

PPSReview

**Product & Packaging
Stewardship Review**

MANAGING WASTE RESPONSIBLY

An information service for municipal governments

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NEW PLAN REWARDS, NOT TAXES, CONSUMERS

McGuinty says no tire tax in Ontario as alternative plan is proposed

“There’ll be no tire tax. Everybody get that one?”

Whether a fee is the same as a tax is a touchy question at Queen’s Park and Ontario Premier Dalt McGuinty left no doubt about his position, June 3.

The Premier was responding to media questions following the release of a new tire management plan the day before.

At a press conference in Toronto, the Ontario Tire Dealers Association (OTDA) and the Ontario Tire Collectors Association (OTCA) jointly released their Ontario Tire Recycling and Economic Development plan (OnTRED).

OnTRED is a tire stewardship program designed to reward consumers for buying recycled rubber products, to build recycled rubber markets, to prevent tire stockpiles, to discourage the burning of tires in cement kilns and to assist the province in meeting its 2008 60% waste diversion target.

Speaking at the Queens’ Park media gallery, June 2, OTDA President Glenn Warnica said the OnTRED plan is “economically and environmentally superior” to the plan presented last year by Ontario Tire Stewardship (OTS).

The OTS plan calls for a \$4/ passenger tire and \$6/ truck tire “stewardship fee”.

When the latest version of that proposal was released last December it garnered very little media attention outside of trade publications and the province’s Environmental Bill of Rights

Registry. It wasn’t until the alternative plan was released that the OTS proposal—and its “fee”—started making headlines.

Already smarting from the negative response from Ontarians to the Ontario health care premium, and well aware of the bad feeling caused by the tire tax introduced by the Peterson Liberal Government in the late 1980s, the Premier wasted no time in shooting down the concept of a new fee for tires, as did his finance minister.

The OTS plan was approved by the Waste Diversion Ontario board in September. Since then there has been a lot of lobbying in the back rooms of Queen’s Park but to date OTS’s plan has not been approved by Environment Minister Leona Dombrowsky.

“The OnTRED program rewards consumers rather than taxing them,” said OTDA President Glenn Warnica. It features a “buy recycled” rebate system that rewards consumers for purchasing a wide range of products containing recycled rubber, he said.

A registration and approval program for scrap tire collectors is being proposed, as is a tracking system for ensuring scrap tires are sent for diversion and are not stockpiled, said OTCA’s Tracy Rockett.

The OnTRED plan also includes a stockpile inventory, moratorium and remediation program, and an immediate ban on the landfilling of tires.

“Consistent with the principles of extended producer responsibility and consistent with the original MOE intent for the program, funds used for rebates, market development, R&D, collector registration, program monitoring and administration are to be provided by brand owners and first importers of tires,” said Mr. Warnica.

There is currently no burning of tires in Ontario. Unlike the OTS plan, where kilns would actually be paid to burn tires, the OnTRED plan has no incentives to processors of any kind.

Four environmental groups, including the Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) and the Canadian Environmental Law Association are supporting the OnTRED plan.

Speaking at the June 2 press conference, TEA’s Gord Perks said collecting a recycling fee to pay for burning tires is “bad economics, harmful to the environment, and deeply dishonest.”

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Briefly...

PLANT MATERIAL USED IN COMPUTER CASES

Fujitsu Limited announced in January that it has have jointly developed the world's first large personal computer cases made of bioplastics. Japan for Sustainability reports that the plastic is used in the Japanese company's spring 2005 model FMV-BIBLO NB80K notebook computers. The material contains polylactic acid and is a bioplastic made from lactic acid derived from fermented starches and sugars from corn and potatoes. Three companies have been working together to improve heat and flame resistance so the material can be used in computer cases and other applications. It hasn't been so easy for large computer cases, however. There have been problems with moulding the desired shapes; the material is reported to have turned from a hard glassy state to a rubbery state at unacceptably low temperatures. Since about half of the newly-developed plastic consists of natural materials, it can reduce the consumption of petroleum resources. When used in the case of notebook computers, carbon dioxide emissions are reduced by about 15% over the entire product life-cycle, compared to using conventional petroleum-based resins.

*Resource Recovery Foundation, May 17, 2005
(www.residua.com)*

NEW STAR WARS MOVIE MEANS NEW DISPOSAL PROBLEMS

The release of the latest Star Wars in May was a plus for movie fans but a downer for the environment, as waves of discarded plastic action figures, light sabers and other movie-related paraphernalia end up in landfills.

Anne Reichman, director of Earth911.org, an environmental action and information website is quoted as saying, "We love Star Wars as much as anybody, but it doesn't mean we should emulate the destructive power of the Death Star by harming the environment. Most people don't know that these types of figurines can't be recycled, not even little Yoda. In fact, almost all of these toys will sit in landfills until long after we're gone." The group is offering tips for disposing of the materials after they lose their appeal. In 1999, when "Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace" was released,

more than 250 million Star Wars action figures were sold. Earth911.org calculates the figurines' aggregate weight to be about 5,700 tons.

Waste News E-News, May 17, 2005

SELF-HEATING COFFEE, ANYONE?

A self-heating coffee can is drawing fire from the New York web magazine *Treehugger*, which describes itself as "dedicated to everything that has a modern aesthetic yet is environmentally responsible". San Diego-based OnTech



Delaware announced recently it has developed a coffee can filled with quicklime so that you can have a hot latte in seven minutes. Its market: "the people who want to have hot coffee in their car without going anywhere or cooking anything at home. I'm not trying to replace your dinner, but when you're on your way to work and you need some oatmeal and you can't get to the microwave, we will be there for you, This is going to be a huge, huge part of society in the United States. In two years everyone will be drinking from self-heating containers."

OnTech President Jonathan Weisz is quoted as saying. The company says the self-heating container is "safe and easy-to-activate", heating up the contents of its package to approximately 145 degrees Fahrenheit within minutes.

Treehugger asks: "How do you recycle this? How do you justify this? How do we tell everyone to boycott Wolfgang Puck until he pulls his name off this? Will all the eco-celebs boycott Spago?"

*Treehugger, May 17, 2005
(treehugger.com, ontech.com)*

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The current issue of PPSReview, and past issues, are available for viewing on the Internet (www.productstewardship.org).

Anyone wishing to support the Fair Comment Project may email Ben Bennett (bbc@albedo.net). Confidentiality is guaranteed.

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Minister's aide provides update at WDO annual meeting

John Wilkinson, Parliamentary Assistant to Ontario Minister of the Environment Leona Dombrowsky, was the guest speaker at the very short but well-attended Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) annual meeting at the Metropolitan Hotel in downtown Toronto, April 20.

The meeting began at 9 a.m., and ended at 9:50 a.m. In addition to Mr. Wilkinson's presentation, the WDO confirmed its officers and committees for the coming year (but not its board) - see below.

The almost 50 meeting attendees heard Mr. Wilkinson provide an update on the status of the various stewardship plans and the minister's position on governance. (The following is taken from the meeting report posted on the WDO website.—www.wdo.on.ca)

BLUE BOX

Industry fees being paid out to municipalities now reflect 50% of the net cost of operating municipal Blue

Box programs. For too long, municipalities and their taxpayers carried more than their share of the financial burden. The cost-containment strategy that WDO developed recognizes the fact that there must be diligence in controlling costs to keep the Blue Box effective and efficient.

WEEE

Minister Dombrowsky has designated e-wastes under the Waste Diversion Act and asked WDO and industry representatives to come up with a diversion program including more than 50 products. (See Pages 4/8 and 5/8 for more on WEEE.)

TIRES

The MOE is now reviewing the input received on WDO's proposed Used Tire Program and the Minister hopes to render a decision after carefully considering all the input. (See Page 1/8 for more on tires.)

OIL

With respect to used oil, it is unfortunate that a program hasn't come to fruition. The Ministry appreciates the leadership shown by WDO in not submitting a program, as it did not meet the requirements of the Act. The Minister fully intends to move ahead on this issue when the time is right.

The Ministry sees WDO's stewardship initiatives as an important driver to help achieve the 60 per cent diversion goal. The Minister has indicated she wants to release a detailed action plan this year.

Governance is another issue of prime importance for Waste Diversion Ontario. The current governance structure was established with an eye to facilitating the start-up of the corporation with its initial priority of developing the Blue Box Program Plan. The initial structure served its purpose well, but the Blue Box program is now well underway. Our government is anxious to find a new structure that is better suited to accommodating new designated wastes and achieving Ontario's broader waste diversion objectives.

There was just one question for Mr. Wilkinson.

Asked by Rhonda Hustler, a guest at the meeting, what policies are in place to consider landfill expansions and proposals for incineration, Mr. Wilkinson said there was a need for balance.

While the goal has been set for 60% diversion, he said it would not be realistic to say that there would be no landfills. The challenge facing the government was where to put the landfills, he said.

WDO confirms officers, committees

Waste Diversion Ontario confirmed its new executive and committees for the coming year at its annual meeting, April 20 in Toronto.

Officers for 2005:

Chair: Gemma Zecchini
Vice-Chair: Andrew Pollock
Secretary/Treasurer: Jeff Newton
Executive Director: Glenda Gies

Committees

Audit/Finance:

Jeff Newton, Lyle Clarke

Staffing and Compensation:

Gemma Zecchini, Anne Kothawala, Jeff Newton, Andrew Pollock

Governance:

Diane Brisebois, John Jackson, Andrew Pollock, Keith West, Gemma Zecchini

Nominating:

Diane Brisebois, Gemma Zecchini, Andrew Pollock

Cost Effectiveness:

Gemma Zecchini, Diane Brisebois, Steve Butland, Deb Haswell, Anne Kothawala, Andrew Pollock, Anthony van Heyningen

Municipal-Industry Programs

Committee:

Glenda Gies, Milena Avramovic, Damian Bassett, Andrew Campbell, Rick Clow, Gordon Day, Joe Hall, Geoff Love, Guy Perry, Geoff Rathbone, Derek Stephenson

Public Affairs Committee:

Glenda Gies, Andrew Coltman, Ashley McClinton, Nicole Dufort, Shelley Ford, Mieke Foster, Anne Kothawala, Barbara McConnell, Joanne St. Godard

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ONTARIO MPP'S BILL GETS SECOND READING

Miller's stewardship bill to be studied in committee

A private member's bill promoting product stewardship has had two readings in the Ontario Legislature and is now headed to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

PC Parry Sound-Muskoka MPP Norm Miller introduced Bill 195 on May 4. It received second reading on May 19.

Formally described as "an Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act with respect to the stewardship of products and of the packages or containers used for products", the bill was supported by a number of speakers, from all sides of the House.

Bill 195 calls for industry to take more of a life-cycle responsibility for products.

"First, government designates beverage containers," Mr. Miller told the House, May 19. "Then government establishes a recovery rate of, say, 85% in three years. It charges industry with the responsibility of forming a management board, which prepares a stewardship plan.

"Government approves and monitors the stewardship plan, which, in this case, includes a deposit-return system. If industry doesn't meet the target of 85% recovery, it must make changes to the plan. In the case of a deposit-return system, the most likely thing you would do would be to increase the deposit."

"Through this product stewardship approach, government moves away

from funding, at taxpayers' expense, waste management," Mr. Miller continued. "Instead, it holds industry responsible for the full life cycle of a product but leaves it to industry to find the most cost-effective and efficient way to achieve it, assisting where necessary and desired."

The MPP has previously introduced a private member's bill that would require the Liquor Control Board of Ontario to implement a deposit-return system. It did not receive third reading.

The full text of the Bill 195 is available at the Ontario Legislature website (www.ontla.on.ca/documents/Bills/index.htm).

BC REGS Clarification

In the November issue of *PPSReview* on Page 3/6 - New BC Reg is passed - we reported the new regulation reduces the recovery target for beverage containers from 85% to 75%. We have been advised by the BC Government that this the regulation doesn't reduce the recovery requirement for beverage containers from 85% to 75%. It says that in order to approve a plan, the director must be satisfied that the plan will achieve a 75% recovery rate or a higher recovery rate established by the director.

Our thanks to Brian Grant of the Environmental Management Branch, Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection for the clarification.

He notes; "We do not want any slippage in the recovery rate for those categories of containers where the rate is already greater than 75%, and will encourage continuous improvement in the recovery rate for all categories. The 75% recovery rate was chosen as a rate that would apply to all product categories (for which a recovery rate was an appropriate performance measure)."

The previous regulation actually said that if the rate in a regional district didn't reach 85% within two years, the director could require the stewardship agency to submit an amended plan showing how the 85% rate could be achieved.

FOLLOW-UP CSR gets WEEE work—apparently

There has been no specific mention in the publicly-available minutes from Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) to confirm the awarding of WEEE research contracts (*Will WEEE research contract go to industry lobby group CSR—PPSReview, March 2005*).

But representatives of the CSR-led consortium have made at least one presentation on alternative funding mechanisms at a recent WEEE working group meeting.

As of press time the May 25 WDO board meeting minutes were not available.

Michele Raymond

North America lost one of recycling's greatest supporters and watchdogs, April 29, when Michele Raymond, passed away after a battle with cancer. Ms Raymond, who was 52, founded Raymond Communications and began publishing *State Recycling Laws Update* in 1991 to provide news and analysis on state and local recycling laws in North America.

In 1995, the company launched *Recycling Laws International* to cover producer responsibility laws for packaging, electronics and other products in Europe and Asia.

Raymond Communications will continue to serve its subscribers and clients under Bruce G. Popka, vice president, and Kim Leslie, managing editor.

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Buddy, can you spare a nickel for a coffee cup?

A proposed new addition to the list of containers covered by deposit legislation in New Brunswick could see coffee and soft drinks consumers paying an extra nickel if they use a disposable cup.

Nova Scotia handling fees increased

Enviro-Depot operators in Nova Scotia have had their handling fees raised for both refillable beer bottles and for recyclable beverage containers.

As of April 1, the rate paid by the brewers for one dozen beer bottles is \$0.2962. Next year the fee is increased to \$0.3022 per dozen. In 2007 the fee goes up to \$0.3082 per dozen.

Payments by the Resource Recovery Fund Board (RRFB) for recyclable beverage containers were increased April 1 by 5.87% to \$0.0349 per container. As of April 1, 2006, the rate will be \$0.0356 per containers; as of April 1, 2007, the rate will be \$0.0363 per container.

Electronics groups announce new guide for product content

The electronics industry has published what it says is the first international standard for product material content reporting.

The "Joint Industry Guide for Material Composition Declaration for Electronic Products" will standardize the disclosure of material content data across the electronics supply chain.

The US-based Electronic Industries Alliance (EIA) and the Japan Green Procurement Survey Standardization Initiative developed the guide to deal with the trend toward international environmental regulations, such as the European Union Directive on the Restriction of Hazardous Substances, which will ban the use of certain materials in electronics manufacturing.

It provides a standardized list of materials that must be disclosed when they are present in products and subparts that are supplied to electronics manufacturers for use in their products. The standardized list will benefit both suppliers and their commercial customers by providing consistency and efficiency in the material declaration process.

According to a May 25 news release, the guide was to be available at no cost at www.eia.org/jig, but was unavailable of press time. For more information, contact EIA Director of Environmental Affairs Rick Goss directly by phone at (703) 907-7582 or by e-mail (rgoss@eia.org).

The New Brunswick Solid Waste Association (NBSWA), which held its annual meeting in Bathurst this past weekend (June 4) will be asking the provincial Environment Department to add disposable drink cups to the deposit list in order to reduce litter.

NBSWA chairman Wayne Flinn, quoted by the *New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal*, said deposits on beer bottles, pop cans and juice boxes have cut into litter.

The solid waste association will submit its recommendation to

Environment Minister Brenda Fowle and to businesses or organizations that might be affected.

Mr. Flinn told the *Telegraph Journal* the association isn't targeting fast food or any specific company. The resolution calls for deposits on all beverage containers, he said.

New Brunswickers currently pay a deposit on most drink cans, bottles and cartons.

The new resolution also calls for milk cartons and jugs to be part of the deposit system.

E-waste legislation introduced in New York City would be a first

At the end of May a local law was introduced in New York City's 51-member legislative body requiring electronics manufacturers to provide free collection and recycling of computers and television sets.

If passed, manufacturers would have to submit detailed collection and

recycling plans to the New York City Department of Sanitation by Jan. 1, 2008.

The bill would give manufacturers the flexibility to set up their own take-back system. It also would hold manufacturers responsible for a prorated share of orphaned electronic waste based on regional sales.

The city would give manufacturers double credit toward the recovery rates for equipment that is reused and donated the New York City Department of Education or a nonprofit group benefiting low-income New Yorkers.

While three US states (California, Maine and recently Maryland) have passed measures to address electronics recycling. This is the first such requirement considered by a municipal government.

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Lindhqvist evaluates three Canadian stewardship programs

In preparation for his appearance as guest speaker at the Recycling Council of Ontario (RCO) conference in Toronto in May, Professor Thomas Lindhqvist of Lund University in Sweden, was asked to develop an evaluation tool for EPR programs. Prof. Lindhqvist, known as the “Father of extended producer responsibility”, made it clear in his opening remarks that in theory implementing EPR programs is easy, “but in practice it’s much more difficult.”

“It’s better to start a discussion about the details rather than get lost in the details.”

The evaluation tool “is not perfect,” he said.

“It doesn’t give you the full picture; it’s a way of orienting yourself. Then you go deeper.”

Prof. Lindhqvist said the evaluation tool should be used for quantifying the degree to which EPR principles, elements and factors are addressed within the design and operation of product stewardship programs in Canada.

The evaluation tool has been tested on three examples of product stewardship programs in Canada: Electronics Recycling Alberta, Ontario Blue Box Program, and Quebec’s SOGHU Used Oil Program.

ELECTRONICS RECYCLING ALBERTA

The Electronics Recycling Alberta program has a number of areas of potential further developments. The program implementation is not stimulating environmental improvements through product system design. The program provides very limited incentives for individual producers to emphasize such a development (it rates 0.3 out of 3.0—*PPSReview’s* interpretation). Specifically, Prof Lindhqvist notes, “There are no direct financial benefits from the EPR system for the individual

producer if the product is re-designed, but such benefits (if acknowledged) will be shared by all producers irrespective of their individual efforts.”

There is a well developed program to secure environmentally appropriate treatment of collected products (2.5 out of 3).

“Measures in this direction will be clearly acknowledged and are promoted by training activities and/or verified by management systems, and are likely to be adopted by a majority of actors.”

The program has a lack of stated targets and ambitions for collection and recycling (0 out of 3), and little incentive to promote activities above the basic levels of material utilization of collected products (0.7 out of 3).

ONTARIO’S BLUE BOX PROGRAM

The Ontario Blue Box Program has a quite even distribution of the grading over the various aspects included in the evaluation tool (ratings range from 1.0 to 2.0 out of 3).

The program rewards packaging using less material and allows for individual systems to be implemented, which potentially enhances the incentives for product and product system design improvements.

Prof. Lindhqvist notes, “The fact that the collection rates (targets) are not binding – and vary considerably – leads to a situation where certain materials that have very low collection rates (because municipalities don’t collect them as they are not profitable – or extremely costly), pay very little into the pay-in model. This creates a situation where recyclable materials with high collection rates are paying considerably more than non-recyclable packaging, even with the funding formula equalisation factor aimed to correct this anomaly.”

The fact that the program is partly

financed by municipalities means that product redesign incentives are diluted, and creates a clear disincentive for alternative programs to be established. There is great potential to create more incentives for high collection rates (rated at 1.5 out of 3) and for promoting more recycling (1.0 out of 3).

QUEBEC’S SOGHU OIL PROGRAM

The Quebec SOGHU Oil Program was the most difficult to evaluate, said Prof. Lindhqvist. The program allows for parallel systems to be organised and provides in this way interesting incentives for identifying and potentially implementing system improvements.

Prof. Lindhqvist said it was difficult to judge the strength of these incentives. His evaluation gives clear recognition to these incentives.

The evaluation results suggest there is room for improvement of the management of post-consumer products in the treatment and recycling phases (rating 1.0 out of 3), while the collection system receives high marks (3.0 out of 3).

“Producers have financial benefits from higher collection rates and these benefits can be substantiated and are perceived as important drivers for striving towards higher collection results by producers.”

The full report is available from the RCO website (www.rco.on.ca).

The blue box is best, LCBO rep tells RCO

Minutes after hearing from a seasoned municipal recycling program operator that handling glass is a major challenge in Ontario, a spokesman for the province's liquor distributor told a Toronto audience he doesn't believe alternative collection systems are any better.

Speaking at the Recycling Council of Ontario conference, May 5, Todd Pepper said there is a "huge problem" operationally in systems where glass is mixed with other containers.

The general manager of the Essex-Windsor Solid Waste Authority, Mr. Pepper said the abrasive quality of broken glass "eats away" steel plate floors in trucks, reduces equipment life and increases maintenance costs.

"We have to find a way to manage glass outside of our blue box, but glass is heavy and if glass isn't in there we aren't

"I have come to the conclusion that the blue box is the most effective way to collect materials—and stewards agree."

- Lyle Clark, LCBO

going to achieve 60% diversion," he said.

The extra expense of handling glass adds to the net cost of the program: a cost now shared by municipalities and stewards.

In several municipalities in Ontario the glass "is simply coming in the front door of the MRF in

the recycling collection truck and going out the back door as residual to landfill," said Mr. Pepper.

Mixed broken glass has little or no value, he noted.

"While there are potential solutions to improving the recovery of glass, they require the investment of significant capital dollars for no return on the investment," says Mr. Pepper in his presentation notes.

"A private sector business would not do this. Why are municipalities being forced to do it?"

The 3Rs Regulations need to be changed, he said, removing the requirement that glass be collected in the blue box, he said.

Lyle Clarke said he has a different outlook on glass.

A senior policy advisor to the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO), Mr. Clark disputed the idea that glass was being landfilled.

With regard to its use as a low-value aggregate substitute, Mr. Clark said by recycling glass we are "saving the Oak Ridges Moraine".

COMING EVENTS

June 12-15

Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario annual general meeting
Toronto, ON
(905) 602-4294

June 15-16

MWIN annual general meeting & conference
Kitchener, ON
(519) 620-9654

August 14-17

2005 AMO Annual Conference
Westin Harbour Castle,
Toronto, ON
(416) 971-9856

September 14-16

Ontario East Municipalities Conference,
Kingston, ON
(613) 925-1498

October 4

Canadian Stewardship Conference,
Toronto, ON
(905) 814-1748
www.canadianstewardship.com

He said the "vast majority" of monies collected through Stewardship Ontario's Efficiency and Effectiveness Fund (of which he is chair) "are going to projects to increase recovery".

After some questions from audience members about the recovery potential of a deposit-return system for LCBO containers, and whether the E&E Fund should study that option, Mr. Clark said, "I have come to the conclusion that the blue box is the most effective way to collect materials—and stewards agree."

"I am confident from a cost/benefit point of view that we have the best system."

Mr. Clark provided no basis for this conclusion.

When Recycling Council of Alberta Executive Director Christina Seidel suggested the deposit-return programs in western Canada have better recovery, Mr. Clark said, "we'll agree to disagree."

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Opinion Piece

The opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of PPSReview

A tax by any other name may kill the tire plan—and the WDO

by Jay Arthur

The Ontario Tire Stewardship (OTS) plan was a time bomb waiting to go off and Boom! did it ever explode?

The fallout from the explosion has likely killed the plan, and may have set the whole stewardship train on a different path.

The OTS plan was a botched job to begin with—ill conceived, contrary to the legislation, its development lacking in meaningful consultation. Not surprisingly, it got sent back the first time it appeared. It was subsequently rejigged (sort of) and found its way to the Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) boardroom. Like most things that hang around long enough, it worked its way to the table and got its rubber stamp. (The oil plan would be the exception to the rule).

Everyone knew the tire plan was flawed, but there were lots of other things to worry about and the issue is not exactly sexy. Tires are not very exciting. Other than the odd spectacular fire, you don't see much in the media.

The plan was placed on the EBR website and the usual clutch of environmentalists made the appropriate noises, pointing out that burning tires is not exactly what we are trying to do here. Some others in the industry were making noises, too. Most of their concerns were ignored by the media.

But the big guys—the major retailers and the tire manufacturers—were right on side with the tire plan, and their lobbyists kept doing what they do so well and kept the tire rolling, so to speak.

Then the media found out there was a tax involved in the OTS plan. Well, not really a tax—at least no more of a tax than the health care premium.

But it was enough to give reporters a chance to hassle Ontario's Premier.

Tires may not be sexy, but taxes? Well, that's a different story. Man the barricades!

Quickly digging out their files on the old tire tax, columnists rushed to their typewriters, their outrage quickly burning the very paper they typed on.

Introduced in 1989 by the previous Liberal Government in David Peterson's day, the \$5 tire tax had seen millions of dollars collected to cover a scrap tire management plan. Most of it ended up in general provincial revenues and little went to doing what it was supposed to do—just like the 10 cents the provincial coffers have been getting for years for all those non-refillable beer containers. But I digress.

In the end, the tire tax was killed by Bob Rae's NDP Government.

On top of the old (Liberal) tire tax hangover, Premier McGuinty's "I won't raise your taxes" election statement was now causing some discomfort in his frontal lobes.

With the introduction of the Ontario health care premium, Mr. McGuinty found he was having credibility issues whenever he opened his mouth.

So when the tire fee furor broke a few days ago, he made it very clear there would be no taxes placed on tires. It was an Ontario version of that old George Bush Sr. classic, "Read my lips".

So is that the end of the OTS plan? Maybe.

An alternative plan (with no consumer fees) has been put on the table to start the discussion. We'll see where that goes.

But if we assume that what is good for the tire goose is good for the other

material ganders, what of electronics? Do we assume all visible fees are now off the table in Ontario?

If that is the case there could be some very dramatic outcomes.

I'm sure when the WDO was set up, no one thought it would take so long to get these plans off the ground. If the everyday workings of the WDO are to be financed by funds from stewardship organizations, who will pay the bills if there are no stewards' fees coming in?

I remember a couple of years ago there was concern about finances and the prospect of the WDO ceasing operations if no funds were found. Letters of credit saved the day then but one wonders how long can that continue.

With the oil plan moribund, the tire plan severely wounded, and controversy over the electronics turning into another potential time bomb, the prospects are not encouraging.

If the worse comes to the worse, the blue box plan may have no one to oversee it.

Norm Miller's new stewardship private member's bill, which seems to have support from all sides of the house, might just be the answer.

Maybe that way we could throw out the bath water and hang on to the baby.

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