




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	February 5, 2025
SUBJECT:	Status of Blue Box Program Transition (WM2501) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Angela Storey Director, Waste Management Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

This Communication Update is to inform the Mayor and Members of Council about the status of Hamilton's Blue Box Program transition to an Individual Producer Responsibility model. As a reminder, the transition is scheduled to occur on April 1, 2025. Below is an update on the steps being taken to successfully implement the transition in Hamilton.

Background

On June 3, 2021, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks released O. Reg. 391/21 (Regulation), which transitions the current Blue Box Program to Individual Producer Responsibility. As of January 1, 2026, producers of paper products and packaging will assume 100% of the cost and operating responsibility for the eligible Blue Box Program. The transition schedule assigns April 1, 2025, as the transition date for the City of Hamilton, resulting in a transition period from April 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025.

It has been confirmed that Green For Life Environmental Inc. is Circular Materials' operator to collect curbside Blue Box material in Hamilton. This is beneficial as Green For Life Environmental Inc. is Hamilton's current curbside collection contractor and is familiar with operating in the City. According to the Regulation, residents and other eligible sources should not see any changes in their recyclables collection during the transition period, such as collection days and items that are acceptable in the Blue Box.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Confirmed Decisions and Service Changes During Transition

- **Non-Eligible Sources Recycling:** Through recommendation report PW24021, Council approved the City to continue recycling collection from businesses, City facilities, and other non-eligible properties during the transition period. As these properties are deemed non-eligible for collection services by the Regulation, the City will need to pay for servicing these properties. Staff have confirmed that costs for this service will be in-line with those included in the current waste collection contract with Green For Life Environmental Inc.
- **Community Recycling Centre Recycling Bins:** Through information report PW24066, Council was informed of the agreement between the City and Circular Materials to continue to accept recyclables from residents at Community Recycling Centres during the transition period and that Circular Materials would compensate the City for continuing this service. However, as bulky rigid plastics are not an eligible material under the Regulation, this service will no longer be provided at Community Recycling Centres starting on April 1, 2025. In addition, as commercial properties are deemed non-eligible properties under the Regulation, they will no longer be permitted to drop-off cardboard at the City's transfer stations starting on April 1, 2025.
- **Signed Agreements with Circular Materials:** Staff have secured two agreements with Circular Materials to provide funding in the approximate amount of \$262,000 for promotion and education related to the Blue Box transition. These agreements will provide important funding to ensure that residents are aware of changes that will happen as a result to the Blue Box transition.
- **Recycling in Multi-Residential Buildings:** Beginning April 1, 2025, owners and managers of multi-residential buildings must work with Green For Life Environmental Inc. and Circular Materials to obtain blue boxes, blue carts, in-unit recycling bags, and educational materials such as posters for their buildings.

Ongoing Work Related to Transition

- **Communications and Education Plan:** Staff have developed a comprehensive communications plan to ensure that residents and stakeholders are well-informed and prepared for the upcoming changes to the Blue Box Program in Hamilton. Updates on the Blue Box transition will be provided to residents and Council via:
 - the City website;
 - printed materials such as the annual waste guide;
 - Communication Updates to applicable Committees, the Mayor, and City Council;
 - supportive toolkit for City Council and their office team;

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- multi-media advertisements (digital, radio and television);
- social media; and
- the City's waste app, Recycle Coach.

The City's education and advertisement campaign is scheduled to launch on February 10, 2025, and on that date residents and Council will begin to see the message included in Image 1 that states changes to the Blue Box Program are coming and directing them to the City's website for more information.

Image 1



Additionally, Circular Materials has a dedicated webpage for residents to access information: www.circularmaterials.ca/hamilton. Circular Materials will also begin their own Blue Box Program education campaign once all municipalities have transitioned on January 1, 2026. Other resources that residents will continue to have access to are the City website, waste guide and waste app.

- **Blue Box Availability for Residents:** Beginning April 1, 2025, the City of Hamilton will no longer supply blue boxes to residents and the current distribution of blue boxes at Municipal Service Centres and Community Recycling Centres will end. Effective April 1, 2025, Green For Life Environmental Inc. will be responsible for the distribution of blue boxes to existing residents and those moving into new developments. At this time, staff are still confirming with Green For Life Environmental Inc. how residents will acquire blue boxes in these scenarios.
- **Customer Service Reference Material:** Customer service staff at the Customer Contact Centre and Municipal Service Centres will be provided with resources to answer inquiries from residents about the Blue Box transition including how to get a blue box and who to contact should they have issues with their recycling.

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- Updates to the Solid Waste Management By-law: Staff are currently revising the Solid Waste Management By-law to reflect the Blue Box transition, including removing the City's responsibility over blue box collection from residential properties. The updated version will come to Public Works Committee for approval later in Q1.
- Recycling Contract Amendments: Staff are working with contractors to amend or terminate operating contracts for waste collections, the material recycling facility and the transfer stations and community recycling centres as applicable.
- Stranded Assets: Staff are confirming future plans for the Materials Recycling Facility space at 1579 Burlington St E in consultation with Corporate Facilities and Corporate Real Estate.
- Communication to Multi-Residential Buildings: Staff are informing property managers and owners of multi-residential buildings of the Blue Box transition and the need to contact Green For Life Environmental Inc. to receive blue boxes and carts as well as report missed recycling collection, and to work with Circular Materials to receive posters and labels for recycling containers. Staff will be mailing a letter and revised waste guide to property managers and / or owners to inform them of this change.
- Industry Association Participation: Staff are participating in consultation activities led by producer organizations such as Circular Materials and other waste industry associations like Waste to Resources Ontario, the Municipal Waste Association and the Regional Public Works Commissioners of Ontario Waste Sub-committee. These consultations help keep staff informed and provide input on the transition.
- Process for New Developments: Staff are confirming with Green For Life Environmental Inc. how new developments starting service, and how new residents to the City without blue boxes, will receive these.

Work for Post-Transition, January 1, 2026

- Non-Eligible Sources Post Transition: Staff are working on finalizing pricing with Green For Life Environmental Inc. on collecting Blue Box material from non-eligible sources post-transition and Circular Materials' contractors for receiving and processing Blue Box material from non-eligible sources post-transition. A Consideration Report will be presented to Council in the coming months, detailing options and costs for providing recycling collection for non-eligible properties post transition should the City of Hamilton approve to continue paying for this service.
- Public Space Recycling Post Transition: Staff are working with Circular Materials to confirm the number and locations of public space recycling containers that will be

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installed and managed in Hamilton by Circular Materials. Based on our size, we estimate our eligibility to be 1500 public space recycling containers.

- Handling of Rejected Blue Boxes: Staff are attending waste industry association meetings to learn about how rejected blue boxes will be handled at the curb to ensure the recycling material left behind does not become the City's to manage as garbage.

For further information, please contact Angela Storey, Director of Waste Management, at Angela.Storey@Hamilton.ca or (905) 546-2424 extension 6483.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A