

## MEMORANDUM

To: Regional Chair Emmerson and Members of Regional Council

From: Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.  
Commissioner of Environmental Services

Date: May 15, 2019

Re: Provincial Discussion Paper on Reducing Litter and Waste in our Communities

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On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, Committee of the Whole requested staff report back to Regional Council with revised recommendations on Report F.2.3 titled *Provincial Discussion Paper on Reducing Litter and Waste in our Communities*. This memo provides changes to recommendations 1.a and 1.d (shown in bold) based on feedback received by members of Committee of the Whole:

1. Council endorse comments identified in Attachment 1 (York Region Response Letter) and Attachment 2 (York Region Detailed Comments), which were submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in response to Environmental Registry of Ontario posting 013-4689: Reducing Litter and Waste in Our Communities Discussion Paper. Due to the timeframe provided, it was not possible to bring the response to Regional Council for endorsement prior to submission. Any additional comments or clarifications by Council will be sent to the Province to supplement staff comments. Key recommendations for endorsement include:
  - a. **Immediately transition the Blue Box to full producer responsibility to make producers both operationally and financially responsible for their waste and establish high targets that obligate the implementation of deposit return programs**
  - b. Include the 4<sup>th</sup> R (Recovery) in diversion calculations to recognize the benefits of recovering the value of resources
  - c. Develop Green Bin compostable standards that align with existing processing systems to provide clear rules

- d. **Take immediate and strong action to eliminate litter and plastic waste going to landfills and waterways, including single use plastics and problematic materials, through a deadline driven action plan**
  - e. Ensure extended producer responsibility requirements include public spaces and Industrial, Commercial and Institutional sectors to help prevent and reduce litter in communities
2. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to local municipalities and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

**Staff support deposit return programs that supplement the service levels provided by the curbside Blue Box program**

Deposit return programs have demonstrated success in other Provinces in Canada. In Ontario, beer and liquor glass bottles have been designated for deposit return and have resulted in high capture rates making this a successful program. Although other provinces have opted for deposit return, about 95 per cent of residents in Ontario have access to recycling through the Blue Box system including both curbside and depot collection and use existing infrastructure to maintain that accessibility. In addition to the existing infrastructure and services, deposit return programs are being considered by the Province in their recently released discussion paper. Region staff are supportive of leveraging this type of recycling option as a complement to existing service levels provided to our communities. Table 1 illustrates the current options to participate in the Region’s recycling programs.

**Table 1**  
**Options for Residents to Participate in Region’s Recycling Programs**

Source	Blue Box Tonnage (2018)	Per Cent
Curbside	80,885	96.8%
Depot	1,007	1.2%
Other*	1,634	2.0%
Grand Total	83,526	100.0%

*\*includes schools, downtown main streets*

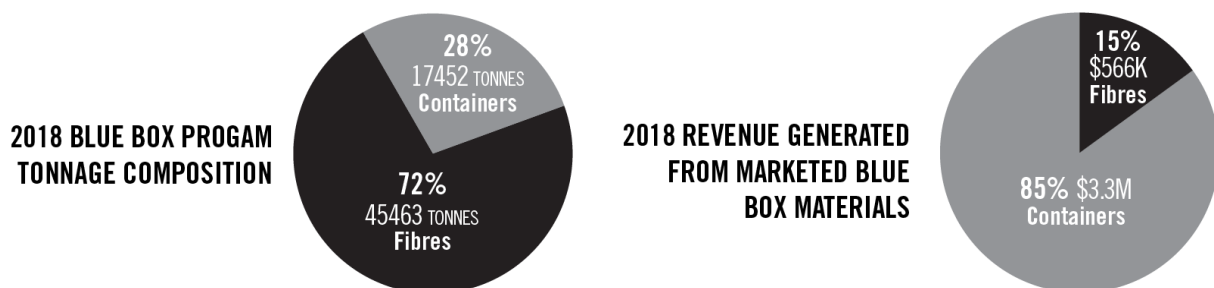
## Any additional collection options should consider the complexity of the Blue Box program and service levels as well as financial sustainability

Funding the Region's Blue Box relies on recovery of revenue from the sale of the commodities collected within the Blue Box. This revenue has fluctuated over the last few years with end markets increasing restrictions and overseas markets closing their doors after years of recycling North American materials. In 2018 marketing fibre, including newsprint, and mixed paper came at a cost rather than generating revenue. The cost impact of this change in market conditions was mitigated by revenue recovered from other Blue Box commodities like aluminum and PET (polyethylene terephthalate). In 2018, PET (i.e. water bottles) and aluminum (i.e. pop cans), offset operating costs by about \$2.5 million. In 2019, PET and Aluminum are projected to generate approximately \$2.7 million, representing about 50 per cent of the Region's revenue from the Blue Box program. This revenue is critical to funding the Blue Box program. Overall revenue recovery is also important to justify capital investments at the Region's material recovery facility including the \$7 million infrastructure investment required to meet stringent end market quality requirements and ensure materials are recycled in the Region.

Figure 1, illustrates the 2018 tonnage split between containers that could be designated for deposit return and the fibres as well as the split regarding revenue generated from the sale of these materials. Although containers are only 28 per cent of the Blue Box tonnage, containers make up 85 per cent of the total Blue Box revenue. Implementing a deposit return program focused on containers would significantly reduce revenue and increase the annual operating cost for this recycling program.

**Figure 1**

2018 Blue Box Program Tonnage Composition and Revenue Generated from Marketed Blue Box Materials



## Staff propose recommendations that include immediate transition of the Blue Box program to full producer responsibility with high targets that require deposit return programs

Deposit return programs can be a useful tool to increase capture rates of material and reduce litter. Implementation of high targets that are greater than 80 per cent will result in reduction of litter in public spaces, parks and waterways. In order to maintain resident participation rates

under extended producer responsibility, deposit return programs should complement and augment the capture of high value materials well managed via the Blue Box system.

Deposit return could also be a useful tool to increase capture and reduce litter for items that are low-value or difficult to manage. For example, coffee pods are very difficult to manage in Blue Box or Green Bin programs. Some manufacturers have already developed return programs, which provide a better option to manage these materials.

Reverse vending machines could be a useful tool to manage challenging materials like coffee cups in public spaces or other litter hotspots as these machines have the potential to incent less litter and provide a cleaner and dedicated stream for difficult to recycle materials.

The LCBO deposit return program complements the curbside Blue Box program, as glass is the most expensive material to collect and the Region has to pay to recycle this material. This synergy between deposit return and the Blue Box presents ideal benefits where residents can use a deposit return system to manage liquor and beer bottles and achieve high capture rates while reducing the cost of the Blue Box program to taxpayers.

In summary, staff have amended the recommendations to compel the Province to immediately transition the Blue Box program to full producer responsibility with high targets that obligate deposit return programs that will eliminate litter from our communities and waterways.

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Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.  
Commissioner of Environmental Services

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