting units with including individual electrified fenced areas, community composting systems with a large, electrified fence area, freezers for compost storage, and purpose-made dehydrators for organics.
- Feedback highlighted concerns about unreliable electricity, visual impact of composting units, and support for a communal fenced compost area integrated with other waste management facilities.

Solid Waste Options

- Three options for managing plastic based waste were presented, involving bearproof bins, alternative drop-off points, and collaboration with a local contractor for waste collection.
- Feedback included concerns about transport costs, limited support for bearproof bins as a standalone option due to doubts about effectiveness in deterring wildlife and aromatic concerns, proposal of the gravel pit as an alternative drop-off location while acknowledging challenges related to security, wildlife and management, and questions about whether longer-term planning or studies should be conducted to ensure that any chosen solution meets the area's needs in the future.

Recycling Options

- Participants were informed that numerous potential recycling options could effectively address sorting and storage concerns. Two options for managing recycling were presented, including storage totes for storage of recyclable materials and manual compactors to reduce volume of recycling.
- Feedback on recycling options was expressed as a desire to see a community-led solution for recycling and for any implemented option fitting in nicely with the proposed alternative site for waste management facility.

Next Steps

Community Services would like to express their gratitude to all individuals who contributed their time and insights during this engagement process. These engagements have provided valuable feedback for Government of Yukon staff and are guiding discussions on the future of solid waste management in communities affected by the planned closures.

The Government of Yukon is reviewing the options and solutions identified and discussed throughout this engagement, aiming to find alignment between the presented solutions and the overarching objective of establishing a modern, efficient, and sustainable solid waste service for the Yukon.

Following the review, the Yukon government will assess the proposed service changes. This assessment will consider the AYC and Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste recommendations, community needs, and environmental considerations, among other factors. The goal is to identify services that address the current challenges and contribute to the long-term resilience of the Yukon's solid waste management system.

