

Carstairs leads region in garbage output

Mark Laycock, Carstairs Courier

Statistics released by the Mountain View Regional Waste Management Commission paint the picture that Carstairs is the trash capital of the region, but mayor Lance Colby dismisses the notion.

According to a year-end report released by the commission detailing garbage and recycling statistics for all commission members — Carstairs, Didsbury, Sundre, Cremona, Olds and Mountain View County — Carstairs has the highest per capita rate of garbage of the communities. At the end of 2009, Carstairs residents averaged 266 kg of trash per person.

Carstairs leads the pack, with Sundre coming in last place with 150 kg per person.

Commission CAO Neil Kivell says Carstairs can do a lot more to improve that number.

"It tells me that on a recycling basis Carstairs is doing not as well as the rest — not that they're doing poorly, we get a lot of materials out of the Carstairs (recycle) depot."

Unlike other communities, Carstairs and Cremona don't participate in a green bin program for compost materials. As a result, Carstairs and Cremona are estimated at recycling 19 per cent of their compost materials, compared to about 30 per cent for Olds, Sundre and Didsbury.

Mayor Lance Colby dismisses the numbers, citing flawed math used to calculate how much garbage each community puts out.

"I don't believe the numbers because that's based on our old population. In the last census (the population) was 2,600 and our actual population is 1,000 more than that for sure, so I don't really put much into that," says Colby.

Kivell confirms that the numbers are calculated using a dated population number, but insists that if the results were recalculated with updated figures the outcome wouldn't be far off.

Currently the town offers residents free backyard composters and has a compost pile at the recycling centre, but Kivell says they aren't nearly as effective as biweekly compost pickup.

"In my humble opinion the backyard composters work good in the summer until people fill them up with grass and then it sits there in the wintertime and very few people shovel out a path to their compost bin."

Council has been pressed by the commission for several years to implement a green cart program, but has displayed strong opposition to the move, citing the increased pickup costs associated with the move.

Colby says that the town's compost pile at the recycle centre is sufficient for the town's needs and is a more effective way of collecting compost.

"We think it's more efficient to do it that way than to have the other bins which will cost the taxpayers money to come get them."

The commission has also recently decided to monitor how many residents are overflowing their garbage bins for statistical purposes.

In Cremona, the commission will be tagging overfilled bins this summer.

At council's Feb. 26 meeting, councillor Al Molnar said that the monitoring would begin shortly, but noted that the issue of overflowing bins isn't a big problem in town.

Colby says he hasn't noticed a problem and says a recent survey conducted by the town found that only 0.03 per cent of bins were overfilled.

"That's nothing," he says.

Not so says Kivell.

"It's a big problem ... in the older areas they're pretty good, but in the newer areas they're typically more open than not."

Kivell says a closed lid policy encourages people to recycle by limiting the amount of garbage that can be stuffed in a bin, and says that in communities like Sundre, it has been a very effective deterrent, citing the lowest per capita garbage rate and a 32 per cent compost recycle rate.

Despite multiple requests to enforce a strict closed-lid policy, Colby says council sees no need to budge on its stance any time soon.

"If it was something on every block — if 50 per cent or 40 per cent of people had overflowing bins I could see us doing something then, but if we're actually looking at say one per cent of all bins I'm not going to get too excited about that."