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CUSTOMER STORY | East Hants, Nova Scotia

•East Hants municipality's Solid Waste Division manages the collection and processing of organics, recyclables, and residual waste for more than 10,000 homes, businesses, and organizations.

•Four months after launching their app, with some 1,000 app downloads, it had surpassed its one-year goal of 700.

•Their digital tools reduced call volumes - from 3000 calls to 1200 calls a year.

•East Hants has averaged more than 12,000 items searched on their Waste Wizard tool annually since launch.

Nestled in the center of the small province of Nova Scotia, Canada, is East Hants. There, the municipality's Solid Waste Division manages the collection and processing of organics, recyclables, and residual waste for more than 10,000 homes, businesses, and organizations.

It also owns and operates the East Hants Waste Management Centre for residents and commercial contractors, which accepts items such as residential hazardous waste, electronics, metals, tires, construction and demolition materials.

The Solid Waste Division provides the public education and promotion for these programs, manages illegal dumping investigations, and more— "everything to do with solid waste," says Andrea Trask, the municipality's Manager of Solid Waste.

A few years ago, a number of municipalities in Nova Scotia were trying to figure out how they could better communicate with their residents, Andrea says. Like other places, East Hants was turning to trade shows and word-of-mouth recommendations for solutions when they found ReCollect.

So, after a request for proposal process, some planning and the like, East Hants launched a widget with their digital recycling communication tools in October 2015.

> "Partnering with ReCollect really seemed like it was the right fit for us
> **Andrea Trask"**
> *Manager of Solid Waste*

The municipality also had launched a new website around that time, so the team was focused on doing all they could to drive traffic to it and help its residents more easily find information.

Its website widget kicked off with the Collection Calendar and What Bin? tool. After some time, it added a tab to their web widget where folks could easily report an illegal dumpsite, and another tab where residents could find information about the Waste Management Centre.

Then, in April 2021, East Hants launched its app. Four months later, with some 1,000 app downloads, it had surpassed its one-year goal of 700.

The one source of the truth

While East Hants hoped their tools would help it streamline its communication efforts, the municipality also wanted to ensure consistent messaging.

In the past, when customers called with questions such as what item should be discarded into which bin, the answer might have depended on whoever answered the phone if there was more than one option.

Now, with the What Bin? tool, "our tools are the one source of the truth," Andrea says.
East Hants is surrounded by three other municipalities, and residents don't always know the actual municipality in which they reside in border communities or streets. Residents also may live in East Hants but work in another, which can cause further confusion about sorting discarded items and collection schedules.

For this and other reasons, ReCollect's "service alerts component was a huge factor for us," Andrea says.

Even if folks knew the rules and typically were aware of their schedules, sometimes it only takes one resident to drag out the wrong bin on collection day for the street to follow suit. "Things like that would happen, and it doesn't really, now," Andrea says. "We've really reduced that with the service alerts and the calendar."

Andrea has also noticed residents spreading the word about the tools amongst one another on community message boards.

It "has been wonderful," Andrea said. "It's a trusted source of the truth."

> We can see the year before we launched our digital tools, we had over 5,000 phone calls. The following year, once we launched our tools in October, we had reduced (that number) to under 3,000 calls to our hotline -
> **Andrea Trask**
> *Manager of Solid Waste*

Powerful efforts yield powerful results

East Hants has operated a solid waste hotline for 20-some years, which comes in especially handy for rural and other residents who do not or cannot easily access the internet.

Then, that dropped to about 1,200 calls.

The scale operator at the Waste Management Center typically is the person on the other end of the hotline. Less time on the phone for them means more time to help some 1,000 residential vehicles a month—plus commercial and municipal collections trucks, Andrea says.

The Solid Waste Division keeps tabs on what and how many items residents search for through the "What Bin?" Waste Wizard tool, and how many people are looking at their Collection Calendars.

East Hants has averaged more than 12,000 items searched annually since launch.

Now, residents can easily find the answers they need, 24/7, and they know where to look.

> To me, every time somebody touches our digital recycling tools, that easily could've been a phone call we were taking.
> **- Andrea Trask**
> *Manager of Solid Waste*

We're a resourceful bunch

East Hants continues to find new ways to make its ReCollect suite work for them. After COVID-19 began affecting services, Andrea says the municipality used the Waste Wizard banner and collection service alerts to communicate changes with its residents.

"We're a resourceful bunch, so we use anything we have," she says.

Alex Collin, East Hants' Administrative Assistant of Infrastructure & Operations, creates graphics and other pieces for the municipality's website and Facebook page. Through their tools' metrics, Alex keeps up with what residents are searching for, and tailors graphics or posts to match.

"That's been really helpful because we're just talking to people about the things they want to know," she says.

East Hants also advertises its tools whenever and wherever it can.

"Even on the municipal brochure that goes out twice a year," Alex adds. "We always make sure that our tools have a spot … (so) there's still that visual there."

Versatile, integrated tools for a growing area

Nova Scotia—and East Hants, specifically—is a fast-growing area, whose key demographic is busy folks in their late 30s to early 40s with children.

"We want something on our phone, which is why we really wanted to get to the app," Andrea says. When someone has a question, the app offers immediate information in the palm of their hand.

Loads of people are moving from other provinces to East Hants, and like most new residents everywhere, "they have no idea what to do with their garbage," Andrea says.

Pride and passion for people and the planet

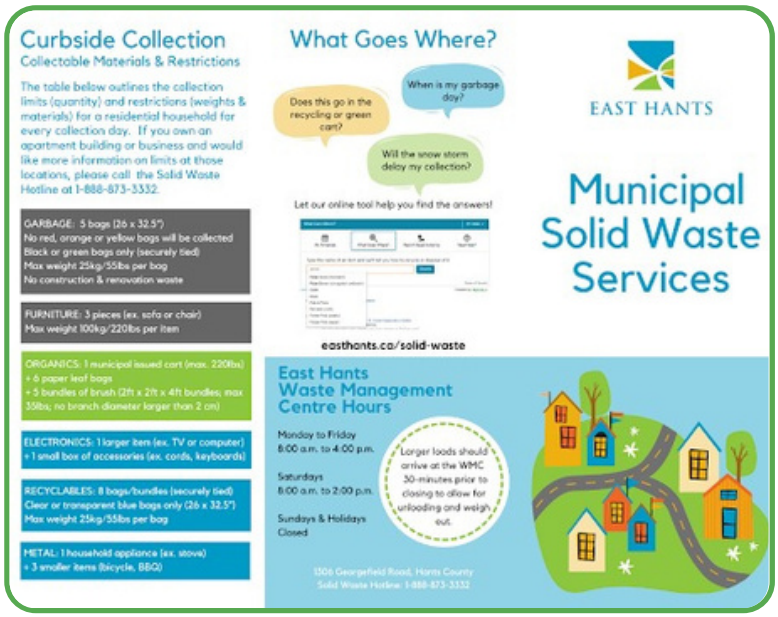
Alex says East Hants knows its efforts will only be as successful as the work it puts in—and it's willing to continue the work.

"In East Hants, we have the best waste diversion three years in a row in Nova Scotia, so we're really proud of that," Andrea adds.

"We have probably the most comprehensive curbside collection program" in the area, too, she says. "Council and our staff take it very seriously."

But all their hard work isn't without play. With all of its positive feedback, Andrea says the municipality has also had a lot of silly comments from folks saying its widget and app have offered quick, definitive answers which have, in turn, "saved marriages."

"We love those stories," Andrea says. "We've had a lot of fun with it."



About ReCollect

ReCollect Systems is a technology company specializing in digital solutions for the waste management sector.

With a focus on meeting and surpassing the expectations of residents, ReCollect has the proven experience to deliver digital products that also meet the needs of waste managers, communicators, IT specialists and governmental officials.

Launched in 2009, today ReCollect is used by millions of residents across North America. From small villages to large urban centres, from municipal services to private haulers, ReCollect is ready to make your waste management programs more efficient and successful.

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