

## **The Waste-Free Ontario Act: What it Means for Current and Future Waste Diversion Programs in Your Municipality, September 2017 (Updated)**

In November 2016, the Waste Diversion Act was repealed and replaced by the Waste-Free Ontario Act, which includes both the Waste Diversion Transition Act and the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act.

This new legislation will have a major impact on municipal waste management and, most importantly, on waste diversion programs you may operate now or have planned for the future.

### **The transition to full producer responsibility**

The cost to run programs for collecting and recycling paper products and packaging is now split 50/50 between municipalities and the companies that produce these items. The new legislation will transfer to full producer responsibility.

This concept will be applied initially for paper products and packaging (e.g. glass, plastics), tires, hazardous wastes and electronics. Other materials such as mattresses, carpets and furniture will be considered in the future.

The new legislation has started the movement toward full producer responsibility, but there is still a lot of work to do. Regulations must be drafted and all the details of the new system must be resolved.

### **Phase 1 of the Blue Box Transition**

Municipal Blue Box recycling programs will undergo some of the biggest changes, as municipalities will have new options – to act as service providers to producers who are responsible for collection and management of paper products and packaging, either directly or by subcontracting to private sector companies, or to opt out from providing a service altogether.

It is in the best interest of municipal governments that this work gets done as quickly as possible, particularly given the risks of delays due to the upcoming provincial election. Each year Ontario municipalities pay about \$130 million for Blue Box programs.

### **The Municipal Resource Recovery and Research Collaborative**

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Municipal Waste Association, Regional Public Works Commissioners of Ontario, and the City of Toronto have joined forces to form the Municipal Resource Recovery and Research Collaborative (Municipal 3Rs Collaborative) to advocate for a

smooth and timely transition to full producer responsibility, and to make sure municipal priorities like maintaining service standards to residents, especially in rural and northern Ontario, are protected.

The Municipal 3Rs Collaborative will actively engage with Stewardship Ontario, the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority, and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change in the consultations on the proposal to revise the Blue Box Program Plan. Consultation will be the first step in transitioning the Blue Box to full producer responsibility.

### **Initiating the transition process**

In July 2017, the Municipal 3Rs Collaborative and Stewardship Ontario sent a joint letter to then Minister Glen Murray, asking that he request an amendment to the Plan. The letter specifies that the amended Plan must:

- Not negatively impact Ontarians' experience with and access to existing recycling services;
- Improve environmental outcomes;
- Create a consistent recycling experience for all Ontario residents;
- Ensure a fair and open marketplace; and
- Address the provincial interests listed in the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act thus becoming the blueprint for the future development of a producer responsibility paper products and packaging regulation.

### **Minister Ballard announces at AMO conference that request letter is signed**

At the 2017 AMO Conference in Ottawa, the new Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Chris Ballard, announced he had signed a letter requesting that the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority and Stewardship Ontario, draft and submit an amended Blue Box Program Plan as had been requested by municipalities and Stewardship Ontario. The letter requests that an amended Blue Box Program Plan be sent to the Minister for approval by February 15, 2018.

Be assured that there will be an extensive consultation process across Ontario, with opportunities for your issues and priorities to be heard.

### **Protecting current standards of service and creating new waste diversion opportunities**

The Municipal 3Rs Collaborative has produced a list of specific issues that must be addressed in the amended Blue Box Plan. These range from the mechanisms that will be used to implement the transition to full producer responsibility, to standards of service and program accessibility for residents.

To date, the focus has been on the transition of existing programs and ensuring there are no service disruptions. Your representatives on the Municipal 3Rs Collaborative are also well aware that there are many municipalities that do not yet have Blue Box Programs, or waste diversion programs of

any kind, and that opportunities for new and expanded programs are extremely important. We have been advocating for future program development and will continue to do so.

A fundamental principle – for the municipal sector and for the Ministry – is that opportunities to divert waste and develop a circular economy extend across the entire Province of Ontario, including our rural and northern regions.

### **Next steps – getting informed and involved**

The role of the Municipal 3Rs Collaborative is to listen carefully to the Ontario municipal sector, feed this information into the process, promote municipal interests, and provide updates and resources that will help municipalities manage contracts and make the best possible decisions for their own local programs and communities.

Now that the Minister has signed a request letter, it is even more important for municipal councils and staff to be informed and get involved. Here's how:

- **WATCH TWO VIDEOS that explain what you need to know about the Blue Box Transition:**
  - [Mac Bain: What Ontario Municipal Elected Officials Need to Know](#)
  - [Jim McKay: What Ontario Waste Management Staff Need to Know](#)
- **REGISTER [HERE](#) for the next AMO Waste Session – scheduled for Tuesday, September 19<sup>th</sup> (Location: Holiday Inn Yorkdale).** For information, please contact Amber Crawford, Policy Advisor, AMO at [acrawford@amo.on.ca](mailto:acrawford@amo.on.ca).
- **Join the AMO Waste Portal – for access, please send an email to [amo@amo.on.ca](mailto:amo@amo.on.ca).**
- **Contact any of the Municipal 3Rs Collaborative Members – listed [here](#).**

To learn more about this important transition, please contact our organizations, or directly to Dave Gordon, Senior Advisor at [dgordon@amo.on.ca](mailto:dgordon@amo.on.ca), and Amber Crawford, Policy Advisor at [acrawford@amo.on.ca](mailto:acrawford@amo.on.ca).

Sincerely,

Mac Bain, Chair AMO Waste Task Force

Ron Holman, Chair ROMA