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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. OPS25-023

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Subject: Waste Collection Downtown Core Businesses (former BIA)

Prepared by: Amanda Cutler, Coordinator Waste and Recycling

Department: Operational Services

Date: November 11, 2025

Recommendation

1. That Report No. OPS25-023 be received; and
2. That the December 2, 2024, Council direction to stop the collection of recycling, solid waste, and compost from non-eligible source Downtown Core businesses (former BIA) be rescinded; and
3. That the collection of solid waste and compost materials from non-eligible source Downtown Core businesses (former BIA) continue as a temporary measure during the detailed design for the Yonge Street Promenade; and
4. That the Town of Aurora (the "Town") provide the Downtown Core businesses (former BIA) a location to dispose of recycling materials as a temporary measure as of January 1, 2026, as they will not be eligible for collection through the Blue Box Extended Producer Responsibility Program.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a further update on the transition of the Blue Box Program to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and to specifically rescind its previous decision to stop collection of solid waste and compost from non-eligible Downtown Core Businesses (former BIA) only. Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) properties, which includes small businesses will remain responsible for their recycling material disposal as the EPR program is not applicable to this group. Producers will have full responsibility for collection of Blue Box recycling materials across Ontario when province-wide system becomes operational January 1, 2026, for eligible sources only.

- Producers will have full responsibility for collection of Blue Box recycling materials across Ontario when province-wide system becomes operational January 1, 2026.
- Section 4 of Blue Box Regulation 391/21, set forth by the province requires Producers to collect only from eligible sources.
- Select ICI properties who have historically received an increased service level, when disposal of garbage and organics is the responsibility of running a business.
- Concern raised by small businesses within the downtown core area about the Town stopping collection of all waste streams January 1, 2026.
- Yonge Street Downtown Promenade Detailed Design to consider waste storage as part of the streetscape design to support revitalization.
- Continued collection of solid waste and organics recommended in the interim while the downtown promenade revitalization detailed design is undertaken.
- Recycling collection is not feasible through our current contractor as part of the downtown core collection route.

Background

Producers will have full responsibility for collection of Blue Box recycling materials across Ontario when province-wide system becomes operational January 1, 2026.

On June 3, 2021, Ontario Regulation 391/21: Blue Box was filed under the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016, S.O. 2016, c. 12, Sched. 1 (RRCEA), which transitions the operational and financial responsibilities of managing packaging-like and paper products from Municipalities to Producers (PROs). This transition changes the existing shared responsibility model of the current Blue Box Program to a Producer-led responsible model, often referred to as 'full' or 'extended producer responsibility'.

Transition to EPR will occur in two phases:

- Transition: July 1, 2023 – December 31, 2025; and
- Post-transition: January 1, 2026, onwards.

All of York Region, including the Town, is scheduled to transition on January 1, 2026. Producers will have full control over all Blue Box recycling programs across Ontario when the province-wide system becomes operational in the post-transition phase.

Effective January 1, 2026, all municipal Blue Box Programs in Ontario will have transitioned to EPR and additional Producers will come into effect, including providing Blue Box collection services to non-municipally serviced multi-residential buildings, public and private schools (excluding post secondary) and not-for-profit retirement homes and long-term care homes.

Items accepted within the Blue Box Program will also expand common single use and packaging like products, such as paper and plastic cups, foils, trays, bags and boxes intended for home use. The new Blue Box Program will create a more uniform system across the province and broader access to recycling services.

Circular Materials Ontario (CMO), as the Common Collection System Administrator, is responsible for contracting waste haulers to collect blue box materials from eligible-sources and transport the material to receiving facilities (i.e. transfer stations). Reverse Logistics Group (RLG), contracted by CMO, is the Common Collection System Operator overseeing the daily operations.

Section 4 of Blue Box Regulation 391/21, set forth by the province requires Producers to collect only from eligible sources.

The Blue Box Regulation specifies sources from which Producers are obligated to collect blue box recyclables. Eligible source is defined as “any residence or facility in an eligible community”. These sources include single-family homes, multi-residential and some public spaces (parks, playgrounds, transit stations and sidewalks).

The definition of “residence” was amended by O. Reg. 210/25 to only include buildings with five or fewer residential units, including a seasonal residential dwelling, but not including a building used for temporary accommodation, such as a hotel, or any portion of a building with five or fewer residential units that is not used for residential purposes.

Producers are not responsible for the collection of blue box material from the following non-eligible sources:

- Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) properties
- Daycares
- Places of worship
- Businesses in BIA’s (Downtown Core businesses)
- Not-for-profit /charitable organizations and shelters
- Post secondary institutions – public and private
- Municipal facilities and community Centres (libraries and arenas)
- Multi-residential buildings (non-eligible until 2031)

- Schools (non-eligible until 2031)
- Specified long-term care homes and retirement homes (non-eligible until 2031)

For properties that have both residential and commercial units, Producers are only required to collect from those units that are defined as an eligible source.

Select ICI properties who have historically received an increased service level, when disposal of garbage and organics is the responsibility of running a business.

Collection of waste, whether recycling, organics or garbage, forms part of a business owners' responsibility. The majority of ICI properties in Aurora deal with all disposals of waste from their establishments through private collection contracts. The collection of waste by the Town from select ICI properties is an increased service level and not provided equally to all those included in this defined sector.

Council approved the staff recommendations at its December 2, 2024, meeting that the Town discontinue the collection of organics and waste when the recycling transition occurs with the province on January 1, 2026.

Analysis

Concern raised by small businesses within the downtown core area about the Town stopping collection of all waste streams January 1, 2026.

Since the approval to discontinue the collection of waste and organics in December 2024, staff have met with business owners, delivered letters, posted information and utilized mobile road signage to inform of the upcoming changes including to recycling, while businesses have been working to secure private collection.

Staff has heard from a small number of business owners in the downtown core about the stop of waste collection by the Town effective January 1, 2026. The rationale behind the concerns is lack of storage/space constraints of large waste bins until collection day, higher costs/difficulty securing service and negative impact on downtown businesses. Parking spots in rear lots are at a premium and utilizing them for waste storage would compound the issue. It is also not possible to utilize the frontage on Yonge Street, this is not an appropriate location, as store fronts need to remain inviting for public and space needs to remain unconstrained to allow for adequate pedestrian flow and safety.

Businesses also don't see an issue with the continuance of collection by the Town as our collection contractor will continue to service the downtown core to collect residential waste and it would seem logical to pick up small business waste while on route to create efficiency.

While the concerns have been expressed by only a very small number of businesses, staff understand the unique complexities the downtown holds, including mixed residential and business blocks, storage constraints, parking limitations, frontage aesthetics and a desire to revitalize the area through the streetscape plan currently under progress.

Yonge Street Downtown Promenade Detailed Design to consider waste storage as part of the streetscape design to support revitalization.

Planning and Development Services are currently engaged in a detailed design project to enhance the public space, integrate the downtown business core with the newly constructed Aurora Town Square (ATS), and address required rehabilitation of existing infrastructure.

As part of the design works, staff will be engaging the consultant to consider waste collection storage as part of the stakeholder meetings for the Town, considering patrons visiting the downtown and to support the commercial/residential needs within the area. This design work and consultation will continue through remainder of 2025 and 2026.

Continued collection of solid waste and organics recommended in the interim while the downtown promenade revitalization detailed design is undertaken.

Waste storage and collection needs for the downtown core are complex, and due course should be taken to explore all aspects through the promenade design. As such, staff are recommending that the Town reverse course on the original decision to discontinue service and continue the collection of solid waste and organics for non-eligible businesses in the downtown core during the design review, while options are explored and potentially considered regarding waste for the future.

This will maintain service continuity and support small businesses until a long-term decision can be made.

Recycling collection is not feasible through our current contractor as part of the downtown core collection route.

CMO is the lead PRO and Common Collection System Administrator responsible for the operation of the common collection system in Ontario. They have indicated that they will not collect from non-eligible sources post-transition. Therefore, blue box materials from non-eligible sources are not permitted to be mixed and processed with the materials they are obligated to collect and process from eligible sources. This means that collection of non-eligible sources by a PRO is not an option.

CMO has indicated there will be depots for ICI properties to dispose of recycling, although, to date, those locations have not been identified, and it is not known if any would be conveniently located to Aurora. While the collection of recycling goods no longer sits with the Town as of January 1, 2026, there are temporary options to potentially assist small business owners during the review of downtown waste.

Option 1

The Town could secure a private contractor to collect. To provide this service for the 107 businesses in this block (as per Attachment 1- Downtown Core Boundary (former BIA) map), the estimated annual cost would be approximately \$125,000 to \$175,000 plus an additional \$16,000 (capital) for collection totes.

Option 2

The Town could provide a recycling drop location for the impacted businesses. This location would be located at the Town of Aurora's Joint Operations Centre (JOC) and would be available during regular business hours Monday – Friday. Staff recognize that this drop location is not adjacent to the impacted businesses and that the recyclables will require transport; however, locating the bins in a parking lot in the downtown core would take up valuable parking spots, cause potential concern for residential properties, potentially promote dumping of other waste by the public and/or cross contamination. A container located at the JOC would be in relative proximity of downtown core, secure and under security surveillance, in an industrial area and allow staff to monitor volume. The cost of this option is expected to be minimal and can easily be absorbed within the Town's existing Operating Budget.

In consideration of the high estimated costs to collect recycling through a private contractor (Option 1), staff recommend providing a drop location at the JOC (Option 2) for the impacted small businesses located within identified downtown core boundary to dispose of their recyclables.

Advisory Committee Review

Not applicable.

Legal Considerations

Pursuant to O. Reg. 391/21: *Blue Box*, as amended by O. Reg. 210/25: *Blue Box*, under the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016*, S.O. 2016, c. 12, Sched. 1, Ontario municipalities were mandated to transition their existing blue box programs to full Producer responsibility between July 1, 2023, and December 31, 2025. Starting January 1, 2026, the Town will no longer be responsible for administering or funding the residential blue box program. As a result, the Town's Waste Collection By-law will need to be amended to ensure it reflects the changes to the waste collection program and associated regulations.

Financial Implications

The Town's estimated costs for its continued collection of solid waste and organics from the impacted businesses located within the defined downtown core area is \$7,175 per year. Should the Town proceed with the recommended Option 2 being the establishment of a recyclables drop location at the JOC for these same businesses the estimated cost would be \$1,300 per year. Therefore, the combined estimated annual cost for the continued provision of solid waste, organic and recycling collection to these impacted businesses would be \$8,475. The Town would be able to manage this expense within its existing operating budget.

Communications Considerations

Corporate Communications will support Operational Services in developing clear and accessible messaging to inform downtown businesses and the community about waste collection changes. A coordinated approach may include a mix of digital updates, stakeholder outreach, and other communication methods as appropriate to ensure consistent information sharing throughout the transition.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations from this report does not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Blue Box Program transition reinforces the Strategic Plan goal of Supporting Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability for all through its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within this goal statement:

Encouraging the stewardship of Aurora's natural resources: Assess the merits of measuring the Town's natural capital assets.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council can decide to not rescind its previous direction to stop the collection of recycling, solid waste, and compost from non-eligible source downtown core businesses (former BIA).
2. Council may provide alternative recommendation(s).

Conclusions

Providing municipal solid waste, recycling and organic collection service to ICI properties is not considered a responsibility of municipalities. Collection practices and service levels vary by municipality, in turn, municipalities are not legislatively required to provide waste collection services to ICI properties. However, due to the unique complexities of the downtown core, staff are recommending the Town continue to collect solid waste and organics for these small businesses, while providing a recycling drop location at the JOC. This service provision will be temporary and provided during the Yonge Street Downtown Promenade Detailed Design project, in which the feasibility of waste storage and collection will be explored and potentially considered.

Attachments

Attachment # 1 - Map of Downtown Core Boundary

Previous Reports

OPS24-022, Blue Box Collection Changes – Non-Eligible Sources, December 2, 2024

OPS23-011, Blue Box Transition Update, June 6, 2023

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on October 23, 2025.

Approvals

Approved by Sara Tienkamp, Director, Operational Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer