The Ontario Waste Management Association commends the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks on his announcement yesterday that management of Ontario’s Blue Box Program will be transferred to producers of plastic and other packaging.

Ontario is now well-positioned to transfer the Blue Box Program to a full producer responsibility model, which would better allow producers to effectively and accountably promote waste diversion, better manage the handling of products and packaging at the end-of-life stage, and reduce the burden on municipal taxpayers, which currently exceeds $120 million a year.

A full producer responsibility model for the Blue Box Program will also make producer companies more responsible for the true costs of recovering materials from the waste stream, and encourage improved diversion of waste from landfills.

OWMA looks forward to further consultations among stakeholders, including stewards, municipalities and service providers (e.g. collectors, haulers, processors, recycled product manufacturers) as the transition plan is further developed. It is vital that waste service providers and municipalities receive transparent and clear communications on a regular basis during development and implementation of the plan.

Background

Some of the first curbside recycling programs were introduced by Ontario municipalities in the 1980’s. Ontario’s internationally recognized Blue Box Program has helped Ontarians achieve a 62% rate of recycling. The decision to shift Blue Box to full producer responsibility will improve the program by ensuring the companies that manufacture products and packaging are incentivized to recover and reduce the waste from their products and increase the potential recyclable contents of their existing product packaging.

OWMA recommends the following measures be taken to ensure the successful transition of the Blue Box Program to a producer responsibility model:

- Set adequate recycling targets; targets should increase over time, and be flexible depending on the type of materials.
- Ensure a competitive bidding and procurement process for waste services such as: collecting, sorting and processing.
- Harness economic opportunity by requiring a mandatory amount of recycled content into products and packaging generated by producers.
- Reduce barriers to investing and building new waste management facilities.
- Improve the systems for ensuring that Blue Box materials that are collected are actually recycled, including following CSA Guidelines, waste audits and performance measurement.

Additional documents:

[OWMA Submission to Ontario Special Advisor on Waste and Recycling (July 11, 2019)]

Questions? Please contact us at info@owma.org