

Public Works and Infrastructure Committee -- July 18, 2011

Emily J. Alfred, Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) Deputation on Agenda Item: PW6.1, Core Service Review

Good Morning,

My name is Emily Alfred, and I'm the Waste Campaigner for the Toronto Environmental Alliance. With our over 15,000 members, we've been working to build a Greener Toronto for over 22 years. Our members are proud of Toronto's great waste diversion programs that make us a leader in North America.

I'm here because we believe that the "Opportunities" identified by the Mayor's consultants to cut or reduce Solid Waste services should *not* be considered,

- because these programs are essential to a healthy environment,
- and, more importantly, there's simply not enough information on the environmental benefits and risks for Councillors to make this decision.

1. Looking at one of the "opportunities":

The Mayor's Consultants suggest reducing Toronto's waste diversion target of 70% diversion from landfill to save money in the short term. We should be pushing *ahead* on environmental goals, not taking a step backwards.

The consultants are incorrect when they state that Toronto's diversion target is significantly higher than other cities:

- the Provincial government has set a diversion target of at least 60% for all cities in Ontario
- most other municipalities in southern Ontario go beyond 60% and have a diversion target of 65 or 70% (*see attached graphic used to illustrate this point*)

The consultants suggest reducing our target, or creating different targets for some groups as its too difficult and expensive to divert waste in high rise buildings. High-rise residents and landlords have been expecting green bin service for years. Cutting this service is unfair to those who want to do their part for the environment, and also unfair to single family residents who work hard to divert the maximum they can.

In terms of costs:

- Diversion is not too expensive - All City diversion programs have been budgeted for and outlined in a ten year plan. The garbage fee paid by residents, businesses and high rise buildings covers the full cost of all waste programs including new diversion programs.
- The numbers quoted in the report un-fairly compare apples to oranges when talking about the cost of diversion vs disposal: The net cost of diversion is significantly offset by both sales of recycled materials, and funding of up to 50% of the cost of the blue box from Stewardship Ontario.
- Also in terms of costs, Councillors need information about the cost of filling up our landfill early

- Toronto earns revenue at the landfill by taking waste from other cities and private companies
- Toronto is one of few municipalities with its own landfill - it's increasingly difficult to find new landfill sites
- According to staff, it could take over 10 years and up to \$100 million dollars to apply for a new landfill (with no guarantee that it would be approved)

We recommend that:

- Toronto continue to work aggressively to achieve 70% diversion
- The City, along with other cities across the Province, push for expanded Extended Producer Responsibility laws --- to increase funds from Stewardship Ontario to cover the full cost of diversion and remove all costs from the City and the public.
- We also urge this committee to seek complete information on the environmental and financial impact of lowering the diversion rate –
 - including penalties from the Province for not reaching 60% diversion;
 - and quantified cost and risks for closing our landfill almost a decade early

2. The Mayor's consultants also recommend contracting out various waste services

As noted in TEA's report *Look Before You Leap*, without sufficient monitoring and reporting, privatizing collection puts our waste services and environmental standards at risk

We *agree* with the consultants that a better financial analysis is needed to understand if this will in fact save money. We recommend that, as requested by City Council in May, and noted by the consultants in this report, complete information about the cost and savings of public service vs contracting out is needed before a sound decision can be made

In conclusion, I urge you today to:

- request a report from staff on the full environmental and related economic risks of these proposed service cuts
- reject any proposal that takes a step backwards for Toronto and the environment

Attachment: **Graphic indicating diversion targets for municipalities in the GTA**

**note, Halton Region currently at 60% diversion target, undergoing review to increase to 65 or 70%*

