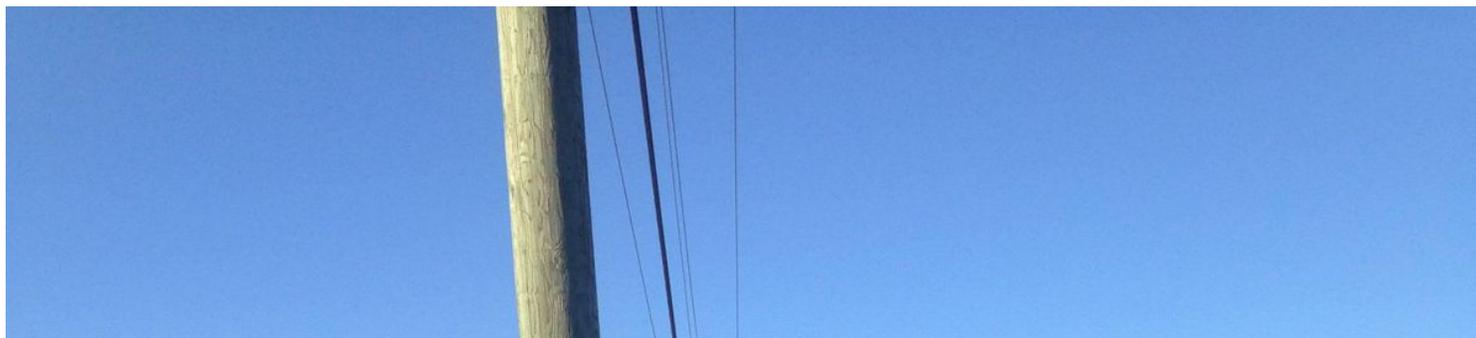


## Illegal dumping of construction waste costing Lower Mainland taxpayers





Lawyer Andrew Waldichuk, stands along Cambie Road in Richmond.

KERRY GOLD/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

I think it's driven by economics — people don't want to pay the tipping fee to dispose of it properly.

In Vancouver, illegally dumped construction waste was up 20 per cent in 2016 from the year before. In 2015, 6,858 construction waste items were reported, compared with 8,207 in 2016. That doesn't include furniture, metal and electronics. There were almost 75,000 illegally dumped items found throughout the city last year.

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Costs of cleanup and investigation came in at \$1.5-million. For 2017, the city has budgeted \$1.9-million for cleanup of illegally dumped garbage.

It has budgeted more, Mr. Shames says, because it's planning to ramp up its approach to the dumping. He says city crews need to respond more quickly to clean up at the dumping sites, because if they don't, those sites quickly grow. For some reason, when people see garbage dumped in a

It's surprising where you do find it — in back lanes, under bridges. One of the challenges we have is wherever there's an area slated for development, and they put up those blue fences, automatically it becomes a dumping ground."

He says staff have caught a few of the dumpers. They've even been able to track them through the items they've dumped, which have included information such as a company name. The fines run from \$150 to \$10,000.

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"We did have some last year that were in the thousands, but we haven't got up to \$10,000," Mr. Shames says. "In some cases, it's individuals or small contractors."

To get the junk out of the alleys, the city is planning a pilot project this year that will offer big-item pick-up of household goods. Mr. Shames says they've got to figure out the cost of the service, how to pay for it and other logistics.

Surrey has had a similar program for the past decade, but the problem is that most people don't know about it. So part of the city's attack plan on garbage is to educate people that they don't have to drop that furnace or couch in the back alley. The city will pick it up.

Rob Costanzo, manager of engineering operations, says Surrey spent a little more than \$1-million on cleanup costs from illegal dumping in 2015. The amount had doubled since 2005. Again, the increase correlated with housing construction. At one point, he says, they even hired former police officers to sit in cars at dumping locations at night and try to catch people. It didn't work.

"A good majority of it is construction type waste, or renovation type waste," Mr. Costanzo says. "We are trying to wrap our heads around how to reduce the impact of illegal dumping."

It hasn't been easy because Surrey is geographically big. But after a year of aggressively tackling the problem, it has gotten cleanup costs down to \$580,000. The next phase is a pilot project in the northwest part of the city involving 2,200 households, which has been hit hardest with dumping.

"We're placing cameras in the neighbourhood, and going door to door, to knock on doors and let them know about the large-item pickup program, educate them about illegal dumping and bylaw infractions," Mr. Costanzo says.

If their efforts have an impact, they'll tackle other areas of Surrey.

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