

## **Creating a Plan for Safe Environment Days**

**Date:** April 9, 2021

**To:** Infrastructure and Environment Committee

**From:** General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services

**Wards:** All

### **SUMMARY**

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The purpose of this report is to outline the safety plan developed for the operation of drive-through Community Environment Day events during the COVID-19 pandemic. The report includes details on the guidelines and procedures contained in the safety plan to be used for drive-through events at the City of Toronto Drop-Off Depots.

The safety plan was developed in the summer of 2020 in consultation with Toronto Public Health and the People and Equity Division, and aligned with the Government of Ontario's COVID-19 pandemic restrictions at that time (Fall 2020). The safety plan is continually updated and is delivered based on current public health measures.

With the guidance of Toronto Public Health, Solid Waste Management Services approved the safety plan in September 2020 and implemented it at the seven drive-through Community Environment Days at Drop-Off Depots held during September and October of 2020. Guidance from Toronto Public Health has since been sought for the 2021 drive-through events.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services recommends that:

1. The Infrastructure and Environment Committee receive this report for information.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## DECISION HISTORY

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At its meeting on April 7, 2021, Toronto City Council adopted IE20.20 entitled "Creating a Plan for Safe Environment Days", and directed the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services, in consultation with the Medical Officer of Health, to report back to the April 28, 2021 meeting of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee with a safety plan for Environment Days, including the option for a drive-through format at City of Toronto Transfer Stations.

The City Council Decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE20.20>

At its meeting on June 29 and 30, 2020, Toronto City Council adopted MM22.31 entitled "Implementing a Mini Environment Day - by Councillor James Pasternak, seconded by Councillor Jennifer McKelvie". Toronto City Council directed the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services, in consultation with the Medical Officer of Health, to create a safe, hybrid, Mini Environment Day option for Fall 2020 using Solid Waste Management Services transfer stations; such Mini Environment Days could include residents remaining in their cars and City staff and volunteers assisting with the dropping off of various items, including textiles and the offering (pick up) of packaged compost, with this being the only option for an Environment Day, City elected officials will be invited to partner in the events.

The City Council Decision document can be viewed at:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.MM22.31>

## COMMENTS

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### Background

Since the 1990's, Community Environment Day events are held each year to help reduce the amount of reusable, recyclable or household hazardous waste going to landfills and ensure environmentally sound disposal of hazardous products. At the events, members of the public can bring items for donation, safely dispose of electronic waste and household hazardous waste, pick up compost for free and buy/exchange kitchen containers. Community Environment Days also serve as an outreach and engagement opportunity to learn about the City of Toronto's waste diversion and environmental programs. Since 2019, the Solid Waste Management Services' budget has supported a maximum of two events per ward per year. The events are held, rain or shine, in all 25 wards from April to September.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in response to the Provincial Emergency Order to prohibit organized public events and social gatherings of more than five people, the City of Toronto cancelled all City-led major mass participation events, festivals, conferences

and cultural programs, and all City permits for major mass participation events organized by external groups at civic centres and squares, parks, public spaces (including road closures), City-operated museums and cultural centres until July 1, 2020.

The decision to cancel City-led events and third-party permits was made in consultation with Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, the Emergency Operations Centre, Toronto Police Service, Mayor John Tory's office and major event organizers, and supported the directive that physical distancing is critical to stopping the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The breadth of the COVID-19 crisis and the City's need to ensure the sustainability of essential services also limited the City's ability to provide the usual level of support to third-party event organizers to ensure public safety.

In June 2020, following the direction of Toronto City Council, Solid Waste Management Services, in consultation with Toronto Public Health, developed and coordinated modified drive-through Community Environment Day events in fall 2020. A total of seven Community Environment Day events were held every Sunday from September 13 to November 1, 2020 with one at each of the City's Drop-Off Depots.

In consultation with the City's People and Equity Division and Toronto Public Health, Solid Waste Management Services developed a safety plan to establish health and safety standards for staff, elected officials, and the public to operate the events in alignment with the Government of Ontario's COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in September 2020. In addition, a records management protocol was developed for the Community Environment Day events at Drop-Off Depots.

The Community Environment Day events were organized as drive-through-only events to prevent any physical interaction. Residents were instructed to drive up to the individual stations and if able, unload items themselves at the appropriate stations. City staff were available at each station to provide assistance, only if required. In order to avoid lifting heavy objects, prevent repetitive strain injuries, and maintain safe physical distancing requirements, City staff only assisted with removal of items from vehicles if requested. To help minimize the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus, City staff did not perform any outreach activities.

In 2020, an estimated 3,041 residents attended the seven Community Environment Day events held at the City's seven Drop-Off Depots. Collectively, at these events 115,345 kilograms of materials were collected, including the following:

- 28,020 kilograms of reusable items collected by the Salvation Army;
- 26,400 kilograms of electronic-waste; and
- 60,925 kilograms of household hazardous waste.

### **Safety Plan for Community Environment Days in 2021**

For the 2021 year, from June to October, Solid Waste Management Services is planning to operate 14 drive-through-only Community Environment Day events at the City's seven Drop-Off Depots. The safety plan developed for the events in 2020 has been updated in consultation with Toronto Public Health and People & Equity and will

be used for the planning and operation of the 2021 events and will consider restrictions leading up to June and throughout the duration of the scheduled events. Hosting these events is contingent on the status of the pandemic and provincial orders at the planned time of the event.

As discussed during the 2021 budget process, City staff were planning for both in community and drive-through Community Environment Day events subject to the public health environment for spring 2021. City staff outlined that if in community events were cancelled that additional drive-through events would be scheduled. With the constantly evolving situation there will not be any in community events for 2021; however, City staff are planning for seven additional drive-through events for a total of 14 drive-through Community Environment Days.

The health and safety measures in place are designed to ensure the safety of residents, City staff, elected officials and contractors and mitigate any risks of exposure to the COVID-19 virus at the events. These measures include COVID-19 screening for City staff, Councillors and contractors, maintaining physical distancing at a minimum of six feet from others, mandatory masks, and access to hand sanitizer onsite. Additional protocols include contact tracing for City staff, Councillors and contractors, procedures for the cleaning and use of on-site portable washrooms, and the supply of personal protective equipment for City staff. Protocols are also in place for the management of traffic by paid duty police officers to ensure the safe flow of vehicles.

#### *Communication of the Safety Requirements at the Community Environment Day Events*

Promotion and education materials for the 2021 Community Environment Day events will include messaging about enhanced safety measures and protocols to protect staff and residents at City Drop-Off Depots. Information will also be posted on the City's website and social media channels to advise residents to anticipate longer wait times due to capacity limitations and the format of drive-through events.

Residents will also be encouraged to visit the City's Community Environment Day web page for the event schedule, status of events and the latest news information about public health guidance and current restrictions.

Information will also be posted on the City's website and social media channels throughout the year to remind people that they can take electronic waste or household hazardous waste to a City Drop-Off Depot during regular business hours for proper disposal.

#### **Next Steps**

Solid Waste Management Services will engage City elected officials in the coming months to begin scheduling and preparing for the upcoming Community Environment Days. Promotion and education of the 2021 events are scheduled to begin in May. It is imperative that all City staff, elected officials, and the public adhere fully to the safety plan when participating in the events. The safety plan and preparation for the 2021 Community Environment Days will be reviewed as needed and continue to evolve with

any new changes to the guidelines and restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Solid Waste Management Services continues to promote and communicate that residents can dispose of their electronic waste items or household hazardous waste at Drop-Off Depots which are open year-round and do not need to wait for the Community Environment Day events. The Toxic Taxi will also be promoted which offers a free pick-up of 10 to 50 litres or kilograms of household hazardous waste from homes and can be scheduled by visiting [toronto.ca/311](https://toronto.ca/311) or calling 311 to request a pickup.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Solid Waste Management Services