

**Ministry of the Environment,
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August 15, 2019

Ms. Glenda Gies
Chair
Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority
4711 Yonge Street, Suite 408
Toronto, ON M2N 6K8

Dear Ms. Gies:

The Blue Box program has been providing Ontarians with a convenient option for collecting and recycling paper products and packaging for many years. In recent years, it has become apparent that the growing challenges in delivering and funding the program must be addressed. After hearing from many interested parties, I believe the time has come to modernize and improve Ontario's Blue Box services by transitioning from the existing program that provides industry funding to reimburse a portion of municipalities' costs to a full producer responsibility model where industry will have control of both funding and operations. The transition to producer responsibility will ensure Ontarians' experience and access to existing Blue Box services will not be negatively impacted and that there are province-wide services available, including for Northern, rural and Indigenous communities.

As a necessary complementary step to transitioning to a producer responsibility model, I have issued direction to Stewardship Ontario (SO), pursuant to Section 14 of the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 (WDTA), to develop a plan in respect of the funding program for blue box materials under the WDTA (the SO Program) and for SO itself.

This direction will begin the process by which Ontario will implement a modern, producer-operated system that will provide consistent province-wide recovery of Blue Box materials under the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 (RRCEA), and ensure there is no disruption to Blue Box services.

Pursuant to Section 29 of the RRCEA, I am issuing policy direction to the Resource Productivity and Recovery Authority (the Authority) with respect to its duties relating to the SO Program under the WDTA.

This policy direction is complementary to my direction letter dated August 15, 2019 to SO issued pursuant to Section 14 of the WDTA to develop a plan in respect of the SO Program and SO.

I am directing the Authority, further to its duties under the WDTA related to its oversight of the SO Program and SO; determine the amount of money required by SO to carry out its responsibilities related to the SO Program under the WDTA; and monitor the effectiveness of SO while the plan is being implemented. To undertake these duties, the Authority should conduct the following activities.

- Ensure that real, potential or apparent conflict of interest concerns have been addressed prior to and during the development of the plan.
- Review the 2020-2025 program budgets for the SO Program jointly with SO to:
 - Develop an approach to ensure sufficient funds are available in relation to the plan.
 - Review SO's proposal to apportion assets, liabilities, rights and obligations among stewards of paper products and packaging and ensure the apportionment is fair and equitable.
- Administer the Datacall, calculate the annual steward obligation, and allocate steward funding to municipalities and First Nation communities including through the administration of the Continuous Improvement Fund in such a way that reflects the following expectations and conditions:
 - While allowing for natural growth of Blue Box services to new residential development or redevelopment, municipalities shall not reduce or expand existing level of Blue Box services that are eligible for funding under the program.
 - The funding for municipalities and First Nation communities to participate in the SO Program shall end over a three-year period between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025.
 - SO's role in transferring payments to a municipality or First Nation community under the SO Program shall end on the date that obligated producers have assumed full responsibility for the collection and management of blue box materials from that municipality or First Nation community.
 - The plan shall recognize, and be responsive to, the fact that a future regulation under the RRCEA shall set the criteria and process by which municipalities and First Nation communities will transfer to full producer responsibility.
 - The calculation of the funds due to be paid to each municipality and First Nation community under the SO Program shall be proportional to the number of months in a calendar year in which the municipality or First Nation community remains under the SO Program.
 - The Continuous Improvement Fund shall receive no additional contributions and shall end as soon as practical prior to December 31, 2025.

To facilitate such activities, it is expected that the Authority will obtain quarterly reports from SO within four weeks of the end of each remaining quarter in 2019-2025 regarding SO' revenues and expenditures in order for the Authority to oversee SO's development of the plan and, if approved by the Authority, the implementation of the plan.

When reviewing the plan, the Authority shall assess whether it is consistent with the direction letter issued to SO and its compliance with the WDTA and its regulations.

I also expect that the Authority will consult with representatives of municipalities, Indigenous peoples, stewards and other affected parties when assessing SO's proposed plan, as required by subsection 14(14) of the WDTA.

It is my expectation that the Authority shall approve the plan for the SO Program and SO no later than December 31, 2020.

I trust the Authority will engage with SO on an ongoing basis to ensure management of SO's affairs in accordance with the WDTA and its regulations, having regard to the plan for the SO Program and SO.

Lastly, the Authority shall make publicly available on the Authority's website my direction letter to SO as well as this policy direction letter.

Sincerely,

Jeff Yurek
Minister

c: Mr. Serge Imbrogno, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Mr. John Coyne, Chair, Stewardship Ontario