

Smaller recycling bins can now be requested from Circular Materials

Residents looking to exchange the recently-arrived 95-gallon recycling bins for smaller 65-gallon models are now able to begin the process of doing so.

Last week, Mayor Tom Mrakas announced that a smaller blue bin cart option would soon be available through Circular Materials, the non-profit organization that will, following a Provincial shift in how recyclables are collected, be tasked with collecting municipal recycling biweekly beginning in 2026.

Residents will be able to call in or visit an online portal to request an exchange of their current 95-gallon Blue Bin for a smaller one from Circular Materials, said Mayor Mrakas on Thursday. I want to thank Premier Ford, Minister McCarthy, and GFL for working with us to ensure Circular Materials provides this much-needed option. And a sincere thank you to all my fellow N6 (Northern 6) Mayors we have worked tirelessly together to push for a solution that respects the needs and feedback of our residents.

Also, for those not repurposing their old Blue Bins, a plan for drop-off is being finalized and will be announced closer to January 1 when the Province transitions to producers being fully responsible for recycling.

Those looking to switch up their 95 gallon bins for the smaller model can request the change as of Wednesday afternoon, November 26, by visiting www.circularmaterials.ca/aurora or by calling GFL customer service at 1-833-779-4351.

Mayors of York Region's Northern 6 communities spent the previous two weeks in talks with Circular Materials and GFL, with the Province ultimately getting involved.

Todd McCarthy, Ontario's Environment Minister, issued a statement on November 15 stating Blue Box size options would be coming for concerned residents who said the 95-gallon models were both unwieldy and, in many cases, too big to be stored in their garages or elsewhere on their properties. They also said the size could pose issues for those with mobility challenges and even residents with sloping driveways.

While that was the word on November 15, the N6 Mayors, who represent York Region's Northern Six municipalities, issued a joint statement on November 18 stating their frustration in the process to get answers and resolutions.

Over the past week, N6 Mayors have presented clear and consistent demands to Circular Materials for smaller Blue Bin options a position that was validated and reinforced this weekend by both the Minister and the Premier of Ontario. Unfortunately, Circular Materials has not provided a firm and clear commitment on flexible bin size options for residents in N6 communities. This is particularly concerning given that other municipalities across the GTHA have successfully maintained their existing Blue Box sizes and collection schedules under the same Provincial producer-responsibility framework.

To be clear: Circular Materials has dictated the terms of this program since its inception and has ignored input from municipal staff throughout the past year. N6 municipalities were never consulted on the size of the new bins or the changes to collection schedules before the rollout began earlier this fall. In the absence of proper communication from Circular Materials, N6 Mayors and Town staff have worked to keep residents informed, answer questions, and advocate for practical, resident-focused solutions. Circular Materials' Board of Directors is expected to meet later this week to discuss smaller bin options. If that meeting fails to produce an immediate and concrete commitment to implement smaller bins in N6 communities, N6 Mayors will formally request that the Province terminate its contract with Circular Materials and allow municipalities to resume control of their local Blue Bin programs including maintaining current bin sizes and service levels.

We will continue to keep residents informed of developments and will not stop advocating for fair, flexible, and responsive recycling options for all N6 communities.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter