

**Region of Waterloo**  
**Engineering and Environmental Services**  
**Waste Management**

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**To:** Sustainability, Infrastructure, and Development Committee

**Meeting Date:** October 7, 2025

**Report Title:** Blue Box Transition Update

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**1. Recommendation**

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo adopt the following, as outlined in report EES-WMS-25-005, dated October 7, 2025:

- a) That all contractual arrangements with Circular Materials (CM) conclude effective December 31, 2025, in alignment with the current contract expiry.
- b) That recycling service at the Cambridge and Waterloo Waste Management public drop-off sites for approximately \$300,000 per year be included as a service enhancement consideration during the 2026 Plan and Budget process.

**2. Purpose / Issue:**

The purpose of this report is to update Regional Council on the status of the Blue Box Program as it transitioned on March 2, 2024, to the Province of Ontario's producer responsibility model.

**3. Strategic Plan:**

This report supports the Climate Aligned Growth, and Resilient and Future Ready Organization strategic pillars by promoting source separation and keeping items out of landfill, and through the transfer of recycling costs of eligible sources to the producers as directed by the province.

**4. Report Highlights:**

- The new legislation does not include blue box recycling services at public drop-off sites. CM has offered to fund a small portion of this service, however, due to strict CM guidelines and program requirements, staff do not recommend implementing the CM public drop-off program. Instead, the Region can provide recycling public drop-off services at the Cambridge and Waterloo Waste Management sites effective January 1, 2026, for approximately \$300,000 per year. This service enhancement will be considered during the 2026 Plan and Budget process

- Updates to the Blue Box Regulation include: no expansion of public space recycling; current recovery targets maintained, with increases to recycling targets deferred to 2032; Blue Box service for facilities (e.g., multi-residential buildings, schools, certain long-term care and retirement homes) that previously lacked municipal service, including newly built sites will be deferred to 2031

## **5. Background:**

The Region transitioned its Blue Box Program on March 2, 2024, to Circular Materials (CM), the Administrator of the Blue Box Program, because of provincial legislation under the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act (RRCEA). Refer to Council Reports EES-WMS-23-001, 003, 004 and EES-WMS-24-001 for more information.

Region staff are working with CM and its contractors up until the end of December 2025 to provide communications and public drop-off depot support. The Region is no longer responsible for administering, collecting, processing, monitoring, enforcing and the promotion and education of the residential Blue Box Program.

### **Cambridge and Waterloo Public Drop-Off Locations**

Annually the Cambridge and Waterloo Waste Management sites receive and process approximately 680 tonnes of recycling from the public drop-off areas. This program was historically funded 50 per cent by producers, with the remaining 50 per cent funded by the Region. Under new provincial rules, CM is responsible for maintaining curbside and depot services only during the transition period (March 2024 to December 31, 2025).

CM has offered to fund a small portion of this service, however, due to strict CM guidelines and program requirements, staff do not recommend implementing the CM public drop-off program. Instead, the Region can provide recycling public drop-off services at the Cambridge and Waterloo Waste Management sites effective January 1, 2026, for approximately \$300,000 per year. This service enhancement will be considered during the 2026 Plan and Budget process. A procurement for hauling and processing would be required to determine costs. Accepting recycling at the drop-off ensures continuity in service for users of the Waste Management sites and encourages diversion of recyclables from the landfill.

### **Updates to Public Space Recycling, Recycling Targets, and Eligible Sites**

On September 4, 2025, the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) announced updates to the Blue Box Regulation Amendments. Key changes include:

- No expansion of public space recycling. CM will continue to collect the existing public recycling bins; however no new bins will be added to the program
- Current recovery targets maintained, with increases to recycling targets for paper, metal class, rigid plastic, and beverage containers deferred to 2032

- Blue Box service for facilities (e.g., multi-residential buildings, schools, certain long-term care and retirement homes) that previously lacked municipal service, including newly built sites has been delayed until 2031, pushing back the original start date of January 1, 2026. Facilities that already qualify and are receiving municipal recycling services will continue to be serviced without interruption

**6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public**

**Area Municipalities:** In June 2025, Region staff hosted Blue Box information sessions for area municipal staff to share the implications of the new regulation. These sessions covered key topics including proposed amendments to the Blue Box regulation, Producer responsibility, public space recycling, and eligible facilities.

Area municipal staff were encouraged to stay informed by subscribing to updates on the MECP website, and to direct any questions about the Blue Box program to CM.

**Public:** The Region will support the blue box transition until December 31, 2025, through the promotion and education agreement with CM. Starting, January 1, 2026, the producers may implement changes across the province to enhance the Blue Box Program including collection frequency, collection day, collection container, and acceptable material. All promotion and education of the Blue Box Program post transition will be the responsibility of the Producers through CM and their contractors.

The Region has been communicating the shift in blue box responsibility to CM since 2023 during in-person engagement, through updates to websites, the Waste Whiz app, and social media, and through customer service interactions.

**7. Financial Implications:**

The estimated operating cost for the public drop-off for blue box materials in 2026 is \$300,000. This funding request is being addressed through the 2026 planning and budget process and has been included in the proposed 2026 Waste Management Operating Budget.

	Current Year	Future Year(s)
<b>Budget Impact?</b>	No new impact	\$300,000
<b>Capital Plan Impact?</b>	No new impact	No new impact

**8. Conclusion / Next Steps:**

The Region of Waterloo is no longer responsible for any aspect of the residential Blue Box Program, as such, the Region shall conclude all contractual involvements with Circular Materials (CM), the Administrator of the Blue Box Program, at the contract

expiry dates (December 31, 2025) to allow for CM to continue advancing the program.

**9. Attachments:** N/A

**Prepared By:** Jessica Landry, Project Coordinator (Waste Management)

Deanna Dakin, Supervisor, Projects and Policy (Waste Management)

**Reviewed By:** Olivia Kwok, Director, Waste Management

**Approved By:** Jennifer Rose, Commissioner, Engineering and Environmental Services