

briefing note



Date: June 20, 2016

To: Public Works & Infrastructure Committee

Re: PW 14.2 Final Long Term Waste Management Strategy - Focusing on Organics first

Toronto's Final Long Term Waste Management Strategy is one of the most important environmental decisions the City can make in 2016. However, the Strategy relies on sending 100,000 tonnes of garbage each year to another community's landfill, and misses major opportunities to dramatically reduce waste in the next five years.

In 2015, Toronto's diversion rate actually decreased (52%), and the Strategy projects only a 4% increase in the diversion rate over the next 5 years. At this rate, our City will only reach a 70% diversion rate by 2026 - a target we were supposed to meet in 2010. To put this in perspective, if the City focused solely on getting all organics out of the residential garbage stream, we could reduce waste to landfill by 180,000 tonnes a year and reach our 70% target in 5 years.

The Waste Strategy has set a deadline in 5 years (2021) to review progress and decide on major future capital investments, so it makes sense to do more effective diversion before this point in order to make the right investment for the next 45 years of the plan.

We need a waste strategy that focuses on Organics first.

The Waste Strategy needs to focus on the area of greatest impact first: organics and food waste. Over half of the waste coming from Toronto households is organics, yet most is ending up in the garbage. This includes multi-residential buildings, which often lack convenient access to Green Bins, and single-family homes who have had Green Bins for over a decade. There is more household organic waste sent to landfill each year (180,000 tonnes) than what is collected in residential Green Bins (105,000 tonnes).

Recommendations:

1. Adopt a target of zero organics found in the garbage stream from City-collected waste, including residential waste and City buildings and facilities by 2021.
2. Use data and waste audits to develop a targeted enforcement and education strategy for all City-served customers to get organics out of the garbage stream.
3. Pass new laws requiring organic waste collection in all multi-residential buildings in Toronto, regardless of waste service provider.
4. Consult with stakeholders and the public on requiring organic waste collection and food waste prevention plans for all Institutions and businesses in Toronto regardless of waste service provider.

Technical notes on the Final Long Term Waste Management Strategy:

1. The LTWMS does not directly address Organic Waste (Toronto's largest waste stream)

- Organics are the largest category of waste coming from Toronto homes - 50% or more of what we throw out. It is also the largest category of waste from many non-residential buildings.
- Based on City waste audits, 180,000 tonnes of compostable food and yard waste is going to landfill each year from residential waste - more than is collected in the Green Bin.
- The Strategy makes no specific mention of an organics strategy, and there is no projections for tonnages of diverted organic waste

2. The LTWMS will create a Multi-Residential diversion strategy, but does not project any major progress in the first 5 years nor does it specifically focus on organics.

- City waste audits show that 100,000 tonnes of organics, and 50,000 tonnes of recyclables are ending up in multi-res garbage. But the Strategy projects increasing multi-res diversion by only 10-20,000 tonnes at the end of 5 years (13% of this divertable waste).
- Promoting on-site composting for multi-res buildings does not start until 2023, even though it is inexpensive, and local groups are already working on this.
- Many City-served high-rise buildings still do not fully use Green Bins, and most buildings without City service do not have any organic waste management options.
- The Strategy recommends setting the same rules for every residential building to divert organics and recyclables, but it is too slow. This needs to start immediately and move rapidly to ensure we have results in time for the 5 year review.

3. The LTWMS does not address inconsistency of waste services and lack of organics diversion outside the home.

- Toronto residents said repeatedly during the consultation that different waste sorting rules where they live, work and play is very confusing. This leads to poorer diversion rates.
- The Strategy mentions various options to increase diversion in Industrial, Commercial and Institutional sector, but does not set a plan on where to start.
- Regulatory tools to require organics collection for all ICI buildings would have the greatest impact on waste, and be least affected by Provincial regulations.
- Other cities are doing this: San Francisco and Vancouver require all businesses to have food waste prevention plans and to compost food scraps. New York City and California now require large food manufacturers and venues to compost food waste.
Many large and small businesses and institutions in Toronto are already separating organics -- for example, UofT and Ryerson; food courts at the Eaton Centre, Scarborough Town Centre and Cloverdale Mall; offices, small businesses, and major grocery retailers.

4. The LTWMS does not outline a role for the Corporation to show leadership

- There is no strategy, target or reporting plan for waste generation volumes or diversion rates for City buildings and facilities.
- Many City buildings do not have Green Bins, even some buildings with kitchen facilities, and many do not have sufficient waste sorting signs.
- The Strategy is missing a key opportunity for the City to reinforce messages, educate and to lead by example by ensuring all City buildings use City waste services effectively.

Benefits of focusing on Organics as a first step in the Waste Strategy

Moving quickly to get organic waste out of the garbage will dramatically cut the waste going to disposal and could eliminate the need to send waste to other communities.

It will also have significant environmental, economic and community benefits for Toronto.

- Keeping organics out of landfill is the fastest way to reduce GHGs from our waste.
- Processing organics in the City's facilities could generate \$4M worth of green energy - Renewable Natural Gas that can power the City truck fleet *and* sell excess for revenue.
- Organics are processed locally, and much can be fully processed in Toronto, supporting the local circular economy and reducing GHGs from trucking.
- Organics contaminate recyclable materials, making it more challenging to separate items for recycling before final disposal
- Requirements for all businesses to reduce or separate food waste will benefit our communities - it will prevent food waste and increase redistribution of food to those in need.
- Standardized organics collection for all buildings will reduce confusion, decrease contamination and increased organics diversion is linked to increased Blue Bin recycling.
- Organics will not be affected by the Provincial regulations under the Waste Free Ontario Act in the way Blue Bin recyclables and other types of divertable waste will be.
- Organics diversion is primarily about access (what goes in the bin does not change the way Blue Bin materials do), so mainly requires effective outreach and improving diversion tools access. This will have a more transformative effect on how buildings see and handle waste.

Toronto has a number of projects and groups that are demonstrating the 3Rs of food waste - reducing food waste, redistributing edible food and recycling the nutrients through composting. These, and others, are outlined in TEA's report: [Organics First: Setting Toronto on the Path to Zero Waste](#)

- Second Harvest's Food Rescue & Delivery program collects over 3,700 tonnes of food from stores and warehouses and delivers it to food banks and shelters across Toronto.
- 430 Mayfair on the Green is a Scarborough high rise that turned their garbage chute into an organics chute and now boasts a diversion rate of 85%!
- Foodshare provides support and training for composting projects, and their community composter turns more than 22 tonnes of food waste into rich compost each year.
- Zooshare's anaerobic digester will recycle food waste from local grocery stores and manure from the Toronto Zoo into fertilizer and electricity, diverting 14,000 tonnes from landfill each year.