

Sent: Wednesday, November 8, 2023 7:08 AM
Subject: Response from the Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks (ref. no. 357-2023-2147)

November 7, 2023

Mary Birch
Interim CAO
Director, Legislative and Community Services/Clerk
The Corporation of the County of Essex
Email: mbirch@countyofessex.ca

Dear Mary Birch:

Thank you for your emailed letter to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks sharing the County of Essex's inquiries regarding food and organic waste reduction and diversion in Ontario.

With over one-third of Ontario's waste stream made up of organic waste, including food waste and scraps, it is critical that we continue to explore ways to recover value from a resource as important as food waste.

Ontario recognizes the importance of diverting waste from landfills in order to extend landfill life and support innovation and job growth in new environmental sectors that convert waste into valuable resources. That is why we have the [Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement](#) (the Policy Statement) in place, which directs municipalities, businesses, and institutions to reduce and divert food and organic waste and promote the rescue of surplus food. The Policy Statement set targets for medium to large municipalities and larger businesses and institutions to reduce and divert 50 to 70 per cent of their food and organic waste by 2023-2025.

For the industrial, commercial, and institutional (IC&I) sectors specifically, the Policy Statement includes the following targets:

- Industrial and commercial facilities that generate 300 kilograms per week or more of food and organic waste have targets ranging from 50 to 70 per cent waste reduction and resource recovery of food and organic waste generated in the facility by 2025.
- Educational institutions and hospitals that generate 150 kilograms or more of food and organic waste per week have a target of 70 per cent waste reduction and resource recovery of food and organic waste generated in the facility by 2025.

Although these targets do not apply to greenhouses which are categorized as crop producers, the ministry remains open to identifying opportunities to support new and emerging technologies, as well as innovative solutions that support our goal of reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills for final disposal. For example, the ministry amended O. Reg. 101/07: Waste Management Projects under the *Environmental Assessment Act* to streamline the environmental assessment (EA) requirements for thermal treatment sites that undertake advanced recycling. The amendments set out when thermal treatment sites engaging in advanced recycling are exempt from EA requirements, are conditionally exempt provided an Environmental Screening Process is completed, and those that must undertake an Individual Environmental Assessment. These changes encourage the recovery of valuable resources from waste.

Additionally, in 2021, the Ontario government made amendments to O. Reg. 267/03: General, under the *Nutrient Management Act*, to create more opportunities for agricultural producers to treat both on and off- farm organic materials in on-farm anaerobic digesters. The expected outcomes of these regulatory changes include:

- Increased opportunities for the management of food and organic waste in the circular food economy;
- Increased production of renewable natural gas in Ontario; and
- Increased economic development opportunities for the agri-food sector.

Regarding Ontario's commitment to develop and communicate a strategy for the implementation of a landfill food and organic waste ban by 2030, the pandemic has impacted all sectors, especially Ontario's businesses and institutions. We need more time for Ontario's businesses, hospitals, and schools to recover before we consider moving forward with disposal bans as a way of reducing and diverting waste. As a result, the government will not be moving forward with a landfill ban on food waste at this time.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario invested over \$5 million through the Surplus Food Redistribution Infrastructure Program to help keep good food out of landfills. More information can be found on this and other resource recovery initiatives in the Progress Report on the Strategy for a Waste-Free Ontario: [Building the Circular Economy](#).

We are working on guidance to help Ontarians reduce their food waste as well as helping municipalities, businesses, and institutions meet their targets and other obligations under the Policy Statement.

We know that being able to divert and recover value from waste requires the cooperation of all Ontarians, as well as the government, and we recognize and applaud the efforts that many municipalities and businesses continue to take to reduce food and organic waste.

Once again, thank you for your interest in reducing and recovering value from food and organic waste in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Charles O'Hara

Charles O'Hara
Director, Resource Recovery Policy Branch
Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks