

Transition of the Blue Box Program to Extended Producer Responsibility: Preliminary Post-Transition Update

Infrastructure and Environment Committee

February 25, 2026

Post Transition Update

Preparations for the transition of the Residential Blue Box Program

- City has been preparing for this change since 2019. This included working closely with Circular Materials and sharing operational knowledge.
- Staff worked to ensure Circular Materials:
 - Continued to use existing city bins and maintained side door, bag-only, and overflow collection
 - Align their collection with the City's collection schedule
- To support the change, the City developed extensive Promotion & Education (P&E) materials and tactics led by the Communications Division to educate residents on service changes.

Collection Operations Optimization

- With no longer collecting recycling, route optimization was needed in Districts 2 and 3. Some households experienced changes to their collection week (day of collection stayed the same).
- P&E materials and tactics were successfully deployed to support communications and change management.
- The City and Circular Materials provided supplemental collection to ease households through the change.

Field Observations and 311 Calls in January

Supplemental Recycling Collection

- Most of the missed collections calls (81%) and negative feedback was within Districts 2 and 3.
- This was caused by challenges with supplemental collection for material week changes.
- The rollout in Districts 1 and 4 experienced less missed collections and service disruption.

Collection of Bagged/Overflow Recycling

- Overflow recycling (in clear bags) was collected for most residents.

Customer Service Call Metrics (January 2026)

- Customer Experience Division (CXD) had 9,264 automated transfers and 1,246 callers transferred by live CXD Customer Service Representatives to Circular Materials / GFL.
- Inquiries via 311 decreased during the tracking and field observation timeline. This showed a high percentage of residents set out the correct materials, despite missed collections and schedule changes indicating communications reached residents and influenced action.

Mobile App & Communications Monitoring

Mobile Application

- Circular Materials' mobile application experienced some challenges after its launch.
- The City has recycling material lookup information on the TOwaste app.
- Staff are working with Circular Materials to include recycling collection day information in the TOwaste app before the end of Q1 2026.

Communication Sentiment Monitoring

- An initial increase in media inquiries and social media was largely focused on confusion related to missed recycling collection.
- Overall, media coverage and public sentiment on social channels were directed toward the Province and Circular Materials, indicating public awareness of responsibility for recycling collection following the transition.

Litter & Transfer Stations

Litter from Uncollected Blue Bins

- Staff have not seen a marked increase in litter-related service requests post-transition and litter operations have not been impacted.
- Staff will continue to monitor for any increase in unsecured blue box materials ending up as litter (i.e., litter audits in public spaces)

Transfer Stations

- Staff have reported an increase in recycling materials in the garbage stream during the first week of January, but no marked increase in the weeks that followed.
- Continued monitoring will occur through curbside residential waste audits.

Next Steps

- Report back to the **Infrastructure and Environment Committee and City Council in Q2 2026** with a strategy to minimize the risks of:
 - uncollected Blue Bins;
 - Blue Box material going to landfill at City expense; and
 - Blue Box materials becoming litter.
- Staff will provide an update to the **Infrastructure and Environment Committee in 2027**, when information becomes available, on the following matters:
 - general observations from field staff related to recycling collection;
 - any increase in recycling tonnes in the City-collected waste streams;
 - the annual report issued by the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority;
 - advocacy efforts with the Province of Ontario for the expedited implementation of producer-funded recycling collection for all multi-residential buildings before 2031; and
 - discussions with the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority regarding their planned approach to ensure producer compliance with O. Reg. 391/21: Blue Box.