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# The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

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From: Commissioner of Works  
Report: #2025-INFO-10  
Date: February 7, 2025

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**Subject:**

Curbside Collection Program Updates

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**Recommendation:**

Receive for information.

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 This report provides a summary of the Regional Municipality of Durham's (Region) transition from the Blue Box program in 2024, the Enhanced Green Bin Program and Online Sales and Exchange Platform.

**2. Background**

**Blue Box Transition**

2.1 In June 2021, the Province of Ontario introduced Regulation 391/21 Blue Box (Regulation 391/21) under the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016. This regulation transfers the financial and operational responsibility for recycling from municipalities to the producers of packaging, paper, and packaging-like products.

2.2 On July 1, 2024, the Region transitioned its curbside Blue Box collection program to Producers as part of a three-year province-wide transition. Under the new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regime, producers took over full

responsibility for the program. The province-wide transition will be completed by December 31, 2025.

### **Enhanced Green Bin Program**

- 2.3 At its June 29, 2022 meeting, Regional Council approved the recommendation in Report [#2022-COW-22](#), to cancel the procurement process for the Region's Mixed Waste Pre-sort and Anaerobic Digestion Facility (AD Project) under NRFP-1080-2021. This decision was due to significant capital and future operating costs, compounded by uncertainties from global inflation and supply chain challenges.
- 2.4 This cancellation did not eliminate the Region's need for a sustainable organics management plan. The plan included ongoing organics processing using Anaerobic Digestion (AD) and meeting the following waste management plan objectives:
- a. Compliance with legislative organics diversion requirements.
  - b. Addressing the service needs of the Region's growing population.
  - c. Managing the capacity limitations of the Region's existing waste disposal infrastructure.
  - d. Increasing environmental sustainability and climate change impacts through an increase in overall diversion.

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 Report [#2020-COW-30](#), titled "Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) #019-2579 Proposed Blue Box Regulation", endorsed staff feedback on the draft Blue Box regulation that was submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) as part of the consultation process and authorized staff to work with Producer Responsibility Organizations to continue service to the Business Improvement Areas.
- 3.2 Report [#2021-INFO-74](#), titled "Overview of the Final Blue Box Regulation 391/21", provided a summary of the key points of the final Blue Box Regulation and the impacts to the Region.
- 3.3 Report [#2022-WR-2](#), titled "Blue Box Transition Impacts on Waste Management Collection Operations and Small Business Recycling Options", authorized staff to

- enter negotiations with Producer Responsibility Organizations to continue collecting blue box materials from the Region's Business Improvement Areas after the blue box transition date of July 1, 2024.
- 3.4 Report #[2023-WR-3](#), titled "Organics Management Plan – Next Steps", authorized staff to pursue a 10-year contract for anaerobic digestion of the source separated organics waste stream and expand the suite of materials accepted in the green bin to include diapers, pet waste, menstrual and incontinence products.
- 3.5 At the February 7, 2024 Works Committee meeting, staff presented an ["Update on Durham Region's Transition to Extended Producer Responsibility and Organics Program Changes"](#), including a review of the regulatory requirements of the Blue Box Regulation and the July 1, 2024 transition to extended producer responsibility for the blue box. The presentation also provided an overview of the launch of the Enhanced Green Bin program planned for July 1, 2024.
- 3.6 Report #[2024-WR-2](#), titled "Update on Small Business Recycling Post Blue Box Transition", authorized staff to inform the Business Improvement Areas in each local area municipality that curbside blue box recycling services would end on December 31, 2025, and that the businesses will need to make alternative recycling arrangements. Regional Council also directed staff to continue advocating for the inclusion of Business Improvement Areas in the Blue Box Regulation as the most cost-effective approach to diverting this material from small businesses in Ontario.
- 3.7 Report #[2024-WR-3](#), titled "Sole Source of Promotion and Education Services to be Provided by The Regional Municipality of Durham for Circular Materials Ontario for the Blue Box Program under Extended Producer Responsibility", authorized staff to enter into an agreement with Circular Materials Ontario (CMO). This agreement involves the Region receiving payment for continued promotion of the Blue Box to Durham Region residents through the Region's Waste App, social media channels and the [durham.ca/waste](http://durham.ca/waste) webpage. The contract expires on December 31, 2025, with an option to extend for three additional one-year terms. The estimated revenue for the Region is \$159,000 over the initial 18-month contract term.
- 3.8 Report #[2024-WR-6](#), titled "Sole Source Agreement with Circular Materials for Collection, Haulage, Processing and Marketing of Blue Box Recyclables Collected at the Regional Municipality of Durham Waste Management Facilities", authorized staff to enter into an agreement with CMO to receive payment for

collecting, hauling, processing and marketing the blue box materials received at Region Waste Management Facilities up to December 31, 2025. The estimated revenue for the Region is \$680,000 over the initial 18-month contract term.

#### **4. Blue Box Transition Update**

##### **Residential Curbside Blue Box Collection**

- 4.1 The Region's Blue Box Program responsibility was transferred to CMO, operating on behalf of Producers, on July 1, 2024. All Blue Box service levels have been maintained and will continue to be maintained at least until the province-wide transition is completed on December 31, 2025.
- 4.2 Staff will continue collaborating with CMO to ensure their contractors maintain service levels, provide new residents with blue boxes and replace broken blue boxes.
- 4.3 The Region's Blue Box and lid inventory has been fully distributed and is no longer available for purchase or exchange at locations operated by the Region. CMO's contractors are now responsible for replacing damaged bins. Although service responses have generally been maintained, staff are aware of complaints where residents have not been able to obtain a replacement due to a lack of inventory. In the interests of residents, staff have raised concerns with the contractors and CMO as appropriate in an effort to improve service levels.
- 4.4 The Region continues to promote the blue box program to residents under a cost recovery contract with CMO until December 31, 2025. This promotion includes directing resident calls to their respective Blue Box collection contractors.
- 4.5 Additional program changes may occur starting on January 1, 2026, including:
  - a. A common list of accepted materials across Ontario
  - b. Additional materials in the Blue Box in Durham
  - c. Collection day changes
  - d. Collection container change (carts)
- 4.6 There will be no changes to the Blue Box program until January 1, 2026, at the earliest.

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**Blue Box Collection in Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)**

- 4.7 Durham's BIAs will no longer be serviced by CMO after the completion of the Blue Box transition on December 31, 2025.
- 4.8 Communication to affected businesses has been disseminated through InvestDurham social channels, with additional targeted communication planned for 2025.
- 4.9 Staff have advocated through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, other affiliated industry associations, and correspondence from the Office of the Regional Chair for the inclusion of small businesses in updated or future regulations after the Region transitions out of the Blue Box program.

**5. Enhanced Green Bin Program**

- 5.1 The Enhanced Green Bin program, launched on July 1, 2024, now accepts diapers, pet waste, menstrual and incontinence products in the Green Bin for weekly collection.
- 5.2 The Region has contracted a third party for anaerobic digestion of the green bin organics, allowing for the removal of more plastics associated with a dirtier organic stream.
- 5.3 The end-products of this process include renewable natural gas and a solid material, which can be composted, land applied or used as fertilizer.
- 5.4 Preliminary data from July to December 2024 indicates an 18 per cent increase in organics tonnes diverted from disposal compared to the same period in 2023, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Organics collected from July to December 2023 versus 2024

Month	2023	2024	Difference
	Tonnes	Tonnes	(%)
July	2,619.81	3,142.03	+19.93
August	3,138.11	3,467.29	+10.49
September	2,932.63	3,087.51	+5.28
October	2,750.32	3,686.42	+34.04
November	2,740.58	3,345.13	+22.06
December	2,689.31	3,190.23	+18.63
<b>Overall</b>	<b>16,870.76</b>	<b>19,918.61</b>	<b>+18.07</b>

5.5 The Region offered a \$10 subsidized Green Bin from July 1 to December 31, 2024, with a limit of one bin per household, to assist residents needing additional green bin capacity due to the program expansion. Residents could order bins by calling MyDurham311 or ordering online, with the new bins delivered to their homes. Approximately 5,000 subsidized green bins were purchased.

5.6 Promotion of the Enhanced Green Bin program will continue in 2025 to further grow the program.

## 6. Online Sales and Exchange Platform

6.1 A new online sales and exchange platform was launched on July 1, 2024, which allows the Region's residents to order Green Bins, kitchen catchers, home composters and other materials through MyDurham311 with direct doorstep delivery.

6.2 From July 1 to December 30, 2024, approximately 9,550 orders were fulfilled using the new online platform.

6.3 Modernizing the sale and exchange of Waste Diversion Inventory has improved customer service and allowed for a more effective and accessible way for residents to obtain new Waste Diversion Inventory or exchange broken bins to improve participation in the Region's waste diversion programs. This service also supports the vision of a fully accessible Ontario by 2025.

6.4 The online sales and exchange service may render the Waste Management Sales Office at 4600 Garrard Road North, Whitby, redundant. There was an approximate 53 per cent decline in in-person sales at 4600 Garrard North,

Whitby, from August to December 2024, compared to the 2023 data for the same period following the launch of the online platform. Staff will undertake a review of the function of the sales office in 2025.

- 6.5 In November 2024, Canada Post went on strike. This had an immediate impact on the Region's ability to distribute garbage bag tags and waste collection calendars. Staff used this opportunity to test the distribution of these items using the Waste Management Services Branch's third-party home delivery service, which supports the new online sales platform as a contingency plan. Staff will monitor this delivery method as an alternative to Canada Post as it has the potential to provide faster service at a lower overall cost.

## **7. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

- 7.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

a. Goal 1.2 - Increase waste diversion and resource recovery.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 Several significant changes to the Regional Municipality of Durham's Waste Management Programs occurred on July 1, 2024. All program changes have been completed successfully and have been well received by the public with continued commitment to diversion, enhancing program accessibility and environmental sustainability.
- 8.2 For additional information, contact Andrew Evans, Director, Waste Management Services, at 905-668-4113 extension 4102.

Respectfully submitted,

**Original signed by Christine Dunkley,  
Director of Corporate Infrastructure and  
Strategic Business Services, for**

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Ramesh Jagannathan, MBA, M.Eng., P.Eng., PTOE  
Commissioner of Works