

# deputation



**Date:** January 18, 2017

**To:** Public Works & Infrastructure Committee

**From:** Emily Alfred, Waste Campaigner

**Re:** PW 18.3 Future Curbside Waste Collection Service Delivery East of Yonge Street

**Toronto has a waste system to be proud of**, and this city has been a leader in waste diversion. With curbside blue bin, green bin, yard waste, electronic waste and bulky furniture collection, Toronto has one of the most comprehensive curbside waste programs in North America. This system makes it as easy as possible for Toronto residents to reduce, reuse and recycle, and makes diversion accessible everywhere.

Toronto's waste system is a key environmental program - by reducing, reusing, recycling and composting, Torontonians are conserving natural resources, conserving energy, addressing climate change, and creating green jobs that support our local economy.

**Since the issue of contracting out waste collection was discussed in 2011, TEA has urged Council to ensure that this important environmental service is protected.**

TEA urged Council to put in place mechanisms to ensure that waste services would not be compromised - that diversion rates and services would be the same across the city. That diversion rates could be tracked and acted on. Council agreed, and that's why the diversion rates by district was reported in the staff report before you today.

**What I'd like to highlight is the very real and sad fact that diversion rates are very different between the districts.**

I'd like to show you this graph from page 9 of the [SWMS staff report](#) before you (*see page 3 below*):

- you can see clearly that over the three years of data, D1 and D2 have consistently lower diversion rates than D3 and D4

To make the difference clearer to see, I've actually made another chart using the same numbers from the staff report, but this time separated it by district, and zoomed in the scale (*see page 4 below*).

- It's much easier to see now that waste diversion rates have been consistently highest in Scarborough, and lowest in the central part of Toronto west of Yonge.
- In Central Toronto, East and West of Yonge, the difference is currently 7%.
- Just looking at Etobicoke and Scarborough, the difference is currently 4%.

The staff report notes that the difference is minimal - but we disagree. As Toronto's landfill is reaching capacity quickly, increasing our diversion rate is a top priority for our waste services.

A few percentage points may seem like a small difference, but let me put that in context:

- In the last five years, since 2011, the City's overall diversion rate has increased by only 3% from 49 to 52%. This is after adding new materials to the Blue Bin and aggressively targeting multi-residential buildings to use green bins.<sup>1</sup>
- Another way to look at it: The new Long Term Waste Strategy outlines a plan to divert more of Toronto's waste - staff have called it an 'aggressive' plan. The first five years will increase diversion by about 40,000 tonnes, equal to about 4% of all the waste the City manages.<sup>2</sup>

In short, in waste diversion, a 4% difference is significant - it's the kind of change in diversion rates that happens over 5 years or longer, as part of an 'aggressive' diversion plan.

### **Why is the diversion rate lower west of Yonge?**

Unfortunately, we don't know what is causing this consistent difference.

I don't believe that people who live in Etobicoke, or west of Yonge, care less about the environment than those in Scarborough. So what is causing this very real, and very consistent difference?

We know that collection workers play a role in our diversion rate by:

- Collecting the right materials and ensuring they don't contaminate recyclables or organics with the wrong materials
- Rejecting heavily contaminated bins at the curb -- all collection workers have stickers, or notices, that they can leave for residents who consistently put out the wrong material
- Not picking up untagged bags of garbage
- Not picking up unauthorized waste - like many types of renovation waste

We don't know what collection workers are doing, and if they're doing different things across the City, but this absolutely warrants extreme caution before the Scarborough diversion rate is put at risk.

The little evidence we have in front of us today is that diversion rates are consistently higher east of Yonge, and that, west of Yonge, where collection has been contracted out, diversion rates have suffered.

Diverting as much waste as possible, and preserving the life of Toronto's landfill, is a major priority for solid waste, so it doesn't make sense to make such a major decision on such an important environmental service without understanding the very real consequences for the environment.

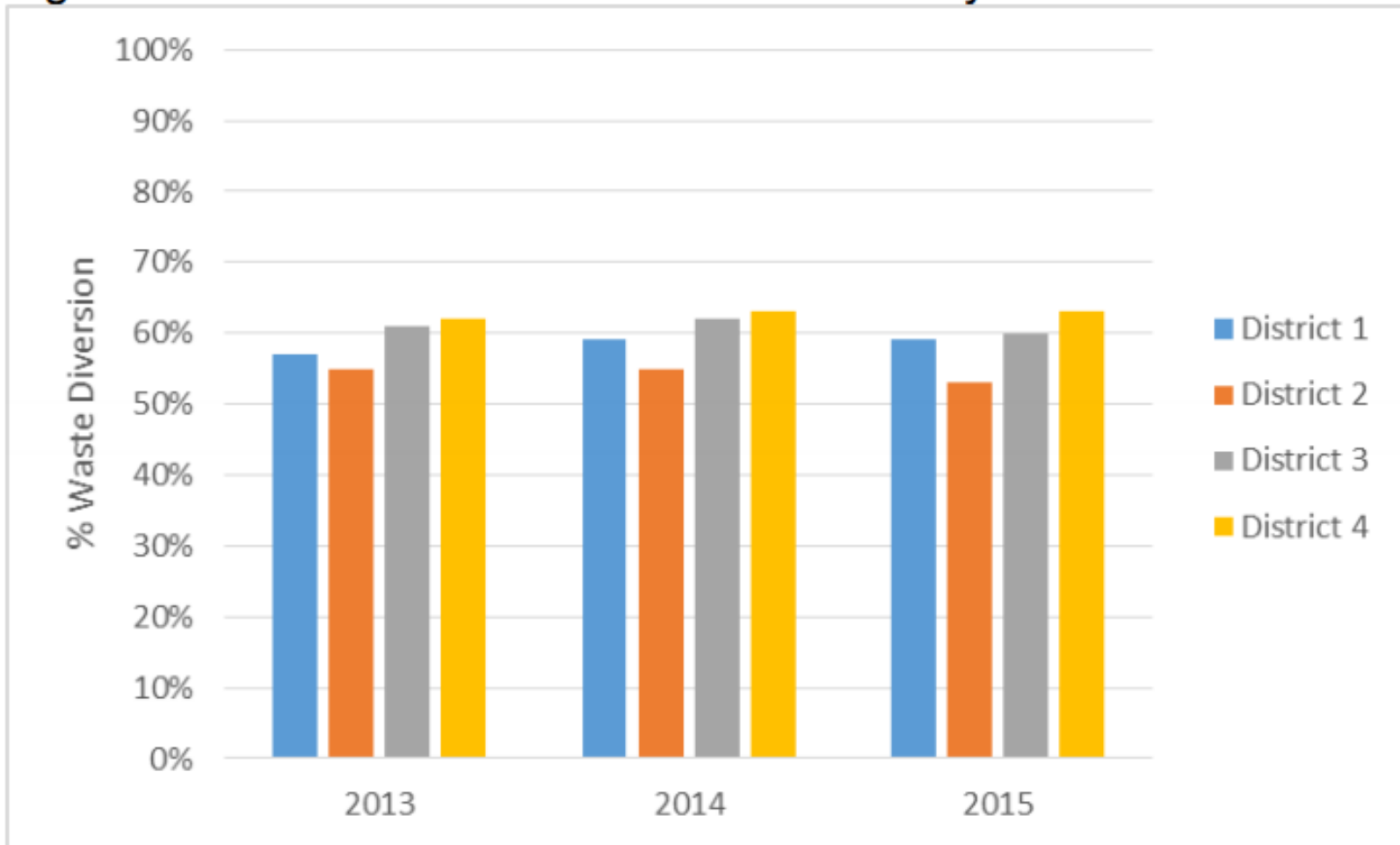
**I urge you to receive this report for information and wait until Council and the public have the information and the data in front of us to explain why there is such a difference, and what we can do to get all of Toronto performing as well as, or better than, Scarborough.**

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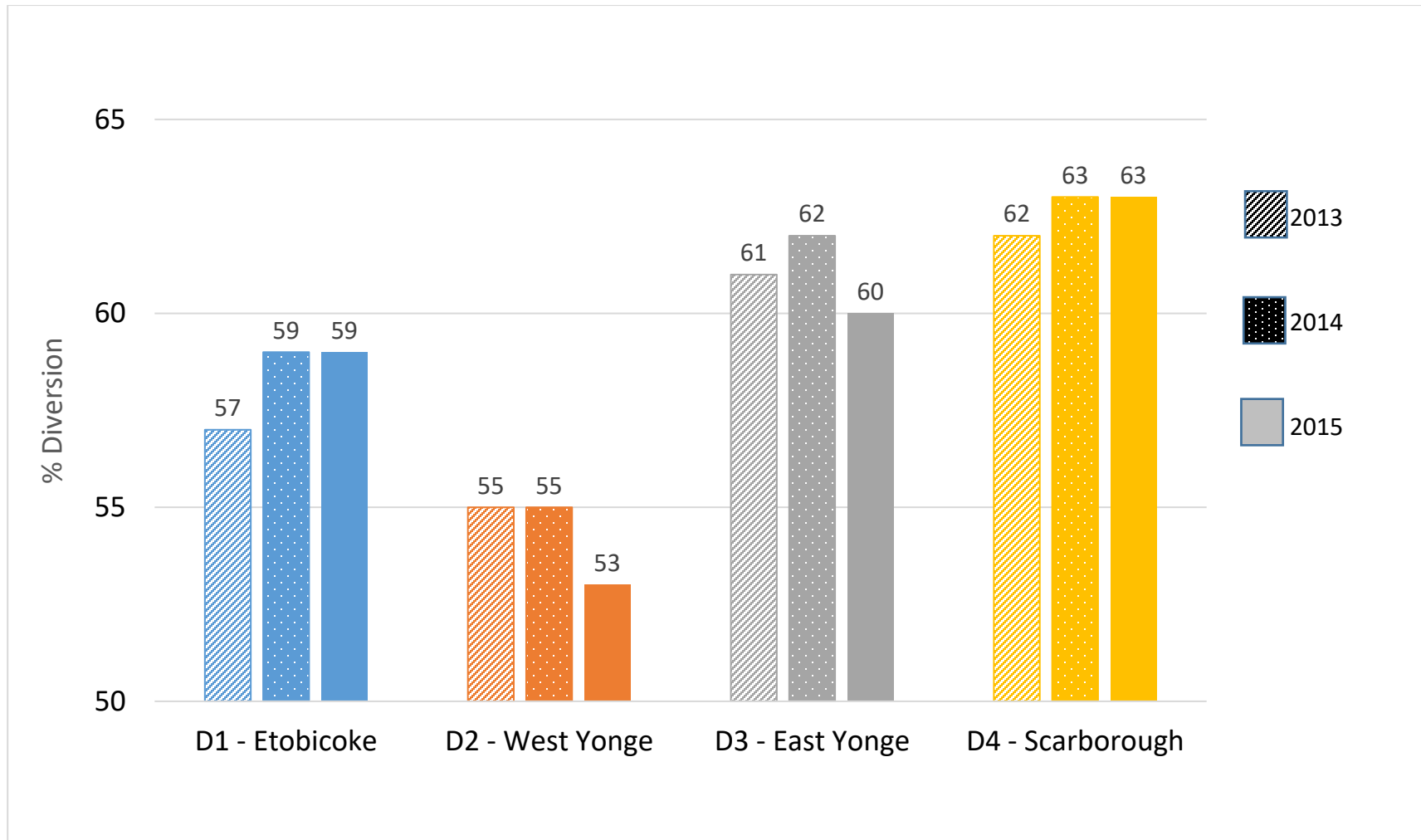
<sup>1</sup> Toronto's residential diversion rate was 49% in 2011, increased to 53% in 2013 and is now at 52% according to 2017 SWMS Operating Budget report.

<sup>2</sup> From [Toronto - Final Long Term Waste Management Strategy](#) (page 86, Table 9-4), projected tonnes diverted in first five years of proposed schedule was 43,000 tonnes per year by 2026. Total waste managed by City of Toronto is just over 1M tonnes per year..

**Figure 2 – Estimated Waste Diversion Rates by District**



## Diversion rate by district



Source: City of Toronto SWMS staff reports:

- Jan 6 2017, [Future Curbside Waste Collection Service Delivery East of Yonge St.](#), p9
- Sept 9 2015, [Curbside Waste Collection Services Review](#), p12