



# The cost of garbage: Illegal dumping increases

In 2010, Surrey spent \$830,000 on cleanup linked to higher fees and landfill restrictions

BY LARRY PYNN, VANCOUVER SUN MARCH 10, 2011



Waste management officials in the Vancouver area have noticed an increase in illegally dumped mattresses since the cost of disposing them was increased.

**Photograph by:** Glenn Baglo, Vancouver Sun Files, Vancouver Sun

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The good news is that Metro Vancouver has recycled 10,000 mattresses and boxsprings in a two-month period.

The bad news is that more people are illegally tossing these same bulky items down quiet country roads rather than paying a landfill disposal fee of \$20 apiece that took effect Jan. 1, 2011.

Surrey crews are picking up discarded mattresses at a rate of about 100 per month. The city spent \$830,000 on cleaning up illegally dumped garbage in 2010, up from \$683,000 in 2009.

The rising cost for cleaning up illegal material is consistent with ongoing hikes in disposal fees and regional restrictions on products accepted for landfills.

Vincent Lalonde, the city's general manager of engineering, said Wednesday he'd like to see the region charge a fee at the point of purchase covering the cost of recycling mattresses.

"We've seen an increase in dumping of mattresses," he confirmed. "We're going to work with Metro Vancouver to try to find a better solution. The problem is that the fee is linked to the disposal, which could encourage illegal disposal."

Dumping is widespread throughout Surrey, he said. "Many of the instances occur in newly developed areas where building and or occupation is not complete."

Suzanne Bycraft, manager of fleet and environmental programs for Richmond, agreed: "Mattresses are becoming more of an issue. It's costing residents more to take those to landfills."

Illegal dumping cost Richmond taxpayers \$78,000 in 2010, up from \$66,000 in 2009 and \$62,000 in 2008.

The regional cost for garbage disposal is set at \$97 per tonne in 2011, up from \$82 in 2010, \$71 in 2009, and \$68 in 2008, Bycraft noted. "It tends to have an impact. Initially, people aren't keen on paying the fee."

Bycraft has also observed an increase in dumping of electronics with expansion of a product stewardship program for electronics since 2007, requiring residents to drop off such products at special recycling depots.

Either violators can't be bothered finding a depot or don't realize there is no charge to drop them off -the cost of the program funded by a special fee at the time of purchase, she said.

Dave Halliday, manager of engineering operations for Delta, also said more mattresses are being dumped illegally. "Definitely. A comment noted by the crews is that since that recycling fee went into effect there's been a lot more."

In the past, mattress disposal fees were based on weight.

Delta has an annual budget of \$230,000 for major garbage pickup, including larger and heavier items such as furniture and construction waste such as drywall, Halliday said.

The municipality is also home to the City of Vancouver landfill at Burns Bog.

"It's always happened," said Halliday, emphasizing the importance of cleaning up such garbage as quickly as possible. "If it sits there, it just attracts more, like a magnet."

Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore, chair of Metro Vancouver's waste management committee, said it's important to note that 10,000 mattresses and boxsprings have been recycled in the first two months of 2011.

The vast majority of citizens are willing to pay the increased fees, Moore said. "People want to do the right thing."

Mani Deo, manager of transfer and landfill operations for Vancouver, said 95 per cent of a mattress can be recycled, including metal, wood, and soft material such as foam, fabric and felt. For more information, go to [www.metrovancouver.org](http://www.metrovancouver.org), click on services, then solid waste and recycling.

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