



2025 ANNUAL WASTE MANAGEMENT REPORT

PARTNERSHIPS DRIVING

Reduction | Reuse | Recycling | Recovery

York Region

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Municipality of York's 2025 Annual Waste Management Report provides a comprehensive summary of York Region's integrated waste management system performance while showcasing progress towards the objectives of the SM4RT Living Plan, York Region's Waste Management Master Plan. This report is submitted annually to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, fulfilling a requirement of the Durham York Energy Centre's Environmental Assessment condition for diversion reporting.

Waste management services in York Region are delivered collaboratively between York Region and its nine local cities and towns, serving 1.29 million residents in over 420,000 households. In 2025, York Region managed 361,034 tonnes of waste, including garbage, organics, recycling and yard waste collected from local municipal curbside collection and public drop-off facilities.

The SM4RT Living Plan outlines a long-term vision for waste diversion and prevention to 2050 and beyond – to create a world in which nothing goes to waste. The plan is guided by three objectives:

Successfully navigate legislative changes

Use resources and infrastructure strategically

Advance the circular economy

The plan was updated and approved by York Regional Council in 2025 to include new priority actions to enhance the Region's commitment to sustainable waste management. These new actions include:

- Build new infrastructure to accommodate future growth and manage costs
- Align waste depot services to meet changing community needs

The circular economy remains a priority, with actions to strengthen partnerships and use data to enhance education and promotional campaigns.

In 2025, York Region and its local cities and towns navigated the final stages of the provincial transition of the Blue Box Program, including decisions about collection contracts, managing ineligible sources and informing residents of upcoming changes. The producer-led program started on January 1, 2026, with changes bringing some challenges and unanticipated costs. Post transition, the Region will remain responsible for processing garbage, green bin, yard waste and depot-based materials, including some recyclables, while local cities and towns will continue to manage collection for garbage, green bin, yard waste and other special curbside collections (scrap metal and bulky items).



2025 AT A GLANCE



117,920 tonnes
RESIDUAL WASTE
Sent to energy-from waste facilities



106,252 tonnes
GREEN BIN ORGANICS
Processed



50,500 tonnes
BLUE BOX RECYCLING
Marketed



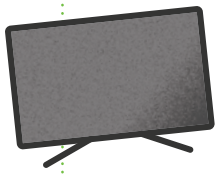
43,481 tonnes
LEAF AND YARD WASTE
Composted



1,687 tonnes
DEPOT DIVERSION
Recycled



1,265 tonnes
HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE
Properly disposed



770 tonnes
ELECTRONIC WASTE
Recycled



1,478 tonnes
TEXTILES/ HOUSEHOLD GOODS
Reused or repaired

90%
DIVERSION FROM LANDFILL

In 2025, York Region achieved a 90% diversion from landfill rate, a 2% reduction from the previous year. This decline was due to an unplanned, temporary shutdown of one of the Region's contracted energy-from-waste (EFW) facilities from April to August 2025. Despite maximizing diversion to other EFW processors, more materials were redirected to landfill during this time.

After 2025, the diversion-from-landfill rate will no longer include blue box tonnage in its calculation. As a result, the diversion rate will be affected and this performance measure will not be included as part of the 2027 – 2031 Corporate Strategic Plan. Ongoing reporting on this performance measure will not be possible after 2026.

It is important to note the following:

- Performance of the Blue Box Program will be reported on by producers in accordance with regulatory requirements. Reporting will occur at the Provincial level rather than the municipal level
- The Annual Waste Management Report will continue to provide metrics on garbage and green bin generation rates, waste disposal and the quantities of material directed to energy-from-waste facilities and landfill

2025 AT A GLANCE

Participation in programming

The Region provides residents with convenient access to information and services to support participation in the circular economy. These resources include the waste depot network and a growing number of community-led, circular economy programs such as the Circular Economy Initiatives Fund (CEIF), the Good Food Challenge, Lenderies, Repair Cafés and the Recycle to Ride program. These programs, along with textile bins at municipal facilities support reduction, reuse and recycling in the community, resulting in 1,478 tonnes of material being reused or repaired instead of thrown away. Region staff also provide waste education and promotion at community events, online through social media and at york.ca/WasteEducation driving more action at the household level.

Circular Economy Program participation

12,479

Outreach engagement

2,688

Reuse and repair programs keep material in use, avoid disposal costs

Waste reduction is an important pillar of the Region's waste management plan. As our population grows, so does demand for sustainable waste processing and disposal services. Similar to investing in energy or water conservation efforts, offering programs and services that encourage waste reduction and reuse reduces demand for landfill and energy-from-waste capacity, along with associated environmental and financial costs.

In 2025, reuse and repair programs supported by the Region and local cities and towns kept over 1,400 tonnes of textiles and household items in use and out of the garbage, allowing residents to save money and support their communities. It also reduced the amount of material the Region managed, avoiding approximately $200,000 in disposal costs.

Globally, the circular economy is being recognized as an important approach to mitigating the financial, social and environmental costs of waste. The United Nations Global Waste Management Outlook 2024 report estimates that at our current rate, global waste management costs could rise to USD $640 billion by 2050. In comparison, "projections show that a circular economy model…could in fact lead to a full net gain of USD $108.5 billion per year."

32 PARTNERSHIPS
supporting the Circular Economy in York Region

6,988 Borrowed items and renewals at Lenderies

3,109 Residents engaged in the Good Food Challenge activities

948 Composter purchases

656 Residents received refurbished bikes from Recycle to Ride

423 Attendees of Repair Cafés

355 Participants in CEIF projects



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CEIF Partner Events



Recycle To Ride
City of Markham



Threading Change Fair Fashion Festival
City of Vaughan

York Region Events



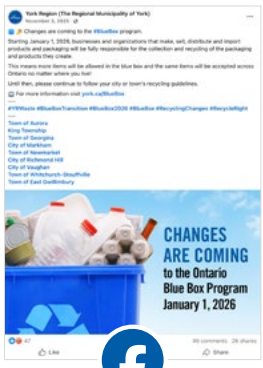
Chippewas of Georgina Island Pow Wow
Town of Georgina



York Region Pride
Town of Newmarket

Popular Posts





Impressions
884,486

Reach
666,384

Social media posts
282

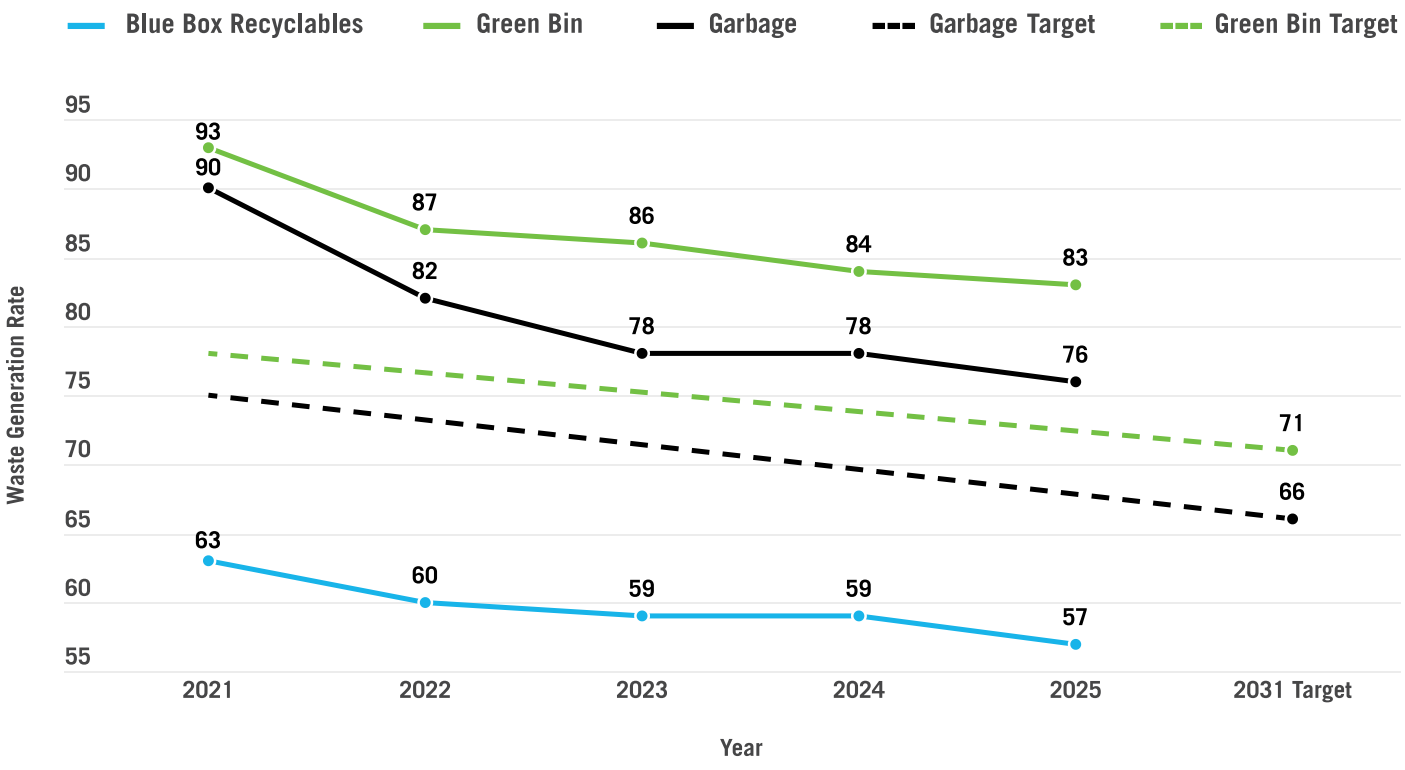
WASTE GENERATION

Future waste-generation rates are unclear given the Blue Box Program transition and evolving economic conditions

With the transition of the Blue Box Program to full producer responsibility in 2026, future reporting will focus primarily on green bin (organics) and garbage (residual waste), which remain municipal responsibilities. Overall, waste generation rates continue on a downward trend (Graph 1). In 2025, waste generation rates decreased across all streams. Compared to 2024 results, blue box materials declined by 3.4%, garbage by 2.6% and green bin waste by 1.2%.

As shown in Graph 1, waste generation rates remain above the 2031 targets. While there are some signs of improvement, overall outcomes remain uncertain. The impacts of the blue box transition and broader external factors are still emerging. The Region will continue to monitor waste generation trends within a shifting economic and regulatory environment to assess the achievability of long-term targets.

Graph 1: YORK REGION RESIDENTIAL CURBSIDE WASTE GENERATION RATE (KILOGRAM/CAPITA)



WASTE GENERATION

Waste generation rates have remained on a downward trend for five years

Since waste generation rates peaked during COVID-19, all cities and towns in York Region saw a steady or declining waste generation rate, consistent with the overall Regional five-year trend. Several factors may have contributed to this decline, including population changes, evolving consumer habits, a shift in packaging materials and types, broader economic conditions and the rising cost of living. Food prices have risen by approximately 27% over the past five years, influencing purchasing and consumption behaviours. According to the York Region Fall 2025 Community Opinion Insights Report, 57% of residents reported that their personal financial situation is the same or better than this time last year and 60% expect it to remain the same or improve over the next year. Households may have adjusted their spending habits, possibly leading to overall waste reduction. Residents' overall satisfaction with York Region services has improved (88%) over the past year's results with high ratings for Waste Management (85%).

FIVE-YEAR TREND: NORTHERN TOWNS' RESIDUAL GARBAGE AND GREEN BIN WASTE GENERATION RATE (KG PER CAPITA)

WASTE TYPE		Aurora		East Gwillimbury		Georgina		King		Newmarket		Whitchurch-Stouffville	
Green Bin Waste	2021	88kg	9.1%	91kg	8.8%	77kg	10.4%	92kg	20.7%	83kg	7.2%	87kg	12.6%
	2025	80kg		83kg		69kg		73kg		77kg		76kg	
Residual Waste	2021	95kg	16.8%	99kg	18.2%	114kg	21.1%	108kg	22.2%	95kg	20.0%	101kg	20.8%
	2025	79kg		81kg		90kg		84kg		76kg		80kg	

FIVE-YEAR TREND: SOUTHERN CITIES' RESIDUAL GARBAGE AND GREEN BIN WASTE GENERATION RATE (KG PER CAPITA)

WASTE TYPE		Markham		Richmond Hill		Vaughan	
Green Bin Waste	2021	100kg	9%	91kg	9.89%	93kg	12.90%
	2025	91kg		82kg		81kg	
Residual Waste	2021	72kg	13.8%	88kg	11.36%	100kg	15%
	2025	62kg		78kg		85kg	

TRENDS: DOWNWARD UPWARD NEUTRAL

WASTE GENERATION

How well are residents sorting?

The SM4RT Living Plan will leverage audit data to monitor diversion program performance, identify opportunities for new programs and inform education and advocacy.

It is important to note waste audit data reflects conditions observed at a specific point in time. Results may vary due to short-term or situational factors, which can limit the ability to draw conclusions about long-term trends.

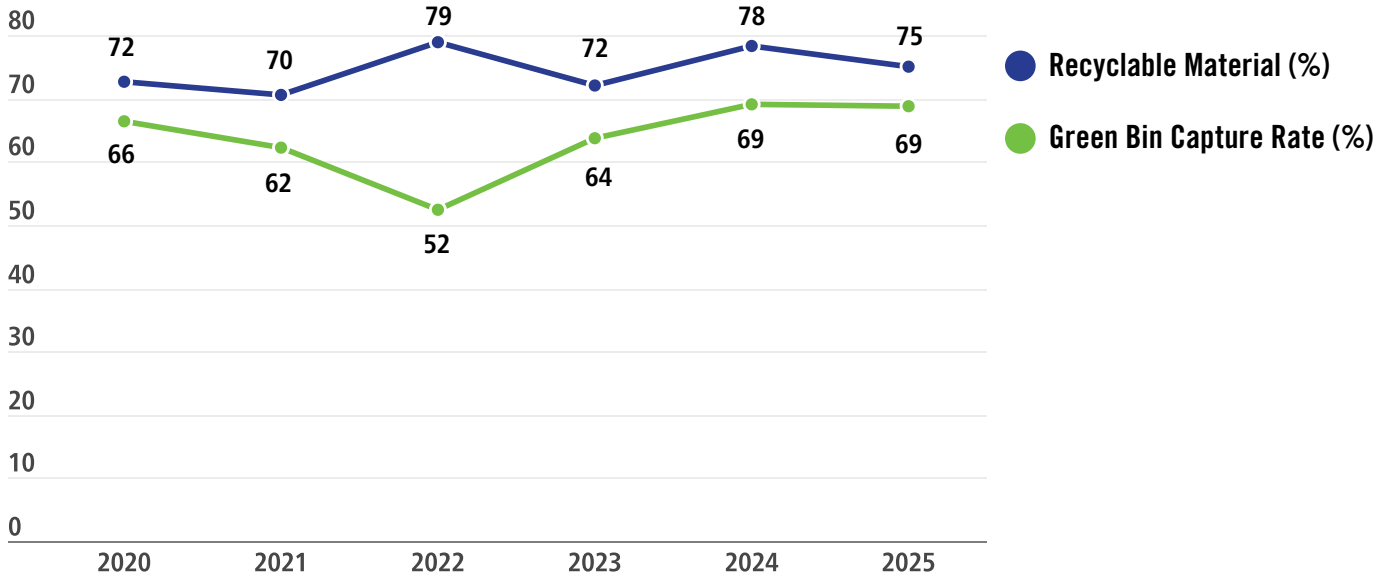
Over the past five years, green bin capture rates and the amount of divertible materials in the garbage have remained steady. While residents who actively use the green bin appear to understand what materials are accepted, the consistent capture rate (Graph 2) suggests there is significant potential to divert additional organic waste from the garbage stream. This is supported by the continued presence of recyclable and organic materials in the garbage, indicating opportunities to redirect these materials to appropriate diversion programs. Collectively, these trends point to the need for targeted communication strategies to educate our residents on materials sorting.

Green Bin Capture Rate: 69% of the organics generated by households are correctly sorted into the green bin by residents (Graph 2).

EPR **Garbage (Designated materials):** Approximately **42%** of materials in the garbage stream are accepted under regulated, producer-led programs, including existing and new materials to be added to the Blue Box Program in 2026. This establishes a 2025 baseline to track year-over-year impact of extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs on garbage generation in York Region.

Garbage (Recyclable materials): Approximately **75%** of materials in the garbage stream are eligible for diversion under EPR programs and municipal diversion streams like green bin and textile reuse (Graph 2).

Graph 2: GARBAGE (RECYCLABLE MATERIALS) AND GREEN BIN CAPTURE RATE



WASTE GENERATION

2025 Audit Data Highlights

About 75% of materials disposed of in the garbage stream are divertible through the blue box, green bin or other Regional waste programs. Table 1 shows divertible and non-divertible materials in the garbage stream. Non-food waste organics such as diapers, pet waste, tissues and toweling (24%), small household items like textiles (17%), paper packaging (8%), food waste (5%), plastics (4%), bulky items (4%) and paper (4%) represent the largest diversion opportunities in the garbage stream.

The green bin capture rate was approximately 69%, indicating that just over two-thirds of organic material generated by households is diverted through the program, while about 31% continues to be disposed of in the garbage and blue box streams. About 14% of food waste in the green bin was avoidable and could be reduced through improved food purchasing, storage and meal-planning practices.

Communications campaigns integrate data insights, market research and leverage partnerships for expanded reach to maximize impact

Many factors influence the purchasing, use and waste-sorting choices residents make on a day-to-day basis. Consistent and engaging communication is key to driving lasting behaviour change. Post-pandemic, the Region, local cities, towns and community partners have increased efforts to educate and engage residents about the circular economy. Waste generation and contamination rates have steadily declined during this time, demonstrating a positive return on investment. Building on this momentum, audit findings and further research into motivations and barriers to reducing and diverting waste will guide development of impactful behaviour change campaigns.

Table 1: DIVERTIBLE AND NON-DIVERTIBLE MATERIAL IN THE GARBAGE STREAM

Material Category	Material Composition%
Divertible	**75%**
Non-food waste organics	24%
Small household items (including textiles, toys and more)	17%
Paper packaging	8.4%
Food waste	5%
Plastics	4.3%
Bulky items	4%
Paper	4%
Electronics	2.5%
Other divertible materials	5.8%
Non-Divertible	**25%**
Non-recyclable plastics	19%
Construction and renovation	3%
Other waste	3%

In 2025, we invested the equivalent of $0.50 per household in community agencies to deliver innovative programs such as Good Food, Lenderies, Repair Cafés, Recycle to Ride and the Share Reuse Repair Hub

OBJECTIVE 1: SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

2025 was a year of significant change in waste management in Ontario

The final year of Ontario's transition to a producer responsibility system marked a major shift in how packaging and designated products are managed at end of life, placing that responsibility on brand owners and manufacturers. The process began in 2019 with the Tire Program and continued with the Blue Box Program from 2023 to 2025, marking a significant shift in municipal waste management responsibilities.

With the transition complete, the focus over the next five years will be to monitor outcomes and assess the long-term impacts of this change.

A key priority will be to measure the performance of producer-led programs by examining the amount of designated materials in the garbage and green bin streams, compared to baseline pre-transition audit data. With the transition of Ontario's Blue Box Program to full producer responsibility, it will take time for audit and diversion data to reveal clear, reliable trends. When designated blue box producer materials end up in the garbage stream, they create avoidable costs for municipalities. Systematically tracking this information over time strengthens the evidence base needed for effective advocacy and supports efforts to reduce the financial burden on the tax levy.

Blue Box Program transition included unexpected challenges for municipalities and residents

During the final stages of the Blue Box Program transition, municipalities experienced operational and communication challenges. Circular Materials, the Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) managing the new Blue Box Program, did not fully launch its public communications campaign until late 2025. These delays left York Region and the local cities and towns with limited time to update promotion and education materials to align with changes in collection schedules, methods and materials accepted. The implementation of large, wheeled carts and the transition to bi-weekly collection in the northern six towns were major program changes that contributed to an increase in resident inquiries and service-related concerns. No service changes were made in the southern cities regarding collection containers or service frequency, resulting in concerns about inconsistent service offerings across the Region.

Local cities and towns led promotional and educational efforts to support residents during the transition. The Region complemented this work by updating the york.ca/BlueBox web page, providing support through the Corporate Contact Centre and updates to Bindicator, the online waste lookup tool.



OBJECTIVE 1: SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

01

Delayed servicing and ineligible sources will impact municipal budgets post-transition

Late amendments to the producer responsibility Blue Box Program regulations, finalized in September 2025, included delayed planned service expansion for multi-residential buildings, schools and non-profit long-term care homes, not already municipally serviced, until 2031. In addition, public space collection was reduced to only include bins located on residential collection routes. These changes have affected collection efforts, with some cities and towns continuing service to business improvement areas, municipal facilities and multi-residential buildings outside the common collection system. The Region will continue to fund the processing costs of these source locations for communities that have chosen to continue collection, in addition to offering free drop-off at select York Region waste depots. Costs and usage of this service will be monitored over the first full year of transition to assess overall sustainability and impacts on budgets.

Expanded material list has potential to reduce garbage stream and address challenging materials such as black plastic, polystyrene, plastic bags and pouches

Under the new producer-led Blue Box Program, the list of accepted materials has expanded to include a broader range of packaging and paper products, many of which were previously excluded due to processing and end-market limitations. This harmonized, province-wide approach is intended to enhance clarity and convenience for residents while increasing overall diversion by capturing more recyclable materials at the curb. Measurable impacts and data from the new system may not be available for some time as the province has established a "best efforts" approach for the first two years after implementation of the new materials, with enforceable recycling targets beginning in 2028 and enhanced targets in 2032. The Region will be measuring the amount of designated material found in the garbage and green bin streams through waste audits to monitor the impact of EPR over time.



OBJECTIVE 2: USE RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGICALLY

02

In 2025, work continued on key contracts and projects including the Convertus York Biofuel Facility and upgrades to York Region waste depots. The SM4RT Living Plan update identified actions to further enhance waste transfer and processing resilience and efficiency through the development of new facilities, expanded transfer capacity and the exploration of long-term energy-from-waste solutions.

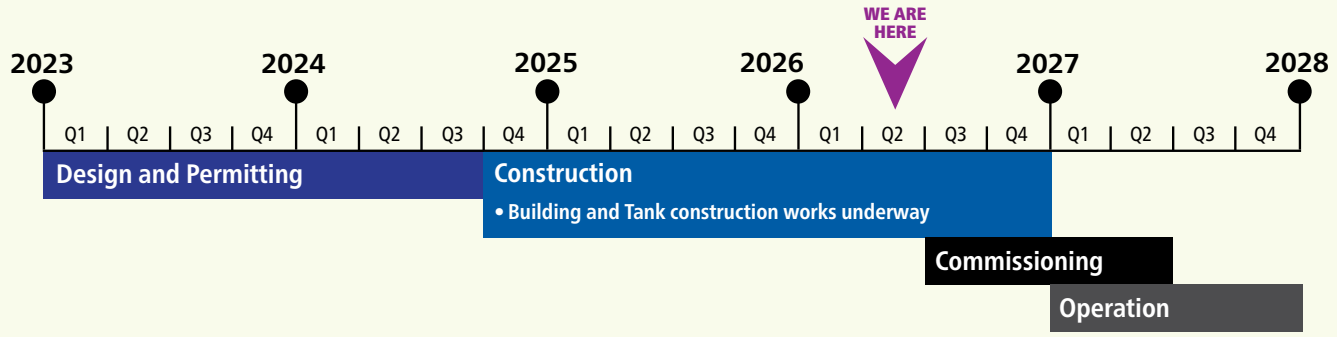
Construction on schedule for the Convertus York Biofuel facility

Construction of the Convertus York Biofuel Facility continued through 2025 with operations scheduled to begin in early 2027. The project will decrease long-distance trucking of organic waste, lower greenhouse gas emissions and support York Region's long-term sustainability and climate goals.



Construction of Convertus York Biofuel Facility in the Town of East Gwillimbury

Biofuel Facility Timeline



Initiated two new capital projects approved in the SM4RT Living Plan update

Planning is underway for two capital projects approved in the SM4RT Living Plan update: a leaf and yard waste facility adjacent to the Waste Management Centre and a new waste transfer station with contracted operations to service a portion of Southern York Region. These projects will provide long-term location certainty for local municipal collection trucks, facilitate competitive pricing from service providers, reduce operating costs and leverage existing York Region assets.

York Region plans for energy-from-waste (EFW) capacity for long-term disposal needs

In 2025, 117,920 tonnes (76%) of York Region's 155,232 tonnes of residual waste were managed through EFW facilities. York Region currently manages its residual waste through three EFW contracts. Both Emerald Energy from Waste and Durham York Energy Centre contracts are scheduled to expire in 2036, with extension options to 2046, while the contract with Reworld Niagara expires in 2028. Discussions are ongoing to secure cost-effective, reliable long-

OBJECTIVE 2: USE RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGICALLY

02

term capacity through Emerald Energy from Waste's planned expansion, a potential Reworld Niagara contract extension and a possible future expansion of the Durham York Energy Centre.

In addition to exploring expanded EFW capacity through existing contracts and as part of York Regional Council's approval of the updated SM4RT Living Plan, in 2026, York Region will investigate interest from local cities and towns to host a future energy-from-waste facility.

York Region waste depots continue to offer safe and reliable operations

York Region manages five waste depots accepting a variety of materials that are challenging or not accepted through curbside collection. With over 280,000 visits annually, these sites provide a valuable community resource. In 2025, waste depots underwent capital upgrades to maintain and improve depot customer experience and infrastructure safety, reliability and effectiveness. Upgrades included structural repairs to fix damage from a fire at the Georgina Transfer Station in 2024 and site resurfacing and system improvements at McCleary Court Community Environmental Centre.

At several locations, on-site signage was used to educate visitors on proper battery disposal and to delete personal data from electronic devices prior to disposal.

Georgina Transfer Station also supported ice-storm clean-up for residents in impacted communities, demonstrating its ongoing value during emergencies.

York Region is also negotiating servicing agreements with producer responsibility organizations (PROs) to secure better compensation for collection and management of the designated materials, including blue box recyclables. This work is ongoing, as the Region is committed to cost recovery and providing residents continued access to convenient household hazardous waste (HHW) and residential recyclable material drop-off locations.





Waste depot visits

287,782







OBJECTIVE 3: ADVANCE A CIRCULAR ECONOMY 03

Reaching our long-term waste reduction targets requires a continued focus on increasing awareness of how the circular economy benefits our community, driving behaviour change and expanding opportunities to participate in programming by building partnerships. As approved in the SM4RT Living Plan, Regional and partner data on participation, waste sorting habits and additional market research will help guide efforts over the next five years.

Program participation data points to opportunities to enhance access to cost-saving circular economy programs for residents across the Region

Participation in circular economy programs has grown over the past five years with participant data guiding evaluation and future planning. Table 2 shows 2024 participation in Repair Cafés throughout York Region. The outcomes show participation was highly location-dependent for smaller, more isolated communities, while in more central areas residents travelled across municipal boundaries to attend programs. Continued efforts to cost-effectively expand program reach through partnerships with local cities and towns, libraries and community organizations will be pursued over the next four years to help build capacity across the Region. For example, in 2025 each York Region city and town hosted at least one Repair Café. To meet expanded demand, the Region is working with local municipal and library partners to contribute funds and in-kind support to continue growth.

Reduction and diversion opportunities identified through York Regions waste audits

As noted earlier, waste generation rates declined slightly from those seen in 2024. Because waste generation is influenced by many factors, waste audit data plays a key role to validate garbage and green bin streams and identify opportunities for reduction and diversion. These insights support planning for education, market research, program development and evaluation.

Table 2: REACH OF REPAIR CAFÉ PARTICIPATION

Repair Cafe Location	Aurora	East Gwillimbury	Georgina	King	Markham	Newmarket	Richmond Hill	Vaughan	Whitchurch-Stouffville
Aurora Public Library	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
East Gwillimbury Public Library	✓	✓	✓					✓	
King City Public Library	✓			✓	✓	✓			
Newmakeit/ Newmarket	✓				✓	✓	✓		
Richmond Hill Public Library					✓	✓	✓	✓	
Vaughan Public Library					✓	✓	✓	✓	
Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library					✓		✓		✓

OBJECTIVE 3: ADVANCE A CIRCULAR ECONOMY 03

Libraries continue to be valuable hubs for circular economy programs in the community delivered with the Region and community organizations

9 Repair cafes with **1.6 tonnes** of items repaired, hosted in partnership with Newmakeit

9 Library systems offering Lendery or Library of Things to their communities with over **840 available items**

5 Good Food Challenge weeks hosted with York Region Food Network engaged over **3,000 people**



Local cities and towns manage curbside collection and support reuse in the community

264 Community clean up days

228 Textile collection bins on municipal sites with **1,467 tonnes** reused

59 Curbside giveaway days across **9 communities**

13 Electronic waste collection events with **39 tonnes** collected



Community led programming supported through Regional funding reaches new audiences and inspires more engagement and action

12,479 People engaged

1,030 Bikes donated, **656 repaired and distributed** through Recycle to Ride program

20 Events hosted through Circular economy fund recipients



PARTNERSHIPS

Innovative reduction, reuse and diversion strategies emerge through collaboration partnerships

Community partnerships are key to York Region's success in developing and delivering SM4RT Living programs for residents. In 2025, we invested the equivalent of $0.50 per household in community agencies to deliver innovative programs such as Good Food, Lenderies, Repair Cafés, Recycle to Ride, the Share Reuse Repair Hub and three new projects approved under the Circular Economy Initiatives Fund.

The estimated cost to deliver all aspects of waste management services in 2025 was $319 per household per year, less than the cost of many comparable utilities such as energy, internet services and cell phones.

Collaborative efforts with local cities and towns bring innovative community programs, including Curbside Giveaway Days, specialized diversion programs for batteries, electronics and textiles to residents. Community partners also play a big role in tailoring programs to the unique needs of residents and extending coverage across the region.

York Region's Circular Economy Initiatives Fund offers $5,000 to $25,000 funding to non-profit organizations for community-driven, innovative projects that reduce residential waste and advance a circular economy within York Region. The program has funded 20 projects since it began in 2021.



PARTNERSHIPS

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN YORK REGION

Aurora
East Gwillimbury
Georgina
King
Markham
Newmarket
Richmond Hill
Stouffville
Vaughan
Aurora Public Library
B'nai Brith Canada
Circular Innovation Council
Conseil canadien du compost / Council of Canada
Diabetes Canada
East Gwillimbury Public Library
Fashion Takes Action
Georgina Public Library
Housing York Inc.
King Township Public Library
markham cycles
Markham Public Library
NEWMAKEIT
Newmarket Public Library – Inspiring Growth
Ontario Food Collaborative
Richmond Hill Public Library
Stouffville Library
Threading Change
Vaughan Public Libraries
Women's Centre of York Region
York Farm Fresh
York Region Food Council
York Region Food Network

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