

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Public Works

Proposal to Amend the Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement, Environmental Registry of Ontario Posting No. 019-2498

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. That Oxford County Council endorse the Oxford County submission in response to the Environmental Registry of Ontario Posting No. 019-2498 – ‘Proposal to amend the Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement’, as attached to Report No. PW 2020-56;**
- 2. And further, that Report No. PW 2020-56 be circulated to Area Municipalities for information.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to seek Oxford County Council’s endorsement of comments prepared by staff in response to the proposed amendments to the Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement, which was posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO No. 019-2498).
- The proposed policy amendments provide harmonization of efforts and clarity on types of food and organic material, including compostables, to be included in waste recovery and diversion programs.
- Submission comments were prepared by staff in conjunction with the Zero Waste Oxford (ZWO) Advisory Committee and the City of Woodstock.

Implementation Points

Following Council’s endorsement of this report, staff will submit final comments along with a copy of the Council resolution to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) by November 14, 2020.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with the recommendations contained in this report.

The Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

Risks/Implications

There are no risks or implications associated with the adoption of this report.

Strategic Plan (2015-2018)

County Council adopted the County of Oxford Strategic Plan (2015-2018) at its regular meeting held May 27, 2015. The initiative contained within this report supports the Values and Strategic Directions as set out in the Strategic Plan as it pertains to the following Strategic Directions:

3. i. **A County that Thinks Ahead and Wisely Shapes the Future** – Influence federal and provincial policy with implications for the County by:
 - *Advocating for federal and provincial initiatives that are appropriate to our county*
3. iii. **A County that Thinks Ahead and Wisely Shapes the Future** - Demonstrated commitment to sustainability by:
 - *Ensuring that all significant decisions are informed by assessing all options with regard to the community, economic and environmental implications including:*
 - o *Responsible environmental leadership and stewardship*
 - o *Supporting the community implementation of the Community Sustainability Plan*

DISCUSSION

Background

Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement

The Food and Organic Waste Provincial Policy Statement was issued pursuant to the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act (RRCEA), 2016* and was originally developed through stakeholder and public consultation. Comments from County staff and the Zero Waste Oxford (ZWO) Advisory Committee were submitted to MECP throughout policy development and were endorsed by County Council in Report No. [PW 2017-41](#) and Report No. [PW 2018-01](#).

The policy supports the vision and actions established in the provincial strategy for a *Waste-Free Ontario: Building a Circular Economy* and further supports Oxford County's goal of zero waste and zero poverty through the following objectives:

- Reducing food and organic waste by preventing food from becoming organic waste, including rescuing edible and surplus food;
- Recovering resources from food and organic waste (in particular) from multi-unit residential buildings and Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) sectors; and
- Supporting and promoting waste resource recovery infrastructure to support food and organic waste processing into valuable end product resources ranging from nutrient rich materials to renewable natural gas.

The proposed Policy Statement identifies municipalities, multi-residential and industrial, commercial and institutional (IC&I) entities with sector specific targets for food and organic waste recovery efforts. Local municipalities meeting population and density thresholds are required to provide curbside collection of source separated organics (SSO) as a preferred diversion method, although alternatives to SSO may be used if diversion targets can be met. Accordingly, the City of Woodstock is required to meet 50% waste reduction and resource recovery of food and organic waste generated by single family dwellings by 2025.

Local municipalities that do not meet the specified population/density thresholds, such as the other seven Area Municipalities in Oxford, are required to provide for resource recovery of food and organic waste at a minimum through means such as home composting, community composting and local event days.

The proposed amendments to the Policy Statement were informed through input received from public and stakeholders, including County Council endorsed comments, during the following consultations:

- Made-in Ontario Environment Plan, posted under ERO No. 013-4208
- Reducing Litter and Waste in Our Communities discussion paper, posted under ERP No. 013-4689 (Report No. [PW 2019-18](#))

Stakeholder feedback was also considered by the Province through establishment of the Food and Organic Steering Committee and Technical Working Groups in 2019.

At this time, the MECP is proposing to amend the *Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement*, as posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) (No. 019-2498) on September 30, 2020. The comment period for this posting closes on November 14, 2020.

Comments

[Proposed Amendments to the Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement](#)

In conjunction with the Zero Waste Oxford (ZWO) Advisory Committee and the City of Woodstock, staff have reviewed and are in support of the Ministry's proposed amendments to the *Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement*. In response to the ERO posting, staff have prepared comments (Attachment 1) for submission to the MECP following County Council endorsement and prior to the November 14, 2020 closing date.

The Ministry's proposed amendments to this policy statement will provide clarity around required recovery efforts and associated targets. Specifically, the proposed amendments to the Policy Statement will focus on:

1. Targets and Harmonization Efforts:
 - Greater flexibility in the type of collection program implemented by a municipality, with emphasis on the ongoing need to meet and/or exceed targets beyond 2025;
 - Province wide harmonization of materials to be handled under the collection program;

- Consistent promotion and education across the Province to reduce program confusion and facilitate behavioural changes; and,
- Increased accountability through publically posting annual diversion results.

2. Compostable Products and Packaging:

- Holding producers accountable to the end of life management of their products and packaging; and,
- Supporting effective management of compostable products and packaging through pilot projects and research on how best to process compostable products and packaging to maximize recovery and minimize contamination and what technology could be used to assist with this objective.

Staff support the proposed policy amendments for the following reasons:

- Harmonization of program requirements across the province will decrease public confusion, increase the effectiveness of promotion and educational campaigns, and increase the amount of material captured.
- Increased material recovery on a continual basis will secure existing end markets as well as establish new end markets, thus supporting the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act (RRCEA), 2016*.
- Increased material recovery will help reduce unacceptable material from the blue box program like compostable cutlery, coffee pods, etc.
- Giving municipalities the flexibility to decide what type of collection program to implement as long as targets are met acknowledges that there is not a one size fits all program for Ontario and the customization of programs may lead to increased program participation rates and cost efficiencies.
- Increased accountability to achieve targets as well as hold producers responsible for the end of life management of their products and packaging will incentivize innovation in waste recovery and reduction technologies.

The proposed amendments will not change policy criteria for sector specific organic waste reduction targets. Nor do the proposed amendments change the original policy objective of waste reduction and resource recovery through prevention and reduction of food waste, rescue of surplus food, and effective collection and processing of food and organic waste for reintegration of resources back into the economy.

This Policy Statement encourages consideration of regional approaches to facilitate the collection of food and organic waste from urban settlement areas. The Policy Statement also allows for flexibility in the type of collection program that is implemented. While the MECF acknowledges a preference for curbside SSO collection, the industry does recognize that curbside collection of SSO is limited in its sustainable capture rate of approximately 50-60% of residential organic waste and may not adequately achieve specified diversion targets. Further, curbside SSO collection programs do not typically capture organic waste generated by the multi-residential and IC&I sectors.

It is anticipated that through implementation of a regional approach to reduce and recover organic waste, alternatives to curbside SSO collection programs may yield higher diversion rates. Further exploration on alternative systems may afford the County opportunities to partner with other municipalities or pilot new technologies which may decrease the cost per tonne to operate the alternative collection system while increasing the overall landfill diversion rate.

[Oxford County Zero Waste Plan](#)

Oxford County Council adopted the Zero Waste Plan in 2016 (Report No. [CAO 2016-14](#)), and committed to achieving 90% overall waste diversion by 2025 to extend the service life of the County's landfill to the year 2100.

In support of advancing the Zero Waste goal, a County-wide waste audit and assessment of Waste Recovery and Reduction Technologies (WRRT) was undertaken in 2017. The findings of the waste audit (Report No. [PW 2017-42](#)) identified a significant amount of food and organic waste in the waste stream being landfilled. From this, it was estimated that Oxford County annually generates approximately 15,506 tonnes of organic material from the residential (7,362 tonnes), multi-residential (496 tonnes), and IC&I (7,648) sectors, to which this tonnage amount could be captured using alternative WRRT technology.

WRRT was investigated further for implementation through a conceptual enhanced mixed waste processing facility that would separate organics and other recoverable resources from the waste stream (Report No. [PW 2019-38](#)). However, WRRT procurement and implementation was paused in 2019 due to concerns with the magnitude of long term WRRT capital and operating expenditures required to achieve significant increases in landfill diversion, along with uncertainty regarding the potential diversion impacts of Full Producer Responsibility and Provincial regional governance review outcomes.

[County-wide Approach to Food and Organic Waste Recovery and Reduction](#)

As noted in the Background section of this report, Oxford County Area Municipalities, with the exception of Woodstock, do not meet the current population and density thresholds and are therefore not subject to the organic waste diversion targets specified in the policy statement.

The County-wide backyard composting and yard waste programs have been successful in reducing and recovering organic waste to some degree, and comply with the policy statement requirements for municipalities that are not subject to organic waste diversion targets.

Staff from the City of Woodstock, which undertakes waste management services under contract to the County, has indicated, although very preliminary, that they are considering implementation of a curbside SSO collection program to meet the policy statement diversion targets by 2025. However, it is recognized that curbside SSO collection is limited in its sustainable capture rate of approximately 50-60% of residential organic waste and may not adequately achieve specified diversion targets. Further, curbside SSO collection programs do not typically capture organic waste generated by the multi-residential and IC&I sectors.

The County, as the Waste Management authority, and the City of Woodstock will need to collaboratively evaluate the feasibility of a curbside SSO collection program as well as other

alternative technologies, such as WRRT, to ensure organic waste diversion is cost effectively maximized and implemented County-wide to provide a consistent level of service.

Advancing the County's Zero Waste goal and overall landfill diversion rate is expected to require technology implementation, such as WRRT, to effectively divert organic waste and other waste resources from landfilling.

Conclusion

Staff and the Zero Waste Oxford Advisory Committee support the MECP's Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement as it aligns with the County's Zero Waste and Zero Poverty initiatives. The proposed policy amendments provides clarity for types of material, including compostables, that should be included in collection programs and clear direction on management of those materials.

SIGNATURES

Report Author:

Original signed by:

Pamela Antonio, BES, MPA
Supervisor of Waste Management

Departmental Approval:

Original signed by:

David Simpson, P.Eng., PMP
Director of Public Works

Approved for submission:

Original signed by:

Michael Duben, B.A., LL.B.
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Oxford County Submission - Proposal to amend the Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement, ERO Posting # 019-2498