



Date: March 1, 2016
To: Toronto City Councillors
From: Emily Alfred, Waste Campaigner
Re: PW 11.3 (Update) Draft Long Term Waste Management Strategy

Hello,

My name is Emily Alfred, I'm the Waste Campaigner for the Toronto Environmental Alliance. We're a grassroots environmental organization with 50,000 supporters across Toronto. Our members care about waste diversion and building a waste free future for Toronto.

I've also been on the Stakeholder Advisory group meeting monthly with staff on the Long Term Waste Management Strategy.

First, I know staff have worked many many hours on this strategy. I think this draft and the many technical documents supporting it provide a great amount of information for Councillors and the public to consider. And the draft here today outlines some great next steps for Toronto.

However, I'm here to say that I think we must go further, much further. I know that Torontonians are ready for a Zero Waste plan.

The Strategy

We wholeheartedly agree with the first step of the strategy - it states that we need to start by improving how Torontonians use the system we have now and the full range of waste diversion programs we've already invested in. However, I think we can do this much faster than is outlined in the strategy.

I believe this strategy is missing a few simple things:

- It's missing a clear and specific target and timeline - for zero waste
- It's missing the urgency and ambition to move ahead quickly
- It's missing some great opportunities to benefit communities - by working closely with communities, groups and businesses that are ready right now.

Zero Waste

I want to say something about the concept of zero waste - Zero waste is an aspirational and visionary concept that helps drive policy and decisions.

It's not meant to be an obsession with 100% diversion, but a way to frame our decisions with the highest goal - we should always be working to minimize waste.

In the same way that we aim for zero accidents, or zero crime, we know that there may always be some 'leftover' waste, but having a goal of zero pushes us to think more creatively, and to be ambitious

This is why we're happy that Ontario's new Waste Free Ontario Act has a Zero Waste goal, and we think Toronto should have one too.

Zero Waste TO

I also want to share with you our new resource Zero Waste Toronto.

This report outlines what zero waste is, why it will benefit our environment, our communities and our economy. It also goes through the garbage bag and looks at what we can do with each type of waste.

Most importantly, it gives many examples of what we can do to get to zero waste -- using examples from other cities, and from community groups and businesses that are doing great things right now in Toronto.

Mayfair on the Green

A story that this committee has already heard, but never fails to amaze me, is of the great condo in Malvern, 430 Mayfair on the Green. This building reduced the number of garbage dumpsters they put out each month from 20 down to 1. Even less than that! They simply used education, outreach, good feedback and an incentive.

We need to learn from their amazing success and spread that across the City. That means we need more education, and a focus on the 3 Rs now. Communities and residents are ready.

Draft strategy

Though the strategy outlines a number of great educational and communications tools to help people use the existing system, there is no specific timeline, and not nearly enough additional funds to do the education we need as quickly as we need.

The draft strategy timeline is far too slow - the most important steps to make the most of what we have, and to determine what future steps we need to take in terms of capital investment and enforcement depend on how well the first five years go, however, the first 3Rs activities don't start until 2019. This is too slow.

Public Consultation

We are about to enter an important public consultation phase - to check with Torontonians on what they care about. To see if the City got it right and heard what people wanted. I think this is very important opportunity.

The public needs to be excited and inspired by this strategy, and to see this as something that addresses their concerns, gives them an opportunity to do more. That's why I have the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

- Direct staff to update the draft going out for public consultation to speed up the implementation of the education tools, and the reduction, reuse and recycling actions. Start them today, not in 2019.
- Include, as part of the consultation:
 - a question on whether the public supports a goal of Zero waste with timelines and targets
 - a question on what community waste reduction projects could be 'scaled up' and what support these groups could use from the City
- Ensure that residents are consulted in all parts of the City, and that important stakeholder groups and communities with ideas and with an interest, are consulted. This includes ensuring that people who don't have access to the internet are consulted - maybe with information booths at civic centres, libraries and other locations.