




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members City Council
DATE:	July 4, 2025
SUBJECT:	Proposed Changes to the Blue Box Regulation and the Resource Recovery Circular Economy Act (WM2505) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY: SIGNATURE:	Angela Storey Director, Waste Management Public Works Department 

This Communication Update is to provide the Mayor and Members of Council with an update on proposed amendments to the Blue Box Regulation and the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act. These proposed amendments were posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario for comment on June 4, 2025. The information below includes a summary of the proposed changes, and staff's responses to the proposed changes, which have been submitted to the Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks as the City's formal comments.

Background

The Blue Box Regulation (O. Reg. 321/91) under the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016, makes producers responsible for the paper, packaging, and single-use items they supply in Ontario. Recently, the provincial government has heard from producers that the cost of the Blue Box program is higher than anticipated and have requested changes to the Regulation to reduce these costs. In response, the Province has proposed several amendments to the Regulation to reduce these costs. However, it is the position of City of Hamilton staff, as well as other municipalities, that some of the proposed changes remove or reduce the environmental benefits of the Regulation, and are in conflict with the intent of the Blue Box regulation. In addition, the Province is proposing changes to the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act.

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.

Proposed Changes to the Blue Box Regulation and Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act

Delaying Recycling Targets – This proposed amendment would change when producers must meet recycling targets for paper, rigid plastic, glass, metal, and beverage containers from 2026 to 2031. Staff have commented that delaying the enforcement of these targets until 2031 will result in more blue box material being disposed of in the garbage, conflicts with the intent of the Regulation, and that no justification has been made for why five years is required for producers to be able to meet these targets.

Remove Planned Expansion for Multi-Residential Buildings – This proposed amendment would make new multi-residential buildings ineligible for the producer-responsibility Blue Box program. Staff have commented that this removes equal access to the Blue Box program and will result in either recyclable material being disposed of as garbage, or increased costs to municipalities to pay for this service.

Remove Expansion of Public Space Collection – This proposed amendment would remove the requirement for producers to increase the number of public space recycling containers to provide greater access for residents to recycle away from home. Currently, the City of Hamilton has approximately 700 public space recycling containers and under the Regulation, producers are required to increase this number to 1500 containers based on the City's population. The proposed amendment would remove this requirement. Staff have commented that this amendment would remove the increase in Hamilton from 700 to 1500 containers and create inequity amongst municipalities where some had public space recycling containers prior to the Blue Box regulation and those that didn't.

Reduce and Delay Flexible Plastic Recovery Target – This proposed amendment would reduce the recovery target of flexible plastic from 25% to 5% and delay when the target must be met from 2026 to 2031. Staff have commented that this amendment undermines the Regulation's intent to drive innovation and investment by producers to improve the performance of the Blue Box program and will lead to more materials being disposed of as garbage.

Allow Energy Recovery to Count Toward Diversion Target – This amendment would allow producers to send non-recyclable material that is collected as contamination to energy from waste facilities and count this as waste diversion. It is also proposed that the amount of material sent to energy from waste must not be more than 15% of producer's management target. Staff have commented that reduction, reuse, and recycling should be the only activities that count towards waste diversion.

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Maintaining Collection for Small Businesses – This amendment would enable the Province to enact regulations that require producers to make an offer to municipalities to provide blue box service to small businesses. This proposed amendment would still require municipalities to pay for this service but may result in cost savings as it would allow for blue box material being co-collected with residential properties, compared to being collected independently. Staff have commented that the City is in support of amendments that assist with the collection of blue box material from small businesses but have asked that there are requirements in place to ensure offers provided are reasonable and that the goal should be to include small businesses as an eligible property in the Blue Box program.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to work with industry organizations such as the Regional Public Works Commissioners of Ontario Waste Sub-Committee and the Municipal Waste Association to advocate the Province for a Blue Box program that best serves Hamilton residents. Our goal is to ensure that the principles of reduction, reuse, and recycling remain at the forefront of waste diversion efforts, supporting a sustainable and circular economy for our community.

For further information, please contact Ryan Kent, Manager of Waste Policy and Planning, at extension 7686.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

N/A