

For immediate release: August 24, 2020

Fifty-two groups call on Ontario government to take advantage of once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fix the Blue Box and eliminate packaging waste

*The environmental and civil society groups released a joint statement today that sets expectations for forthcoming regulation to address Ontario's packaging, paper, and packaging-like products (PPPP) waste*

Toronto, Ont. – As the province considers changes to the Blue Box program, 52 environmental and civil society groups released a joint statement calling on the government to address the failings of its recycling system and transition Ontario to a circular economy.

*Ontario - Recycling is the Last Resort* unites the voices of local, regional and national groups calling on the provincial government to adopt a regulation under the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2015* that ensures products and services are fundamentally redesigned to prevent waste, and that companies are financially and operationally responsible for their products' end-of-life.

"For decades, consumers have been led to believe that recycling is *the* solution to Ontario's waste issues, but the truth is recycling systems were never designed to manage the volume and complexity of materials on the market," says Ashley Wallis, Plastics Program Manager at Environmental Defence. "We need the province to set and enforce high waste-diversion targets that encourage companies to phase-out hard-to-recycle materials, especially lightweight plastic films, styrofoam and black plastic."

Only about seven per cent of Ontario's waste is recycled. The rest is sent to landfills or incinerators, or ends up in the environment. To date, the province's efforts to divert waste from landfill have largely focused on the residential sector. However, two-thirds of Ontario's waste is generated in the industrial, commercial and institutional (IC&I) sectors. The joint statement calls on the province to include all sources of packaging, paper, and packaging-like products (PPPP) from *all* sectors.

"The best and most important opportunity to improve recycling of packaging and plastics is missed with these proposed regulations," says Jo-Anne St. Godard, Executive Director of Recycling Council of Ontario. "While transitioning the full cost of the Blue Box program to industry is vital, not including the IC&I sector ignores nearly 70 per cent of packaging and plastics waste generated across Ontario that ultimately ends up in landfill or lost to the environment."

The groups say the regulation must provide accessible service to all Ontarians, regardless of where they live, and should require that public spaces like parks and community centres are serviced as well.

“These new regulations should make it easier—not harder—for people to recycle,” says Emily Alfred with the Toronto Environmental Alliance. “Instead, we’re hearing that Blue Box services could be scaled back or stopped altogether for schools, parks, and many residents. This doesn't make sense. Producers should be required to provide recycling services to all Ontarians where they live, work and play.”

The transition to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)—where companies are financially and operationally responsible for their waste—is an essential part of the transition to a circular economy. However, the devil is in the details, and the province needs to adopt a regulation that ensures human health.

"Effective Extended Producer Responsibility regulations prevent waste *and* avoid toxic chemicals," states Fe de Leon, Researcher and Paralegal with the Canadian Environmental Law Association. "The Province's proposed EPR approach doesn't require producers to redesign for toxic-free products and packaging, nor does it prevent recycling of toxic chemicals. Ontario needs a regulation that keeps materials containing toxic chemicals out of the Blue Box, and avoids relying on solutions such as burning of waste, energy-from-waste, incineration and chemical recycling to manage problematic materials."

For a full list of signatories, please see the *Ontario - Recycling is the Last Resort statement*.

-30-

For more information or interview requests, please contact:

Jen Mayville, Environmental Defence Canada, 905-330-0172 (cell),  
jmayville@environmentaldefence.ca

Cedric de Jager, Recycling Council of Ontario, 416-657-2797 ext. 6,  
media@rco.on.ca

Emily Alfred, Toronto Environmental Alliance, 416-543-1542,  
emily@torontoenvironment.org

Fe de Leon, Canadian Environmental Law Association, 416-960-2284 ext 7223;  
416-317-1063 (cell), deleonf@ccla.ca

John Jackson, Citizens' Network on Waste Management, 519-744-7503,  
jackson@web.ca

Olga Speranskaya, Health and Environment Justice Support, 613-252-9839,  
olga.speranskaya@hej-support.org

Duncan Bury, Waste Watch Ottawa, 613 406-8262 (cell), la.db@sympatico.ca