

# MISSION Green

A Newsletter from the City of Markham • Issue 12 • Fall/Winter 2019

## Thank You Markham!

- Over 16 million lbs. (7000 metric tonnes) of clothing and textiles have been donated
- More than 150 Markham donation bins across the City including 60 apartment buildings convenient access

*Thank you for your overwhelming support.*

Markham has been recognized for its leadership on this program, including:

- ✓ 2019 PJ Marshall Municipal Innovation Award
- ✓ 2018 IPAC Public Sector Excellence Award
- ✓ 2017 York University Environmental Leadership Award
- ✓ 2017 CAMA Environmental Award



Residents can drop off their textile donations on-the-go! New donation bins located at all four Markham GO Stations. Photo (l-r): Logan Kanapathi, MPP (Markham - Thornhill); Hon. Paul Calandra, (Markham - Stouffville); Simon Langer, Diabetes Canada; Hon. Kinga Surma, Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA); Mayor Frank Scarpitti.

## Markham's Textile Recycling Program A Proven Winner

In 2016, Markham launched the first municipal textile diversion program in North America. Our goal is to tackle the staggering amount of clothing and usable household items that is sent to landfill every year. Through community partnerships with local, licensed registered charities, we have helped to instill public confidence in how the materials are managed once

they are donated; ensure the bins are kept clean; and provide 24/7 access to Markham donation bins. The charities supply the bins, service and maintain them. Proceeds from the bins remain with the charities allowing them to create local employment and support our community. Markham no longer allows unlicensed non charity bins on

either public or private property and have removed over 200 bins this year. Markham's unique textile program accepts all clothing, shoes, purses, toys, and bedding in any condition. Just bag it and drop it off!

## Markham Bans Textiles

On Earth Day 2017, Markham became the first municipality in Ontario to ban the disposal of textiles in household garbage. Waste audits of household garbage confirmed that increasing amounts of clothing were being placed at the curb for landfill. By banning textiles from the disposal stream and providing easy access to charities that need the clothing, Markham residents have once again demonstrated their commitment to the environment and social justice.



### Who Made Your Shirt?

Ignore the brand, read the label.

Where was your clothing made?

### Fast Fashion

originates from Third World economies where children still labour in the garment industry. Even the cotton used to make your shirt may have been picked by a child.

# To Recycle or Not to Recycle

Recent media reports have painted a picture of a recycling industry in great turmoil. Offshore countries that were often the market for our Blue Box recyclables have closed the door due to high levels of contamination. Some Markham residents are questioning whether they should continue recycling.

Moving recyclables from the Blue Box and tossing them into the trash would be a shortsighted reversal of decades of efforts to recycle more effectively and efficiently. While municipalities elsewhere have decided to dump recyclables into landfills, Markham has not. Markham Council has not made any changes to Markham's Blue Box and Depot acceptance list. While current market prices for recyclables may be soft, plastics and paper can still be recycled.

The recycling crisis triggered may have an upside, if it leads to better solutions such as expanding processing capacities in Ontario, creating local jobs and spurring manufacturers to make their products more easily recyclable. Above all, it should be a wake-up call on the need to sharply cut down on single-use plastics.

Markham residents are well recognized when it comes to recycling. The City of Markham has a municipal gross diversion rate of 82% and the lowest garbage generation rate in York Region. Our award-winning textile donation program has diverted over 16 million pounds of reusable goods to local and legitimate charities such as Diabetes Canada since 2017.

Markham has a lot to be proud of! However, as we depend on sending our waste to other people's communities for landfill or incineration, we must also think hard about the waste we are creating, and figure out how to stop creating so much. We need to remember the first "R" of "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle" and add a new "R" – Refuse.

Markham may be just one fish in the global pond, but we have a commitment to future generations to continue recycling, diverting, and reducing as much as possible. That's part of Markham's DNA.

**Jack Heath**, Regional Councillor  
Chair, Markham Waste Diversion Committee

# Fast Fashion Facts

Fast fashion refers to clothes that are designed and manufactured quickly then sold to consumers at extremely low prices. New fast fashion garments arrive in stores weekly or even daily. While fast fashion clothing may not cost the consumer much, it comes at a high price to the people who work in the garment industry and to the environment.

**Fast Fashion is the second most polluting industry in the world after the fossil fuel industry:**

- Approximately 7,000 liters of water are needed to produce one pair of jeans (the amount of water one individual drinks in 5-6 years).
- In 2013, the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh collapsed. 1,138 people died and another 2,500 were injured, making it the fourth largest industrial disaster in history.
- 85% of the plastic pollution in the ocean is due to microfibers from synthetic material used to make fast fashion.

## What Happens To My Donations?

Markham's textile donations are sorted and sold locally at retail locations such as Salvation Army Thrift Store and Value Village. Unsold and damaged items are further graded and recycled into industrial rags, insulation, car seat padding and much more. Markham does not send unsorted clothing to Third World countries.



## 10 Things That Never Go in Your Blue Box

1. Clothes hangers (wire & plastic) – bag them & drop in any Markham Textile Donation Bin.
2. Furnace filters go in Clear Bag Garbage.
3. Bagged recyclables – keep items loose in the Blue Box.
4. Paper coffee cups go in the Green Bin.
5. Paper towels, tissue & soiled paper plates go in Green Bin.
6. Plastic cutlery goes in Clear Bag Garbage.
7. Six-pack rings go in Clear Bag Garbage.
8. Newspapers in plastic sleeves. Remove newspaper from bag before placing in the Blue Box.
9. Plastic bags – recycle them at any Markham Recycling Depot.
10. Styrofoam – recycle at any Markham Recycling Depot.

# Single-Use Plastics Are Destroying Our Lakes and Oceans

Single-use plastics are plastic items that tend to be used only once before they are thrown away or recycled.

Single-use plastics make up one-third of all the plastics used in Canada.

Common examples include retail shopping bags; take-out containers; food packaging; beverage containers; straws; plastic cups and cutlery, six-pack rings; balloons, balloon sticks, coffee stirrers; cigarette butts (plastic filter); cling wrap, bottle caps; candy wrappers; wet wipes; lids for disposable cups and plastic bag sleeves for newspapers.

## What Happens to Single-Use Items That Aren't Recycled?

- **Microplastics in our oceans:** Microplastics come from larger plastic debris that degrades into smaller and smaller pieces. Microbeads, a type of microplastic, are very tiny pieces of manufactured polyethylene plastic that are added as exfoliants to health and beauty products, such as cleansers and toothpastes. These tiny particles easily pass through water filtration systems and end up in the ocean and Great Lakes, posing a potential threat to ecosystems.
- **Clogging our sewage systems:** Some people also try to dispose of single-use plastics (like wet wipes, cotton buds, and feminine product applicators) by flushing them down the toilet or putting them in their green bin for composting. However, these plastic items are not compostable and disposing them by flushing can cause expensive problems for municipalities as these plastics are known to clog sewage pipes.
- **Litter:** Single-use plastic take-out containers, cutlery and condiment wrappers (e.g., ketchup), coffee cups and cigarette butts are a common source of streetscape litter.



## Single-Use Plastics Quick Facts

- Paper bags and straws are wildlife and marine-friendly. They disintegrate quickly compared to plastic.
- 500 Billion disposable cups are used worldwide every year.
- The plastic bag lobby is very powerful in Canada and the United States and works hard to stop plastic bag bans or plastic bag reduction efforts
- According to the United Nations, ingestion of plastic kills an estimated 1 million marine birds and 100,000 marine animals each year. Additionally, more than 90% of all birds and fish are believed to have plastic particles in their stomach. This is because plastic breaks up into tiny pieces in the sea, which are then consumed by fish and other sea creatures.

Plastic bags are used just once; for an average of 12 minutes

Shoppers in Canada average 1 plastic bag per day. Shoppers in Denmark average 4 plastic bags per year

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is now three times the size of France

## Speak Up Speak Out

- ✓ Refuse plastic shopping bags from your retailer. Ask for paper or bring your own reusable ones
- ✓ Just say NO to plastic straws when offered. Ask for a paper straw or keep a reusable one with you
- ✓ Demand paper or compostable containers for your restaurant leftovers and take-out
- ✓ Released balloons harm wildlife, birds and waterways. Celebrate balloon-free!

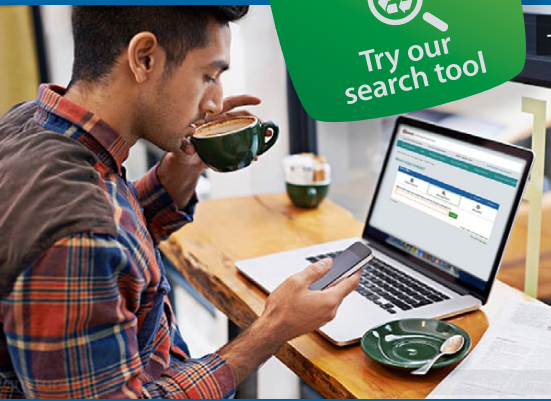
Bring your reusable coffee cup and water bottle everywhere!



Wondering  
What Goes  
Where?



Try our  
search tool



# Wondering What Goes Where?

Markham's website contains a lot of valuable information about Markham's recycling programs, Recycling Depot hours and acceptable and non-acceptable items.

Not sure what to do with your broken refrigerator or leftover motor oil? Or what about those old shoes you no longer wear? With Markham's new and improved online search tool, simply enter your item to learn if it goes in the blue box, green bin or drop off at a depot for recycling.

- ✓ Check it out at [markham.ca/WhatGoesWhere](http://markham.ca/WhatGoesWhere)
- ✓ Get your collection schedule online too! Sign up for personalized reminders so you never miss another collection day again.

Sign up for  
recycling &  
garbage  
reminders!  
Text, email, iCal or  
Google Calendar

## Protect Your Pipes From F.O.G (Fats, Oil & Grease)

When poured down the sink or toilet, grease quickly turns to solid and can clog the pipes that take the wastewater from your house to the treatment plant.

Clogged sewer pipes can cause sewage to back up and flood your basement, your neighbour's basement and possibly back up onto the streets!

Make the most of your green bin.

- Wipe pots, pans and dirty dishes with a paper towel or scrape it into your kitchen catcher
- If fats, oils and grease are in liquid form, pour the liquid into a paper cup and put directly into the green bin.



## Respect the Collector

Waste and recycling collection has been ranked the 6<sup>th</sup> most dangerous job in Canada. With almost 90,000 stops each week in Markham, your collectors experience many challenges every day. Extreme weather, hidden sharp objects and heavy containers can make their job unsafe and hazardous.

- ✓ Put materials at the curb neatly, where they can be easily seen and collected. Avoid placing near or behind parked cars or snow banks.



- ✓ Wrap broken glass or sharp objects in cardboard or newsprint and place beside your clear bag garbage.



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