

**Date: November 23, 2020**

**To: Budget Committee**

**Re: BU19.2 - 2021 Rate Supported Budgets - Solid Waste Management Services and Recommended 2021 Solid Waste Rates and Fees**

This letter is to express the university's concerns with Toronto's decision to eliminate a print copy of the city's waste calendar. The City's rationalization for this decision is that the calendar is costly to manufacture and distribute, and given the resource constraints facing the City as a result of COVID, it was deemed a non-essential resource. The City has also carried out a series of surveys/interviews to solicit community feedback regarding the effectiveness of the waste calendar.

Their findings seemed to suggest that there is redundancy between information contained in the waste calendar and resources available online. However, there are a number of methodological concerns with respect to how the City carried out this research (establishing control groups, representative sampling etc), as their findings directly contravene previous studies gauging household attitudes and awareness towards waste in the City.

In previous research carried out by York University, the waste calendar was found to be a resource most commonly used by groups with low levels of technical proficiency and who encounters barrier to online access (particularly marginal groups such as the elderly and new immigrants). This research also found that the waste calendar scored higher than the City's online waste wizard tool with respect to increasing levels of awareness regarding the Blue Box and Green Bin program. Both the use and perceived efficacy of the waste calendar was also shown to be much higher among multi-residential households relative to single family homes. Families in multi-residential homes were shown to be more reliant on the waste calendar for information regarding the city's waste services.

In light of these findings, the has to ask themselves is "Who is the waste calendar for?". If the City's goal is to increase marginal diversion, particularly among growing immigrant communities, it would be best served to utilize a multi-medium approach that incorporates both electronic and print media. It is dangerous to assume that everybody has a degree of comfort and competency when seeking information online., 11% of all Torontonians do not have in-home access to the internet (relying on schools, libraries etc.), and a significant portion of that group are classified as vulnerable/marginalized groups

The university feels strongly that the City should continue to provide the waste calendar to households, as the benefits of educating residents and increasing levels of waste awareness more than rationalizes the cost.

Sincerely,

Dr. Calvin Lakhan

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