



Curbside Recycling Options

Lethbridge Public Opinion Study – Winter 2015

February 2015







Faron Ellis PhD
Citizen Society Research Lab
Lethbridge College
3000 College Drive South
Lethbridge AB T1K 1L6
faron.ellis@lethbridgecollege.ca
www.lethbridgecollege.ca/go/csrl



Contents

Methodology	2
Executive Summary	3
Lethbridge Opinions on Five Curbside Recycling Options	4
Option 1 – Weekly garbage and weekly blue cart curbside service	5
Tabular Data	6
Option 2 – Weekly garbage and weekly blue cart curbside service	7
Tabular Data	8
Option 3 – Bi-weekly garbage and bi-weekly blue cart curbside service	9
Tabular Data	10
Option 4 – Weekly green cart curbside service	11
Tabular Data	12
Option 5 – Status Quo (no new curbside services)	13
Tabular Data	14
Demographics	15
Question Wording	15-16

Methodology

-  **Population** The city of Lethbridge has a total population of 93,004 residents (2014 census) approximately 80.5% of which are 18 years of age or older (74,905). A total of 45,575 Lethbridge residents are male (49%) while 47,429 are female (51%). South Lethbridge is home to 31,176 residents (33.5%) while the rapidly expanding west side is now home to 35,377 residents (38.0%). There are 26,451 north Lethbridge residents (28.4%).
-  **Sample Data** Collected by Lethbridge College students enrolled in a variety of social science courses in the winter of 2015. Students interviewed 789 randomly selected, adult Lethbridge residents by telephone on February 7–11, 2015 under the supervision of School of Liberal Arts faculty member Faron Ellis. We sincerely appreciate and thank all those who took time to respond to our survey. Full methodological notes for samples from previous Lethbridge and Alberta Public Opinion Studies can be obtained by visiting the CSRL web pages at:
www.lethbridgecollege.ab.ca/go/csrl.
-  **Representativeness** Analysis of the demographic data indicates that, within acceptable limits, the sample accurately represents the demographic distribution of the adult population within the city of Lethbridge. The sample has been statistically weighted to even better reflect that of the population (sex, age, and area of the city of Lethbridge).
-  **Confidence** The sample yields a margin of error of ± 3.47 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error increases when analyzing sub-samples of the data.
-  **IB Commons Call Centre** Students conducted interviews using the facilities of the Lethbridge College IB Commons Call Centre.
-  **Sponsorship** These data are part of a larger study of the opinions and attitudes of Lethbridge residents conducted by the Citizen Society Research Lab at Lethbridge College. This particular set of questions was derived from student, faculty and general community interest in the topic.

Executive Summary



Introduction

In the fall of 2014, Lethbridge City Council was presented with four curbside waste and recycling options during its operating budget deliberations. Acting as finance committee, council voted 7-2 in favor of the principle of delivering curbside recycling in Lethbridge, but deferred debate on implementation until 2015. On January 26, 2015, council voted 5-4 in favor of recommending a blue cart curbside recycling program. It also voted 3-6 against recommending an organics green cart curbside program. On February 9, council resumed deliberations and defeated by a 3-6 vote a resolution recommending a blue cart curbside pilot program. It also defeated a resolution by a 2-7 vote to commission another community survey on these issues, although several council members expressed a desire for more community input.

In an effort at providing some of that additional community input, the CSRL asked Lethbridge residents about their support for or opposition to each of the four curbside options that were presented to council during its operating budget deliberations. Full question working, including clarification/explanatory information is presented on the final pages of this report.

The data presented below demonstrate an interesting shift in public opinion that mirrors council's deliberations and voting patterns. Initially, it should be noted that Lethbridge residents value and rate very highly (typically in the 98-99% range) both the importance of and their satisfaction with existing weekly garbage collection ([Ipsos Reid 2014](#)). A clear majority (65%) also indicated satisfaction with the city's current recycling programs that include regional recycling depots but no curbside service ([Ipsos Public Affairs 2013](#)). Much like city council, residents also indicated initial support for the principles of curbside recycling (80%), but support decreases significantly once costs are considered (down to 61% at a \$10 per month cost, and 66% if costs are \$8 per month.) It was within this context and at the height of public debate about these issues that we engaged Lethbridge residents with our queries.



Option 1 – Weekly garbage and weekly blue cart

Opinion is relatively evenly split with respect to this option, with a slim majority opposed (53.3%) and a substantial minority supportive (46.7%). Majorities of south (57.9%) and north (58.9%) Lethbridge residents are opposed, while a majority of west residents are supportive (54.8%). Older residents are much more opposed than are younger residents, with seniors most strongly opposed.



Option 2 – Weekly garbage and bi-weekly blue cart

Opinion is relatively evenly split with respect to this option, with a slim majority opposed (52.4%). Substantial majorities of south and north residents are opposed, while a majority of west residents are supportive. Older residents are much more opposed than are younger residents, with seniors most strongly opposed.



Option 3 – Bi-weekly garbage and blue cart

A clear and substantial majority of Lethbridge residents (65.4%) are opposed to this option including substantial majorities in all areas of the city. Clearly, Lethbridge residents prefer weekly garbage collection.



Option 4 – Weekly green cart

Residents are even more overwhelmingly opposed to this option (76.9%), with a clear majority strongly opposed (54.3%).



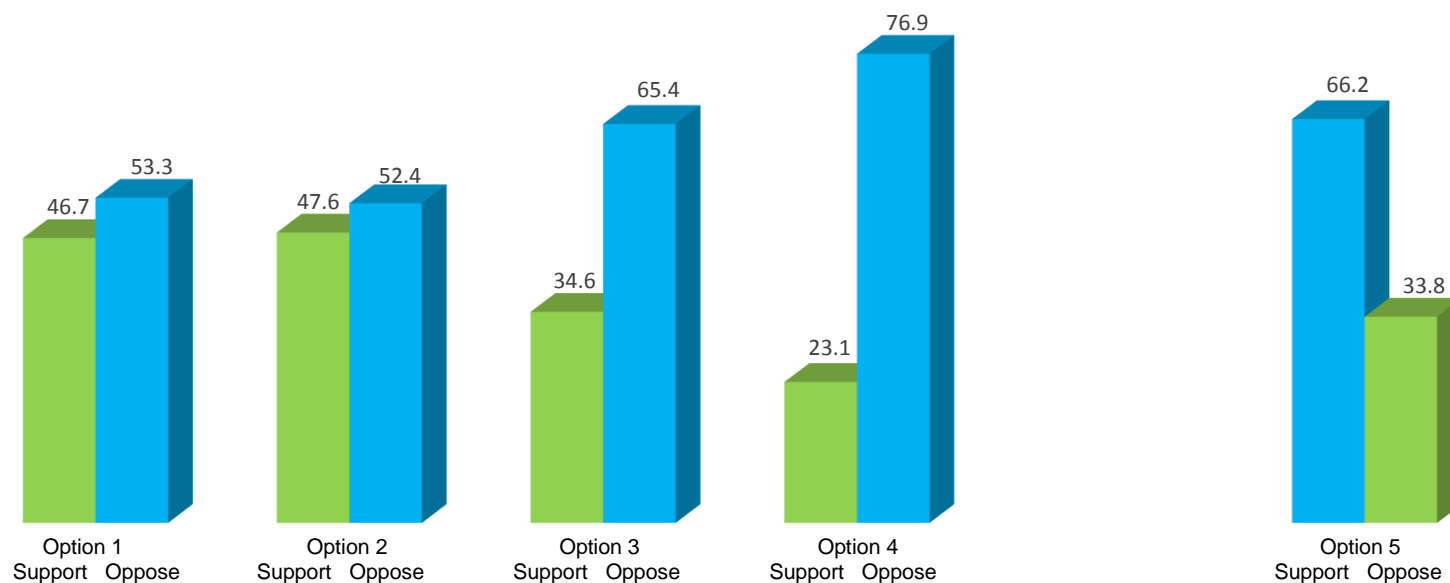
Option 5 – Status Quo (no new curbside services)

In the end, at least at this stage of the debate, a substantial majority of Lethbridge residents (66.2%) support the status quo (no new curbside services) preferring to use the existing recycling depots or private sector options.

Lethbridge Opinions on Five Curbside Recycling Options (%)

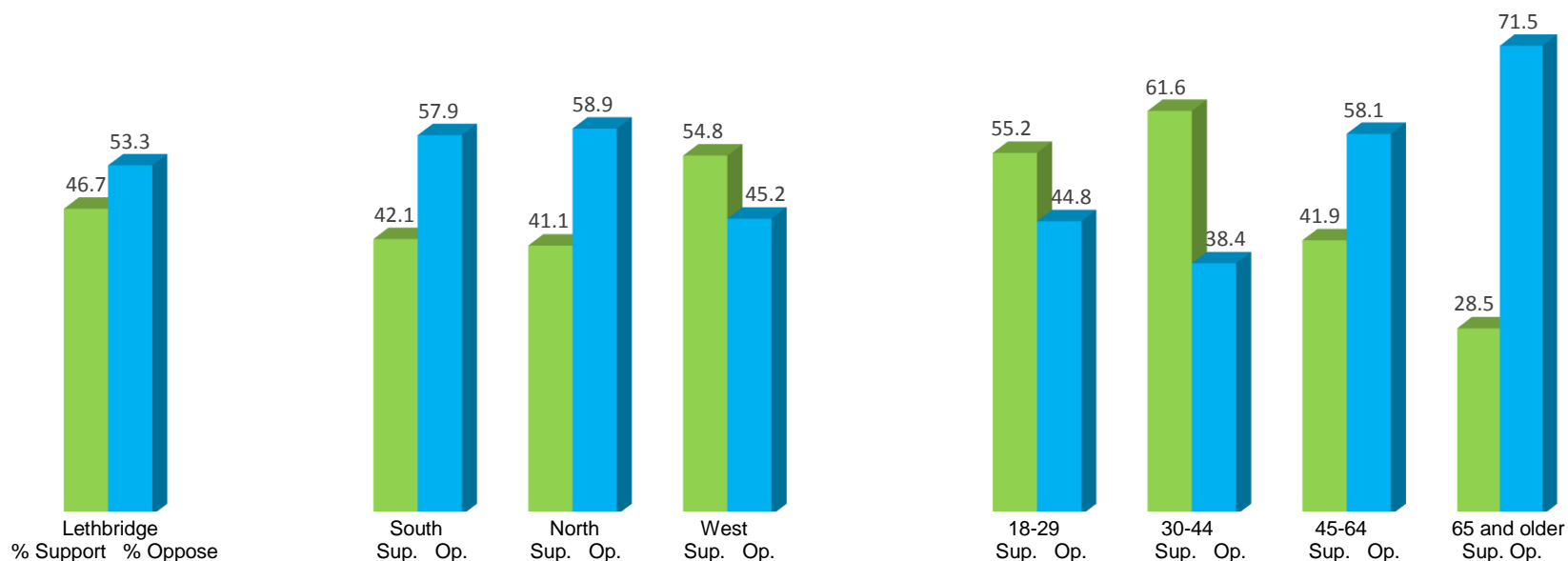
WG = Weekly Garbage
WBC = Weekly Blue Cart
BWG = Bi-weekly Garbage
BWBC = Bi-weekly Blue Cart
GC = Weekly Green Cart

	Option 1 (WG & WBC)	Option 2 (WG & BWBC)	Option 3 (BWG & BWBC)	Option 4 (GC)	Option 5 (Status Quo)
Support	46.7	47.6	34.6	23.1	66.2
Oppose	53.3	52.4	65.4	76.9	33.8
Strongly Support	20.3	20.5	14.7	7.9	42.2
Somewhat Support	26.4	27.1	19.9	15.2	24.0
Somewhat Oppose	23.0	22.6	20.4	22.6	13.3
Strongly Oppose	30.3	29.8	45.0	54.3	20.4



Option 1 – Weekly garbage and weekly blue cart curbside recycling services

- Clearly, public opinion is divided on the issue of weekly curbside blue cart recycling services, with a slim majority opposed (53.3%) and a substantial minority supportive (46.7%). However, despite the relatively equal overall support and opposition levels, beneath the surface, deep divisions between different demographic groups are evident and these often have a much greater impact on public policy deliberations than do the overall aggregate differences.
- For example, while we can measure some slight differences in opinion between the sexes (with men slightly more supportive than women), and between the three regions of Lethbridge (south and north Lethbridge residents are opposed while west Lethbridge residents are supportive), all of these minor differences pale in comparison to the significant opinion differences between age groups.
- Younger Lethbridge residents are supportive, while older Lethbridge residents are opposed. Seniors are most opposed (71.5%) while those aged 30 to 44 (61.6%) are most supportive. Furthermore, with a clear majority of seniors strongly opposed (53.6%), and given that older voters are more likely to actively express their opinions to policy makers, it is very likely that the age related differences in opinion were being clearly conveyed to city council.



Option 1 – Weekly garbage and weekly blue cart (%)

Gender	Male	Female	Lethbridge
Agree	49.6	43.9	46.7
Disagree	50.4	56.1	53.3

Area*	South Lethbridge	North Lethbridge	West Lethbridge
Agree	42.1	41.1	54.8
Disagree	57.9	58.9	45.2

Household Income*	Under \$40,000	\$40,001 to \$100,000	Over \$100,000
Agree	44.8	46.2	58.9
Disagree	55.2	53.8	41.1

Education	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	42.7	48.2	43.1	54.2
Disagree	57.3	51.8	56.9	45.8

Age*	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	55.2	61.6	41.9	28.5
Disagree	44.8	38.4	58.1	71.5

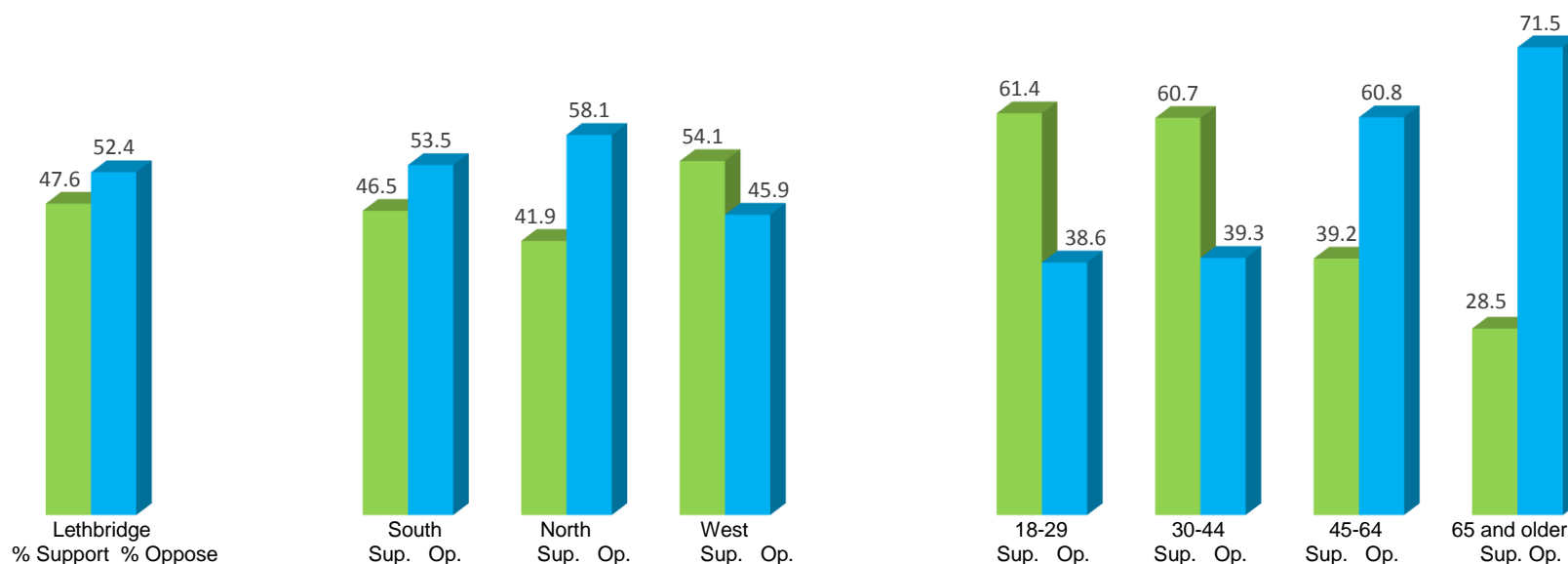
Provincial Vote	PC	Wildrose	Liberal	NDP	Undecided
Agree	45.0	36.1	54.3	56.2	43.7
Disagree	55.0	63.9	45.7	43.8	56.3

Federal Vote	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	44.5	56.7	54.5	50.0	36.7
Disagree	55.5	43.3	45.5	50.0	63.3

Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100%; * sig < 0.05

Option 2 – Weekly garbage and bi-weekly blue cart curbside recycling services

- Public opinion is also nearly evenly divided on the issue of bi-weekly curbside blue cart recycling services, with a slim majority opposed (52.4%) and a substantial minority supportive (47.6%). Interestingly, support levels do not fluctuate significantly with the change in pickup frequency and corresponding cost reduction.
- As with the previous option, minor differences between different demographic groups are evident, but the most significant differences are again between age groups.
- Younger Lethbridge residents are supportive, with those younger than 45 years of age demonstrating slightly more than 60% support. Older Lethbridge residents are much more opposed. Seniors are most opposed (71.5%) while those aged 45 to 64 are also opposed (60.8%).
- Furthermore, when considering intensity of support and opposition, it is evident that a clear majority of seniors are again strongly opposed while support amongst younger generations is not nearly as intense as is senior opposition. For example, a clear majority of seniors are strongly opposed (54.0%) while only 28.6% of the youth are strongly supportive and even fewer of those aged 30 to 44 are strongly supportive (23.8%).



Option 2 – Weekly garbage and bi-weekly blue cart (%)

Gender	Male	Female	Lethbridge
Agree	49.9	45.3	47.6
Disagree	50.1	54.7	52.4

Area	South Lethbridge	North Lethbridge	West Lethbridge
Agree	46.5	41.9	54.1
Disagree	53.5	58.1	45.9

Household Income	Under \$40,000	\$40,001 to \$100,000	Over \$100,000
Agree	52.8	45.3	61.0
Disagree	47.2	54.7	39.0

Education*	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	42.1	49.0	44.6	54.6
Disagree	57.9	51.0	55.4	45.4

Age*	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	61.4	60.7	39.2	28.5
Disagree	38.6	39.3	60.8	71.5

Provincial Vote	PC	Wildrose	Liberal	NDP	Undecided
Agree	44.9	34.1	58.1	57.2	46.1
Disagree	55.1	65.9	41.9	42.8	53.9

Federal Vote	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	41.6	61.4	51.5	51.1	44.3
Disagree	58.4	38.6	48.5	48.9	55.7

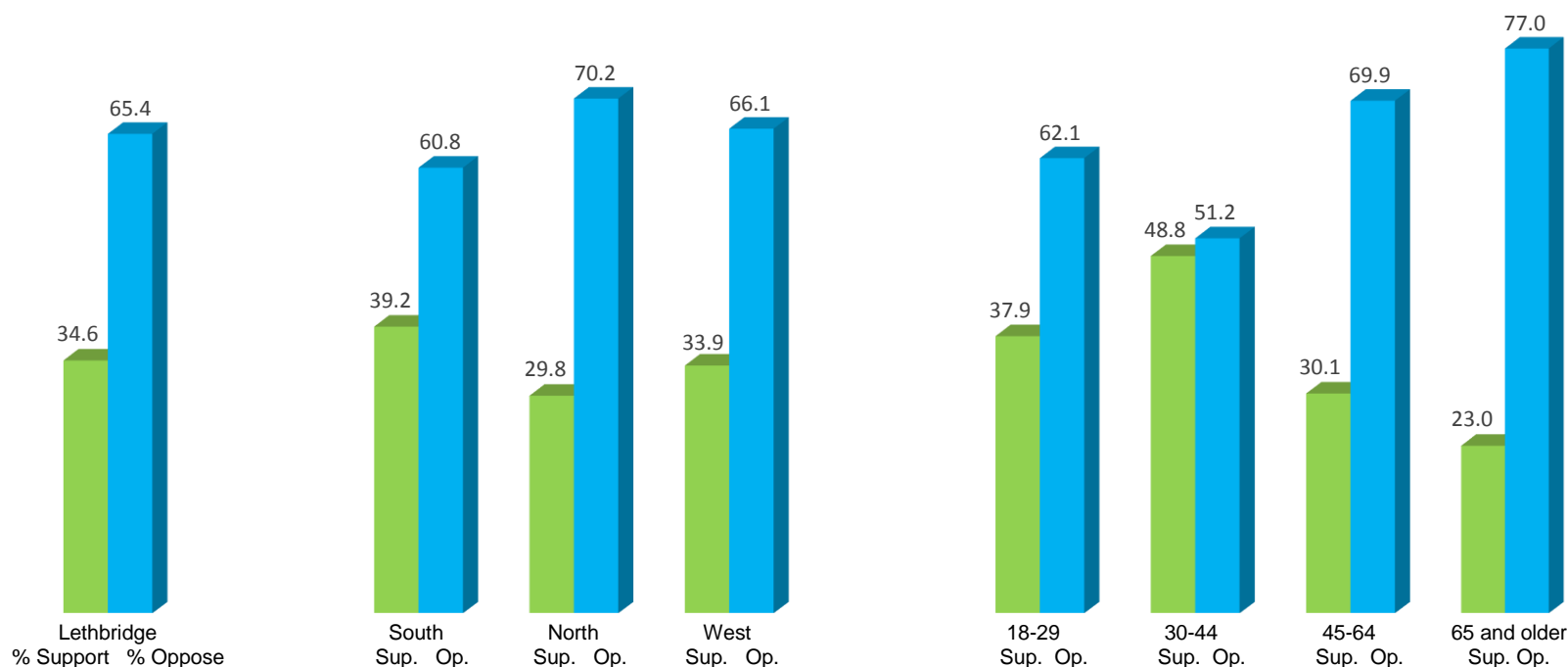
Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100%; * sig < 0.05

Option 3 – Bi-weekly garbage and bi-weekly blue cart curbside service

- Opinion changes dramatically when Lethbridge residents consider giving up their weekly garbage pickup and moving to bi-weekly garbage collection and bi-weekly blue cart curbside recycling services. Support plummets to just over one-third of all residents (34.6%) in agreement with this option while opposition soars (65.4%).

Finding nearly two-thirds of residents opposed to moving to bi-weekly garbage collection is not surprising given the near universal support for the existing garbage services that has been measured in previous polls. Further, since the bi-weekly garbage proposal is the only difference between this option and the previous option, it is safe to assume that the large increase in opposition is solely attributable to the change in garbage collection service and has little to do with any aspects of curbside recycling pickup.

- Substantial majorities in all demographic categories are opposed, with seniors (77.0%) and north Lethbridge residents (70.2%) most opposed.



Option 3 – Bi-weekly garbage and bi-weekly blue cart (%)

Gender	Male	Female	Lethbridge
Agree	36.6	32.7	34.6
Disagree	63.4	67.3	65.4

Area	South Lethbridge	North Lethbridge	West Lethbridge
Agree	39.2	29.8	33.9
Disagree	60.8	70.2	66.1

Household Income	Under \$40,000	\$40,001 to \$100,000	Over \$100,000
Agree	38.3	37.6	37.9
Disagree	61.7	62.4	62.1

Education*	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	28.6	36.0	32.0	40.8
Disagree	71.4	64.0	68.0	59.2

Age*	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	37.9	48.8	30.1	23.0
Disagree	62.1	51.2	69.9	77.0

Provincial Vote	PC	Wildrose	Liberal	NDP	Undecided
Agree	32.8	22.0	36.3	45.3	31.9
Disagree	67.2	78.0	63.7	54.7	68.1

Federal Vote	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	25.6	47.4	41.0	45.7	32.8
Disagree	74.4	52.6	59.0	54.3	67.2

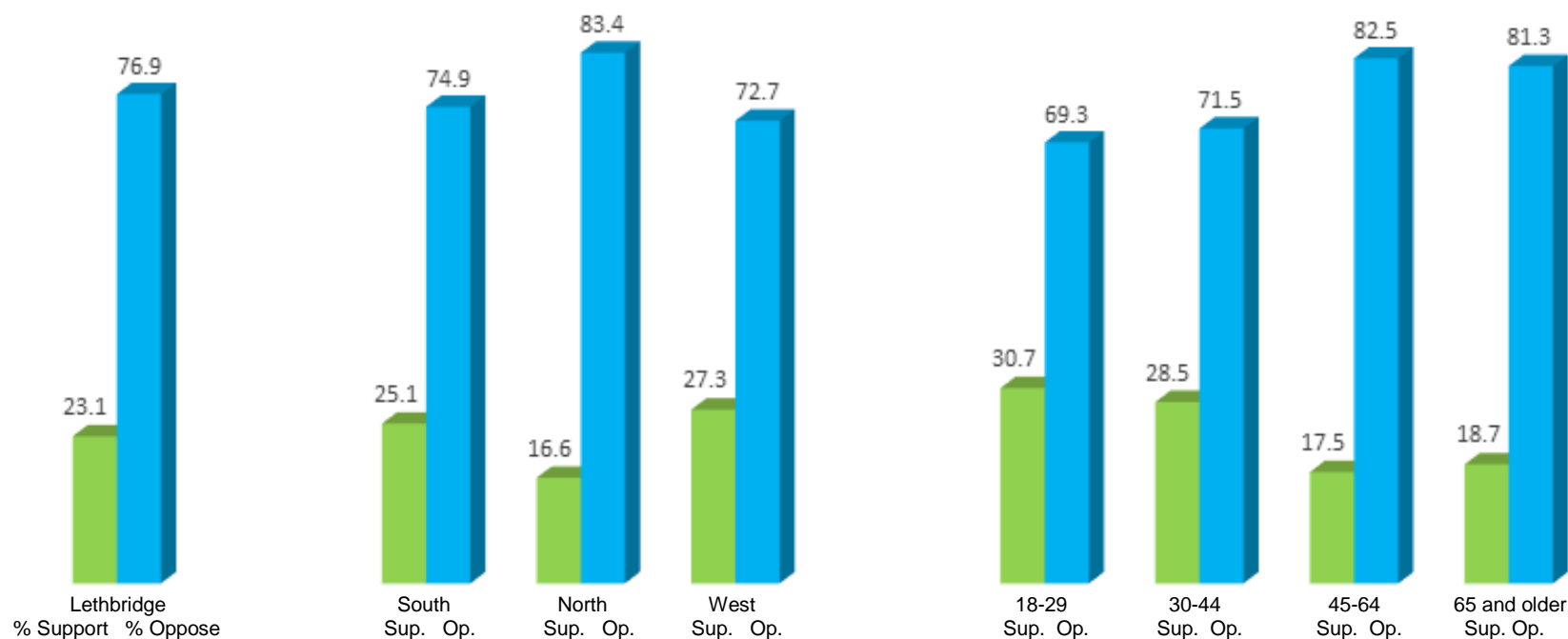
Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100%; * sig < 0.05

Option 4 – Weekly green cart curbside service

- Lethbridge residents are strongly opposed to introducing weekly organics green cart curbside service. More than three-quarters of all residents are opposed (76.9%), with most strongly opposed (54.3%).

Again, seniors (81.3%), those aged 45 to 64 (82.5%) and north Lethbridge residents (83.4%) are most opposed, but strong levels of opposition exists across all demographic categories, age groups, and in all areas of the city.

- Clearly, expanding curbside service to include organics is not something that Lethbridge residents support at this time.



Option 4 – Weekly green cart (%)

Gender	Male	Female	Lethbridge
Agree	23.6	22.5	23.1
Disagree	76.4	77.5	76.9

Area	South Lethbridge	North Lethbridge	West Lethbridge
Agree	25.1	16.6	27.3
Disagree	74.9	83.4	72.7

Household Income	Under \$40,000	\$40,001 to \$100,000	Over \$100,000
Agree	26.8	21.7	24.4
Disagree	73.2	78.3	75.6

Education	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	18.5	28.6	17.8	28.5
Disagree	81.5	71.4	82.2	71.5

Age*	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	30.7	28.5	17.5	18.7
Disagree	69.3	71.5	82.5	81.3

Provincial Vote	PC	Wildrose	Liberal	NDP	Undecided
Agree	19.5	13.6	37.2	28.4	19.4
Disagree	80.5	86.4	62.8	71.6	80.6

Federal Vote	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	18.1	31.6	30.2	26.1	21.8
Disagree	81.9	68.4	69.8	73.9	78.2

Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100%; * sig < 0.05

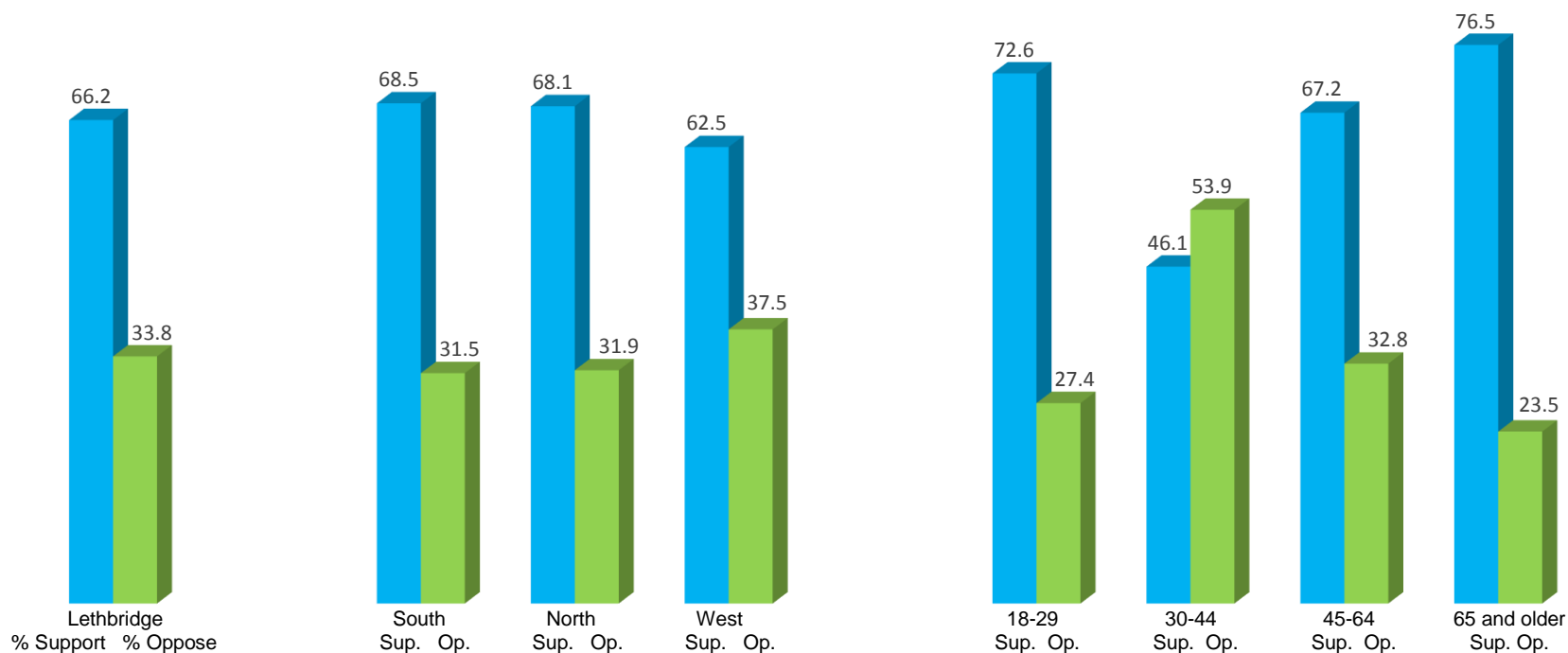
Option 5 – Status Quo (no new curbside services)

- After considering the four curbside options that were presented to Lethbridge City Council during its budget deliberations in the fall of 2014, Lethbridge residents prefer to not introduce any new curbside services at this time. By a margin of approximately two to one, Lethbridge residents prefer the status quo (sticking with existing garbage and recycling services.)

A substantial majority of Lethbridge residents (66.2%) expressed support for the status quo while approximately one-third would prefer to establish some form of new curbside services.

- Majority support for maintaining the existing range of services exists in all demographic categories except for those aged 30 to 44 where a slight majority (53.9%) would prefer some new curbside services.

Support for the existing system is strongest among seniors (76.5%) and those aged 18 to 29 (72.6%), but strong support for the status quo exists in all areas of the city.



Option 5 – Status Quo (no new curbside services) (%)

Gender	Male	Female	Lethbridge
Agree	67.4	65.2	66.2
Disagree	32.6	34.8	33.8

Area	South Lethbridge	North Lethbridge	West Lethbridge
Agree	68.5	68.1	62.5
Disagree	31.5	31.9	37.5

Household Income*	Under \$40,000	\$40,001 to \$100,000	Over \$100,000
Agree	74.1	60.6	57.1
Disagree	25.9	39.4	42.9

Education*	High School or less	Some Post-secondary	College-Tech-Trade	University Grad
Agree	69.6	74.2	67.3	52.3
Disagree	30.4	25.8	32.7	47.7

Age	18-29	30-44	45-64	65 and older
Agree	72.6	46.1	67.2	76.5
Disagree	27.4	53.9	32.8	23.5

Provincial Vote	PC	Wildrose	Liberal	NDP	Undecided
Agree	66.4	72.3	72.5	50.0	70.8
Disagree	33.6	27.7	27.5	50.0	29.2

Federal Vote	CPC	Liberal	NDP	Green	Undecided
Agree	72.6	58.4	57.1	54.3	64.6
Disagree	27.4	41.6	42.9	45.7	35.4

Notes: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100%; * sig < 0.05

Demographics

Gender (%)		Area of City (%)		Income (%)		Education (%)		Age (%)	
Male	49.2	South	34.3	Under \$40,000	30.5	H-School/less	21.1	18-29	27.1
Female	50.8	North	27.9	\$40-100,000	43.6	Some P-Sec.	26.6	30-44	22.7
		West	37.8	Over \$100,000	25.9	Col-Tech-Grad	25.9	45-64	30.2
						University Grad	26.3	65 or older	20.0

Note: Due to rounding, proportions may not total exactly 100%

Questions

Thinking for a moment about recycling in Lethbridge.

As you may know, Lethbridge City Council is in the process of debating recycling strategies, including possibly providing a range of curbside recycling services that vary in cost depending on the level of service provided.

Right now, Lethbridge residents pay for weekly garbage pick (\$13.60 per month) and a number of other waste and recycling services including; a monthly recycling fee to support the recycling depots (\$3.60 per month) and a monthly landfill fee (\$3.50 per month). (approximately \$20.70 per month total)

Council is now considering four options to add new curbside recycling services for Lethbridge residents. Council could adopt any one or a combination of these proposals, or it could choose to not introduce curbside recycling at this time. I'm going to read each of the options to you, beginning with the most service, and therefore highest fee option, through the less service and fee options, and finally the option of not starting any new curbside recycling programs.

Please tell me whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each of the options.

Additional information provided for clarification when required:

- The current recycling, landfill and waste fees will remain even if council decides to add curbside recycling because the depots, landfill, etc. will still be needed for large item drop-off, hazardous waste.
- Blue cart recyclables include paper, small item cardboard, tin cans, most plastics and possibly some glass.
- Green cart recyclables include kitchen food-waste, grass clippings, leaves and other small item yard waste.
- Weekly means 1 pick-up per week.
- Bi-weekly means pick-up every other week.

Questions (continued)

Option 1 - Continue to pick up garbage on a weekly basis and add weekly blue cart curbside pickup at an additional cost of \$10 to \$11 per month. (weekly garbage and weekly blue cart pickup) (total costs approximately \$32 per month)

Option 2 - Continue to pick up garbage on a weekly basis and add bi-weekly blue cart curbside pickup at an additional cost of \$9 to \$10 per month. (weekly garbage, bi-weekly blue cart) (total costs approximately \$31 per month)

Option 3 - Move to bi-weekly garbage pickup and add bi-weekly curbside blue cart recyclable pickup at an additional cost of \$6 to \$8 per month. (bi-weekly garbage and bi-weekly blue cart) (total costs approximately \$28 per month)

Option 4 - Independent of what happens with garbage and blue cart curbside services, council is also considering adding weekly curbside organic recycling pick (green cart) up at an estimated cost of an additional \$7 to \$8 per month. Please tell me how much you support or oppose adding organic curbside pick-up at an additional cost of \$7 to \$8 per month.

Option 5 - A final option is for Lethbridge City Council to decide against adding any new curbside recycling services, keeping weekly garbage pick-up and having residents continue to use the recycling depots and private-sector recycling options. Please tell me how much you support or oppose Lethbridge City Council not starting any new curbside recycling programs and keeping waste and recycling services and fees at their current levels.

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Don't know (unprompted)
- Refused (unprompted)

NOTE to readers who may have accessed an early version of this report:

An earlier version of this report included a typographical error on this page indicating the costs of Option 4 would be \$10-\$11 per month. That was a typographical error that occurred while preparing this report and well after data collection had been concluded. In fact, we did ask respondents about City Council operating budget initiative N-12 and its proposed costs of \$7-\$8 per month for weekly organics curbside service. We apologize for any confusion that the error in the previous version of this report may have caused.