

Part 3 – Understanding Ontario's Blue Box Transition Timeline

During the June 15 Council meeting, it was mentioned that larger municipalities transitioned to Ontario's new Blue Box system first and that smaller municipalities are now transitioning.

There is some truth to that statement, but I think it's helpful to provide a little more context, so residents understand how the transition actually occurred.

Ontario's Blue Box program changed under the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016, with the detailed transition set out in Ontario Regulation 391/21 (Blue Box).

Rather than transitioning municipalities simply based on their size, the Province established a phased transition schedule that took place between July 1, 2023, and December 31, 2025. Communities were grouped according to the provincial implementation plan, taking into account factors such as existing collection contracts, geography, and service delivery considerations.

While many larger municipalities transitioned earlier in the process, smaller municipalities also transitioned throughout that same period. The transition was based on the provincial schedule—not solely on municipal size.

One important point is that municipalities had to collaborate with the Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO), such as Circular Materials, to complete the transition. Until their scheduled transition date under Ontario Regulation 391/21, municipalities generally remained responsible for delivering and funding Blue Box services. Once that transition date arrived, responsibility transferred to producers under Ontario's producer responsibility framework.

It is also important to note that the province-wide transition period concluded on December 31, 2025. Municipalities that transitioned later generally remained responsible for delivering and funding Blue Box services for a longer period before those responsibilities transferred to producers. As a result, they may have continued to incur recycling-related costs for a longer period.

This is one reason why understanding the transition timeline matters. It is not simply about who collects the recycling—it also has financial implications for municipalities and, ultimately, for taxpayers.

As someone who has helped municipalities transition to curbside recycling, I know there is much more involved than simply changing who collects the recycling. A successful transition requires careful planning, public education, communication with residents, coordination with the Producer Responsibility Organization, and clear implementation procedures.

My goal in sharing these posts is simply to provide residents with accurate information and explain how Ontario's new Blue Box system works. An informed community is better prepared for a successful transition.

Putting Our Community First means understanding not only what is changing, but also why it is changing, how those changes affect our community, and making informed decisions that provide the greatest benefit to residents and taxpayers.

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Sources of Information

The information in this post is based on publicly available provincial legislation and guidance, including:

- Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 (S.O. 2016, c. 12, Sched. 1)
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/16r12>
- Ontario Regulation 391/21 – Blue Box
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/210391>
- Circular Materials – Ontario Blue Box Program
<https://www.circularmaterials.ca/>
- Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority (RPRA)
<https://rpra.ca/>
- Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks – Waste Management and Producer Responsibility
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/waste-management>

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