



## CUSTOMER STORY | Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Adding or changing services is no easy feat for any municipality or organization, especially when it comes to communicating and working with thousands of people. But as Lethbridge, Alberta, has shown, with a little tenacity and the right tools, it doesn't have to be impossible.



In Lethbridge, the city's [Waste & Recycling Services](#) handle garbage and [recycling collection](#) on an alternating, bi-weekly schedule for its roughly 100,000 residents.

"We're very behind in the waste world (in) Lethbridge," said the city's Digital Communications Specialist Gordon Prest, adding that the city only kicked off its curbside recycling program in 2019.

But the city has big plans to catch up — and fast: Lethbridge will initiate phase one of its Curbside Organics Program in late 2022 and roll it out to the rest of the city in Spring 2023.

And unlike their 2019 introduction of recycling collections, Lethbridge now has a new plan to communicate these changes that will place pertinent information directly into their community's hands.

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“We call (the app) our Lethbridge Loop — keeping people in the loop,” Prest says, noting that the city uses the app to notify people about street sweepings, outages for electricity and water and other service alerts, with plans to communicate information about snow routes & more in the future, too.”

## Customizable tools that get the job done



Beginning around 2018, Prest started doing all he could to tout digital tools for recycling communications from ReCollect, especially the customizable app. At the time, however, the city tapping into another app for other services, so the project was put on hold.



In the years that followed, the perfect storm of price increases and the upcoming addition of the city’s Curbside Organics Program became the catalyst that sealed the deal: The city needed a singular platform to help communicate about waste and recycling in a timely way and meet people where they are.



“Four months into having the app, and we’ve already hit our three-year targets” for downloads and usage, Prest says. “We’re happy with how everything’s been going.”



But Lethbridge didn’t stop with waste and recycling. Not only does the app (and website) feature the [Collection Calendar](#), [Waste Wizard](#) and the [Waste Sorting Game](#) (called [the Ins and Outs Game](#) in Lethbridge), but the city also uses the app and tools to notify the community about issues within other city departments, too.



Prior to the app, Prest says all this information was routed to residents separately. This meant having to sign people up twice to receive the information they needed. “It was really hard on the community and really labor intensive for us,” Prest says.



Now all the notification information is stored in one database that can be updated or expanded as needed. “There’s been hiccups, but it’s worked really well,” Prest says. “I think that’s been the biggest push we’ve had for getting so many people signed up for the app, just because it’s a one-stop shop, essentially.”



Having one app to route all communications has also reduced printing costs for outreach materials and calendars and alleviated confusion around city services from weather delays and beyond with room to grow and add information as needed.



Not many municipalities route information to residents in this way, but “Lethbridge is a nice size for that,” Prest says. “We’re big enough that we have a lot of these different kinds of communications pieces internally,” but small enough to group together other city services and utilities, too.

“It does make things easier,” Prest says.

### Maximizing resources



To reach the largest number of people possible, the city also relies on social media and automation to fill any communication gaps. “As soon as something happens, our social media shoots out a message,” Prest says.



“Social media is great. It has a good reach, but it does reach a specific demographic,” Prest says. While Lethbridge is a bit of a university town, “we have a very elderly population, too.” Although senior citizens may use social media, “they’re not always on social media,” so having an app and web tools has “helped us build the biggest web possible for our outreach.”

And the more people Lethbridge can encourage to adopt its app and tools, the better — especially the Waste Wizard. This tool has quickly become the city’s recycling handbook that’s notably effective, “especially in waste these days, as everything is changing,” and Alberta finds more ways to recycle.



“Rather than fielding call after call, or rolling out printed materials and other communications, we just update ReCollect -- and the tools and people can kind of go from there,” Prest says. “It’s nice that we can just update one place.”

### Spreading the word

Lethbridge knows that its tools are only useful if the people in their community use them, so they’ve made sure to incorporate information about their suite of technology into their marketing campaigns, especially the Waste Wizard.

“We recently wrapped our waste trucks” with information about the app and the Waste Wizard, Prest says. “We have essentially 10 driving billboards going throughout the city each day.”





The city also created fun and informative messaging around its collection schedule, now that the city has added blue carts for recycling and soon will add green for organics collection.



“In the past, everybody just had their waste (collected) weekly, and it was very simple,” Prest says. But now, with collections for garbage and recycling running on alternating weeks, the city has been pushing their “bin-fluencer program.” A bin-fluencer, Prest says, is the first person on the block to drag out the appropriate bin for collection.



“Then, all the residents are looking out the windows (and thinking), ‘OK, today’s a blue (cart) day,’” Prest says. “So, it’s like, you can follow your binfluencer, or you know, you can be the binfluencer: Get the app, it’ll notify you, you can be the first one” to place the correct cart at the curb.

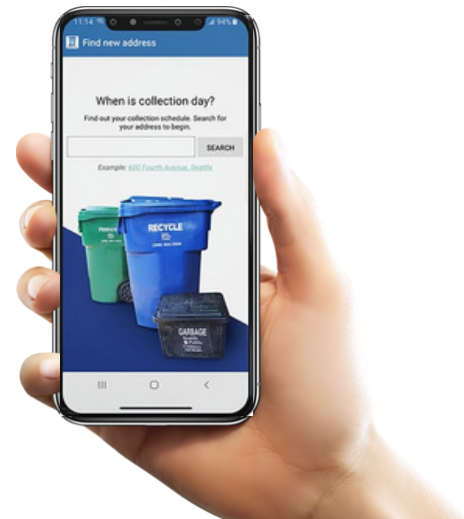


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## Patience pays off

Lethbridge recently saw a downturn in app users and downloads. Prest says the city attributes this to folks getting the hang of the collection schedule, or perhaps it was triggered when the city discontinued SMS messaging alerts.

“But we still had very good retention” of app users, Prest says. While residents would no longer receive text alerts, the app remained aligned with the city’s waste collection and street sweeping schedules, along with other city services. “Our losses weren’t as high as we thought they would be,” Prest says, and less, still, compared to the downturn in users other municipalities saw when they discontinued SMS alerts.



### About Routeware

Routeware has been digitally transforming the waste and recycling industry for over 20 years. Our mission is to help waste and recycling leaders use technology to delight customers, improve operations, and protect our planet. Routeware solutions are used by smart cities and haulers in every US state, across Canada, and in the United Kingdom, benefiting over 100M people.

Routeware has acquired a number of leading waste and recycling technology companies in recent years including ReCollect Systems, Core Computing Solutions, EasyRoute, Webaspx, RouteOptix, and Andrews Software Inc.

Find out more at [www.routeware.com](http://www.routeware.com)



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