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This submission from Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO) is in respect to a policy proposal from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MOECP).

RCO is a multi-stakeholder, not-for-profit organization committed to minimizing society's impact on the environment by eliminating waste. Members include municipalities, retailers, manufacturers, material management companies, brand owners, retailers, industry associations, schools, academics, and individuals. We are an independent and neutral organization that develops policy positions based on research, experience, and unfettered discussion with stakeholders.

Policy positions are taken with a focus on environmental outcomes based on a hierarchy that prioritizes waste prevention, resource reutilization, and conservation. Our mission is to inform and educate all members of society about the generation of waste, the avoidance of waste, the more efficient use of resources, and the benefits and/or consequences of these activities.

RCO is pleased to provide comment on *Preserving and Protecting Our Environment for Future Generations: A Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan*. This Plan outlines critical environmental issues that Ontario currently faces, which includes economic, environmental, and social losses associated with increasing generation of waste and disposal.

RCO estimates that 15 of Ontario's largest landfills will reach capacity within the next 10 years and potentially strand 48 million tonnes of material. In 2017, China, the world's biggest importer of recycled materials, abruptly applied restrictions that left western jurisdictions, including Canada and Ontario, with limited recycling options. As such, Ontario's commitment and expertise in waste reduction through reduced generation and increased recycling has never been as important as it is now.

The Plan identifies some important impacts caused by Ontario's increasing waste stream: prime land replaced to accommodate expanding and creating new landfills; greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated from waste; how waste reduction is an important objective to mitigate climate change; and pollution, such as plastic waste, contaminating Ontario's water and soil. RCO also supports many principles in the Plan, such as making polluters accountable; using energy and resources wisely; and the importance of government leadership.

The Plan, however, neglects to acknowledge additional and significant effects of waste:

- Economic losses of valuable discarded materials that could displace virgin materials in production cycles.
- Energy and water losses when goods are produced with virgin rather than recycled materials.
- Economic and social losses of sustainable jobs; the ratio of jobs created by recycling versus landfilling for every tonne disposed is 7:1.
- Economic and environmental losses and liabilities of maintaining landfill during and beyond lifespan.

It is important for the Plan to acknowledge all benefits of waste reduction as its consequences and benefits intersect with MOECP objectives.

RCO also notes the Plan contains deficiencies with pivotal aspects absent or requiring more detail. Our comments are prioritized by their ability to produce the most impact on waste elimination and drive waste reduction outcomes. RCO offers each recommendation in the spirit of maximizing results of its implementation.

Disposal Levies Absent

Jurisdictions around the world that boast higher waste reduction achievements and positive market transitions include broad-based disposal levies. Responsibly pricing the costs of pollution is important to account for full economic and environmental impacts of waste, and address the cost disparity between disposal and recycling that is often a barrier to attract investments to expand and support more recycling and/or reuse. Correcting disposal values to properly reflect their long-term pollution and loss of natural capital is fundamental to shift behaviours and markets that support a transition from a linear to circular economy. A provincial plan that is void of disposal levies undermines the overall objective of this transition that is a basic tenet to success.

Disposal Bans Beyond Organics Absent

Disposal bans are a proven and effective policy approach that provides governments the ability to target specific products and materials that may be hazardous when disposed of; are prevalent in the waste stream; and/or have the capacity to be managed through existing recycling processes, however, still end up disposal due to a lack of market supports or other type of policy pressures (i.e., producer responsibility).

Given the barriers that exist with Ontario's relatively inexpensive disposal costs, banning materials that already have recycling solutions or established diversion programs should be prioritized for the years 2019 and 2020.

RCO recommends the following products/materials be immediately considered:

- mercury-containing lamps;
- organics;
- fibre-based materials such as boxboard, cardboard, and paper; and
- metals.

Domestic processing capacity exists for each of these material types, and banning them from disposal will have instant and positive effect for Ontario businesses and the environment.

Targets, Monitoring, and Reporting Strategies Absent

The Plan consistently recognizes lack of progress on waste reduction and urgency, however, it does not offer any specific activities or targets to indicate how the Plan will be effective. The Plan does not provide any benchmark values from which to base its targets, nor does it offer any details on measurement and reporting to monitor progress. The Plan should be accompanied by a strategy that acts as a blueprint and sets specific targets and implementation timelines.

Furthermore, the Plan does not provide details of any expected impacts or contributions toward objectives for each of the independent actions it lists. What effect, expressed in absolute measures (tonnes), is targeted or attributed to each independent action item?

Government Procurement

RCO supports the Plan's commitment to government leadership on waste reduction objectives, and specifically, its procurement practices. The Government of Ontario annually procures approximately \$6 billion worth of goods, services, and construction in partnership with 52,000 vendors.

Commitment to examine and improve its own procurement policies and practices is one of the most important and impactful of all action items in the Plan. The Government of Ontario is an influential purchaser of goods and services that can have a substantial impact on reducing waste, and expanding recycling through its commercial relationships with vendors and service providers. It also provides funding to a broad sector of beneficiaries, including municipalities, hospitals, universities, colleges, and schools. As committed to in the Plan, government can have influence funding recipients and require them to actively leverage procurement and purchasing power to support waste reduction objectives.

RCO recommends the MOECP prioritize this action for 2019.

Food and Food Waste Lost to Disposal

The Plan recognizes that organic materials contribute more than 35 per cent of Ontario's disposal; represents a national economic loss of \$31 billion; and comprises a significant portion of GHG emissions attributed to the waste industry. RCO encourages government to prioritize action on organic wastes developing an implementation strategy with multiple short-term actions:

- Province-wide disposal ban.
- Government procurement requirements with all food-related vendors and service providers, as well as a requirement of organizations that receive government funding.
- Focus on the Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional (IC&I) sector and enforce reporting and source separation requirements from Regulations 102, 103, and 104. Progress with a full review of these regulations to modernize and make them more effective.

Prioritize the IC&I Sector

Program Investments

Policy-makers and program operators agree that Ontario's waste reduction objectives are dependent on improvements in the IC&I sector. RCO has long been advocating for policy and program reviews in Ontario to support improved waste reduction. Most recently, we have focused on new and expanded program offerings custom-made for the IC&I material generators, which includes [3RCertified](#) and [Take Back the Light](#).

Regulatory Review

RCO supports government commitment to prioritize waste reduction improvement in the IC&I sectors in particular starting with a full review of the 3Rs Regulations 102, 103, and 104.

Data and Reporting

Local governments manage household or residential waste and recycling as a matter of public safety, human health, and environmental conservation. The introduction of stewardship regulations has further entrenched the role of municipalities as they expand and improve materials management operations and build standardized program structures that allow them to collect and report detailed data, set benchmarks, and identify best practices. As public entities that are subsidized by taxpayers, municipalities operate openly and transparently, which facilitates some harmonization and standards setting. Data reporting and analytics for waste and recycling have always been part of the responsibility of management. For some materials, particularly those under regulation and subject to stewards' reimbursement, these data sets are reliable and robust.

Materials management in the IC&I sector is predominately serviced by the private sector, which is not required or motivated to share data for business and proprietary reasons. Materials move according to either service requirements and/or economic opportunity. Data reporting is not standardized at the point of generation nor by service providers (through billing or transport documentation).

Although some material records are kept for permitting processes these are limited to a subset of hazardous wastes, are not verified, and face significant time delays. Figures and reports are not required to be made public by government.

Sector Support

Through research and programs RCO understands the barriers that limit the improvement of waste reduction in the IC&I sector and the opportunities where these improvements can be made. While there has been a substantial amount of information and resources to improve energy efficiency through conservation and operational best practices, there is a lack of support for the IC&I sector to improve waste reduction and materials management. Unlike energy efficiency programs, there has not been direct connection made between economic savings and materials consumption and conservation through reduction and recycling. The IC&I generator is generally unaware of the economic losses associated with disposal.

The IC&I sector is also broad and diverse, and as such, it is difficult to pinpoint one policy tool or program that can address every barrier. However, there are several consistent and common barriers that RCO recommends be the focus of an improvement strategy.

Although Ontario is one of the only Canadian provinces to have waste reduction requirements for the IC&I sector its requirements are vague. Regulations require annual waste auditing, however, there are no specific data and reporting requirements or standardized methodologies. Similarly, although there is a requirement for a waste reduction plan, there are no recognized best practices, no reduction or diversion thresholds, and no requirements for generators to submit data. As such, value of auditing and planning is essentially lost.

Expand Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

RCO has long been a strong advocate for EPR as important policy to reduce waste, and supports the Plan's recognition of it:

We believe that producers should be responsible for managing the waste they produce. Placing responsibility squarely on those who produce the waste will help unleash the creative talents and energies of the private sector. Making producers responsible for the full life-cycle of their products and the waste they produce will help companies to consider what materials they use in and to package their products, and find new and innovative cost-effective ways to recycle them and lower costs for consumers. It can also make recycling easier and more accessible right across the province, keeping it clean and beautiful.

Producers have the most influence on the design and delivery of their products and services, and should be accountable for the environmental impacts of their goods past the point of purchase and use. RCO encourages the MOECP to prioritize and continue the transition of existing producer programs to the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act (RRCEA)*, including waste electrical and electronics, municipal special and hazardous wastes, and printed paper and packaging (PPP).

This transition is critical as it allows for numerous benefits:

- Greater and direct alignment between individual producer accountability with responsibility while allowing producers flexibility to manage their obligations.
- Shifts costs away from municipalities and their taxpayers.
- Provides opportunity to expand the list of targeted products and materials for each transitioning program, in particular, opportunity to expand the scope of obligations to include the IC&I sector.
- Designates new products and materials that are toxic and/or prevalent in the waste stream.
- Meaningful targets and consequences for non-compliance

Transitioning the Blue Box

The MOECP has an important and unique opportunity to transition the Blue Box program for PPP to full producer responsibility, and should consider this transition through a new designation under the RRCEA.

This will provide opportunity for municipalities and producers to support a timely Blue Box transition, and prepare operations and businesses for new roles and responsibilities under a full producer responsibility model.

Thermal Treatment of Waste

RCO supports production and consumption cycles that keep materials and resources at their highest and best use at all times; maximizes their value in their current state for as long as possible; and extends their life by using them as inputs in new production activities.

Thermal treatment of waste, while providing opportunity to extract embedded energy from materials, is a short-term and limited use of the inherent value of materials. If not regulated and monitored properly, thermal management could displace more valuable reuse and recycling applications. While thermal treatment presents more value than landfilling, it severely limits the opportunity to leverage full or potential value of materials. Consequently, it may demotivate the marketplace to innovate and invest in preferred post-consumer applications, and eliminate incentive to improve materials/product designs that integrate environmentally superior options at end of life.

Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that thermal treatment is considered disposal and does not count toward diversion targets made under regulation or claims made in voluntary reporting.

Thermal treatment facilities require significant investment and only make good on those investments if supply of materials for burning are readily available. This market dynamic may mean that recycling industries compete with thermal applications for the supply materials.

Responsible jurisdictions that have chosen to manage disposal through thermal technologies rather than landfill have done so under progressive diversion performance targets and reporting requirements that track landfill use, thermal treatment, and recycling activities separately and transparently. This ensures that effects of thermal management are public; maintains recycling as a preferred option; and avoids perverse markets shifts that redirect valuable materials to recycling rather than lost to thermal applications or disposal.

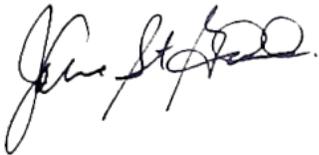
RCO recommends the MOECP undertakes the following activities prior to considering thermal technologies as a waste management strategy:

1. Global scan of jurisdictions that permit thermal treatments of waste and examine impacts and costs with particular focus on waste diversion performance.
2. Publicly list, for comment, materials that the MOECP considers safe and economically viable for thermal treatment with clear rationale for each.
3. Conduct a full economic and environmental impact analysis:
 - a. Full costing of infrastructure and operational, short- and long-term, for thermal treatment of materials.
 - b. Potential short- and long-term effects on the recycling industry.

Preserving and Protecting Our Environment for Future Generations: A Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan is an important initiative that will continue to move Ontario into a place of environmental leadership and accelerate the transition to the circular economy.

Thank you for your consideration, and we would be pleased to discuss the contents of this submission at your convenience.

Yours Sincerely,



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