

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Increased Recycling

Province Proposes Legislation to Increase Recycling

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I'm sure you're as horrified as I when reading media stories about conscientious citizens dutifully separating their recycling from their garbage ? only to discover the majority is ending up as costly landfill.

Ontario generates nearly 12 million tonnes of waste materials annually. That's almost 2.3 kgs per person, per day. Of special concern is Ontario's landfill capacity that is expected to last less than 20 years.

It makes sense that increased diversion is needed to extend the lifespan of existing disposal sites.

Clearly, Ontario is generating too much waste, and not recycling enough. As a result, the province has introduced the new Waste Free Ontario Act that would encourage producers to turn more of their waste into new products by requiring them to take full responsibility for their products and packaging.

The new legislation would also help fight climate change by reducing greenhouse gas pollution that results from the landfilling of products that could otherwise be recycled or composted.

The province has posted a draft Waste Free Ontario strategy for public and stakeholder feedback. (The online strategy can be found at bit.ly/1ISjJG0). The draft strategy provides a roadmap for Ontario to become a province that produces zero waste and zero greenhouse gas pollution from waste. Together, the proposed legislation and strategy would:

Foster innovation in product and packaging design and encourage businesses to design long-lasting, reusable and easily recyclable products

Require full producer responsibility for the blue box program, removing the financial burden on municipal property taxpayers while ensuring all Ontarians continue to benefit from convenient blue box collection

Eliminate industry funded organizations that set fees that can be passed on to consumers

Encourage companies to look for ways to make their recycling processes more economical and stay competitive

Boost recycling in the business and institutional sectors, which will reduce waste and lower greenhouse gas emissions

Develop a plan to reduce the amount of organic materials going into landfills.

A new approach is needed to effectively increase diversion and keep valuable resources out of landfills. Shifting to a full producer responsibility model would maximize waste diversion in Ontario and provide environmental and economic benefits.

Existing recycling programs would continue under the new Act and responsibility for collection and recycling of the products would be transferred to individual producers. The proposed legislation would provide the producers with the flexibility to manage waste in the most cost-efficient manner.

We believe this would encourage innovation, lower recycling costs and give consumers access to more convenient recycling options. Shifting the costs of recovering product and packaging waste from municipal taxpayers to producers would also save money for municipalities and improve the sustainability of municipal services.

Under Ontario's proposed approach, consumers would continue to benefit from accessible and convenient recycling through the blue box. In fact, we expect the public will be able to recycle more materials than it can today because producers will be required to meet convenience and accessibility collection standards for more materials, such as furniture, carpets and fluorescent tubes and bulbs.

Waste Diversion Ontario would be transformed into an oversight body that would oversee producer responsibility and the existing waste diversion programs as they transition to the producer responsibility framework.

Under the proposed legislation, Ontarians' experience with, and access to, blue box services would not be affected. Because of service standards set through the legislation, Ontarians across the province would benefit from accessible and convenient blue box service. The proposed legislation would provide producers with the flexibility to manage waste in the most cost-efficient and effective manner. This would encourage innovation and lower recycling costs which should be reflected in lower costs for consumer goods.

The design of the proposed legislation would help to discourage eco-fees. Unlike the current system, producers would no longer be required to pay a set fee to mandated industry funding organizations to manage their product wastes. By removing the third-party, businesses would have the incentive to manage waste in the most cost-efficient way. This would encourage innovation, lower recycling costs and discourage eco-fees.

Fostering consumer fairness would be considered a matter of provincial interest under the proposed act. The province would be able to provide direction to producers on ensuring fairness to consumers, for example, by including any recycling costs into the final shelf price of a product.

I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.