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## 2026 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

### Distribution of Waste Collection Schedules

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#### Issue/Background:

- Solid Waste Management Services (SWMS) continues to develop and distribute annual Waste Collection Schedules to residents.
- Prior to 2025, Collection Schedules were distributed through a combination of utility bill inserts and standalone mailing. Approximately 29 per cent of Collection Schedules are distributed via standalone mailing and not utility bills due to the following unique circumstances with billing and/or account addresses:
  - resident's mailing address is different from their service address,
  - resident is billed every quarter,
  - resident has a Semi-Annual flat account; and
  - to capture any resident who has not received their collection schedule by a specified cutoff date in December.
- SWMS received Council direction<sup>1</sup> in 2025 to distribute 2026 Collection Schedules through standalone mailing only, to allow for more flexible timelines given changes that are occurring to some collection schedules due to the transition of the residential recycling program to Extended Producer Responsibility and time needed to sign a Joint Collection Schedule Agreement with Circular Materials.
- The City now has a Joint Collection Schedule Agreement with Circular Materials to include its recycling collection details on the City's 2026 and 2027 Collection Schedules, with option to extend up to 2030.
- To reduce timeline risks that are associated with the previous method of distribution through the utility bill process, staff recommend that moving forward, the Collection Schedules be fully distributed through a standalone mailing to residents.

#### Key Points:

- Mailing Collection Schedules in line with utility bills is a resource intensive process, with many critical timelines.
- The process requires coordination with multiple Divisions that include SWMS, Communications and Revenue Services (RS), in addition to coordinating with the

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<sup>1</sup> City of Toronto. April 23-25, 2025. "IE20.5 - Transition of the Blue Box Program to Extended Producer Responsibility: Post-Transition Update". <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.IE20.5>

print vendor, to review and test files and ensure the process is set up by critical deadlines and is running smoothly through the RS system.

- The process also needs to be manually cut off in the system in early December, which is a resource intensive process and requiring staff overtime, to stop files from being included in the bill sequencing and prepare a file for standalone mailing within a few days. This overtime must also occur over a weekend due to the nature of the dates in the billing cycles. This is done to ensure that residents receive their Collection Schedules at least two weeks in advance of the new year.
- The total hours amongst Divisions estimated for the inline utility bill process is estimated at 340 hours per year (90 hours for SWMS, 200 hours for Communications and 50 hours for RS). This would be significantly reduced with a standalone mailing, eliminating all of RS' hours and reducing staff time spent with meetings with the vendor, testing, reviewing, and having oversight over the contractor, production and distribution process.
- As the City now has a Joint Collection Schedule Agreement with Circular Materials to include recycling collection day information in the City's Collection Schedules, this introduces an added layer of reviews in the process that could impact timelines.
- Moving fully to standalone mailing will have some budget impacts as the estimated cost per mail piece is higher at \$0.814 than the cost per piece through utility bills at \$0.205. However, the cost increase will be partially offset with funding of \$0.35 per household being received from Circular Materials through the Joint Collection Schedule Agreement. The remaining cost increase can be accommodated in the existing Operating budget and can be offset through cost savings from staff time spent on the project and the identification of 2026 operating budget efficiencies in the Solid Waste Management Services' budget. This can include the reduction of planned budget allocation in 2026 for lower priority education and awareness campaigns and using high impact but lower cost tactics.

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