

PPSReview

MANAGING WASTE RESPONSIBLY

**Product & Packaging
Stewardship Review**

**An information service for municipal governments
Vol 10, Issue 6, January 2012**

DISPUTE OVER INCENTIVE PROGRAM

SO says it is ready in the event of an MHSW service stoppage

Just as municipalities are about to consider signing new municipal hazardous or special waste (MHSW) service agreements with Stewardship Ontario (SO) for 2012, a dispute with a service provider has put dozens of programs at risk of disruption.

In a message to municipalities, January 21, SO notes that it has “fully planned for contingencies” if there is a disruption of Phase 1 MHSW transportation and processing services from municipal depots.

Any municipality that is affected

by such a disruption of service as result of the dispute will be able to select an alternate service provider from a list provided by SO.

“If a municipality is unable to secure a service provider, that municipality should contact Stewardship Ontario immediately and Stewardship Ontario will make arrangements for service on behalf of the municipality.”

In a bulletin sent to municipalities January 20, the Ontario Waste Management Association (OWMA)

said some MHSW service providers have “major concerns” about some of the details in SO’s new incentive program, which was announced in the fall (see *PPSReview*, October 2011).

OWMA notes a consultant has been hired to review the incentive program and a report is expected by the end of January.

One of the major MHSW transporters and processors had served notice to clients that a service disruption was imminent. The wording of the OWMA bulletin suggest others may be considering action, too.

Service providers, it says, “will be making independent decisions as to their ability to be able to operate in this new marketplace.”

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Quebec stewards to pay less

Quebec blue box stewards will pay less to support the province’s recycling program in 2012.

In a news release issued January 23, Éco Entreprises Québec (ÉEQ) notes the 2010, 2011 and 2012 Schedules of Contributions were adopted by the ÉEQ board of directors on January 20, 2012, and submitted to RECYC-QUÉBEC for analysis and recommendation to the Government of Quebec.

The schedules were the subject of a special consultation with companies and organizations in the fall of 2011.

The rates adopted by the board were adjusted downward by an average of 6%, compared to those presented

during the company consultation process, as a result of the 2010 efficient and effective net costs reported by municipalities. These costs, used to calculate fees in the 2010 and 2011 contribution tables, turned out to be lower than estimates presented by ÉEQ during consultation meetings.

The reduction will be reflected in rates for the 2012 Schedule of Contributions.

Publication of the 2010, 2011 and 2012 Schedules of Contributions in the *Gazette officielle du Québec* is expected in May 2012.

For more information, visit www.ecoentreprises.qc.ca/anglais/bulletin_230112.html.

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Briefly...

BLOW-UP DOLLS ARE NOT RECYCLABLE

Among the more unusual objects found in the local recycling program in the London borough of Enfield were blow-up dolls and vibrators, according to *Access Enfield*, the municipality's website. Other unusual items put out for recycling were an urn containing ashes, a box of live maggots and dead pets, said a November news release. Enfield Council said it wants to emphasize the importance of residents recycling properly and encourage them to put the right items in the correct bins. Local residents have been asked to "think long and hard about whether it's really suitable to put a blow-up doll in their recycling."

Access Enfield (www.enfield.gov.uk/news/article/378/out_of_their_boxes), November 4, 2011

PAPER PALLETS TO BE USED BY IKEA

IKEA is moving to paper-based pallets. The company says they are lighter, thinner and cheaper to use. Ikea, which annually uses 10 million pallets to ship goods from suppliers to its 287 stores in 26 countries, was scheduled to make the switch to paper this month, cutting transport costs by 10%. The new corrugated cardboard design can support loads of 750 kilograms, the same as timber. At two inches high, the paper pallets are one-third the height of wooden ones, and 90% lighter, at 5.5 pounds. The pallets, assembled onsite by most of Ikea's 1,200 global suppliers, will be used only once before being recycled. The company expects to cut its transport bills by \$193 million a year, although there will be up-front costs for new forklifts to handle the slimmer pallets.

Bloomberg Business Week (www.businessweek.com) November 4, 2011

WASTE FOR ANIMAL FEED IS BACK ON THE TABLE

Since the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the United Kingdom in the early 2000s, the practice of feeding animals catering waste that had been in contact with or contained animal by-products has been banned. This is now under review, given the amount of waste that is has been going to disposal. While the ban, also adopted across the European Union countries, did eradicate new cases of foot and mouth, it also saw the end of the practice of collecting swill, which

had been an efficient way of using waste to raise livestock. Recent policy changes in the EU have developed in light of scientific advice from the European Food Safety Authority and advances in animal feed screening tests. The European Council is calling for the ban on non-ruminant animals to be lifted, so that feeding pig, chicken and fish by-products to pigs, chicken and fish will now be permitted (with the exception of cannibalism). The UK Government has commissioned the Food and Environment Research Agency to look further into this food waste solution. Getting the public reacquainted with the idea of catering waste-fed meat will be a challenge. Progress on animal by-product regulations would give more options on how to deal with the current UK food waste mountain, estimated to be between 18 and 20 million tonnes annually. It has also been noted, however, that preventing food waste altogether should remain the ultimate aim.

Resource Recovery Forum (resourcesnotwaste.org) December 6, 2011

JAPAN PLASTICS RECYCLING AT 77%

Japan is leading the world in plastics recycling. The country has a 77% recycling rate, about twice that of Britain and well above the 20% figure for the U.S. Japan's recycling has improved from 73% in 2006 and 39% in 1996, according to the country's Plastic Waste Management Institute. Japan has passed several recycling laws to address the disposal and treatment of plastic waste since 1997, when businesses and consumers were obliged to separate plastic waste for the first time. The number of plastic items that can be recycled has grown to include boxes and cases, wrappings, cups and containers, plates and trays, tube-shaped containers, lids, and caps. Most of the waste is processed together, with plastic bottles and other containers treated separately. The number and types of plastic waste separation differ among municipalities, but most households are required to separate plastic wrappers and packages from polyethylene terephthalate [PET] bottles. The recycled material is used in textiles, sheeting, industrial materials and household items such as egg boxes. Large quantities are shipped to China, Hong Kong and other parts of Asia, where the materials are used to make toys and games.

The Guardian (www.guardian.co.uk) December 29, 2011

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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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February 14 set for update on B.C.'s packaging and printed paper project

Multi-Material British Columbia (MMBC) is hosting a workshop, with simultaneous webcast, next month to present information compiled during Phase 1 of MMBC's activities to develop a stewardship program for residential packaging and printed paper in British Columbia.

It will be held Tuesday, February

14, 2012, at The Theatre - UBC Robson Square at 800 Robson St., Vancouver. The sessions run from 10 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:30 p.m. to approximately 4:00 p.m., PST.

MMBC awarded the Phase 1 consulting contract to a consortium that includes Glenda Gies and Associates, Kelleher Environmental, Maura

Walker and Associates, and Corporate Policy Group LLP.

MMBC represents the producers (brand owners and first sellers) of packaging and printed paper in B.C. and is governed by a board consisting of the Retail Council of Canada, Food and Consumer Products of Canada, Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, Canadian Restaurant and Food Services Association, and the Canadian Newspaper Association.

While municipalities in B.C. are supportive of a system funded by industry rather than taxpayers, some have expressed concern about maintaining levels of service to citizens and how the materials will be managed once collected.

The wording of government regulations may be able to address the level of service, but the increasing use of single-stream systems would see materials commingled. This in turn would require mechanical separation in MRFs, which can be costly. There is a concern that industry may send some of the lower-value materials, such as certain plastics, for energy recovery (incineration), rather than separate them and send them for recycling.

Metro Vancouver, for example wants to increase its recycling goal from 55% to 80% by 2020. Losing control of its recycling program makes that goal seem unattainable.

The December 9, 2011, MMBC presentation at Canadian Waste Management Association Workshop on Packaging Printed Paper Extended Producer Responsibility is available at www.rcbc.bc.ca/education/product-stewardship/packagingpr.

Different industry position from others on many issues in B.C. consultation

The *Interim Report for the Beverage Container Product Category of the British Columbia Recycling Regulation*, dated December 30, 2011, is now available.

The report notes that more than 70 people attended an all-day consultation workshop held at the British Columbia Institute of Technology in Vancouver on November 23. Participating stakeholders included beverage producers and distributors, retailers, associations, depot owners, members of the public, environmental groups and municipalities.

At the time of writing the report (December 29), 17 written comments were submitted to the B.C. Ministry of Environment. Summaries of stakeholder perspectives from both the workshop and the submissions form the basis for the interim report.

The report reveals a variety of

opinions on deposit levels, with industry mostly opposing any increase (with the exception of the beer industry) and municipalities, depot operators and other representatives pointing out the current 5-cent deposit is no longer much of an incentive to return the containers.

The report also reveals a variety of opinions on mandatory return-to-retail, with industry mostly opposing (with the exception of the beer industry) and municipalities, depot operators and other representatives supporting it.

In the discussion on end-of-life packaging management, most industry representatives felt energy-from-waste should be an option while municipalities and others did not.

The interim report is to be posted on the Recycling Council of British Columbia website (www.rcbc.bc.ca).

MHSW service agreements

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In the event of a future service disruption, SO says it will advise all municipalities on which service providers remain active. This information will also be posted at www.stewardshipontario.ca/odserviceproviders.

The service uncertainty comes just as a team of municipal representatives from the Association of Municipalities

of Ontario (AMO), the Regional Public Works Commissioners of Ontario (RPWCO) and the Municipal Waste Association (MWA) has been working with SO to improve the terms and conditions of the initial MHSW agreement, presented to municipalities this past July.

The revised agreements from SO are expected to arrive in municipal mail boxes shortly.

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Ontario has solutions to waste, but hasn't used them—ECO Gord Miller

Environment Commissioner Gord Miller says the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) is failing to act on the province's growing waste problem.

In his annual report released in late November, Mr. Miller said that four major MOE policy reports have outlined many solutions to reduce the more than 9 million tonnes of waste landfilled and incinerated each year. Yet, in Mr. Miller's words, "for whatever reason, the government is failing to act on these progressive solutions."

In 2004, two years after the Waste Diversion Act (WDA) was enacted by the Ontario Legislature, the government set a waste diversion target of 60%.

For the preceding 10 years, following the wide-scale introduction of municipal blue box recycling, the provincial diversion rate from all waste streams sat at around 20%. Today, that rate still sits at 23% (as calculated in 2008).

According to Mr. Miller's report, while residential waste diversion has been increasing, declining diversion rates in the industrial, commercial and institutional (IC&I) sector have tempered progress towards 60%. In addition, the amount of waste generated in the province has been increasing. As a result, the Commissioner notes that Ontarians still landfill or incinerate more than 9 million tonnes of waste every year.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Mr. Miller points out that the MOE generated four strong policy proposals between 2004 and 2010, with the final report coming from Minister John Gerretsen in March 2009, under the title, *From Waste to Worth: The Role of Waste Diversion in the Green Economy*.

These reports outline a number of problems faced in increasing diversion, including among others:

- the failure of the WDA to prioritize waste reduction and reuse over recycling;
- a distorted accounting structure that fails to take true costs of disposal into account, making landfilling about one-third to one-half the cost of diversion;
- poor diversion of organic wastes and in the IC&I sector (The latter generated about 60 % of the province's waste, but only diverts 13%.);
- a lack of financial incentives to reduce waste through better product design.

LAUNDRY LIST OF SOLUTIONS

Over the past three decades, the MOE has continued to propose what Mr. Miller calls "progressive and potentially effect solutions to improve waste reduction and diversion." This laundry list of solutions includes:

- imposing a surcharge on waste that is sent to landfill;
- banning materials such as paper and electronics from landfill;
- requiring that retailers take back products at their end-of-life;
- establishing deposit-return systems for certain products and packaging;
- charging manufacturers lower environmental management fees if their products are easier and cheaper to recycle and dispose of;
- making individual manufacturers rather than their industry organizations responsible for meeting waste diversion requirements;
- requiring manufacturers to internalize the environmental management costs of their products, and prohibit showing these costs as separate charges on the receipt at point of sale (i.e., "eco fees").

With a few exceptions, such as the stewardship programs for used tires,

municipal hazardous waste and waste electronics, these solutions remain on the shelves.

"The Ministry of the Environment clearly knows what it needs to do to reduce the amount of waste generated and discarded in Ontario," said Mr. Miller. "Now the government needs to find the political will – and courage – to actually do it."

To download a copy of the waste chapter of the ECO annual report, visit: www.ecoissues.ca/index.php/What_a_Waste:_Failing_to_Engage_Waste_Reduction_Solutions.

First Alert alarms plan for B.C.

A stewardship plan has been developed by First Alert Canada for a zero waste program for smoke, carbon monoxide alarms and/or combination alarms sold in British Columbia and throughout Canada at retail and/or electrical wholesaler channels. It was drafted pursuant to the requirements of the B.C. Recycling Regulation, B.C. Re. 449/2004 (the "Regulation").

Initially the program will include three retail items: smoke alarms, carbon monoxide (CO) alarms alarm and combination alarms.

The program proposes to have 80 depots in B.C. by its implementation in April 2012.

For more information, visit www.firstalert.ca/news/ZERO-WASTE.

THE DEBATE RAGES ON—LOOK FOR IT IN B.C.

Recycling versus take-back, convenience versus performance

Editor's Note:

The curbside recycling versus deposit-return debate has been raging for years, usually with industry preferring the former for the convenience and others preferring the latter for its better performance. In early January, Michael Washburn of Nestle Waters North America wrote a piece in the U.S. publication Plastic News that criticized a recent report from the Container Recycling Institute (CRI) entitled "Returning to Work: Understanding the Domestic Jobs Impacts from Different Methods of Recycling Beverage Containers." The full story can be found at <http://plasticsnews.com/headlines2.html?id=24150&q=Michael+Washburn> A rebuttal from the study authors, Clarissa Morawski of CM Consulting Inc. and Dr. Jeff Morris of Sound Resource Management Group Inc., in collaboration with CRI, sought to set the record straight. Given that this discussion is happening as we speak in British Columbia, it provides a valuable insight to both sides of the argument. Following is an edited version of their response.

Returning to Work reaches several important conclusions. One is that increasing collection, processing and secondary processing of recyclable commodities within the U.S. supports jobs across the board and also supports domestic manufacturers.

Another is that material quality, which is directly affected by the method of collection, is also an employment driver.

The cleaner the material, the fewer the losses and the greater chance for the material to remain in the U.S. One would think Nestlé would be grateful for, or at least keenly interested in, a study that drills down into potential jobs impacts of its particular packaging product.

This is especially true because Nestlé has a corporate goal to "increase U.S. recycling rates to 60 percent for PET beverage bottles by 2018." That's an ambitious goal—to nearly triple the existing PET bottle recycling rate from the current 21% (according to the Environmental Protection Agency).

Washburn's other critique related to jobs is that "the main increase in jobs from bottle bills compared to curbside recycling is in collection.

Our study found quite the contrary—that clean material from container deposits support many more jobs in U.S. manufacturing, while dirtier curbside PET is disproportionately exported to overseas markets for manufacturing.

The remainder of Washburn's critique was not directed at CRI's study, but rather was a restatement of an old litany of complaints about container deposits that appear to be ill-informed.

\$1000/T TO COLLECT PET

To Washburn's claim that container deposit refunds "do not come cheap, and often at the expense of other materials," we respond that in Ontario's curbside program, PET has a net collection cost of nearly \$1,000 a ton (50 cents per pound), or about 3.4 cents per container. The program sees about 44% of PET in the province recycled.

Contrast that with "best practice" container deposit programs in California, Hawaii and Oregon that operate at dramatically lower net cost—just one-fifth of a cent for all containers in California (a 68% PET recycling rate), and about a penny per container in Hawaii and Oregon (about \$290 a ton, or 15 cents per pound for PET, net).

As to other materials, funds from California's deposit system also deliver over \$100 million a year in payments to community curbside programs. To the

claim that "aluminum cans and PET bottles are the greatest revenue generators" for curbside, we say longtime recyclers know that it's net cost that matters, not scrap price.

Aluminum is a net positive in any collection program, but PET costs more to collect curbside, transport and sort than the revenue it brings in.

All of the multi-material, packaging extended producer responsibility programs in Europe and North America set fees for producers to pay for PET collection, because it has a net cost, not net revenue.

WHERE ARE CARCASSES?

If deposits were the dinosaur of municipal recycling that opponents insist, we should expect the landscape to be littered with dead and dying carcasses. Yet the reality is that while only one state deposit program death has been recorded in the last decade, those 10 years have seen 16 new or expanded programs, not only in North America (e.g., Oregon, New York, Alberta, Hawaii, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Connecticut), but in such far-flung places as Germany, Guam, Fiji, Australia's Northern Territory, Estonia, Croatia, and even little Turks and Caicos.

Whether we look narrowly at a particular material or broadly at the whole spectrum of manufactured and organic recyclables, surely we all agree that a system currently trashing 76% of its beverage containers—and 79% of its PET bottles—needs everyone involved to "think bigger."

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WDO to distribute \$85.4 million in Ontario blue box program support

Ontario municipal blue box programs are sharing \$85.4 million in Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) steward funding this year. The split is based on responses to the 2010 Datacall.

This year sees an increase in the number of municipalities receiving WDO funding, up to 223 from 216.

Each municipality's share of available funding is based on several

factors: 25% based on responses to 2010 Datacall Best Practice questions; 45% based on program performance measured by Performance Factors; and 30% based on net cost.

The largest funding recipient is the City of Toronto, receiving \$16,258,369 or 38.32% of its net costs. It recovered 155,010 tonnes at a reported net cost of \$273.69 per tonne. The regions of Peel

and York are also seeing contributions over the \$5 million mark.

Peel will see \$8,638,517, or 38.9% of its cost to collect 90,367 tonnes at \$245.49 per tonne.

York is to receive \$7,306,628, or 50.62% of its cost for collecting 78,494 tonnes at \$183.90 per tonne.

Although stewards pay 50% of what is called the Blue Box Best Practice Net System Cost, individual municipal programs do not actually receive reimbursement for 50% of their reported net costs.

The average percentage for the amount of net cost covered by the payments was the low-to-mid 30s. The formula used to calculate funding is changing every year to place more emphasis on performance and best practices and less on net cost.

U.S. waste industry stewardship policy calls for shared responsibility

A new policy of the U.S. National Solid Waste Management Association says product stewardship may increase the safe management of some products, particularly those containing toxic substances.

Released January 9, the policy says successful product stewardship should be a shared responsibility of many stakeholders, including manufacturers and retailers, government, consumers and members of the solid waste industry.

The policy recommends that new product stewardship programs should be cost-effective and efficient, resulting in enhanced environmental protection at no additional cost to consumers and taxpayers.

It also states that government should undertake a life-cycle analysis before designating an item for product stewardship. Further, all new programs should take place in a freely competitive marketplace with no special treatment for product stewardship organizations.

The association represents for-profit companies in the waste management field across the U.S. To read the policy, visit www.environmentalistseveryday.org.

Defining PS and EPR a little closer in the U.S.

Product Stewardship and Extended Producer Responsibility, a document designed to harmonize product stewardship terminology in the United States, is being developed jointly by the Product Policy Institute, the Product Stewardship Institute and the California Product Stewardship Council.

The document, which is expected to be released shortly, aims to guide the development of policies, legislation and other initiatives by governments, companies, and organizations.

OTHER OBLIGATIONS

The obligation to municipalities by stewards who are newspaper publishers and members of the Canadian Newspaper Association and the Ontario Newspaper Association and the Ontario Community Newspapers Association is met through an in-kind contribution of newspaper lineage which, for the 2012 funding year, is \$3,571,471.

A portion of the blue box steward obligation to municipalities is directed to the Continuous Improvement Fund (CIF) to improve effectiveness and efficiency. The agreed amount for 2012 is \$4,450,757. (See more on the CIF on page 7/8.)

More information, including each municipality's share of the funds, is available on WDO's website at www.wdo.ca.

SWEEP, food bank team up

The Saskatchewan Waste Electronics Equipment Program (SWEEP) has approved the Regina Food Bank as a collector of regulated electronic waste. The food bank will accept e-waste from businesses in the Regina area.

The move provides the food bank with an income stream to support and enhance their food security programs.

For more information visit www.sweepit.ca.

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Bale wrap programs lining up in Saskatchewan and Ontario

The Government of Saskatchewan has partnered with CleanFARMS to manage on-farm plastic waste, such as bale wrap and grain bags, in the province.

Accordingly to a news release from CleanFARMS on January 16, there are either limited or no recycling options for many agricultural plastic waste products in Saskatchewan.

CleanFARMS recently did a study of the agricultural waste stewardship programs in the province. The research revealed that the most successful programs had government legislation mandating participation such as those to manage used oil, oil filters and their containers, tires, paint, and electronics.

The Government of Saskatchewan has tasked CleanFARMS with bringing together stakeholders to develop the framework for a program to recycle agricultural plastics. The organization, which currently operates a national empty pesticide container collection program and an obsolete pesticide collection, led a consultation with industry stakeholders, which will help guide its work. Its recommendations on a potential program structure will be ready for the Ministry of Environment by early spring of this year. For more information, contact Erin O'Hara at 613-608-3446 (oharae@croplife.ca).

Meanwhile, a new service for farmers in Ontario will be piloted in 2012 in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

"This pilot project will lay the groundwork for a comprehensive program," Barry Friesen, general manager of CleanFARMS.

According to recent research conducted by CleanFARMS, farmers in Ontario generate more than 14,000 tonnes of non-nutrient based waste on their farms each year.

The pilot program in Lake Simcoe is being funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs through the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem.

CIF optimization study goes to StewardEdge, U.S. partner

Waste Diversion Ontario selected StewardEdge Inc. and U.S.-based Resource Recycling Systems to conduct the next in a series of blue box processing studies.

In 2011, a study of all publicly owned materials recovery facilities (MRFs) was undertaken, funded by the Continuous Improvement Fund (CIF). This work was complemented with an optimization study of Eastern Ontario MRFs. The 2012 study is to further this work, looking at optimizing the provincial blue box system on a waste-shed basis rather than following municipal boundaries. A final report is due in the spring.

Hochu moves to CPIA

Carol Hochu starts 2012 with a new position. The former executive director of Ontario Electronic Stewardship is now president and CEO of the Canadian Plastics Industry Association (CPIA). Greg Wilkinson, who served as interim president for most of 2011, is returning to consulting.

CPIA is the national trade association for the \$27 billion plastics industry. The association represents over 3,000 businesses with over 90,000 employees.

COMING EVENTS

February 6

An Evening with Prof. Thomas Lindqvist, Father of Extended Producer Responsibility
Vancouver, BC
rcbc@rcbc.bc.ca

February 14

Multi-Material British Columbia (MMBC) workshop/webcast on PPP stewardship
Vancouver, BC
rcbc@rcbc.bc.ca

February 26 – 29

ROMA/OGRA Combined Conference
Toronto, ON
905-795-2555
info@ogra.org

February 26 – 29

ROMA/OGRA Combined Conference
Toronto, ON
905-795-2555
info@ogra.org

February 29 – March 2

Alberta Recycling Spring Seminar
Alberta CARE
Banff, AB
1-866-818-2273
www.albertacare.org

March 14 – 16

GLOBE 2012
12th Biennial Conference & Trade Fair
Vancouver, BC
1-800-274-6097
www.globeseries.com

April 19 – 20

Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council
Spring Forum
Regina, SK
www.saskwastereduction.ca

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Opinion Piece

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

Municipal, industry sectors are ready. What on earth is Ontario waiting for?

By Jay Arthur

Happy New Year to everyone, and in particular to the good folks at the Ministry of the Environment in Ontario.

I hate to be a party pooper, but now that the holidays are over I think we are in need of a reality check.

We are past the magic 100 days since the election, so any pretense of a honeymoon period is over and it's time to get something done.

In British Columbia, we are already committed and moving to full funding for our blue box. Quebec is going the same route.

I realize the world does not entirely revolve around the Internet, but a casual glance at the MOE website is not reassuring to anyone looking for progress on the waste file in Ontario, or any other environmental file, come to that.

Other than some new postings on the environmental approvals process (which you have to look for), it would appear the MOE thinks the only thing worth telling the world about since the election is windmill noise.

Given the fact that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO) stated very publically in his report before Christmas that the province really should get things moving in the world of waste, you'd think there would have been something by now.

The ECO report came after municipalities and several environmental organizations had urged action, too. So, there is plenty of political support for extended producer responsibility (EPR) and all the financial benefits it brings to the municipal sector.

A few words of encouragement would also bring a little certainty to the private sector, which is fully expecting

to be on the hook for the management of recycling. It is already planning for it in British Columbia and Quebec.

Nothing has actually been said out loud by government officials that would suggest a reversal of the oft-repeated intention to make it so in Ontario, too.

I was hoping that having the election out of the way, the Premier's office could remove the blocks that had been placed under the wheels of the EPR

... the new funding focus clearly anticipates a world where Ontario's recycling programs will be under industry, not municipal, control.

bandwagon and get it moving again. As long as there is inaction, there is doubt.

It is not as if the municipalities are not showing faith. A Waste Diversion Ontario subcommittee comprising municipal and industry representatives recently committed millions of dollars to an initiative that will view the province as a series of "waste-shed" regions to be serviced, as opposed to dozens of individual programs looking to become more efficient.

It's all part of a new strategy the committee confirmed back in July 2011.

While still operating under the rubric of continuous improvement, the new funding focus clearly anticipates a world where Ontario's recycling programs will be under industry, not municipal, control.

It could well be that those who agreed to this change of priority for funds know something we don't. These funds are, after all, part of the stewards' share of municipal recycling costs.

Perhaps the minutes from future

WDO board meetings will provide some insight, although we've seen nothing posted to date.

The first and very welcome issue of the *MIPC Minute*, released in the fall, did note that the change "will set the basis for the implementation of full Extended Producer Responsibility".

This was before the election, even as one of the parties, Mr. Hudak's Progressive Conservatives, was talking quite loudly about "reviewing" all the provincial programs.

Either way, a request for proposals for the optimization/regionalization study was prepared. It actually hit the street a few days after the election and was awarded just before Christmas to StewardEdge (formerly Corporations Supporting Recycling), and some U.S. partners.

Had the election result been different, one wonders if the RFP would still have gone out.

But it did go out and work is already well under way, with a report anticipated in the spring. It's a big project.

In all, up to \$8 million of the 2011 Continuous Improvement Fund budget and 50% of the 2012 dollars have been set aside for optimization work (which means regionalization).

That's a lot of municipal dollars (in effect), so confirmation that the EPR will move ahead cannot come soon enough.

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