



The Role of the Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments in Solid Waste Management

Introduction

In order to have meaningful conversations about what the City should include in the Solid Waste Master Plan it is important to understand who has a role to play and the specific responsibilities of each level of government.

What role does the City of Ottawa play in solid waste management? What can be addressed through the Solid Waste Master Plan? What are the current federal and provincial initiatives and how can the actions of municipalities complement these plans and policies?

Overview of the roles

In Canada, all three levels of government have a role to play in waste management.

Federal government	Provincial governments	Municipal governments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regulates the international and interprovincial movements of hazardous waste and recyclables identifies best practices that will reduce the toxic pollution from the management of waste provides funding to reduce waste sent to landfill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish waste reduction policies and programs approve and monitor waste management facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> typically manage the collection, recycling composting and disposal of household waste influence management of waste from the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional sector

As the City of Ottawa prepares to develop the Solid Waste Master Plan, both the Canadian and Ontario governments are also in the process of reviewing and renewing their approach to waste and pollution, particularly with respect to plastic and food wastes.



Key federal initiatives

The Canadian government is working to reduce food waste and food loss and has published various reports to address this issue, including:

- The [Food Policy for Canada](#) roadmap for a more sustainable food system in Canada;
- The [Strategy on Short-lived Climate Pollutants](#), which looks at strategies to avoid food waste in Canada; and
- The [Taking Stock of Food Loss and Waste Reduction in Canada](#) report

The Canadian government is also taking action on plastic waste, recognizing the need to change the way we design, produce, use and dispose of plastics. Recent actions include:

- A commitment to implement a [single-use plastics](#) ban by 2021;
- Championing the development of the [Ocean Plastics Charter](#) in 2018, whereby government and business signatories commit to changing the way we manage plastics on land and at sea;
- Commitment to the [2018 Canada-wide Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste](#), which builds on the Ocean Plastics Charter by taking a [circular economy](#) approach to plastics; and
- The commitment to divert at least 75 per cent of plastic waste from federal operations by 2030.

Provincial tools and initiatives

The [Environmental Protection Act](#) enables the Province to regulate waste management systems, disposal sites and the disposal or diversion of certain types of waste. Through various regulations, the Province requires that:

- the City of Ottawa establish a blue box waste management system and a leaf and yard waste management system
- [Industrial, Commercial and Institutional \(IC&I\)](#) establishments separate the waste generated by their operations. This does not include the separation of organic waste. The IC&I sector includes multi-residential buildings, retail complexes, office buildings, construction and demolition projects, restaurants, hotels and educational institutions.



What changes is the Province considering?

In late 2016, Ontario introduced the *Waste Free Ontario Act* consisting of the *Waste Diversion Transition Act* and the *Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act*. These regulations are intended to increase **resource recovery** and move the province towards a **circular economy**.

The legislation supports the idea that producers should be responsible for the end-of-life management of their products and packaging after consumers have finished using them – a concept commonly known as **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**. Materials that are currently in the process of being moved over to EPR, or are expected to move over in the near future, include:

- Tires
- Electrical and electronic equipment and batteries
- Hazardous or Special Waste
- Blue Box Program materials

In addition, the Province may also introduce or amend other current legislation to support increasing diversion rates. One method the Province could decide to use is introducing disposal bans on materials such as:

- Beverage containers
- Corrugated cardboard and other paper materials
- Fluorescent bulbs and tubes

Food and organic waste

Food and organic waste have also been a focus for the Province, due to the negative effect of methane on climate change and the fact that processing this waste responsibly can turn it into a usable asset. The Province's "[A-Made-In-Ontario Environmental Plan](#)" currently estimates that approximately 60 per cent of all food waste is sent to the landfill. In response, the Province's Environmental Plan outlines:

- proposed actions for expanding green bin usage across the Province;
- a proposal for banning food waste from landfills;
- expanding outreach efforts for food reduction and diversion; and
- developing best practices for safe food donation.



The Municipal Role

Municipalities are the front-line governments responsible for waste in Canada. They are responsible for the bulk of residential waste management services. This could include, for example, curbside collection of organics, waste and recyclables and providing depot drop-off locations. The establishment of a Solid Waste Master Plan can help municipal governments ensure their responsibilities for this critical service can be met in a sustainable way over the long-term.

Municipalities can influence waste management through legislation. The next section describes key legislation the City of Ottawa can use to steer the management of waste. Depending on the direction taken by the Solid Waste Master Plan, this legislation could be used to help achieve certain goals.

The Solid Waste Management By-law

Currently the City's [Solid Waste Management By-law](#) provides a framework for the collection of garbage and recyclable material from residential dwellings and some City Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (IC&I) establishments, including municipal facilities and some multi-residential properties, small businesses and schools. The Solid Waste Management By-law can be amended to widen its scope, for example, the by-law could:

- set limits on the amount of waste that may be generated by residents;
- determine new fees for waste collection; and
- require the diversion of certain materials.

Municipalities can also further influence the management of waste from the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (IC&I) sector as long as this does not conflict with requirements imposed by relevant federal or provincial regulations.

Business and events

Through the [Business Licensing By-law](#), the City can influence waste management and diversion at businesses within the city. For example, the City could include requirements in this by-law for businesses to separate green waste, recyclables and garbage, or require that they implement waste diversion plans. Similarly, through a special events by-law, waste management at cultural, recreational and educational events can be steered by the City.

The development review process



Plan directeur des déchets solides

The City can also influence the disposal and diversion of waste through the development review process governed under the *Planning Act*. Currently, the City requires that site plans at multi-residential buildings allocate space for waste bins. More comprehensive space requirements and source separation obligations could be established and enforced through the *Planning Act*.

Environmental well-being

Under the *Municipal Act, 2001*, municipalities have the authority to pass by-laws for the environmental well-being of the municipality, including addressing environmental well-being issues related to climate change. By-laws could be introduced or amended by a municipality that address the management and collection of certain types of waste that affect the well-being of the municipality, such as single-use plastics.

How does this affect what the City of Ottawa can do?

The City of Ottawa can make changes to policies and programs to help meet targets and goals set by the Solid Waste Master Plan. However, new policies and amended by-laws need to conform with federal and provincial waste management legislation.

The City can generally set its own diversion targets, which will be included in the Solid Waste Master Plan, and determine where solid waste will be processed. It can also consider implementing food waste strategies and bans on certain materials, such as single-use plastics, as long as new policies are in accordance with relevant provincial and federal legislation.

There is a lot that the City can do but it must consider and adapt to federal and provincial waste management legislation and future decisions. It is therefore imperative that the roles and responsibilities of all three levels of government are considered as we build the new Solid Waste Master Plan.