
2021 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE Optimizing Public Education Budget and Review of the Annual Calendar

Issue/Background:

This communication responds to the Budget Committee's request for the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services, to provide a Briefing Note to Executive Committee as part of the 2021 Solid Waste Management Services rate supported budget submission, which responds to the following requests for information:

- Evidence to support reducing the public education budget and discontinuing the use of the Solid Waste Management Services' Annual Calendar, including a distinction between demographic groups in Toronto; and,
- The cost of a partial production of the Solid Waste Management Services' Annual Calendar to be provided to specific demographics that might benefit from the material.

Key Points:

- 1. Solid Waste Management Services' response to *evidence to support reducing the public education budget and discontinuing the use of the Solid Waste Management Services' Annual Calendar, including a distinction between demographic groups in Toronto.***

Solid Waste Management Services employs a variety of activities in its public education efforts including communications campaigns that include multi-lingual advertising across various mediums (e.g. transit, online, social media, radio, and newspaper ads) as well as direct mail-outs (e.g. letters), posters, guides and the distribution of an annual Waste Management Guide with Collection Schedule (previously titled "Calendar") that goes to each home and multi-residential unit. Materials such as the Blue Bin and Green Bin Guides have been translated into 17 of the top home languages in Toronto. Both multilingual public education campaigns, and brief summaries of the content on each page of the Waste Management Guide are translated into five of the top home languages, as well as French. The top home languages are determined by the most recent census data (2016). All materials are translated in accordance with the City's Multilingual Information Provisions Policy that has been in effect since 2017. Currently, the brief summaries in the Waste Management Guide are translated to:

- Chinese

- Farsi
- Tamil
- Spanish
- Portuguese
- French

Further, Solid Waste Management Services also conducts community outreach activities, such as volunteer programs, community workshops and presentations, etc. These efforts contribute to helping residents' behaviors align with the goals of the Long Term Waste Management Strategy to reduce waste and increase diversion. These efforts are also complemented through information available on the City of Toronto website (which can be translated through Google Translate), social media, TOwaste App and multi-lingual customer service offerings available through 311.

Although it is difficult to quantify the overall impacts of this specific tactic, the Waste Management Guide has been considered a useful tool for educating the public on how to properly participate in the City's waste management programs with high levels of reach and accessibility (e.g. it is a guide that goes to every home, and access to a computer, the Internet and a printer is not a barrier). It is also one of the only physical pieces of communication the City distributes to both single-family and multi-residential homes and that provides detailed information on how to properly sort and set out waste. The production of the Waste Management Guide accounts for approximately 27 per cent of Solid Waste Management Services' overall communications operating budget (e.g. design, printing and postage).

2019 Survey and Focus Groups

Solid Waste Management Services with support from Strategic Communications regularly conducts surveys and focus groups in relation to public education and communication delivery to residents. In 2019, Solid Waste Management Services completed an independent survey and focus groups focusing on where and how residents acquire information about waste management. The quantitative survey and qualitative focus groups also asked residents to provide feedback on potential changes to public education efforts and the Waste Management Guide.

The survey acquired responses from 1,003 Toronto residents living in single-family homes and 1,006 residents living in multi-residential buildings. Survey participants are statistically represented across all areas of the city, gender and age (18 years or older), based on the Toronto population. The focus groups included a total of 36 residents from single-family and multi-residential homes, a portion of which were newcomers to Toronto (e.g. in the City less than five years).

Overall, participants in both the survey and the focus groups recognized the importance of public education in reaching out to millions of residents, in addition to City visitors. This included the use of campaigns through a variety of media such as transit ads, radio, newspapers, online advertising and social media. They also recognized that incentives and enforcement (e.g. ticketing) can encourage behavioral changes leading to better waste sorting practices among Toronto residents.

Participants provided insights about how and how often they used the Waste Management Guide; how useful they found it; and what changes they would recommend for its future editions. Generally, participants found the Waste Management Guide to be a useful tool that they used either regularly or occasionally, with some differences in use between those living in single-family homes and multi-residential buildings. For instance, participants living in single-family homes reported using the Waste Management Guide primarily to check the collection schedule (70 per cent) and as a reference guide for information about waste management (65 per cent). Participants living in multi-residential buildings reported primarily using the Waste Management Guide as a guide for information about waste management (73 per cent) and as a personal calendar, not a collection schedule, since it is not applicable to multi-residential residents (41 per cent).

The survey showed the following findings regarding how people get their information and the Waste Management Guide:

- The two most popular choices for how people acquire their information were through the City of Toronto website (20 per cent single-family and 14 per cent multi-residential), and the Waste Management Guide (18 per cent single-family and 12 per cent multi-residential).
- The majority of residents identified the Waste Management Guide as a useful or somewhat useful tool (92 per cent of both single-family and multi-residential residents).
- The majority of residents who use the Waste Management Guide reported using it regularly (47 per cent single-family and 35 per cent multi-residential).
- The primary uses of the Waste Management Guide were reported to be checking collection schedules (70 per cent single-family; it does not apply to multi-residential); and, using it as a reference guide for information on waste management (65 per cent single-family and 73 per cent multi-residential).

When asked what enhancements or changes participants would suggest for the Waste Management Guide, the following was reported:

Table 1. Changes suggested by survey participants

Change	Single-Family (percentage)	Multi-Residential (percentage)
City to consider putting the Waste Management Guide on the website for residents to print it at their convenience	41	48
Reducing the size of the Waste Management Guide	23	29
Making the collection schedule one-page	32	N/A* <i>*The multi-residential Waste Management Guide does not have a collection schedule</i>
Keeping the Waste Management Guide the same	16	11
Including more information in the Waste Management Guide	10	1

In addition, focus group participants identified the importance of having summaries of the Waste Management Guide information available in different languages.

Website and TOwaste App

The use of the website has increased over the years, and the use of online tools, such as the TOwaste App is expected to increase in the future. The TOwaste App was launched in October 2019 to facilitate residents’ mobile access to waste management information. Residents may access the Waste Wizard, collection schedules (for residents with day-time curbside collection) and maps of Drop-Off Depot locations and locations where to donate or buy used items. To date the app has been installed approximately 86,000 times (30,000 installs in Android devices, and 56,000 installs in apple devices).

In addition, in 2019, the Recycling, Organics and Garbage section of the City website received 1,110,473 visitors (an average of 5,119 visitors per day) with a total of 1,868,762 visits (an average of 9,686 daily page visits). These statistics include visits by City staff (e.g. 311). More time is required to properly disaggregate visits by City staff. The majority of visits focused on the following pages (in order of highest number of hits):

1. Collections Schedules
2. Waste Wizard
3. What Goes in My Blue Bin
4. Drop-Off Depots Locations
5. Drop-Off Depots

Moreover, between January and October 2020, 311 reported that the top Knowledge Base activity usage by 311 agents, answering public inquiries on Solid Waste Management Services, consistently related to the Knowledge Base pages related to Collection Schedules, and What To Do With Your Waste Materials. This last page provides information related to the Waste Wizard, proper sorting of Blue Bin and Green Bin waste and Drop-Off Depots, among others. This shows that both Toronto residents and City customer service agents strongly rely on online information to identify collection dates and to find information about how to properly sort and manage waste.

Reductions to the Waste Management Guide are expected to increase website traffic, particularly regarding information on how to dispose of certain items. While the website remains a strong source of information for Solid Waste Management Services, it also poses certain challenges as not everyone has the same access to computers, the Internet and/or the necessary supports to print a Waste Management Guide.

2. Solid Waste Management Services' response to *the cost of a partial production of the Solid Waste Management Services' Annual Calendar to be provided to specific demographics that might benefit from the material.*

At this time, Solid Waste Management Services does not have enough information to estimate the costs of providing a partial production of a Waste Management Guide to specific demographics across the city.

Solid Waste Management Services is currently exploring cost-effective alternatives to the calendar that leverage existing City communication and distribution channels to provide residents with waste management information. This includes consulting with Revenue Services regarding the possibility and cost of disseminating high-level information about waste management through utility bills, which are distributed to single-family homes, multi-residential buildings and residential above commercial (RUAC) properties. This would be in addition to the Solid Waste Management Services information already included in the utility bill brochure and could consist of an additional one to two pages of information regarding waste management mailed with the bills. Leveraging already planned mailings would increase City efficiencies regarding the distribution of information and allow the Division to continue to provide communication directly to residents. It is expected that the associated costs of including this information in the utility brochure mailing will be approximately \$150,000 annually.

To further support the accessibility needs of residents who may not have reliable and consistent access to the Internet, Solid Waste Management Services is also working to identify additional channels to distribute existing waste management literature, such as Drop-off Depots, Community Environment Days, and pickup at publicly accessible City facilities, libraries and community partner and Councillors' offices, among others. Similarly, waste management information will continue to be leveraged through existing City programs (e.g. 3Rs Ambassador Program, Live Green Toronto, etc.) and relationships with other stakeholders.

Staff will continue to monitor how different methods of communication impact operational outcomes such as contamination rates. In the case of shifting the Waste Management Guide to an

online version, staff will seek feedback from rate payers and iteratively apply suggestions to increase Divisional outcomes.

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