

# The Standard

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**Recycling family gets a new cousin: Orange Drop**  
**COLUMN by MATTHEW VAN DONGEN AND JULIE GRECO**  
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Ontario's rainbow of recycling programs just added a new colour.

Last week, Stewardship Ontario unveiled Orange Drop -- a recycling program for all the explosive, poisonous, corrosive or otherwise hazardous junk you're not supposed to chuck in the dump.

It's not a collection program, so don't expect to add a new orange-coloured curbside cousin to your existing family of green bins, blue boxes and grey boxes.

Instead, Orange Drop is the next generation of the less colourfully named Municipal Hazardous or Special Waste program, which allowed residents to safely recycle dangerous cast-offs from around the home. Think dead batteries, needles, fire extinguishers, aerosol cans, fuel and pharmaceuticals, to start.

The new, more robust campaign expands the list of materials the program will recycle and the number of drop-off locations, both government and retail, according to Stewardship Ontario, the organization that collects industry funding for recycling.

The new program is "designed to raise awareness about what is considered a hazardous or special waste and to encourage Ontarians to make returning these items part of their regular recycling routine," said Stewardship Ontario vice-president Lyle Clarke in a release.

It will also make recycling household hazardous waste cheaper and easier for Niagara residents, said regional waste director Andrew Pollock.

He said that in the past, the industries represented by Stewardship Ontario only paid a portion of the recycling costs for more dangerous waste items like old batteries, fertilizer and fuel collected in Niagara.

The Region still budgets close to \$700,000 each year to safely dispose of those items. Pollock said the new changes should wipe that cost off the property taxpayer tab.

"That's a pretty significant financial gain for us," he said. "And ideally, if this campaign works, it will bring more attention to these materials that should be disposed of properly."

Pollock said Niagara collected close to 8,000 tonnes of household hazardous waste last year, mostly at special weekend depots held in communities around the region.

The waste depots will still be run by the Region, he said, but now mostly paid for by industry.

Stewardship Ontario is also promising more than 700 retail collection sites across Ontario for specific items like batteries and paint. Residents who want to find the nearest drop-off depot can search by item or area on a new website, [www.makethedrop.ca](http://www.makethedrop.ca).

It's worth the effort, Pollock said.

The goal of the program is to keep particularly toxic garbage out of the dump, where poisonous leachate builds up and sometimes leaks out into the environment.

Used batteries, for example, are tiny, toxic time bombs full of lead, cadmium and mercury. Statistics Canada data suggests Canadians recycle only 2% of the hundreds of millions of batteries purchased each year.

Niagara's hazardous waste depots collect around 16 tonnes of batteries each year, but officials suspect many more tonnes end up buried in landfills.

"Batteries are small, but any quantity discarded can create an environmental challenge," Pollock said. "Our landfills have to be monitored for years and years after they close, and we want to make sure we're not creating a problem that could ultimately contaminate our groundwater."

Returning household hazardous waste does require a little more effort than chucking cans in a blue bin, however.

Used needles, for example, have to be safely capped and contained before you drop them off at a depot.

For instructions on how to drop off your household hazardous waste, or for a list of depots and dates, visit the [makethedrop.ca](http://makethedrop.ca) website or Niagara Region's website at [www.niagararegion.ca/living/waste/hhw-depots.aspx](http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/waste/hhw-depots.aspx).

Coming up: If you've ever wondered how to improve your own local water quality, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority wants to show you how.

The Common Sense Approach to Ecological Stewardship workshop runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. July 20, starting at the Ball's Falls Centre for Conservation. Experts will be on hand in the morning to talk about simple steps a landowner can take to restore habitat and improve water quality. The afternoon includes a tour of three local restoration projects.

To register for the \$75 workshop, which includes lunch and transportation, visit [www.npca.ca](http://www.npca.ca). [mvandongen@stcatharinesstandard.ca](mailto:mvandongen@stcatharinesstandard.ca)

A weekly environmental series by Matthew Van Dongen and Julie Greco. Send questions to: [standard@stcatharinesstandard.ca](mailto:standard@stcatharinesstandard.ca) Subject: Green Team