



LAWSON

Ottawa deserves better.

ALEX LAWSON FOR MAYOR

Burn it, don't bury it.

The Lawson plan for garbage: bring back the six-item limit, and build the waste-to-energy plant on the land Ottawa already bought.

POLICY PAPER

SEPTEMBER 2026

01 / OVERVIEW

The City rationed your garbage, then bought a dump.

Spring cleaning, when the garage finally gets emptied. The week after Christmas. The morning after a kid's birthday party. The week you missed garbage day, because it comes every two weeks now, so you sit on a month of it and then try to ration it out over the month after that. Three items, then a yellow bag from the City at \$4.40 each, or it stays in the garage. Apartments and condos with no limit of what they can put down the garbage chute. The limit was written for the weeks a family can't fit it in three, and those are weeks every family has. **It isn't fair.**

In June 2023, council voted to cap every household at three items of garbage every two weeks. The reason given was simple: Trail Road, the City's only landfill, was running out of room, and the City had nowhere else to put the garbage. Stretch the dump, buy time. The limit took effect in September 2024, replacing a six-item limit that had been in place since 2007.

Then, in January 2026, the same council spent \$95 million buying a landfill.

The Capital Region Resource Recovery Centre sits on 192 hectares of Boundary Road near Highway 417, in Carlsbad Springs. It is approved by the province for 450,000 tonnes a year and has an expected life of 30 years. It is the first landfill Ontario has approved in more than two decades, and the City now owns it, along with the permits. The debt gets paid over 40 years through the solid waste fee on your tax bill, starting in 2027.

So the reason for the three-item limit is gone. Ottawa is not out of room. Ottawa paid \$95 million to not be out of room. And yet the limit stays, the yellow bags stay, and bylaw officers logged about 7,000 instances of illegally dumped garbage in parks, street bins and back roads in the limit's first ten months.

There is one more piece. In June 2025, the City's own consultants finished a study of what to do when Trail Road fills up. Their highest-ranked option was a waste-to-energy plant, because it sends 77 percent less material to landfill and generates electricity. Council's response was to order another report, due after the election, in 2027.

Understand what a landfill is. It is a pile. Ottawa has been filling one pile since 1980, and the answer in 2026 was to buy a second pile for the next thirty years, and leave the question of what happens after that to the people who will be running this city when our kids are paying the taxes. Making another pile is not a solution. It is a way of not deciding, and every year of not deciding is a year of tipping fees, landfill gas and rationing that the next council inherits with less runway than this one had.

Ottawa is not out of room. It paid \$95 million to not be out of room.

Two decisions, made now.

Both of these can be made in the first term. Neither needs another study. The study is done.

DECISION 01

Bring back the six-item limit.

A motion in the first 100 days to restore the six-item limit Ottawa lived with from 2007 until September 2024, in effect from the first collection day of 2027. Six items every two weeks covers the week after Christmas, the birthday party, the spring clean-out and the missed collection day without a trip to the store. The yellow bags stay on the shelf for the rare week a household goes past six, but the City stops selling rationing to families as a policy. Green bin, blue bin, black bin and leaf and yard waste continue exactly as they are, with no limit. Diversion is a good program and this plan keeps it. What ends is the rationing.

DECISION 02

Build the waste-to-energy plant on the Boundary Road land the City already owns.

Within 30 days of taking office, a motion directing staff to treat waste-to-energy as the working assumption, sited on the City's own 192 hectares at the Capital Region Resource Recovery Centre, and to move from comparing options to delivering the one their own study ranked first. The plant burns what is left after diversion and turns it into electricity for the Ontario grid. What comes out the bottom is ash, about a fifth of the weight that went in. Denmark puts 99 percent of its bottom ash into road base; the Netherlands has committed to reusing all of it. Ottawa's plan tests the same thing in the City's own road base and concrete, and whatever cannot be reused goes into the landfill next door. Either way, the 30-year landfill Ottawa just bought stops being a 30-year landfill.

PROMISE 01

A host community agreement with Carlsbad Springs before a shovel goes in.

Carlsbad Springs fought this landfill for fifteen years and lost. Five rural councillors voted against buying it. The residents were promised consultation and got a deal negotiated under a non-disclosure agreement. A Lawson council negotiates a host community agreement with the community, the standard practice for these facilities in Ontario, before construction starts. If the City is going to put its waste in Carlsbad Springs either way, the plant is the better neighbour, and the community gets paid for hosting it.

PROMISE 02

The smell. A plant tips the garbage indoors.

It is the question every neighbour asks first, so here is the answer. A landfill smells because garbage rots in it: the working face where fresh loads are tipped, and the gas that escapes the collection system, give off hydrogen sulphide and the other sulphur compounds that read as rotten eggs, and a wet, hot year makes it worse. Ottawa knows this from Trail Road. In 2018, Half Moon Bay in Barrhaven, five kilometres from the landfill, spent months complaining after a wet year sped up decomposition, and the City had to install a new perimeter gas collection system to get on top of it. The City's own 2006 odour study found that properties within a kilometre of Trail Road could expect odours ten to fifteen times a year, and developers building near it must put a notice on the title of every affected property. That is what an open landfill taking 450,000 tonnes a year for thirty years means for Carlsbad Springs, and the smell outlasts the operation, because closed cells keep making gas for decades. A plant is different. The garbage is tipped inside an enclosed building held under negative air pressure, so the air in the tipping hall is drawn

into the furnace and burned with the waste; the garbage sits for days, not decades; and what leaves the stack after the scrubbers is scrubbed, monitored and posted online, not something you smell at ground level.

PROMISE 03

Real-time emissions data, published, written into the contract.

Durham York Energy Centre runs continuous emissions monitoring and two stack tests a year, and posts the data online. Ottawa's plant will do the same, with the reporting requirement written into the procurement contract rather than left to the regulator, so it can never be quietly dropped. The feed lives on the City's open data portal, where any resident of Carlsbad Springs can check it on their phone, and the stack tests are published the week they come back.

PROMISE 04

A monthly complaint log, published.

On the Durham York model: every odour, noise, litter or truck complaint from a neighbour, logged with the date, what was found and what was done about it, published every month and going back to the day the site opens. Durham York has posted its log every month since 2013. Carlsbad Springs gets the same, written into the operating contract, so a neighbour never has to wonder whether anyone wrote it down.

PROMISE 05

Milestones in public, costs posted as they are committed.

Today, the City has no milestone for this decision at all beyond a report due in 2027. Under this plan the milestones are set on day one and published. Motion in 30 days. Refreshed cost estimate in 60 days. Provincial approval application filed within 12 months. Procurement decision within 24 months. Shovels in the ground inside the term. Today, contracts of \$25,000 and up are disclosed twice a year in a PDF. Under this plan every contract on this project goes online as it is awarded, with no dollar threshold, consistent with the campaign's commitment on every City contract. Today, there is no public progress report. Under this plan there is one every quarter, in plain language, and a slipped milestone gets reported the quarter it slips, with the reason, not the year after.

PROMISE 06

Trail Road stays open until the plant is running.

Nothing in this plan closes Trail Road early or trucks Ottawa's garbage to a private operator somewhere else in Ontario. The current site, the six-item limit, and the new plant are sequenced so that residents never see a gap in service. Trail Road's gas collection system, its monitoring and its closure plan continue on the City's existing schedule, and its remaining airspace is a buffer, not a deadline, once the plant is taking the tonnage.

03 / WHY A PLANT

Europe already did this.

Waste-to-energy is not an experiment. Europe runs about 500 of these plants, and they handle roughly a quarter of all municipal waste on the continent, a share that has been steady since 2011. Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Belgium all burn more of their garbage than they bury, and several of them have effectively stopped landfilling household waste at all.

Italy is the case worth knowing, because it is the one that looks most like Ontario's problem. Italy is about 28 percent of Ontario's land area with more than three and a half times the people, and in 2010 it was sending 46 percent of its municipal waste to landfill. Twelve years later that number was 18 percent. It got there by recycling 53 percent and sending 19 percent to energy recovery. A country with a fraction of our land and a multiple of our population found the room. It did not do it by buying more land. It did it by deciding, region by region, that the residual was going to a plant, and then building the plants.

On emissions, the comparison the City's own study made is the right one. When garbage sits in a landfill, the food scraps and paper in it rot and release methane, which traps about 28 times as much heat as carbon dioxide over a century and keeps venting for decades after the landfill closes. Trail Road captures most of its gas, but not all of it, and a new landfill is a new fifty-year methane source. A plant burns the same material once, captures the energy, and produces no methane tail. The United States Environmental Protection Agency's estimate is roughly one tonne of greenhouse gas avoided for every tonne of waste combusted instead of landfilled. Some environmental groups dispute that accounting and prefer diversion alone. This plan keeps diversion in full, and the six-item limit does not change that: the green bin, blue bin and black bin are the diversion programs, and none of them has ever had a limit. It is the residual that has to go somewhere, and the choice for the residual is a pile or a plant.

One more thing worth noticing. A 400,000-tonne plant was proposed in the Pontiac in 2023 at a cost of about \$400 million. Its business case rested on taking garbage from Ottawa, Pembroke and Renfrew County, because the Pontiac itself produces about 5,000 tonnes a year. Local opposition killed it in 2024. The point stands: municipalities across eastern Ontario and western Quebec are paying to get rid of residual waste and have nowhere to put it. A plant sized for Ottawa's own stream first, with capacity to take a neighbour's tonnage at a tipping fee, turns that regional problem into Ottawa's revenue. That is upside, not a dependency. Ottawa's curbside garbage alone ran to about 103,000 tonnes last year under the limit, and about 126,000 the year before, before counting a single apartment building. Durham York runs on 140,000. The sizing is a job for the staff study that already exists, not for a campaign document; the point here is only that the fuel is not in doubt.

Ottawa is not starting from zero on this, either. Trail Road has run generators on its own landfill gas since 2007, six of them now, producing enough electricity for about 6,000 homes and flaring what the generators cannot take. That is the City already doing, at small scale and with a rotting pile as the fuel source, exactly what a plant does with the whole stream, on purpose, without the pile.

The choice for the residual is a pile or a plant.

04 / WHAT IT COSTS

The City is spending this money either way.

Every number in this section is the City's own, or Durham York's. None of them is the campaign's.

The six-item limit. Restoring it costs the City almost nothing in collection, because trucks already stop at every house every two weeks. What changes is tonnage. In its first year the three-item limit cut curbside garbage from about 125,700 tonnes to about 102,900 tonnes. Under this plan that tonnage is fuel for a plant that sells electricity, not a liability going into a hole. What residents save is the \$4.40 a bag, the trip to the store, and the bylaw fight over a fourth bag of diapers.

PAID FOR THE BOUNDARY ROAD SITE

\$95 million

Plus \$470,000 land transfer tax and \$422,000 HST. Debt over 40 years, on the solid waste fee.

Ottawa Citizen, January 28, 2026; council vote 20 to 5, January 14, 2026.

WASTE-TO-ENERGY PLANT, CAPITAL

\$497M to \$862M

The City's own June 2025 study. A new landfill: \$439M to \$761M.

HDR feasibility study to Environment and Climate Change Committee, June 2025.

LESS TO LANDFILL

77 percent

Landfill diversion rate of a waste-to-energy plant, per City staff

City of Ottawa staff report, June 2025, as reported by CBC.

DURHAM YORK, ELECTRICITY REVENUE

\$8.5 million

Per year, on 140,000 tonnes, at \$0.08 per kWh over a 20-year term

Durham York Energy Centre FAQ, durhamyorkwaste.ca.

The plant. The honest numbers, from the City's own study: a waste-to-energy plant costs more to build than a new landfill, in the range of \$497 million to \$862 million against \$439 million to \$761 million, and more to run, about \$47 million a year against \$15.6 million, before revenue. The plant's revenue, electricity sales and recovered metals, was estimated at about \$17.9 million a year. Durham York, an hour down the 401, earns about \$8.5 million a year in electricity on 140,000 tonnes and recovers the equivalent of 3,000 cars worth of steel and 36 million aluminum cans. Tipping fees from neighbouring municipalities, and ash sold as road base instead of buried, would be on top of that.

What the study did not price, because it was done before the purchase, is that Ottawa now owns the land, the road access to the 417, and the provincial landfill approval next door for whatever ash cannot be reused. No site to buy. No fight over where it goes. That fight already happened, and Carlsbad Springs lost it. And a landfill that receives a quarter of the tonnage lasts roughly four times as long on the same airspace, before growth and before any ash is reused. Thirty years of capacity starts to look like a century. That is the asset.

Where the money comes from. The solid waste system already runs on its own fee, separate from the property tax rate, and that fee is already carrying the \$95 million. On January 1, 2026, the province moved the full cost of the blue box program onto the producers who make the packaging, and the City stopped paying for it. Residents have not seen that saving on their bill. The whole-bill statement in the Lawson fiscal plan will show, line by line, where it went. The plant is financed the same way a water plant is: a long-lived utility asset, backed by tipping fees the City pays itself today, a 20-year electricity contract with the IESO on the Durham York model, and metals revenue, procured as design-build-operate on the Durham York model or with federal infrastructure money where it is available. No new program without a named funding source is the rule in the Lawson fiscal plan, and this is the funding source.

The honest caveats. The landfill approval on the site does not cover a plant; the plant needs its own provincial approval, and that process is slow, which is exactly why the application goes in inside twelve months instead of after another report. The capital range is wide because nobody has designed it yet; the 60-day cost refresh narrows it. Ash reuse in road base has to pass Ontario's environmental rules before a

tonne of it goes under a street, and this plan says test, not assume. And the three-item limit did reduce garbage tonnage, which its supporters will say. They are right. It also produced 7,000 instances of illegal dumping in ten months, a yellow bag economy, and a bylaw enforcement load, for a landfill problem the City then solved with a chequebook.

05 / SOURCES & VERIFICATION

Every figure here is sourced.

THE THREE-ITEM LIMIT VOTE, JUNE 2023

Council voted 22 to 2 on June 14, 2023 for a three-container curbside limit, replacing the six-item limit in place since 2007, after rejecting the staff bag-tag proposal 14 to 10. Stated purpose was extending the life of the Trail Road landfill. Mayor Sutcliffe called it "step one in a process."

<https://www.cbc.ca/lite/story/1.6876612>

THREE-ITEM LIMIT RULES AND YELLOW BAG PRICE

In effect September 30, 2024. An item is a bag or container up to 140 litres and 15 kilograms, or one bulky item. Yellow bags \$17.60 for a package of four, which is \$4.40 each. No limit on green bin, blue bin, black bin or leaf and yard waste. The City's stated goal: "extend the life of our Trail Road Waste Facility Landfill."

https://engage.ottawa.ca/solid-waste-master-plan/news_feed/three-item-limit-coming-for-curbside-waste-collection

FIRST-YEAR TONNAGE UNDER THE LIMIT

Curbside garbage fell from 125,682 tonnes (October 2023 to September 2024) to 102,882 tonnes (October 2024 to September 2025), a drop of about 22,800 tonnes. CTV News Ottawa, October 2025. Rounded in the text to 125,700 and 102,900.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/ottawa/article/ottawa-residents-throw-out-less-waste-in-first-year-of-3-item-garbage-limit/>

ILLEGAL DUMPING UNDER THE LIMIT

Staff update to committee, October 21, 2025: from October 2024 to summer 2025, 1,800 instances of illegally dumped household waste, 5,200 instances in parks and street bins, and 57 on roads, for roughly 7,000 in about ten months; fewer than 1 percent of the 310,000 curbside households exceed the limit. Capital Current.

<https://capitalcurrent.ca/ottawa-landfill-volumes-are-down-thanks-to-garbage-limits-councillors-hear/>

THE BOUNDARY ROAD PURCHASE

The City closed the \$95 million acquisition of the Capital Region Resource Recovery Centre, 192 hectares on Boundary Road near Highway 417 in Carlsbad Springs, approved for 450,000 tonnes a year with an expected 30-year life, the first landfill approved by the province in more than two decades. Council approved it 20 to 5 at a special session on January 14, 2026; details were withheld under a non-disclosure agreement until the staff report of January 28. The price excludes \$470,000 land transfer tax and \$422,000 HST. Debt is repaid over 40 years through the solid waste fee, with increases starting in 2027. Ottawa Citizen, January 28, 2026.

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/city-closes-deal-95-million-210556310.html>

RURAL OPPOSITION TO THE PURCHASE

Carlsbad Springs residents opposed the site with "No Dump in Carlsbad" signs. Coun. Isabelle Skalski: "Rural communities are tired of being treated like second-class citizens." Taggart Miller spent roughly fifteen years securing the approvals. Capital Current, November 22, 2025.

<https://capitalcurrent.ca/ottawa-eyes-purchase-of-landfill-site-in-carlsbad-springs-despite-local-opposition/>

THE CITY'S OWN STUDY, JUNE 2025

HDR feasibility study to the Environment and Climate Change Committee, June 17, 2025, and Council, June 25, 2025. Capital cost of a waste-to-energy incineration facility \$497 million to \$862 million; a new landfill \$439 million to \$761 million; annual operating and maintenance about \$47 million for the plant, offset by about \$17.9 million in revenue, against about \$15.6 million for a new landfill. Figures as summarized by Waste Watch Ottawa from the HDR report.

<https://wastewatchottawa.com/our-focus/residuals/>

STAFF RANKING AND THE 2027 REPORT

City staff: "The WTE Incineration Facility was the highest ranked technology as it offers significant environmental benefits, including a 77 per cent landfill diversion rate and energy recovery." Council voted June 25, 2025 to have staff report back by the first quarter of 2027 on public and private incinerator options. Trail Road is expected to reach capacity in roughly 10 to 15 years. CBC News, June 2025.

<https://www.cbc.ca/lite/story/1.7556140>

A LANDFILL IS NEEDED EITHER WAY

City of Ottawa: "a landfill will be required to manage residual waste in a safe and sustainable way over the long term, regardless of future diversion efforts or waste-to-energy solutions." Ontario Construction News, January 2026. This plan agrees, and uses the one the City bought for whatever ash cannot be reused.

<https://ontarioconstructionnews.com/ottawa-council-moves-ahead-with-purchase-of-east-end-landfill-site>

CONTRACT DISCLOSURE TODAY

The City currently discloses contracts of \$25,000 and up in semi-annual reports listed by department and purchase order. Campaign verification file, July 29, 2026, and the all-contracts commitment at votealex.ca.

<https://votealex.ca/policy/your-money-in-plain-sight>

TRAIL ROAD LANDFILL GAS GENERATORS

CBC News: five generators at a centralized plant at the landfill began turning landfill gas into power for the grid in 2007, with a sixth added later, producing enough electricity for about 6,000 homes; excess gas is flared.

<https://amp.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-landfill-greenhouse-gas-emissions-1.4952239>

TRAIL ROAD ODOUR, HALF MOON BAY, 2018

CBC News reported an increasing number of complaints over six months from Half Moon Bay in Barrhaven, five kilometres northeast of the Trail Road landfill, after record precipitation accelerated decomposition; the City responded by installing a new gas collection system around the landfill perimeter.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/trail-road-landfill-smell-barrhaven-half-moon-bay-1.4481014>

THE CITY'S 2006 ODOUR STUDY AND NOTICE ON TITLE

City of Ottawa Q&A published by the Ward 3 (Barrhaven West) office, August 2023, updated June 2025: per a 2006 odour study, properties within one kilometre of the Trail Waste Facility may experience odours

ten to fifteen times a year; developers must place a notice on title for affected properties; the City has adjusted its landfilling sequence to move away from Barrhaven and caps completed stages to limit odour.

<https://www.davidhillbarrhaven.ca/post/what-s-with-the-smell>

DURHAM YORK MONTHLY COMPLAINT LOG

The Durham York Energy Centre publishes a monthly complaint and inquiry log, with the protocol for responding to public complaints, in an archive that runs back to 2013.

<https://www.durhamyorkwaste.ca/en/operations-documents/complaint-inquiry-protocol-and-logs.aspx>

DURHAM YORK ENERGY CENTRE BENCHMARK

140,000 tonnes a year; about 14 MW net, enough for about 10,000 homes; electricity revenue approximately \$8.5 million a year at \$0.08 per kWh, inflation indexed, over a 20-year term; metals revenue approximately \$682,000 (2018); capital cost \$284.2 million; operating cost approximately \$16.8 million (2020 dollars); continuous emissions monitoring and two stack tests a year. Durham York Energy Centre FAQ.

<https://www.durhamyorkwaste.ca/en/education-and-resources/faqs.aspx>

DURHAM YORK METALS RECOVERY

The equivalent of 36 million aluminum cans and 3,000 cars worth of steel recovered each year. Region of Durham.

<https://www.durham.ca/en/news/did-you-know-about-the-dyec.aspx>

BOTTOM ASH, AND ITS REUSE IN EUROPE

Bottom ash is about 20 percent of the weight of waste treated (EU, 2018). Denmark recovers around 99 percent of its bottom ash, principally in road construction; Dutch waste-to-energy operators committed under the national Green Deal to 100 percent useful application by 2020. Metals make up 10 to 12 percent of bottom ash and about 80 percent of them are recovered at modern plants. CEWEP bottom ash fact sheet.

<https://www.cewep.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/FINAL-Bottom-Ash-factsheet.pdf>

EUROPE'S PLANTS AND SHARE

About 500 waste-to-energy plants in Europe (World Economic Forum, citing CEWEP); the share of EU municipal waste treated in waste-to-energy plants is 26 percent and has stayed between 25 and 27 percent since 2011 (CEWEP, 2024 Eurostat data). Only 9 EU member states landfill less than 10 percent of their waste.

<https://www.cewep.eu/municipal-waste-treatment-2024/>

ITALY

Municipal waste landfilled fell from 46 percent in 2010 to 18 percent in 2022; recycling rose from 31 percent to 53 percent; energy recovery 19 percent. European Environment Agency, Italy municipal waste factsheet, 2025. Land area: Italy 301,340 square kilometres, Ontario 1,076,395 square kilometres (Italy is about 28 percent of Ontario). Population: Italy about 59 million, Ontario about 16 million, so more than three and a half times.

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/waste-and-recycling/municipal-and-packaging-waste-management-country-profiles-2025/it-municipal-waste-factsheet.pdf>

EMISSIONS, PLANT VERSUS LANDFILL

The US Environmental Protection Agency estimate cited by POWER Magazine: "about 1.0 tons of GHGs saved per ton of MSW combusted" relative to landfilling, principally avoided methane. Methane is about



28 times as potent as carbon dioxide over 100 years (WEF). The Toronto Environmental Alliance disputes the industry's accounting; the plan says so.

<https://www.powermag.com/energy-waste-greenhouse-gas-winner-pollution-loser/>

THE PONTIAC PROPOSAL

MRC Pontiac proposed a 400,000-tonne-per-year energy-from-waste plant at a cost of about \$400 million, to take waste from Ottawa, Pembroke and Renfrew County on top of the Pontiac's own roughly 5,000 tonnes a year. The MRC ended the project in May 2024 after local opposition. CTV News Ottawa, May 2024; CBC News, May 15, 2024.

<https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/pontiac-trashes-plans-for-waste-to-energy-incinerator-in-western-quebec-1.6890991>

BLUE BOX MOVED TO PRODUCERS

On January 1, 2026, Ontario's blue box program became fully producer-funded; the City of Ottawa no longer collects or pays for blue and black bin collection, which is administered by Circular Materials with Miller Waste as the collector. Circular Materials reports Ontario municipalities collectively saving over \$200 million. No Ottawa-specific figure has been published; the plan claims none.

<https://www.circularmaterials.ca/news/ontario-welcomes-enhanced-blue-box-program/>

FOUR TIMES AS LONG

Derived. If 77 percent of residual tonnage is diverted from landfill, 23 percent still goes in; 1 divided by 0.23 is about 4.3. Stated as "roughly four times as long on the same airspace, before growth and before any ash is reused."

<https://www.cbc.ca/lite/story/1.7556140>

FISCAL PLAN RULES

Alex Lawson's fiscal plan commitments: no new program without a named funding source, and a whole-bill statement to residents once a year.

<https://votealex.ca/policy/your-money-in-plain-sight>

Authorized by the official agent of the Alex Lawson campaign.