

Ontario Minister approves revised e-waste program

Just five days after the comment period on the Environmental Registry ended, the Ontario Minister of the Environment has approved the Revised (Phase 1 and 2) Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Program Plan.

The Revised WEEE Program Plan, which will see cell phones, cameras and audio-visual equipment added, comes into effect April 1, 2010. In the interim, Ontario Electronic Stewardship will continue to implement the Phase 1 WEEE

Program Plan that commenced on April 1, 2009.

To view the correspondence from Minister John Gerrestsen, dated August 14, visit: <http://www.wdo.ca/files/domain4116/09-08-14%20WEEE%20approval%20letter.pdf>.

MHSW PLAN POSTED

The Minister has posted the Consolidated Municipal Hazardous or Special Waste (MHSW) Program Plan on the Environmental Registry for 30 days, with comments accepted up to August 30, 2009.

WDO submitted the plan to the Minister on July 31, 2009.

To view the Plan on the Environmental Registry visit: <http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/displaynoticecontent.do?noticeId=MTA3MjA4&statusId=MTYwOTcy&language=en>

Manitoba waste packaging plan to launch in spring 2010

The Manitoba Packaging and Printed Paper Program Plan is awaiting the approval of the province's Minister of Conservation.

Submitted on June 22 by Multi-Material Stewardship Manitoba (MMSM), the plan responds to the province's new Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship Regulation, which was registered under the Waste Reduction and Prevention (WRAP) Act at the end of 2008.

It is anticipated that the plan will receive approval, with a launch scheduled for spring of 2010.

The new regulation is based on the principles of extended producer responsibility (EPR). Stewards—companies that distribute packaging or printed papers in Manitoba—are now responsible for 80% of the cost of managing their materials once they become waste.

MMSM formed in 2006 in anticipation of the paper and packaging

regulation. The organization's membership and directors come from a number of industry associations, including the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, Refreshments Canada and the Retail Council of Canada.

The plan is based on requirements outlined in the province's Guideline for Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship and Guideline for Plastic Bags.

PACKAGING AND PAPER WASTE DEFINED

Included under the regulation are:

- Packaging—both of pre-packaged goods and service packaging (defined as “any packaging that is provided at the point of sale by a retail seller or food service industry to facilitate the delivery of goods to the consumer, including single use plastic bags.”).

Continued on Page 3/8

INSIDE THIS
EIGHT-PAGE
ISSUE
News in brief..... 2/8
Latest on BBPP..... 3/8
Analysis: plastics.... 4/8
Calendar..... 7/8
Editorial..... 8/8

Briefly...

SEWING FOR A GREENER PLANET

Sewers in Massachusetts, USA, have been stitching up a storm in an effort to reduce the use of disposal plastic bags. The BagShare project sees sewing circles come together to make fabric bags, usually out of scrap material, on machines donated by the local community. The bags are left at local stores and libraries. People who shop at the stores can take a reusable cloth bag and return it the next time they shop, either to that store or another BagShare participating store. Organizers were approaching 10,000 bags sewn and donated in May. The project is being embraced by other communities across the United States.



The BagShare Project, May 2009
www.thebagshare.org

MAZDA ANNOUNCES NEW VEHICLE BUMPER RECYCLING TECHNOLOGY

Mazda Motor Corp. has developed what it says is the world's first process to recycle old vehicle bumpers back into raw resin for new vehicle bumpers. Used bumpers from different manufacturers can be included in the process. The technology automates the removal of metal attachments from the bumpers.

Japan for Sustainability, July 24, 2009
www.japanfs.org/en/pages/029171.html

GOODBYE "BEST BEFORE" IN UK?

In their ongoing battle to reduce food waste, best-before dates could be shelved in the United Kingdom. Speaking at the 2009 Futuresource Conference in London, UK Environment Secretary Hilary Benn stated that about 1/3 of food purchased in the UK each year ends up as waste. He claims that food labelling is part of the problem, with 370,000 tonnes of safe and edible food being thrown out because it is past its best before date. Sell-by dates are used by retailers to keep track of inventory, but can lead to customer confusion. "Too many of us are throwing things away simply because we're not sure, we're confused by the label, or we're just playing safe," said Benn. The Food Standards Agency has pointed out that best-before and use-by dates are required under European Law.

In response to Benn's comments, Stephen Robertson, director general of the British Retail Consortium, said in a press release, "Scrapping best-before dates won't reduce food waste. Customer education will. Date labels are there to help customers but they need to understand what they mean. Retailers are working with the Government to improve understanding and to help customers make better choices about buying, storing and using food at home."

Futuresource Conference, June 9, 2009
www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/ministers/speeches/hilary-benn/hb090609.htm

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT INDEX LAUNCHED IN US

Wal-mart has announced plans to develop a worldwide sustainable product index. On July 16, the company said the index will "establish a single source of data for evaluating the sustainability of products." The index will be introduced in three phases. The first will see its more than 100,000 suppliers worldwide complete a 15 question survey focused on energy and climate, material efficiency, natural resources, and people and community. Phase two will see a database of lifecycle analysis developed, and phase three will see the index translated into a simple sustainability rating system for consumers.

Wal-mart Press Release, July 16, 2009
Walmartstores.com/FactsNews/

UK GROCER DROPS THE BOX FROM HOUSE-BRAND CEREAL

Sainsbury's, a UK supermarket chain with almost 800 stores, will drop the boxboard boxes from their house-brand cereal to reduce packaging waste. MRW reports that the move has met with mixed reviews from customers worried that their cereal will be "squashed into dust." In the same article, Stuart Lendrum of Sainsbury's is quoted as saying in response, "we trialled cereals in a bag and a box, and we've now established that we can remove the box on 'Rice Pops' without affecting the quality of the cereal. This is now on shelf and we're looking at other cereals where we might be able to do the same."

Materials Recycling Week (MRW), June 23, 2009
www.mrw.co.uk

Product & Packaging Stewardship Review is published by Ben Bennett Communications as part of the Fair Comment Project. It is emailed as a communications service aimed at providing a broad range of stewardship and associated information from Canada, the United States and overseas.

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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**PPS
Review
August
2009**

Page 2/8

Gerretsen sets 70% diversion goal, seeks action on problem materials

While the review of the Waste Diversion Act (WDA) is still taking place at the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Minister John Gerretsen says some work can start now on revising the Blue Box Program Plan.

“As you are aware, many of WDO’s recommendations must be considered in the broader context of the WDA, which is undergoing a separate review,” writes the Minister.

“That report will be released “upon its completion.”

“However, there are a number of improvements to the existing Blue Box Program Plan that can be made in the near term, building upon the success of the program to date, to achieve greater diversion.”

In his August 14 letter to Waste Diversion Ontario Chair Cliodhna McMullin, the Minister directs WDO to revise the plan by establishing a diversion target of 70% to be achieved by December 31, 2011.

The Minister wants to see improved methodology for calculating diversion by including additional avenues where residential Blue Box materials are collected.

Manitoba plan

Continued from Page 1/8

- Printed Paper—including newspapers, promotion materials and magazines, but not books.

The regulations also require that:

- plastic bags be recyclable or biodegradable; and
- the program meets targets to reduce the use of plastic bags and to recover beverage containers.

Beverage containers included in a deposit-return program, such as beer bottles, are exempt.

For further details visit www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/pollutionprevention/waste/packaging_paper.html.

And he would like to see included packaging-like materials, sold as products, that are compatible with current collection and management systems.

The revised plan is to be submitted by April 30, 2010.

The Minister also wants a review of material management issues associated with the current management of packaging and printed paper by Ontario municipalities under the Blue

Box Program Plan. He wants that by the end of February.

That review is to include moving to a greater consistency of materials collected across Ontario, and finding a way to identify and manage problem material in the blue box.

The full text of the letter can be found at: <http://www.wdo.ca/files/domain4116/09-08-14%20Minister%20BB%20letter%20to%20WDO.pdf>

Rechargeables program looks to all the battery business

The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation of Canada (RBRCC) is looking to manage all of Ontario’s batteries. RBRCC submitted an industry stewardship plan to that effect to Ontario Minister of the Environment John Gerretsen on July 30, 2009.

RBRCC proposes to expand its free Canada/US recycling program, Call2Recycle. The program has been operating in Ontario for over 12 years.

The new plan would see RBRCC use its existing network of collection points — 2,023 in Ontario currently, it says — to collect both rechargeable and non-rechargeable batteries at no charge to the consumer. The plan estimates that more than 10 million kilograms of batteries would be collected in the expanded program in the first five years.

AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

If approved, collection would begin on January 1, 2010, six months ahead of the scheduled launch of Phases 2 and 3 of the Municipal Hazardous or Special Waste (MHSW) Program. A stewardship program to manage household batteries, among other waste categories, is required in Phase 2. (See page 6 for an update on the MHSW plan in Ontario.)

RBRCC submitted the plan on

behalf of the 200 battery product stewards in Ontario, about 90% of the rechargeable and primary battery market in the province, including major brandowners such as Energizer, Duracell and Rayovac.

The plan has a five-year goal to reach 25% diversion from disposal.

In his submission letter to the Minister, Carl Smith, Chair of the RBRCC, states, “based on our knowledge of programs around the world and the alternative being considered for Ontario, we are convinced that our ISP [industry stewardship program] is best in class.”

The Minister has yet to adopt a stewardship plan for Phase 2 and 3 MHSW. Waste Diversion Ontario has recently submitted a comprehensive plan for all MHSW in the province.

For more information visit www.call2recycle.org/ontario-isp.php?c=149&d=154&w=2&r=Y.

**PPS
Review
August
2009
Page 3/8**

ANALYSIS

Plastic's public relations coup comes at the expense of its own credibility

Editor's note: Sometimes a story comes out that pulls certain invisible levers and just demands further investigation. One such story appeared in the media on May 20, 2009, the same week the most recent PPSReview was published, hence this is our first chance to look at the issue. The story was about a study that claimed there are health risks with reusing plastic bags. As a piece of

**In
depth**

corporate public relations it was a complete success. Our obsession with plastic bags ensures any story on the topic—mostly unfavourable to the plastic industry—seems to make headlines everywhere. This story, casting doubt on all the “green” moves to reduce plastic bags, was carried across the world. Most people don't look beyond the “Reusable grocery bags may pose public health risk” headlines.

We did.

On May 20, 2009, a news release about research into the hazards of reusing bags was issued by the Environment & Plastics Industry Council (EPIC). It talked about research that appears to comprise an initial testing of five items last fall and a later study of 29 items (including controls) this past spring. It says EPIC funded some research, but it is not entirely clear who paid for the initial testing.

The Canadian Plastics Industry Association (of which EPIC is a council) says on its website “the study was commissioned last fall by a consumer coalition to gain a better

understanding of how people use reusable packaging and to address any concerns for public health and safety.”

Many will recall the fight the City of Toronto had with the plastics industry last year over the city's moves to reduce plastic waste. This included talk of bans, promotion of reusable bags and ultimately the requirement that stores charge a 5-cent fee on plastic bags.

The EPIC news release makes no mention of consumer groups, but says the food service sector “has been particularly concerned” about the use of reusables. EPIC says research conducted last fall on a sample of reusables during the City of Toronto in-store packaging reduction program “sparked even more concern by industry” about potential public health risks. EPIC accordingly “agreed to fund this independent piece of research in response to these public health concerns.”

The first piece of research looked at one reusable bag and two Tupperware containers, plus two “controls.” Was this the “study” commissioned by the as-yet unnamed consumer coalition? Was it the food service sector? We don't know.

BUT WHY?

Exactly who did commission the research is significant because the first question that cries out to be answered is why on earth the work was done in the first place.

There might, perhaps, be some political value in determining the level of contamination that may be found in reused bags. This would give you something to write a news release about, if you were so inclined, which you might be if you were trying to

score points for single-use plastic bags.

But the fact that there would be contamination would surely not come as a surprise to anyone.

Whether we are talking about reused regular plastic bags, the so-called “eco-bags” that stores are now selling, cloth bags, wicker baskets, backpacks or even coat pockets, no one would seriously suggest that any of these containers would be suitable for raw meat or that any unpackaged foodstuffs be placed directly in them and then eaten without washing.

What is unfortunate is that this kind of media focus thing overshadows

all the excellent work EPIC has been doing over the years to improve plastics recycling, and does nothing to address the very real issue of what to do with all those plastic bags.

The fact that EPIC “agreed” to further research suggests a third party asked EPIC to do it. Perhaps it was the

research company (among whose main conclusions, we read, is that still more research be done). We don't know.

SAME STATEMENT

Accompanying the EPIC news release is a report on the study itself, dated April 21, 2009, on Sporometrics letterhead. The EPIC news release contains the following statement:

Continued on 5/8

If it was the food service sector that was so concerned initially, it is curious that the research into containers ended after testing just two pieces of Tupperware...

**PPS
Review
August
2009
Page 4/8**

Unscientific statements a cause for concern

Continued from 4/8

“The position of the plastics industry is clear. The industry strongly supports reduction and reuse, and recognizes use of reusables as good environmental practice, but it does not want to see these initiatives inadvertently compromise public health and safety. The industry believes that appropriate research and investigation must be pursued.”

It's a concise summary of EPIC's position.

The introduction to the “independent piece of research” by Sporometrics contains exactly the same statement, word for word, which seems out of place in a scientific report.

While *PPSReview's* analysis in no way impugns the integrity of the actual research and laboratory work, some of the statements in the report do raise some questions about the mandate and the assumptions.

The testing began, to use the report's words, with the “hypothesis” that reusable packaging could pose potential health risks versus “proven, more hygienic” single-use packaging. It does not refer to previous research where this proof was established, but it is hard to argue with the hypothesis, only with the apparent need to prove it.

Once the testing of the single reusable bag showed “unacceptably high bacterial, mould and total coliform counts,” authority for more

testing was sought and secured, but this time the focus was entirely on reusable grocery bags, “which have been assumed to be safe and hygienic after repeated use.” It does not say who made this rather unscientific assumption, and does not add to our confidence in the logic of what is to follow.

If it was the food service sector that was so concerned initially, it is curious that the research into containers ended after testing just two pieces of Tupperware, even though “considerable bacterial build-up” was found on one of them. The follow-up research only looked at bags.

A WHOLE RANGE

The laboratory analysis of the second round of research this past spring showed a whole range of contamination was found on the bags, including coliforms, mould and yeast. While the report confirms no E-coli was actually found, the fact that coliforms were present “suggests” that forms of E. coli associated with severe disease “could be present in small but a significant portion of the bags if sufficient numbers were tested.”

Further, while the report confirms no salmonella was actually found, it adds, “it is consistent with everything that is known about Salmonella ecology that it would also be present on rare occasions.”

So, it wasn't there, but it could have been—and it could have been “serious.” Again, it is hard to argue

with the hypothesis, only with what appears to be a rather unscientific effort to prove it.

The report also concludes that the use of reusable bags as a multi-purpose tote by a majority of bag owners in this study is a cause for concern, “particularly if the reusable bags are used to transport gym equipment or diapers.”

NOT A GOOD IDEA

At the risk of labouring the point, this appears to mean that is not a good idea to carry foodstuffs in the same bag as your old running shoes or your baby's last nappy change, which is not likely news to many people.

The report further recommends that in the event of future cases of food poisoning, family doctors and public health officials should add the reusable grocery bag to the list of possible sources of contamination to be investigated.

And to that list, perhaps we might add, albeit unscientifically, all other containers that may have hosted the offending bacterium, including brand new single-use plastic bags, gym bags and coat pockets.

What has happened here is a classic media coup for the public relations consultants. But it comes at the expense of the credibility of the rest of the organization. And that is a shame.

The news release and the report can be found at: http://www.cpia.ca/files/files/A_Microbiological_Study_of_Reusable_Grocery_Bags_May20_09.pdf.

The CPIA website news bulletin is at: <http://www.cpia.ca/newsroom/details.php?ID=2054>.

How US industry is fighting legislation against plastic bags

According to National Public Radio (www.npr.org), the United States plastics industry is spending more than \$1 million to fight a surcharge on grocery bags in Seattle.

Seattle Council imposed a 20-cent-per-bag charge last year. Since then, NPR says the American Chemistry Council (ACC) helped fund a petition drive that forced the issue to a city-wide ballot. That vote is scheduled to be held August 18.

The ACC has contributed approximately \$1.4 million for an ad campaign against the surcharge, says NPR. Ads on local radio dramatize a husband and wife, lamenting the dawn of a new tax. “A tax on grocery bags is not what we need in this economy,” says the announcer.

**PPS
Review
August
2009**

Page 5/8

Various groups support public space recycling project in Sarnia

On July 9, among the dozens of news releases issued by Canada News Wire (CNW) was one from Nestlé Waters Canada.

The headline was “Beverage industry, Waste Diversion Ontario, City of Sarnia launch first pilot public spaces recycling of its kind in Ontario.”

Public spaces recycling, it said, captures the “last mile” of recyclables – items typically found in Ontario’s Blue Box curbside recycling program that

are thrown away by people in park spaces, recreational facilities like arenas, street scenes, transit stops, bars and restaurants, elementary and secondary schools, convenience stores and gas stations.

Refreshments Canada, the Canadian Bottled Water Association (CBWA), Nestlé Waters Canada and Stewardship Ontario’s Continuous Improvement Fund are funding the cost of purchasing new recycling container

infrastructure and/or re-engineering the City of Sarnia’s existing containers as part of the two-phase pilot project.

Open space recycling facilities have been around for many years, and it’s not the first time industry has contributed to special projects. So it is not exactly clear what makes this program “the first of its kind in Ontario.” There is no further information on the Refreshments Canada, CBWA or Nestlé Waters websites, or any references to the project or the news release.

The news release says the industry coalition is also responsible for the overall management of the project as well as pre- and post-pilot measurement of the program. The City of Sarnia is responsible for assuming the operating cost associated with any changes to its current waste management services contract. The first phase of the program will take place in selected Sarnia parks. The second phase of the pilot begins in October in three Sarnia arenas.

In an unusually political statement for an industry-sponsored news release, Sarnia’s mayor is quoted as saying, “Rather than sit on the sidelines and do environmentally symbolic but ineffective actions that do not address the recycling issue - like banning the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities, Sarnia Council decided to take a leadership role.”

(In August of 2008, Nestlé’s previous release on the issue via CNW was headlined: “Nestlé Waters opposes London’s bottled water ban, proposes effective environmental and health programs.”)

Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan lower e-waste fees

Atlantic Canada Electronics Stewardship (ACES) has reduced the environmental handling fee (EHF) charged on some new electronic devices sold in Nova Scotia effective August 1.

Portable computers will see a drop in EHF’s from \$5 to \$2.10 each. Similarly, desktop printers will see a drop from \$8 to \$6.50. Some items will see an increase; for example, the EHF on 30” to 35” televisions will increase by \$10.

The changes come after electronics stewardship programs in Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Waste Electronic Equipment Program—SWEEP) and British Columbia (Electronics Stewardship Association of British Columbia—ESABC) joined with ACES to have an independent third party analyze the fees for some end-of-life electronics. SWEEP has also reduced most of its EHF’s as of August 1. The only increase comes in desktop computers, which see an increase from \$10 to \$15. Computer peripherals have been added at \$1.10.

For more information visit www.estewardship.ca.

E-waste program coming to PEI

An e-waste bill was introduced into the Prince Edward Island Legislature on May 13, 2009, that will see a province-wide management system for electronic waste developed. Announced by Environment, Energy and Forestry Minister Richard Brown, the system will be developed by the Province and Atlantic Canada Electronics Stewardship (ACES), which represents electronics manufacturers and retailers.

Currently there is no e-waste handling system on the Island. Materials are collected and either incinerated or sent to the provincial landfill. Under the new system, depots for dropping-off e-waste will be established across the province. Collected items will be properly recycled. The program will be funded through environmental handling charges collected at the point of sale. It is expected that the program will begin in early 2010.

The provinces of New Brunswick and Newfoundland & Labrador may soon follow suit, as the four Atlantic provinces agreed to work together on implementing e-waste regulations at a June 2008 meeting of the Atlantic Environment Ministers.

See www.gov.pe.ca for details.

**PPS
Review
August
2009**

Page 6/8

Merriman, van Rossem join WDO team

Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) has recently welcomed two new staff. David Merriman, formerly of MacLaren and MacViro, has joined WDO as Director of Waste Diversion Programs.

Chris van Rossem has been hired as a policy analyst. For the past 10 years Mr. van Rossem has been a research associate at the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics at Lund University in Sweden.

Encorp Pacific releases 2008 annual report

Encorp Pacific (Canada), the British Columbia not-for-profit product stewardship organization that manages used beverage containers in the province, recently issued its 2008 annual report.

The online-only report points to an overall recovery rate of 77.1% , with glass and aluminum recovery rates at 87.3% and 81.5% respectively. Results are further broken down by container size. This capture rate translates to over 1 billion containers recovered in 2008, 71 million more than in 2007. To read the report visit www.encorp.ca.

Quebec Minister to open stewardship conference

Line Beauchamp, the Minister of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks for Quebec, will speak at the opening of the third Conference on Canadian Stewardship in Montreal, October 6.

Sustainable Stewardship is the theme for the conference. Presentations will focus on the state of stewardship programs in Canada, and their economic sustainability.

For more information visit the conference website, www.canadianstewardship.com.

CSR becomes StewardEdge

As of May 1, 2009, CSR: Corporations Sharing Responsibility, has discontinued operations, being recreated as StewardEdge Inc.

StewardEdge describes itself as a “new Canadian-based independent, employee self-managed company, dedicated to the design, implementation and management of effective and cost-efficient product stewardship programs.”

Derek Stephenson, former senior CSR official, is serving as the company’s president. Company directors, each overseeing a StewardEdge program area, include Joe Hall - Municipal Hazardous or Special Waste, Gord Day - Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment, Ken Friesen - Multi-Material Stewardship Manitoba, Guy Perry - Blue Box, and Jane MacKenzie - Financial and Administration.

StewardEdge’s website, www.stewardedge.ca, will be fully live September 2009, according to a single announcement web page. The CSR website is now effectively closed but the Price Sheet will remain available for the next few months at www.csr.org/pricesheet.html.

COMING EVENTS

August 16—19

2009 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Annual Conference
Ottawa, ON
(877) 426-6527
www.amo.on.ca

September 28—October 2

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

September 30—October 2

19th Annual National Compost Conference 2009
Vancouver, BC
(877) 571-4769
www.compost.org

October 5—7

Conference on Canadian Stewardship
Montreal, QC
(250) 495-4592
www.canadianstewardship.com

October 14—16

Paint the Town Green—Recycling Council of Alberta's 2009 Waste Reduction Conference
Calgary, ON
(403) 262-1234
www.recycle.ab.ca

October 22

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

**PPS
Review
August
2009**

Page 7/8

Editorial

The opinions expressed in this column are indeed those of PPSReview

After 50 issues, we still need to shine a light—and we will

By Ben Bennett
Publisher, PPSReview

(I have asked our regular columnist Jay Arthur to step aside for this issue of PPSReview.)

Next year marks the 10-year anniversary of this publication, and this marks our 50th edition.

A lot has happened since the first four-page issue of what was then known by its full name of *Product & Packaging Stewardship Review* was faxed to municipalities across Ontario.

The idea in those days was to provide up-to-date information about what was going on in the world of stewardship, and information about what wasn't going on but maybe should have been.

The biggest thing that was going on, of course, was a lot of talk about industry paying toward the cost of recycling. What wasn't going on was the payment part.

Most of what did go on involved a relatively small group of players, and few meaningful details of what they talked about or did ever made their way to the council tables of the province, or anywhere else beyond their respective ivory towers.

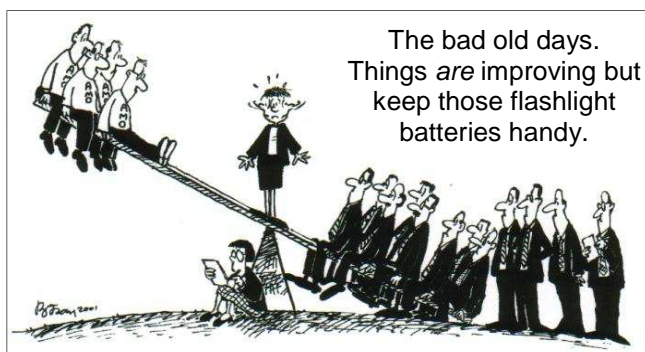
What did get through usually came from organizations representing one side of the discussions, and was suitably (and understandably) nuanced.

A cartoon of a teeter-totter from our July 2001 issue showed the imbalance that existed at the time—see insert. While that was a long time ago, based on comments we have received, the image seemed to stick in many people's minds as summing up the essential flaw in the whole business.

As some of our regular columnists have pointed out that, right from the beginning, the stewardship negotiations

which lead to Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) were one-sided in terms of the numbers at the table, and it was clear that the municipalities were being outgunned.

When it came to negotiating, or when lobbying the provincial government, private industry had all the aces.



Because companies answer to their shareholders, it was those shareholders' interests that were the priority. These guys were focused. Also, those who represented industry were often professional advocates who were paid to be at all those meetings. It was part of their job.

The municipal representatives, on the other hand, were often already overworked with their everyday jobs. They often got seconded to a committee because their boss couldn't make it that day and the next thing they knew they were supposed to negotiate "cost containment" and to argue why newspapers should be paying into the blue box kitty. The following week someone else was sent.

Probably one of the biggest reasons we are now seeing industry pay a significant part of the cost of recycling—and soon will be paying even more—is the more aggressive stance taken by the Province, and some stiffening of the spine on the municipal side. Things are looking up.

Lately, there have been some improvements to the balance at the board table, courtesy of some recent restructuring and we look forward to the coming months.

Given the unevenness of the playing field, the mandate of this publication has been not only to shine a bright light into the corners, but to provide the other half of the nuance.

To the extent that some people have not always been thrilled about the brightness, or the other side to the story appearing in print, we may claim some modest success, perhaps. But given our limited resources, we would do well to maintain that modesty.

The nature of any bureaucracy means there will inevitably be a lot of material that never sees the light of day, and for the most part, that is not a big problem.

But no governing body like the WDO, with or without a balanced membership, should be reticent about what they talk about at their meetings reaching the ears and eyes of the general public, even if it might not always be convenient.

Of late, PPSReview has added increased in-depth analysis on some issues, something readers will be seeing more of in the future.

Your feedback tells us it is sorely needed.

**PPS
Review
August
2009
Page 8/8**