

PPSReview

MANAGING WASTE RESPONSIBLY

**Product & Packaging
Stewardship Review**

An information service for municipal governments

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AS E-WASTE PROGRAM BEGINS

BC eyes new products for industry stewardship

As a new program to recover electronic waste kicks off in British Columbia (see Page 5/6), the province could have two more products under stewardship plans by next spring and the government has set a September 30 deadline for comments as to which products they should be next.

In a letter to industry product stewardship stakeholders dated June 26, the province lists nine new products under consideration for stewardship programs. The list includes antifreeze, batteries, products with mercury switches, packaging, and construction and demolition wastes. It also puts

forward the option to expand current product stewardship categories, including electronics, paint and pharmaceuticals.

The letter states these products have been selected because “there is a high likelihood that environmental benefits can be derived from improved management.”

The ministry intends to select two products from this candidate list for the government to consider adding to the Recycling Regulation in spring 2008. Products to be added in future years will also be selected from this list.

The ministry has committed to recommending two new products for stewardship every three years.

Comments on the proposed product list are due by the end of this month (September).

In May, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD—now known as Metro Vancouver) waste management committee set six new product categories that it wants the BC environment ministry to consider.

The committee identified electronics and pesticides not already covered under recycling programs, all major appliances and smaller ones like coffee makers and microwaves, dry cell batteries, mercury-containing products, and drywall as strong candidates for product stewardship.

GVRD staff also want to move toward product stewardship for printed paper and packaging. Paper and paperboard represents almost 19% of the GVRD's total waste stream by weight, only behind organic waste.

Ontario MHSW Plan waits for minister's signature

Ontario is potentially one signature away from having a stewardship plan for Municipal Hazardous or Special Waste (MHSW).

The program plan, submitted by Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) in May, completed its Environmental Registry posting earlier this summer and now waits for approval from the Environment Minister Laurel Broten.

The plan is not clear about how exactly funds would be recovered to cover the cost of the program, but given the over-the-top fee-focused media coverage the proposed e-waste plan announcement received in June

the Province may be shy of even appearing to open that door again until after the October 10 Ontario election.

Approval of the MHSW plan would mean funds can start flowing from MHSW stewards to assist the WDO's financial situation. Each plan includes steward support for the administration of the WDO in addition to support for the specific material recovery plan itself. The WDO was set up under the assumption that a series of new material stewardship plans would be approved, with revenue from steward's administration support coming in on a regular basis.

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Briefly...

BIODEGRADABLE LAPTOPS IN JAPAN

Fujitsu, the world's largest IT service provider, has designed a laptop computer using a biodegradable plastic chassis. Currently only available in Japan, the Fujitsu LifeBook's plastic chassis will be made from cornstarch rather than petroleum. After disposal, the cornstarch chassis will breakdown in months instead of the decades it takes traditional plastics. It is estimated that the cornstarch plastic will create 15% less carbon emissions. The biodegradable plastic is already used by Fujitsu on mobile phones and point-of-sale terminals.

Resource Recovery Forum, August 22, 2007
www.resourcesnotwaste.org

RECYCLED PANDA POOP SOUVENIRS

Taking a note from Thai zookeepers, the Chengdu Giant Panda Breeding Base will turn panda poop into odour-free souvenirs, from bookmarks to Olympic-themed statues of pandas playing various sports. The 40 bamboo-fed pandas at the base produce 300 tones of poop annually. The excrement will be collected, dried and sterilized before being made into souvenirs. It was costing \$770 a month to get rid of their waste. Zookeepers in Thailand already sell paper made from panda and elephant dung.

China Radio International, July 30, 2007
english.cri.cn

PLASTIC BAGS BANNED IN KENYA, UGANDA

Kenya and Uganda, following the example of Tanzania and Rwanda, have banned the importation and use of thin plastic bags, and have imposed taxes of 120% on thicker ones. The ban and tax are designed to decrease the use of thin plastic bags, previously distributed by shops at no charge. The single-use bags can create litter, block drains and harm aquatic life and livestock, although it is not clear how thicker bags would be any less of a problem. City officials in Nairobi, who are charged with enforcing the ban and the new standards, will to purchase micrometers to ensure bags are of the proper thickness, and will need to carry out awareness campaigns to inform the public about compliance with the new regulations. Initial attempts to enforce the ban have met with criticism, as

members of the public arrested for using the thin plastic bags had no way of knowing the thickness of the bag they were using. The city has suspended enforcement of the ban to allow industry to clear out their old stock and the public to learn about the standards. In addition, a new Kenyan standard requiring bags to be a minimum thickness of 30 microns is scheduled to take effect January 1, 2008. The price of plastic bags is expected to increase by 660% as a result

East African Standard, August 8, 2007
www.allafrica.com

BAN ON REUSING PLASTIC BOTTLES, UGANDA

Vendors in Kampala, Uganda, are urging the health ministry and the Ugandan National Bureau of Standards to lift the recent ban on reusing plastic bottles. According to the empty bottle vendors, plastic recyclers are behind the ban. The vendors were refusing to take their bottles to the recyclers because of the low price being offered. Instead, they sell the empty bottles to local dealers in fruit juice, millet porridge, medicinal herbs and local brew as they offer higher prices.

The government fears that reusing the empty bottles causes toxins to be released by the plastics and will spread disease. But the vendors claim that they practise good hygiene, washing the empties with boiling water to eliminate germs. They also say that no person has died, nor have there been any cholera outbreaks attributed to reusing the bottles.

New Vision, August 7, 2007
www.newvision.co.ug

NEW PAPER-THIN BATTERY DEVELOPED

Researchers in the United States have created a 90% cellulose battery that looks like a sheet of black paper. The nanotechnology battery uses no toxic chemicals. The battery is lightweight and can be rolled, cut and folded. Stacking the batteries like a ream of paper, increases the power output. Researchers expect to see the battery used in medical devices and transportation vehicles.

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, August 13, 2007
www.rpi.edu

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The current and past issues of PPSReview 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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Manitoba tire stewardship plan waits for provincial approval

The deadline for comments on the Manitoba Scrap Tire Program Plan closed last month. Following the public consultation period, recommendations will be made to the Minister of Conservation, who has authority under the Waste Reduction and Prevention Act to approve the plan.

Tire Stewardship Manitoba, the new not-for-profit industry funding organization responsible for implementing and operating a scrap tire

diversion program for the province, released its proposed stewardship plan for stakeholder questions and comments in the spring.

The proposed program responds to the province's 2006 Tire Stewardship Regulation. All types of tires and tubes, including off-road tires, will be collected and processed. Services will be available to all regions of the province.

Manitoba currently generates 835,000 scrap program tires annually.

With the addition of off-road tires, it is expected that 900,000 tires will be generated, with a cost of \$4.6 million to remediate.

MUST PARTICIPATE

In order to sell tires in Manitoba, tire stewards must participate in the proposed program or operate an equivalent program. Funding for the program will come from an eco-fee on new tires. The fee will vary depending on the type of tire; car tires will carry a fee of \$4 per tire; large non-highway industrial tires, \$35 per tire. Currently there is a \$3 levy on each new tire, regardless of tire type.

To view the full tire program, visit www.rubberassociation.ca/TSM.

No word yet on Ontario e-waste plan developer

The program developer for Ontario's new e-waste plan, scheduled for delivery early next year, should be known soon.

Electronic Products Stewardship Canada (EPS) issued a request for proposals to develop a program plan for electronics in the summer, following a letter from Environment Minister Laurel Broten, June 11, calling for a stewardship program for

waste electronics and electrical equipment (WEEE) by February 2008. (See *PPSReview*, June 2007).

The selected bidder was to develop a WEEE stewardship program plan and assist in seeing the plan through approval by the Ministry of the Environment.

The request for proposal closed July 16. As of press time, the selected program developer had not been named.

BC conference September 13

A session on how stewardship initiatives have developed in Canada, with a focus on the past and current roles of business in the development and administering of successful programs, opens this year's Conference on Canadian Stewardship September 13, in Vancouver.

Speakers include Robert Lemieux, President of Recyc-Québec and Lynn Bailey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Protection Division, British Columbia Ministry of Environment.

BC Environment Minister Barry Penner is a keynote speaker (www.canadianstewardship.com/).

Minister to retailers: stop sale of oversized PET bottles

The Province of Ontario wants those oversized non-returnable, non-refillable water bottles off the shelves of Ontario's supermarkets.

In a letter to Galen Weston, chairman of Loblaw's Companies Ltd., June 29, Ontario Environment Minister Laurel Broten calls on retailers to stop selling non-refillable 15-litre PET water bottles.

After commending the company's actions to reduce plastic bag consumption and other packaging, the minister states her concern that, "the sale of large non-refillable water bottles is inconsistent with these efforts."

The letter goes on to mention the concerns that municipalities have expressed with collecting and processing the large bottles, and the

potential for the bottles to end up in landfills as a result.

The minister states, "It is my hope that industry will place appropriate emphasis on the environmental aspects of this issue, and stop selling these bottles, rather than rely on government to make these decisions."

She notes Quebec faces the same issue and is considering regulatory action to address the issue.

"In the absence of voluntary action by the retailers and producers, Ontario will also look toward regulatory action."

The letter was copied to several water companies using the 15-litre non-refillable bottles, as well as the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors and the Retail Council of Canada.

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PLAN ACCEPTS IC&I WASTE, TOO

Nova Scotia's e-waste program plan before minister

A plan to manage Nova Scotia's e-waste is awaiting approval from the provincial government.

Electronics Product Stewardship Canada (EPSC) submitted its *Proposal for an End-of-Life Electronics Stewardship Program for Nova Scotia* to Environment and Labour Minister Mark Parent on August 1.

The proposed plan aims to divert unwanted and end-of-life electronics from landfill starting February 1, 2008, as required by the province's Electronic Products Stewardship Program Regulation.

Under the proposal, consumers will drop off their unwanted desk-top computers, laptops, computer components such as keyboards, printers and monitors, and televisions at locations across the province at no cost. The industrial, commercial and institutional (IC&I) sectors will also be able to access the program.

HANDLING FEE

The plan will be funded by an environmental handling fee to be charged at the point-of-purchase. The fee will vary by product category. Initial fees will be set to mirror those in other provinces: a 35" television will carry a fee of \$30; computer printers, \$8; and laptops, \$5.

Toronto adopts safe e-waste disposal policy

Toronto city council has adopted a new policy to ensure that the city's electronic waste is recycled or disposed in a safe manner.

The policy, adopted in July, responds to concerns that some contractors are shipping e-waste for recycling to developing countries with lax environmental and health and safety standards. The new policy will see all requests for proposals require that e-

If approved, the EPSC Industry Advisory Committee that oversaw the development of the proposal will create a new non-profit organization, Atlantic Canada Electronic Stewardship (ACES), to launch, implement and maintain the program. Obligated brand owners will join

ACES. The Resource Recovery Fund Board (RRFB), which prepared the plan, will continue to serve as program administrator after its approval, pending negotiations.

The full proposal is available at the RRFB's website, www.rafb.com.

Phase in for full EPR —municipalities

Municipalities in Ontario have recommended a phased-in approach to reach full extended producer responsibility (EPR).

In a letter accompanying its EPR discussion paper submitted to Environment Minister Broten on July 10, Doug Reycraft, President of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), said it has become apparent "that the [Waste Diversion] Act fundamentally fails to provide the motivation for industry to make the necessary changes to consumer packaging and help to improve provincial diversion of designated blue box materials."

As reported in *PPS Review*, February 2007, a discussion paper on

extended producer responsibility (EPR) proposes some radical changes to the system.

After much municipal comment, the final paper recommends a phased-in approach to full EPR for non-recovered consumer packaging and printed paper (CPPP).

The first phase calls for a 50% cost sharing arrangement between industry and municipalities for the full cost of CPPP, including litter and garbage costs. The second phase would see industry take on 100% of the full cost of all CPPP.

The report also presents a number of recommendations on improving the blue box through litter reduction initiatives, strengthening recycling markets, and encouraging EPR at the federal level.

The full paper is available at www.amrc.guelph.org/policy/FinalEPR.pdf.

Canada-wide EPR principles endorsed

The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) announced it has endorsed a series of Canada-wide principles for extended producer responsibility (EPR). CCME developed national principles to promote harmonization of approaches and help ensure a level playing field for the application of EPR across the country.

The principles are contained in a report that identifies two key features of EPR policies: that they shift responsibility for wastes upstream to the producer and that they provide incentives to producers to incorporate environmental considerations when designing products.

The principles take into account the environment and EPR program design and implementation. They include:

- consistency with the 4R waste management hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle, recovery)
- incorporation of design for environment
- transfer of end-of-life responsibility for waste products or materials to producers and away from municipalities
- program costs not borne by general taxpayers
- consumer access to collection systems without charge

The CCME concurrently issued a report on the free-rider issue (wherein producers do not pay their fair share of stewardship costs). The report looks at various management options and suggests clarification to jurisdictional issues.

Copies of both reports are available at www.ccme.ca.

FUTURE PROJECTS

CCME has posted two contract projects on its website. The first, which closed to competition in August, was to revise the CCME's EPR Evaluation Tool. The tool is to be used to evaluate "products for the appropriateness of EPR programs."

The second contract will see the development of sustainable packaging guidelines, following a worldwide inventory of sustainable packaging initiatives. It was scheduled to close to competition on September 5.

BC's new e-waste program seeks executive director

BC's latest stewardship program, for electronic waste, was launched last month (August).

BC residents can take unwanted computers, monitors, fax machines, and televisions to collection sites across the province for recycling at no charge.

The new program is funded by an industry-set fee to be paid on all new electronics.

The operator of the program, the Electronics Stewardship Association of British Columbia, an off-shoot of Encorp Pacific, is currently seeking an executive director.

For more information on the e-waste program, and the details of the executive director posting, visit Encorp's website (www.encorp.ca/electronics).

COMING EVENTS

September 12-13

Conference on Canadian Stewardship
Vancouver, BC
(800) 330-9767
www.canadianstewardship.com

September 12-14

Ontario East Municipal Conference
Kingston, ON
(613) 925-1498
www.oemc.ca

September 19-21

Composting Council of Canada National Conference
Moncton, NB
(416) 535-0240
www.compost.org

September 24-28

Union of British Columbia Municipalities Convention
Vancouver, BC
(604) 270-8226
www.civicnet.bc.ca

September 26-28

"20/20 Vision" - 2007 Recycling Council of Alberta
Waste Reduction Conference
Calgary, AB
(403) 843-6563
www.recycle.ab.ca

October 1

Paper Recycling in Ontario workshop
Toronto, ON
(416) 626-0350
sprice@ppec-paper.com

October 18

Ontario Waste Minimization Awards
Toronto, ON
(416) 657-2797
www.rco.on.ca

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Opinion Piece

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

What does “rethink” mean in BC?

By Jay Arthur

About five years ago, I wrote a column in this august journal entitled *Look Twice at that Gift Horse, BC*.

The piece was written in response to concerns that our beacon of common sense and sound planning when it comes to things blue (boxes in particular) was about to lose its virtue.

Men in suits and big black cars were rumoured to coming to town from the east, offering baubles to the natives in exchange for changes in local customs.

One of the problems with men in suits from the east is that they don't quite get the BC approach to life, or indeed any approach to life that doesn't come from an address with a Toronto postal code.

It may be the mountains, the sea air, or who knows, even the second hand “smoke” drifting down for the hippies in the Interior. Either way, people tend to think differently west of the Rockies.

So when the suits did arrive and brought stories of the breath-taking performance of the packaging recovery system that saw between one third and one half of the containers diverted from landfill, the locals were indeed aghast.

“Is that all?” they asked, truly breathless. It was indeed awesome. Not the performance, you understand, so much as the nerve.

The locals checked their own numbers—two thirds to three quarters with a deposit system—and it wasn't long before their respiratory systems, and their efficient blue box system, returned to normal.

Meanwhile, the men in suits left town and returned to their postal code to think again.

It wasn't long before more missionaries were expedited to the

western colonies. And this time they brought suitcases full of cash.

Money talks, and there had been many conversations with money-strapped municipalities in Ontario during the 1990s. They were cash-strapped by a poor economy and then by Premier Robbin' Harris, who stole from the poor and gave to the rich. It was good time to have a suitcase full of cash.

But money did not talk in BC. Even in the face of a \$5 million signing

“...when the organization that runs the depot system tells a Recycling Council of British Columbia audience it is time to “rethink recycling”, what do we make of that?”

bonus, BC said no thanks, we'll do it our way, and shrines in its honour were built all over the country.

In the past few years, however things have changed and there is a bit of a concern that the men in suits and their ambassadors may be spending a lot of time in the chief's house.

At the end of last year it became evident that the level of diversion enjoyed by the BC depot system needed improvement. Like all deposit programs, it relied on the incentive of the returned cash to motivate behaviour.

As the economy grows and inflation grows with it, that five cents, or ten cents deposit may not be enough to get the job done.

There is no science here. Many jurisdictions in the United States have seen this happening and some—after great battles with industry usually—have succeeded in increasing their deposits and recovery rates have improved.

It is entirely understandable that industry doesn't want to see the price of its products increased, but it would affect all the competition too, so this out-dated

ideology should be retired. Yet we fight it every single time we try to do the right thing. And no one is going to stop drinking pop because of a five-cent price increase (that is redeemable).

So when the organization that runs the depot system tells a Recycling Council of British Columbia audience it is time to “rethink recycling”, what do we make of that?

And when the idea of increasing deposits is met with “industry wouldn't like that”, what do we make of that?

It is all very well that the BC Government takes a hands-off approach to this kind of thing but if the price it pays is to lose its beacon status, no one wins.

BC still has the best example of a hybrid system in the country, and if they could do something about milk containers more shrines would surely follow.

I note the new e-waste program relies on advanced disposal fees to cover the cost of managing the program, and that the existing container depots, among others, will be used for the return of the computers. But without a deposit up front, what incentive do consumers have to take them back?

How long will it be, I wonder, before the “rethinking” means losing deposits for containers, too?

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