

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Environmental Services
June 15, 2023

Report of the Commissioner of Public Works

2022 Annual Waste Management Report

1. Recommendations

1. Council recognize the month of July as “Plastics-Free July”, in support of community efforts to reduce use of single-use items.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of the local municipalities and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

2. Summary

This report provides Council with a copy of the 2022 Annual Waste Management Report (Attachment 1), which summarizes the Region’s waste reduction and diversion initiatives and highlights progress made on implementing the Integrated Waste Management Master Plan (SM4RT Living Plan). Each year this Annual Report is submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to satisfy the Durham York Energy Centre Environmental Assessment condition for diversion reporting.

Key Points:

- The Region and its local municipal partners achieved 94% diversion from landfill in 2022, again exceeding Council’s goal of 90% waste diversion from landfill. This includes all tonnes collected through local municipal curbside programs, waste depot diversion programs and tonnes managed through energy-from-waste
- The Province does not recognize energy-from-waste as diversion and, as such, the diversion rate reported by the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority (Authority) does not include energy-from-waste tonnages. York Region’s diversion rate for 2022 was 66% and is awaiting verification by the Authority
- The Authority’s Annual Datacall (Datacall) process and diversion ranking will end once the Blue Box program transitions to full producer responsibility in 2026, although the Region will continue reporting waste generation rates and diversion from landfill

- Waste generation decreased sharply after two years of increases due to pandemic restrictions that saw many residents working and studying from home. Waste generation rates are close to pre-pandemic levels for green bin and garbage
- The Region and local municipalities continue to make progress on all objectives in the Integrated Waste Management Plan (Attachment 1, page 3) including, new initiatives such as the Circular Economy Working Group and Single Use Innovation Challenge, advancing procurement of long-term organics processing and continued advocacy on single-use plastics and extended producer responsibility
- “Plastics-Free July” is an international effort to raise awareness and drive action to reduce impacts of single use plastics on the environment. To introduce this effort local and regional councils are asked to recognize July as “Plastics-Free July”

3. Background

The Region advances waste sustainability commitments through implementation of the SM4RT Living Plan

As approved by Council in [April 2020](#), the SM4RT Living Plan establishes a vision and long-term targets to move towards a world without waste. With a strong focus on partnerships and innovation, this plan continues to guide waste policy and programming and emphasizes the importance of transitioning to a circular economy. As outlined in Attachment 1, the Region, local municipalities and community partners, have made progress on all objectives of the Plan. Progress includes, adapting to federal and provincial waste regulations, securing long-term capacity for processing organic waste in a sustainable and cost-effective manner and increasing the reach of community programs that support transition to a circular economy.

York Region and its local municipal partners continue to be leaders in diversion

Together with local municipal partners, the Region achieved 94% diversion from landfill in 2022. The Region has exceeded its 90% diversion from landfill target annually since first reaching that milestone in 2016. The diversion from landfill rate is reported annually to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to satisfy the Durham York Energy Centre Environmental Assessment condition for diversion reporting.

York Region leads diversion performance in large urban municipalities in Ontario, as reported by the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority (Table 1) and has ranked first since 2012. In 2021 (latest year with verified data), York Region’s verified diversion rate of 65% was the highest in the Province. The Region has submitted a 2022 diversion rate of 66% to the Authority for verification. This provincial diversion rate differs from the York Region diversion from landfill rate of 94% (referred to above), as energy-from-waste is not recognized by the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority as diversion.

Table 1
2021 Large Urban Municipal Verified Diversion Ranking

Rank	Municipality	2021 Diversion Rate
1	York Region	65.4%
2	Halton Region	52.7%
3	Toronto	50.6%
4	Peel Region	46.9%
5	London	43.7%
6	Hamilton	42.6%

Datacall process and diversion ranking will adjust as municipalities transition to a producer-led system

Datacall is used to determine net Blue Box Program cost and allocate steward funding under the current Blue Box Program Plan. This annual Datacall is the source of data used by the Authority to determine verified residential waste diversion rates and rankings.

Once the Blue Box Program transitions to full producer responsibility in 2026, Datacall will cease along with the annual verified diversion rankings for municipalities. Municipalities that begin to transition their blue box programs in 2023 will no longer be obligated to submit an annual Datacall report to the Authority. The 2022 verified diversion ranking will be the last municipal ranking that includes all municipalities. Staff will update Council next year on the Datacall process and any new developments. The Region will continue to report on waste generation rates and overall diversion from landfill as key performance indicators for its integrated waste management system.

4. Analysis

Garbage and green bin waste generation rates decreased sharply, as residents returned to work, school and community activities

In 2022, with more businesses and community services opening back up, residents were spending less time at home. By fall 2022, community polling showed almost 50% of residents indicated a return to the workplace and in-person learning. As a result, the Region saw a decrease in waste at the curb in all streams except yard waste. The green bin generation rate decreased to 87 kilograms per person in 2022, from 93 kilograms per person in 2021 (Attachment 1 page 9). The garbage generation rate also decreased significantly to 82 kilograms per person in 2022 from 90 kilograms per person in 2021. These rates are comparable to those observed in 2019. The trend was consistent across all nine local municipalities. Participation at the depots continues to remain steady, with tonnages for most

streams consistent with the five-year trend (Attachment 1, page 19), suggesting users continue to appreciate the services offered by those sites.

The Region continues to advance waste reduction, diversion and circular economy actions prioritized in the SMART Living Plan

Reuse programming such as [Repair Cafes](#) and [Lenderies](#) restarted in 2022 with support from local libraries and other community partners. The first round of [Circular Economy Fund projects](#) were completed and seven new projects received funds from the 2022 funding call. The Region completed a [Circular Economy Roadmap](#) advancing the transition to a circular economy. A Circulate Economy Working Group composed of 13 local experts from a variety of sectors was established to support implementation of the Roadmap, with an initial term of two years.

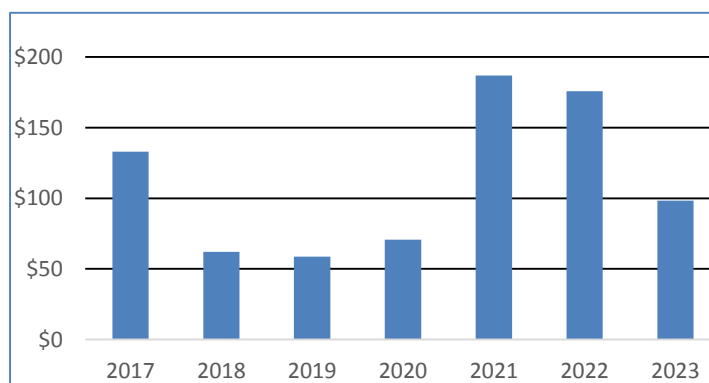
As outlined to Council in [January 2023](#), the Region secured long-term organics processing capacity that supports its commitment to the circular economy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A separate report to Council in fall 2023 will provide a detailed update on progress towards preparation for the blue box transition.

5. Financial

In 2022, Commodity price declines resulted in lower blue box revenues

Commodity markets for blue box materials have been very volatile over the past five years. Figure 1 shows fluctuations in the average annual price/tonne received for blue box commodities since 2017. Prices most recently peaked in June 2022, but as of October 2022, all commodity prices decreased significantly. In particular, the price for mixed paper products, which dropped from \$150 per tonne in revenue to a cost of \$50 per tonne in domestic markets (change of \$200 per tonne) and a cost of \$150 per tonne in the overseas market in India (change of \$300 per tonne). This means there was a transition from revenue received to a cost incurred for taking mixed paper products to markets.

Figure 1
Average Annual Price per Tonne Received for Blue Box Commodities



Changes in the commodity market and the overall economic climate allowed domestic end product buyers to impose even more stringent contamination limits in the latter half of 2022. These changes slowed down material movement and more products had to be shipped to India with a higher shipping cost. Commodity prices for plastic and metal dropped about 80% and 35%, respectively, but continued to generate revenue. Overall, this resulted in lower revenues for blue box in 2022. The impact to commodity markets will likely remain in 2023 until the global economy is stabilized.

Once responsibility for the Blue Box Program is fully transitioned to producers in 2026, York Region will no longer be impacted by the risks of volatile markets. An update to Council on transition of blue box operations will be provided in fall 2023.

Budget impacts from the pandemic declined as waste generation rates returned closer to pre-pandemic levels

As noted in Attachment 1, 2022 tonnages are similar to pre-pandemic levels, with increases more in-line with what would be expected from population growth. This trend is anticipated to continue.

6. Local Impact

Local and Regional staff working collaboratively supporting the community in reducing reliance on single use items

Reducing single use item usage in the Region continues to be a priority for local and regional councils and other levels of government. In June, 2022, the federal government finalized its [Single-use Plastics Prohibition regulations](#), which impact several types of common single use items. The federal government continues to consult on other actions under the Canada-wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste and Action Plan including [rules regarding recyclability labelling on packaging](#), recycled content requirements for plastic manufacturers and [a registry to track plastic usage and waste in Canada](#). Staff recently submitted two letters of comment in response to these federal consultations (Appendix A and B). Due to short consultation timelines, staff were unable to communicate this response to Council in advance, should Council have additional comments or feedback staff will share it accordingly. Draft regulations related to these initiatives are anticipated to be released for comment by the end of 2023.

Local and Regional staff have a joint working group to provide input through these consultations and [create resources](#) to help the community transition away from single use items where possible. 2022 activities included:

- Piloting a Single Use Innovation Challenge to support community-led projects aimed at engaging the business community in reducing their use of single use items.
- Sharing resources on best practices for reducing usage at community events/facilities.

- A communication campaign to educate residents on single use plastics.

For 2023, a campaign is planned to launch during “Plastics-Free July”, an international effort to raise awareness and drive action to reduce negative impacts of single use plastics on the environment. To kick off this effort, local and Regional councils are asked to recognize the month of July as “Plastics-Free July” in support of these efforts.

7. Conclusion

Performance of the Region’s integrated waste management system in 2022 shows that York Region continues to remain a leader. The high diversion rates demonstrate the Region and local partners continue to move towards its visionary goal of a world in which nothing goes to waste. Waste generation rates have reduced, close to 2019 levels, and programs are already in place to promote more sustainable behaviours and community collaboration. These programs will help build a successful circular economy.


For more information on this report, please contact Lindsay Milne, Acting Director, Waste Management and Forestry Operations, Operations and Services, Public Works at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75714. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by:



Laura McDowell, P.Eng

General Manager, Operations and Services, Public Works



Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.

Commissioner of Public Works

Approved for Submission:



Bruce Macgregor

Chief Administrative Officer

June 1, 2023

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Appendix A – York Region Response – Technical Paper: Federal Plastics Registry
Appendix B – York Region Response – Recycled content and labelling rules for plastics:
regulatory framework paper
Attachment 1 - 2022 Annual Waste Management Report



May 18, 2023

Tracey Spack
Director General, Plastics Regulatory Affairs Division
Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H3
plastiques-plastics@ec.gc.ca

Ms. Tracey Spack,

RE: York Region Response – Technical paper: Federal Plastics Registry

Regional staff thank Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Technical paper: Federal Plastics Registry* (Technical Paper). Staff support this approach as a federal plastics registry supports a circular economy for plastics with potential to expand to non-plastics in future. Key recommendations are described in the response as follows:

1. Align federal plastics registry with provincial extended producer responsibility (EPR) program reporting requirements
2. ECCC lead development of harmonized data standards to improve quality and consistency of ICI waste data
3. Make tracking and reporting of end markets and recovery rates across the lifecycle of durable goods the responsibility of manufacturers/producers

1. Align federal plastics registry with provincial EPR program reporting requirements

Staff appreciate ECCC aligning with provincial and territorial EPR programs and guidance developed by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME). This will be critical to avoid creating a patchwork of requirements and guidance should clearly indicate where provincial versus federal requirements take precedent. Many provincial EPR programs have similar categories and reporting guidelines. Staff support the direction to include specific resins and recommend ECCC develop guidance for obligated parties similar to the [technical guidance](#) and [business guide](#) provided for the Single-Use Plastics Prohibition Regulations to ensure wide adoption and compliance.

2. ECCC lead development of harmonized data standards to improve quality and consistency of ICI waste data

Staff support including Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) generators of plastic waste in the registry. There is a significant data gap around the performance of waste diversion programs in the ICI sector. Open collaboration between provinces through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME), processors, collectors, waste management industry, and reporting authorities can support consistent and reliable data and reduce administrative burden on businesses. It is recommended that the federal government lead the development of harmonized data standards to ensure consistency in waste diversion and reporting requirements for residential and ICI sources. Data standards would also support potential future automated data reporting processes.

3. Make tracking and reporting of end markets and recovery rates across the lifecycle of durable goods the responsibility of manufacturers

Staff support ECCC's direction to increase transparency on the full lifecycle of all plastics by collecting disposal, reuse and recycling data for durable goods that contain plastic parts. As the regulator of trade, the federal government is in the best position to create transparency on the lifecycle of durable goods. It is recommended that ECCC place the onus on manufacturers to provide data on plastic components of their products and their lifecycle. Current systems do not fully track end market destinations and recovery rates beyond initial collection tonnages nor recovery of component material types such as plastic and are likely unable to provide the level of detail proposed in the technical paper.

York Region looks forward to continued engagement as ECCC moves forward with plastic waste reduction commitments

Staff support ECCC's approach that creates a federal registry for plastics while protecting the sensitive information needs of businesses. Regional staff look forward to future consultation opportunities as next steps are rolled out later in 2023. If there is interest in discussing these recommendations, please contact Lindsay Milne, Manager of Sustainable Waste Management at Lindsay.Milne@york.ca.

Sincerely,



Laura McDowell
General Manager, Operations and Services
Public Works, York Region

cc: Charles O'Hara, Director, Resource Recovery Policy Branch, Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks
Dave Gordon, Association of Municipalities of Ontario

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May 18, 2023

Tracey Spack
Director General, Plastics Regulatory Affairs Division
Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Gatineau, QC K1A 0H3
plastiques-plastics@ec.gc.ca

Ms. Tracey Spack,

RE: York Region Response – Recycled content and labelling rules for plastics: regulatory framework paper

Regional staff thank Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) for the opportunity to provide feedback on the regulatory framework paper: *Recycled content and labelling rules for plastics*. Staff were pleased to see more clarity and direction on compostable materials and promoting activities to drive a circular economy for plastics in line with previous Region comments. York Region supports standardized labeling for recyclable and compostable materials, key recommendations are described in the response below:

1. Implement 80% acceptance criteria for compostable products to align with mandate letter and support extended producer responsibility
2. Develop a Canadian standard for compostable products by 2025 to ensure products can be composted effectively in existing municipal infrastructure
3. Harmonize labelling program across Canada and ensure labels are accessible
4. Provide stronger federal guidance to prevent unintended consequences from single-use plastic alternatives
5. Increase scope of materials under labelling rules in future phases of regulation to include problematic and hazardous materials
6. Permit provincial standards prevail if more stringent than federal standards
7. Increase recycled content targets to exceed 50% over time

1. Implement 80% acceptance criteria for compostable products to align with mandate letter and support extended producer responsibility

Staff recommend applying labelling standards for compostable products that align with recyclability criteria outlined in the Minister's mandate letter. Specifically, that for a

product to be labelled compostable, it must be accepted and successfully composted in programs servicing >80% of Canadian households that have Green Bin programs. Applying the same criteria to compostability as recyclability supports effective outcomes and will help reduce consumer confusion.

Applying acceptance criteria provides municipalities with autonomy over managing their own green bin programs and encourages the application of extended producer responsibility (EPR) to compostable products and packaging. By setting the framework, ECCC demonstrates a commitment to ensuring these costly programs and infrastructure investments to manage compostable plastics are covered by the manufacturers and producers who want to label their products as compostable.

2. Develop a Canadian standard for compostable products by 2025 to ensure products can be composted effectively in existing municipal infrastructure

Staff are pleased to see consideration of standards and field testing to regulate products labelled as compostable. While staff appreciate ECCC taking steps in this direction, the issues raised in previous consultations are not addressed by using the proposed ASTM and ISO standards. Even certified compostable products do not break down in York Region's processing facilities and many other municipal systems as they do not reflect the realities of field conditions at different facilities, nor do they test for compatibility with anaerobic systems. Anaerobic digestion is the preferred processing technology for many municipalities as it is better suited to more populous areas, recovers biogas, and creates compost. York Region is planning to transition all its organics processing to AD by 2027.

It is strongly recommended that ECCC develop a Canadian standard that includes aerobic and anaerobic compatibility and standardized approaches to field testing. A Canadian compostability standard and clear labelling helps ensure materials will break down in existing infrastructure. It will reduce contamination and associated costs for processors, keeping Canada's compost quality high and supporting market demand. A Canadian standard would also increase capture of compostable products leading to reduced carbon emissions as they would be less likely to enter landfills. This supports the Minister's commitments to achieve net-zero emissions by 2030. It is recommended ECCC aim to develop a proposed standard by the end of 2025 to address this pressing issue and align with the labelling regulation timelines.

3. Harmonize labelling program across Canada and ensure labels are accessible

The proposed recyclability measurement test seems to indicate that recycling labels will vary across provinces and territories. Staff suggest ECCC clarify the intention of the criteria to ensure implementation of the labelling rules does not vary province to

province but works to harmonize labelling and promote consistency in recycling programs across Canada.

Staff thank ECCC for providing sample infographics for the proposed recycling labels, which include accessibility considerations, such as high contrast text and backgrounds and sans serif fonts. York Region accessibility staff have recommended a sans serif font at a size of 18 be required as this is a best practice for accessible font size and type. Staff recommend ECCC collaborate with accessibility organizations to ensure the label is accessible prior to developing the regulations.

4. Provide stronger federal guidance to prevent unintended consequences from single-use plastic alternatives

While Region staff support restrictions on single-use plastics, it can result in shifts to alternatives that create unintended consequences, such as businesses switching from plastic takeout containers to paper products lined with Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) that could have negative health and environmental impacts. It would be unfortunate to see businesses switch to this alternative even as Health Canada explores regulation of PFAS. Another example is stores giving out [new 'reusable' bags with online grocery orders](#). With no take-back option provided for these bags, the environmental benefits of reuse are not being achieved. These alternatives risk becoming a more resource-intensive single use item than what they are replacing. Staff recommend ECCC consider the following to promote better outcomes for single-use plastic alternatives:

- Federally-led education on selecting appropriate alternatives to single-use plastics and a behaviour change campaign to promote a shift to reusables
- ECCC-led collaborations between manufacturers and processors to promote better design for single-use plastic alternatives
- Focus on prevention of harm by restricting the use of PFAS and harmful chemicals in products, especially foodservice ware

5. Increase scope of labelling rules to include all blue box recyclables within two years and problematic and hazardous materials in later phases

Region staff support increasing the scope of materials included under the regulation beyond just plastic packaging, and recommend including recyclables such as paper products, glass and metal, and eventually problematic and potentially hazardous materials such as “flushable” wipes and batteries. Staff recommend ECCC phase in materials commonly accepted in household recycling programs within 2 years of publishing the regulation. A later phase could include items needing special handling such as batteries or frequently mis-handled items like flushable wipes. New materials

phased in must be subject to the same requirements for acceptance and recyclability under the regulations to ensure items aren't inappropriately labeled. Broadening the scope will reduce confusion for consumers, continue to improve participation and performance of recycling systems and promote a circular economy.

6. Permit provincial standards to prevail if more stringent than federal standards

In the proposed framework, the definition of regulated parties is broad and provides a minimum standard to capture entities with the most control over design and marketing of plastic packaging and single-use plastics. Staff recommend ECCC consider an approach to defer to the more stringent standard when those standards exist. For example, in provinces with EPR programs, these regulations have well defined producer hierarchies that potentially capture more parties. In these cases, staff recommend ECCC defer to provincial EPR definitions of regulated parties under federal regulation.

7. Increase recycled content targets to exceed 50% over time

Staff support the direction to focus on an outcomes and data-driven approach to determine recyclability of plastic products. High targets drive better outcomes. When setting targets for recycled content requirements, staff encourage ECCC to set initial targets with an indication these will increase to above 50% recycled content in the future.

Region staff are encouraged by the government's actions and commitment to achieving zero plastic waste by 2030. The Region looks forward to continued engagement in meaningful discussions to help advance these plans. If you would like to further discuss these recommendations, please contact Lindsay Milne, Manager of Sustainable Waste Management at Lindsay.Milne@york.ca.

Sincerely,



Laura McDowell
General Manager, Operations and Services
Public Works
The Regional Municipality of York

cc: Charles O'Hara, Director, Resource Recovery Policy Branch, Ministry of the Environment,
Conservation and Parks
Dave Gordon, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
#15242466