



Report of the Commissioner of Public Works **2025 Annual Waste Management Report**

1. Recommendation

The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the Clerks of local municipalities and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

2. Purpose

This report and attached 2025 Annual Waste Management Report (Attachment 1) summarize the Region's waste reduction and diversion initiatives and highlight progress on implementing the Integrated Waste Management Master Plan (SM4RT Living Plan). This 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:

- In 2025, York Region managed 361,034 tonnes of waste including local municipal curbside waste, organics, recycling, yard waste, waste depot diversion programs and tonnes managed through energy-from-waste
- Council endorsed the SM4RT Living Plan 5-year review and update in [October 2025](#)
- The Region and its local municipal partners achieved 90% diversion from landfill in 2025
- The Green Bin generation rate decreased from 84 kg/capita in 2024 to 83 in 2025. The Garbage generation rate decreased by 2 kg from 2024, to 76 kg/capita in 2025
- Planning is underway for capital projects approved through the master plan review and update, including decommissioning the Materials Recovery Facility equipment, design of a leaf and yard waste processing facility adjacent to the Waste Management Centre and land search for a southern transfer station

- Blue box transition is complete; however, uncertainty remains over cost impacts from ineligible sources
- Alternative waste performance measures are being evaluated as diversion reporting can no longer be completed with the significant tonnes in the blue box program now being managed by producers

3. Background

Update to the SM4RT Living Waste Management Plan outlines priority actions to enhance system resilience, accessibility and environmental performance

Five-year review and update to the SM4RT Living Waste Management Plan (the “Plan”) was endorsed by Council in [October 2025](#). Approved actions under three objectives will advance York Region’s commitment to financial and environmental sustainability. Region staff have begun working on implementation with key stakeholders and partners. Over the next five year cycle:

- Annual Waste Management Report will continue to provide updates on implementation progress, system performance and social/community benefits
- Waste generation rates will continue to be tracked as a measure of waste reduction efforts by the Region and indicator of broader social influences on waste such as purchasing habits, consumer packaging trends, accessibility and prevalence of alternatives to traditional consumption
- After 2025, the diversion-from-landfill rate will no longer include blue box tonnage in its calculation. As a result, the diversion rate will be affected, and this performance measure will not be reported as part of the 2027-2031 Corporate Strategic Plan. Ongoing reporting of this performance measure will not be possible after 2026
- It is important to note the following:
 - Performance of the blue box program will be reported by producers in accordance with regulatory requirements, and this reporting will occur at the Provincial rather than municipal level
 - Annual waste management report will continue to provide metrics on garbage and green bin generation rates, waste disposal, and quantities of material directed to energy-from-waste facilities and landfill
- Audit data of residual waste and green bin streams will track impacts of the blue box transition on the garbage stream over time
- Engagement and partnership numbers will illustrate accessibility and participation in waste and circular economy services locally

4. Analysis

Waste generation rates decreased slightly, reflecting residents' ongoing efforts to limit waste amid rising prices

York Region saw a 1 kg/capita decrease in the green bin generation rate to 83 kilograms per person in 2025, from 84 kilograms per person in 2024. The garbage generation rate was at 76 kilograms per person in 2025, down 2 kg from 78 in 2024.

This trend toward generating less waste per capita could be attributed to several factors, including rising cost of living due to inflation, particularly in gas and groceries, leading to reduced consumer spending and more focus on limiting wasted food at home. The Region's messaging promoting waste reduction may be helpful to those residents looking to save money through informed purchasing and intentional grocery shopping.

Waste generation rates remain above the 2031 targets. While there are some signs of improvement, overall outcomes remain uncertain. Impacts of the blue box transition, economic conditions, changing consumer habits and other social influences are still emerging. The Region will continue to monitor waste generation trends within a shifting economic and regulatory environment to assess the achievability of long-term targets. Additional analysis on changes in waste generation is included in Attachment 1.

The diversion from landfill rate was 90% in 2025. The slight reduction in 2025 is due to closures at one of the contracted energy-from-waste facilities for part of the year, necessitating more use of landfill for disposal.

Region's depot network continues to provide excellent service and value to residents

As outlined in Attachment 1, depots saw over 280,000 visitors in 2025, even with temporary closures for facility maintenance and upgrades. Most residents live within a 20-to-30-minute drive of a depot and survey results continue to show high satisfaction with the services and programming provided. A 2026 pilot approved in the master plan update will test the efficacy of event-based household hazardous waste collection as an enhancement to current services. Results and recommendations will be reported in next year's annual update.

Community circular economy partnerships provide impactful programming for less than \$1 per household annually

Community-based circular economy programs also expanded in 2025. More than 30 partnerships supported initiatives such as Repair Cafés, Recycle to Ride and Good Food programs. Over 12,000 people participated in organized circular economy activities, with many more engaged at community outreach booths or in self-directed activities like textile donation and curbside giveaway days. These programs cost less than a dollar per household per year to

fund, reduce waste at the curb, and help residents save money while strengthening community connections for seniors and other vulnerable populations.

Planning underway for decommissioning Materials Recovery Facility equipment and developing Region-owned capital infrastructure

As outlined in Attachment 1, the capital infrastructure projects approved under the review and update will begin implementation planning in 2026. At the end of 2025, transition of the Blue Box Program was completed. The Region began steps to decommission the equipment at the Materials Recovery Facility, following the process outlined in the Region's Disposal of Surplus Assets Policy to recover value through sale of some equipment. Once the equipment is removed, a renovation design will be developed to expand transfer station capacity and support the addition of a Regional leaf and yard processing site on adjacent Region-owned land.

Staff are working with Realty services, in accordance with the Corporate Land Acquisition Policy, to identify and purchase a suitable property for construction of a waste transfer station to service the southern portion of the Region. In addition, a municipal support letter was issued to the Region's local municipal partners in early 2026 to identify willing hosts for an Energy-from-Waste facility, with responses requested by August 31, 2026.

Uncertainties and added costs remain after final stage of blue box transition

2025 was the final year for blue box transition and all York Region municipalities moved to the producer-led system at the end of the year. The process was challenging, as significant provincial regulatory changes affecting eligible sources and targets were introduced late in September 2025. Additionally, as outlined in a [recent motion](#) by Mayor Lovatt at Regional Council, delays in communication from Circular Materials and changes to collection containers and schedules resulted in confusion and complaints from residents. The Region and local municipalities have been working together to make decisions and evaluate costs and benefits of continuing to provide servicing for businesses, charities, and public facilities not included in the new system. Amendments to the Blue Box Regulation made in late 2025 delayed the addition of schools, new multi-residential buildings and more public spaces until 2031, adding more potential collection points that will not be included in the producer-led program.

Collection of recyclables at York Region's depots has always been offered free of charge to residents and small businesses. However, Circular Materials has limited their servicing and funding to residential materials collected at depots that also collect garbage, excluding two Regional depots and all non-residential material. This will result in increased costs for the Region as these ineligible materials will be hauled to a private processing facility whereas they were formerly hauled locally to the Waste Management Centre material recovery facility and processed along with residential material.

Region will continue to monitor impacts of producer responsibility programs on garbage and green bin streams

With the transition now complete, residents will be able to add new materials to their blue boxes from 2026 onward. The addition of plastic film, polystyrene, coffee cups, toothpaste tubes and black plastic to the program should drive down garbage generation in the Region. Audit data from 2025 suggests that up to 42% of garbage is material that will be divertible under the new program and over half of that is flexible plastics that would have been considered garbage under the previous program. Although still in its infancy, concerns have been raised about the efficacy of the program. In [February 2026](#), Regional Council proposed a motion that highlighted consistent service levels across the province, including differences in collection frequency, missed collections, accepted materials, cart provision, contamination management, customer service response times, and contractor accountability. These service level inequities have resulted in increased resident complaints, confusion, reduced participation in recycling programs, and declining public confidence in Ontario's recycling system. The Region will monitor garbage and green bin composition to assess impacts and inform advocacy efforts to hold producers accountable.

5. Financial Considerations

Waste management services continue to deliver strong value for money for residents

This report does not present any current changes to the Region's budget or fiscal position; however, ongoing monitoring is required to ensure any potential future impact could be managed within the Region's multi-year budget. The estimated cost to deliver all aspects of waste management services in 2025 was \$319/household per year, less than the cost of many comparable utilities such as energy, internet services and cell phones. Community polling and customer satisfaction surveys at depots continue to show a high degree of satisfaction with waste services. Anticipated costs for infrastructure projects approved through the Master Plan update are reflected in the 2026 10-Year Capital Plan.

Waste System Costs Remain Uncertain Amid Economic and System Transitions

Rising contract costs for haulage, transfer and processing continue to pressure the Region's waste management budget. Master Plan recommendations to invest in Region-owned infrastructure are intended to help mitigate cost increases by strengthening competition, enhancing system resilience, improving long-term siting certainty, and increasing service efficiency for local municipalities.

Transition challenges related to producer responsibility programs for blue box, tires, electronic waste, and household hazardous waste have also contributed to higher costs for other transfer, processing and depot services. These increases offset some of the expected cost reductions from producer-run programs. In addition, certain blue box processing costs will continue as

some local municipalities collect blue box materials from municipal buildings, small businesses and other ineligible sources that are not required to be serviced by producers under the Blue Box Regulation.

At the local level, municipalities are dealing with similar challenges as they make decisions about service provision to commercial and institutional sources such as Business Improvement areas, churches, long-term care homes and others that may have previously received municipal collection and are excluded from the new program. The alternative for most of these locations is private servicing or discontinuing their recycling program. Servicing these sources is now more costly as collection cannot be combined with the larger residential blue box program. The Region is covering the processing costs for locations that local municipalities are continuing to service, under a cost sharing agreement. Staff will monitor impacts on costs and tonnages from the first full year of transition, to understand financial implications related to the blue box program and report on these in next year's annual update.

6. Local Impact

Building partnerships increase access to circular economy programs that meet diverse local needs

A review of participation trends across a number of Region-supported circular economy programs identified a number of trends that will inform expansion and improvement plans for community programming over the next five years. Some key insights are:

- Residents in central communities such as City of Markham and Town of Newmarket are more likely to cross municipal boundaries to access events, while those in more isolated areas such as the Towns of Georgina, Whitchurch-Stouffville and East Gwillimbury opt for events closer to their own communities
- Drivers for participation vary significantly depending on the type of program offered, with some attracted to cost savings and others valuing environmental or social impacts
- Integrating language and cultural considerations helps to reach audiences that are frequently underrepresented

To address these challenges and expand reach, the Region is working with over 30 partners that serve diverse audiences to enhance local access and inclusion. Examples include York Region Food Network's collaborations with local libraries to offer tailored Good Food Challenge programming, and Centre for Immigrant and Community Services bringing the Recycle to Ride initiative to newcomer communities.

Other initiatives funded through the Circular Economy Initiatives Fund in 2025 focused on training local champions to develop and deliver events within their own communities, to meet their unique needs. Local municipalities and libraries are also working with the Region to

expand repair-related offerings through cost-sharing and in-kind administrative support for Repair Cafés in 2026.

7. Conclusion

As demonstrated by the performance of the Region’s integrated waste management system in 2025, York Region remains a leader in waste management. With a 90% diversion rate, the Region and local partners continue to move towards the visionary goal of a world in which nothing goes to waste.

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

Recommended by:



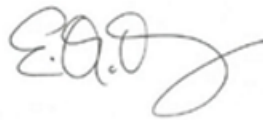
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Approved for Submission:

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Attachment 1 – 2025 Annual Waste Management Report