RCBC

RECYCLING COUNCIL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

RCBC Background Paper:

On the Road to Zero Waste: Priorities for Local Government

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1.0 Introduction and Background

As the traditional managers of waste in communities across the province, local governments have an important role to play in the shift towards a zero waste British Columbia. The purpose of this document is to explore how local governments can encourage waste reduction within their jurisdictions. The report highlights various waste-related policies local governments should consider in the interim period before full Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for all products and product packaging is a reality in B.C. The report also outlines the ideal role for local governments in the shifting world of EPR and organics management.

1.1 Local Government and the Waste Problem

Since the creation of city-based waste collection programs at the turn of the last century, local governments have been largely responsible for dealing with the ever increasing quantity of waste produced by residents and businesses. Generally speaking, local government's primary goal has been to quickly and efficiently move the garbage away and dispose of it in a safe manner. In B.C., the vast majority of this garbage has been buried in landfills, with a small portion being processed in Waste-to-Energy (WTE) facilities.

It is estimated that each British Columbian, on average, disposes of over 600kg of waste each year. Waste has become such an everyday part of our lives, it's almost impossible to envision life without it.

The environmental and economic costs of Western society's wasteful habits, however, are increasingly being brought into question. Climate change, deforestation, water pollution, air pollution and the full plethora of environmental problems we face in the twenty-first century can, in part, be traced to our ever -increasing appetite for consumer goods and the waste associated with their eventual disposal. It is estimated that each British Columbian, on average, disposes of over 600kg of waste each year. Waste has become such an everyday part of our lives, it's almost impossible to envision life without it.

Recent economic challenges, marked by market downturns and declines in economic growth across the industrial world, have provided an opportunity to step back and review the way in which our first world economy is designed to produce waste. Already, decreased consumption rates associated with the economic downturn have caused a decline in the amount of garbage being collected and dumped at many North American landfills. This deceleration in waste creation affords us the opportunity to begin re-shaping our systems to permanently reduce the waste we generate, before the inevitable upswing in economic activity reverses the trend.

1.2 The Zero Waste Alternative

Local recycling and yard-waste diversion programs, which local governments have developed and expanded over the last few decades, have diverted millions of tonnes of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) from landfill and some communities have now reached diversion rates of over fifty percent. These programs represent the province's first step on the road to becoming a zero waste society.

The zero waste International Alliance defines zero waste as "a goal that is both pragmatic and visionary, to guide people to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are resources for others to use. zero waste means designing and managing products and processes to reduce the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them. Implementing zero waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water and air that may be a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health."

Getting serious about zero waste will require a concerted effort and coordination between all levels of government as well as industry, businesses and consumers.

A zero waste approach, if applied in B.C., would work to not only maximize levels of diversion from landfill and WTE facilities, but actively promote waste prevention and reduction. The goal of such an approach is not to "manage" waste after it has been produced, but to eliminate the very concept of waste from our society. Instead of considering discarded resources as waste, these resources can form the basis for jobs in a new, green economy.

Getting serious about zero waste will require a concerted effort and coordination between all levels of government (municipal, regional, provincial and federal) as well as industry, businesses and consumers. It will also require a dramatic shift in the way products and their associated packaging are designed. Throw-away products will be replaced with products designed for reuse, repair, recyclability and decreased toxicity.

As implied by the above definition, critical to the concept of zero waste is the exclusion of waste disposal in either a landfill or WTE facility. Figure 1 below represents the 'waste hierarchy'. The first three Rs — Reduce, Reuse and Recycle — form the foundation of a zero waste approach. Materials that cannot be reduced, reused or recycled are considered residuals. The long-term objective of a zero waste approach is to eliminate materials from the waste stream. The fourth R, recover, implies recovering the embodied energy in a material by processing it in a WTE facility. It is an important distinction to note that this is considered a final disposal method and is not an alternative to recycling.

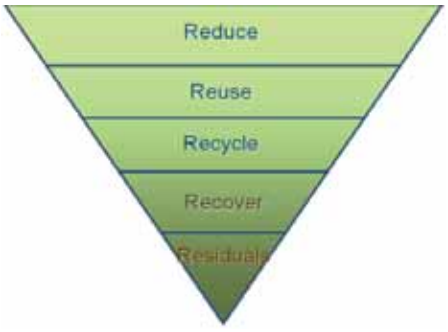


Figure 1 – The Waste Hierarchy

Both landfills and existing WTE facilities may need to play an interim role for residuals management while zero waste practices achieve a decrease in the amount of residuals requiring disposal. Again, the ultimate goal of a zero waste approach is to reduce and eventually eliminate the need for these types of facilities. Instead of investing hundreds of millions of dollars in building new facilities to absorb the future residual waste stream, governments should use the full weight of their financial and regulatory powers to reduce the residual waste stream. Since WTE facilities require a consistent feedstock to make them operationally effective and financially viable, landfills that can be phased-out over time may provide a more appropriate interim disposal option. Please refer to the Recycling Council of B.C.'s 2008 report, *Examining the Waste-to-Energy Option,* for more discussion on this issue.

2.0 Local Government's Role: The Big Picture

Zero waste will be achieved in B.C. when full EPR and organics composting programs are implemented.

Manufacturers are in a better position than local government to manage product and packaging waste, as they have direct control over the design of these materials in the first place.

It is estimated that about three quarters of the municipal waste stream is comprised of products and their packaging. Traditionally, local governments have dealt with these materials by collecting them under local recycling programs, or disposing of them in a landfill or WTE facility. Under EPR, the manufacturers of products and packaging become responsible for the full life-cycle of their products, including the collection and recycling of materials at the end of their useful life. Local government and taxpayers are no longer financially responsible for managing these materials, once they have been added to an EPR program under the B.C. Recycling Regulation.

Manufacturers are in a better position than local government to manage product and packaging waste, as they have direct control over the design of these materials in the first place. Manufacturers, therefore, can ensure their products and packaging are made in a manner that maximizes reuse, enables repair/recycling and minimizes toxicity.

It is the Recycling Council of B.C.'s position that all products and packaging should be covered under EPR programs. This view is shared by the B.C. Product Stewardship Council, which is comprised of all but one regional district in British Columbia. This approach has also been confirmed by the B.C. Ministry of Environment as the long-term approach for waste management policies in B.C. Local governments, therefore, will eventually be freed from the financial and operational burdens of managing product and packaging waste. This represents a dramatic decrease in local government's waste management responsibilities.

Compostable organic materials make up the vast majority of material in the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) stream that is not products or packaging. Collecting and processing organic material will become local governments' primary solid waste management role under a zero waste regimen. Yard waste and food scraps that are collected and processed locally will provide communities with a finished soil product to market to parks, landscapers and farmers. Overcoming barriers to public participation, organizing efficient collection systems and managing organic facilities will form the foundation of local governments' role in this respect. Organic material that decomposes in a landfill releases large quantities of potent greenhouse gases, so accelerating the roll-out of organics diversion programs should be a top priority for local government.

It should be noted that some materials, such as tires and diapers, while technically organic and often included in this waste category, are considered products and should be covered by EPR programs.

Local governments can also play an important role in supporting EPR programs in their jurisdictions. This issue is explored in more detail in section 4.

3.0 Short-Term Policy Options for Local Government

3.1 Planning for Zero Waste

Achieving zero waste will require local governments to undertake ambitious planning processes that clearly define goals, specify target dates and make concrete plans to accelerate waste reduction. The Solid Waste Management Plan development and review processes provide a legally-mandated opportunity for local governments to shape the direction of waste management in their jurisdiction and plan for zero waste. Many regional districts have also released specific zero waste plans, outlining the opportunities within their community to achieve greater waste reduction and diversion.

The first step in the zero waste planning process is to set ambitious goals in actual net-waste reduction. A numerical goal to be reached within 10 to 15 years, with interim targets every few years, will provide clear direction for the plan and a yardstick by which to measure success over time. While diversion targets can be an important tool, diversion rates do not give a complete picture of how much waste is actually sent to disposal facilities. A diversion rate simply outlines the percentage of waste that is diverted from landfills and WTE facilities. While the diversion rate can increase, the total quantity of waste sent to a disposal facility may also still increase, or remain constant, if increases in waste diversion are matched or exceeded by increases in per-capita waste production.

Since a zero waste approach is chiefly concerned with the quantity of waste disposed and the extent to which this number is decreasing, zero waste goals should centre on net-waste reduction. Of course, jurisdictions experiencing positive population growth face an even steeper uphill battle in reducing their waste disposal rates, and may need to adopt even more ambitious plans.

Many zero waste plans in circulation simply lay out specific actions that a jurisdiction *could* take to achieve waste reduction. While outlining potential policy options is an important first step in the planning process, much more detail is required if the plan is to provide a blueprint for future government action. Plans should include a detailed description of action items the jurisdiction is planning on taking with a clear time frame, discussion of costs and budgetary considerations and a breakdown of the roles and responsibilities of various departments.

3.2 Organics Programs

As outlined above, the collection and processing of organic materials will become the primary role of local governments under a zero waste approach. Planning comprehensive organic diversion programs should be the top priority of every local government that is serious about moving towards zero waste.

The Recycling Council of B.C. has convened an Organics Working Group that is studying various organics collection systems across North America. This group is expected to publish its findings and recommendations in the summer of 2009, focusing on how local governments should shape their collection systems to maximize public participation and environmental benefits.

3.3 Municipal Collection Programs

3.3.1 Pay as You Throw Systems

Under a Pay as You Throw (PAYT) system, residents are charged for garbage collection based on the amount of their household's waste. The more garbage a household creates, the more that household pays for disposal. Unlike programs that are financed by a flat fee or property taxes, a PAYT system includes a direct financial incentive for residents to reduce their waste and increase diversion. When combined

To achieve success, the financial incentive for producing less garbage has to be significant enough to motivate behavior change.

with free recycling and organics collection and drop-off services, such systems can dramatically increase waste reduction, waste diversion and the proper sorting of waste.

In its simplest form, residents are charged a fee based on each bag/can of garbage they put out on the curb or drop-off at a disposal facility. This is often facilitated by requiring the purchase of a specific garbage tag or sticker that must be placed on each bag/container.

Some systems charge different rates for the different sizes of garbage bins that the local government provides. Households that don't produce much waste can buy a smaller can with an associated smaller annual fee.

In some communities, households are charged directly for the weight of their garbage. While such a system is easy to implement at drop-off facilities with a scale, some communities have gone so far as to outfit collection vehicles with scales that weigh each household's garbage can and then bill that residence directly by weight.

While PAYT systems are common in some parts of B.C., many communities across the province have not yet adopted this approach to waste collection. Moving towards a user-pay system should be a priority for these jurisdictions. To achieve success, the financial incentive for producing less garbage has to be significant enough to motivate behavior change. Many communities that already have PAYT systems would see greater waste reduction and diversion rates if the inherent financial incentives were maximized by increasing the fees associated with producing large quantities of garbage.

3.3.2 Collection Frequency

The frequency with which garbage, recycling and organics are collected is a policy tool that local governments can use to encourage greater waste diversion and, in the long-term, overall waste reduction. As of yet, this policy tool has not been used to full advantage in B.C.

In many communities, residents have grown accustomed to having their garbage picked up every week. In many of these same communities, recycling collection is only provided bi-weekly. This actually deters residents from recycling properly on the week in which recyclables are not collected. In jurisdictions where both garbage and recycling

are collected weekly (or bi-weekly on a rotating basis), the incentive to recycle properly is only built into the system when residents are also charged on a PAYT basis.

Once local governments introduce comprehensive organic collection programs, they should shift towards bi-weekly collection of garbage and weekly collection of both recycling and organics. The incentive to divert recyclables and organics thoroughly and efficiently is built into such a collection system. Who would rather have rotting vegetables sitting in the garbage can after two weeks instead of having them carted off after one week? Who would rather have a bulky pile of cardboard boxes taking up space for two weeks when it can be picked up after only one week? The purpose of this system is to make it more convenient to recycle and source-separate organics than it is to dispose of these materials in the garbage.

For local governments accustomed to collecting garbage every week, this approach may actually save money that can then be re-invested into other zero waste programs. There is no doubt that people used to the convenience of weekly garbage collection will resist such a move. However, these criticisms can be overcome if the convenience that residents have grown accustomed to (quick, clean, efficient garbage removal) is replaced, in part, with equally efficient and convenient recycling and organics programs.

Over time, additional product and product packaging categories will be removed from both the garbage and recycling streams, which local governments currently manage, and will be replaced by EPR programs. When combined

with successful organics diversion programs, these initiatives will greatly reduce the quantity of waste disposed of by the average household. This will provide additional opportunities to reduce the frequency of garbage and, eventually, recycling collection, thereby increasing the incentive to properly sort any remaining waste.

3.3.3 Disposal Bans and Recycling Requirements

Disposal bans and recycling requirements can play an important role in guiding people to properly divert materials from landfill and incineration. Bans should be introduced and widely advertised only following the introduction of a local program to collect a particular material or product type, as has been done in Metro Vancouver with materials such as cardboard.

Bans are only truly effective when a convenient alternative that is widely known, understood and accepted is available to all residents. This requires extensive advertising/promotion and social marketing to educate people on the disposal bans and the alternatives available.

Disposal bans can also be imposed on the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) sector. By banning the disposal of certain products and materials at the landfill, local governments can guide the ICI community to develop programs to more effectively divert their waste. Again, these bans and the alternative options available to the sector must be widely publicized and understood before a ban can have a significant impact on diversion rates.

Enforcement is, of course, an essential aspect of any disposal ban. Without effective enforcement, disposal bans run the risk of being seen merely as a symbolic measure.

Bans are only truly effective when a convenient alternative that is widely known, understood and accepted is available to all residents.

There are many ways to enforce disposal bans at both the residential and commercial level. Spot checkers can randomly inspect containers right at the curb and leave stickers explaining any infractions. The penalty for an infraction can range from a warning to skipped collection to an actual ticket and fine. In some jurisdictions these spot checkers are hired directly by the local government or contract hauler. In other areas, the garbage collectors themselves are given the responsibility to spot check bins occasionally for infractions.

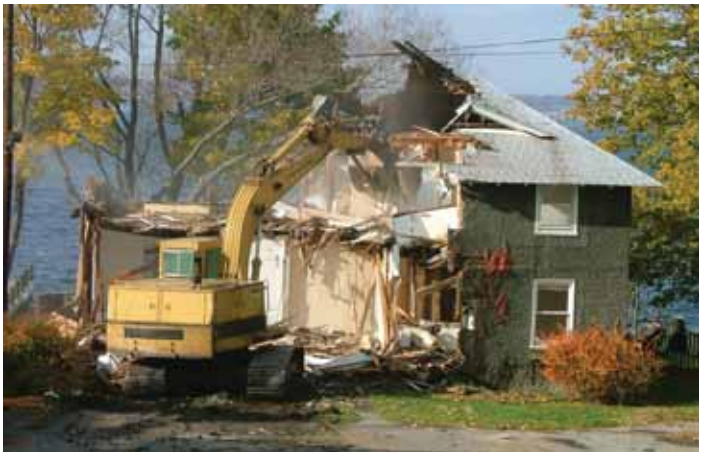
Enforcement is often achieved at the landfill by employing staff to check loads on a random basis for any major infractions. This approach is usually targeted towards private haulers and requires a certain level of staffing to ensure enforcement is taken seriously. Penalties are usually applied to the hauler in the form of a fine for any major infractions. In many jurisdictions, however, it is difficult for haulers to pass this cost on to their customers, and they simply internalize the cost of the occasional fine as the price of doing business. The cost of these fines should be high enough, combined with the threat of losing a business license for repeat infractions, to encourage haulers to crack down on those customers who are not sorting their waste effectively.

Recycling requirements, when combined with disposal bans, can also be used to encourage high diversion rates. At the residential level, local governments can require multi-family housing units to develop a designated space to collect recyclables and organics. Such a requirement can be included in the development permit process for any new multi-family housing developments. In much the same way, the business licensing process can be used to ensure businesses have both diversion plans and collection agreements for recyclables and organics. A sliding-scale licensing fee can be used to reward businesses that have achieved higher diversion rates.

3.4 Construction and Demolition Waste

In many jurisdictions within B.C., the construction and demolition (C&D) sector has achieved a high rate of waste diversion. Considering the quantity of waste flowing from this sector, however, there is still room for significant improvement.

This waste category should be covered by a provincially mandated EPR program, as the materials found in C&D waste can be considered products controlled by brand-



owners. The B.C. Ministry of Environment has already expressed the intent to mandate an EPR program for this product category, but other categories have taken precedent in becoming recent additions to the Recycling Regulation. During the transition period to full EPR in the province (including an EPR program for C&D waste), local governments can take immediate steps to achieve higher diversion rates in this sector. Some of these policy options are explored below.

Provincially mandated EPR programs should cover this category, as the materials found in C&D waste can be considered products controlled by brand owners.

3.4.1 Planning and Diversion Requirements

As a condition for granting a permit for construction or demolition, local government can require the responsible party (typically a contractor and/or developer) to develop and submit a plan for how they will reduce, reuse, recycle, compost and dispose of the waste that is produced during their operations. Permit offices can accept or reject plans according to clearly established criteria. For example, local governments could require specific details of how a pre-determined diversion rate will be achieved.

3.4.2 Deconstruction Requirements

In many demolition projects, valuable materials that would otherwise be salvageable for reuse by other parties are destroyed by contractors eager to remove materials as quickly and efficiently as possible. One possible solution to this challenge is to require the contractor to use a deconstruction company that specializes in retrieving salvageable materials, as a pre-condition for a demolition permit. Other communities require demolition companies to publicly advertise their plans for demolition and the availability of salvageable materials on-site.

3.4.3 Economic Incentives

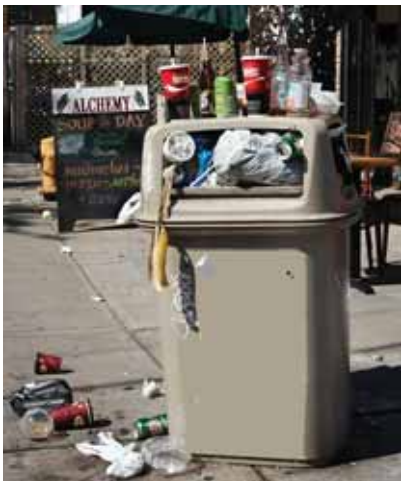
Less prescriptive policy options rely on economic incentives to maximize waste diversion in the C&D sector. If properly designed and enforced these policies encourage greater diversion by shifting the cost-structure for developers and contractors to make diversion the economically favorable waste management option. Such policies include:

Deposits – Local governments can require developers or contractors to submit a monetary deposit to local government, which is returned in full if a prescribed diversion target is achieved. If this target is not met, only a portion of the deposit is returned based on the achieved diversion rate according to a pro-rated formula laid out in the deposit contract.

Rate Structures – To encourage recycling over disposal, local governments can ensure companies are charged more for disposal services than recycling services. If the C&D waste is destined for a public landfill, they can place a punitive landfill tax on these materials. For those jurisdictions where private companies both collect and dispose of materials in private facilities, the community can require private companies to charge more for disposal than recycling services.

3.5 Social Marketing and Education

Ensuring that people have all the information required to make positive choices regarding waste should be a major priority for local governments. A well-funded social marketing and education program is a truly essential and integral piece of any community's waste reduction and diversion program. Such programs should focus not just on how citizens can divert their waste (through recycling and com-



posting) but also on how they can reduce the quantity of waste they produce.

Despite stated commitments to the Waste Hierarchy, which prioritizes waste reduction, reuse and recycling over residuals management, local governments spend a vastly disproportionate amount on landfills and WTE facilities than waste reduction strategies. Well-funded social marketing campaigns are an important and necessary first step in addressing the funding gap between waste reduction and residuals management.

The simplest awareness strategies focus on publicizing the waste-reduction and diversion opportunities available in each community and neighborhood. Programs which fit with the prescribed learning outcomes of the Province should also be developed, to ensure waste reduction is being actively promoted at the elementary school level.

Front-line staff at local waste-handling facilities, including depots, transfer stations and landfills are often citizens' first and only connection to municipal or regional staff. More intensive education and training is necessary to ensure that staff are well versed in all of the waste reduction options available to the public and have the ability to communicate the information effectively. These programs should be funded and facilitated by local governments.

Local governments should more actively promote citizen involvement in the waste planning process. Waste-related budgets, plans, meetings and decisions should be more transparent and advertised/promoted more widely to facilitate greater public involvement. By engaging citizens in this way, local governments can ensure better public confidence in their zero waste plans and programs.

3.6 Green Procurement and Internal Operations

Local governments have a responsibility to walk the talk of zero waste if they are ever to inspire their citizens to take the issue seriously. By taking a leadership role in waste diversion and avoidance, local governments can drive positive change in their communities.

Despite campaigns to encourage citizens to engage in zero waste practices at home, many jurisdictions do not provide even basic recycling infrastructure at municipal and regionally owned sites. City hall, public buildings, parks, spaces and events should all be equipped with the basic infrastructure to allow citizens to recycle and compost any waste associated with that space. By providing garbage bins without side-by-side options for waste diversion, local governments miss an opportunity to utilize those spaces/events to instill a zero waste ethic in their citizens.

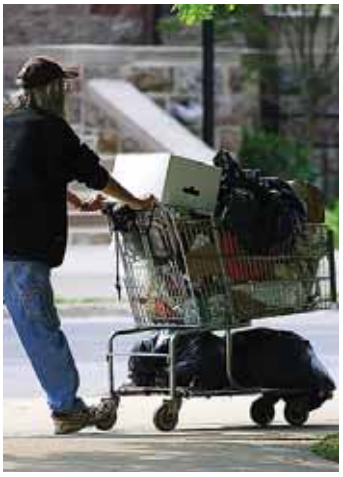
City hall, public buildings, parks, spaces and events should all be equipped with the basic infrastructure to allow citizens to recycle and compost any waste associated with that space.

Local governments can also use their purchasing power to drive market change by adopting green procurement policies. Such an approach encourages the selection of products with a minimized environmental impact over the entire product life cycle. One example is a recycled content requirement for paper or plastics purchased using public money. Another example involves local governments setting standards for the construction of public facilities, including requirements to use salvaged materials and building materials comprised of recycled material. In this way, local governments can use their financial clout to increase the demand for products in the marketplace that adhere to zero waste principles.

3.7 Land Use Planning

Land use planning is a major policy tool that local governments can use to support the creation of zero waste businesses and the infrastructure required to achieve significant reductions in waste generation. In general, local governments have only begun exploring how their powers in regards to zoning and land use can be used to achieve zero waste objectives. A major opportunity, therefore, exists to begin incorporating zero waste considerations into municipal and regional departments that have traditionally not been involved in waste management decisions.

Zero waste businesses can be encouraged by local governments by using their zoning authority to facilitate the siting of these spaces. Recycling depots, free stores, reuse centers and repair stores can all be clustered together in neighborhoods where similar products are sold. Local governments can consider reducing business taxes or fast-tracking the permits for these types of businesses to further foster their creation.



In many communities, zoning issues are not the only barriers to the siting of recycling depots and other zero waste infrastructure. There is a significant social stigma surrounding bottle depots, for example, that has led to citizen resistance against locating new facilities in their neighborhoods. Local governments can help to overcome these barriers by providing operational support to problem facilities in the form of by-law enforcement and a greater police presence where needed.

Mobile collection units, whether for EPR programs or local government collection programs, can also be used to overcome some of the challenges in siting permanent depots. As it is important to instill zero waste habits in citizens, these opportunities should be routinely scheduled and widely advertised to ensure greater public participation. Local governments can facilitate these mobile collection units by revising the bylaws surrounding such practices and encouraging the use of public land for this purpose.

Local governments can facilitate mobile collection by revising bylaws and encouraging the use of public land for this purpose.

Larger scale zero waste facilities, such as recycling sorting centers and large resource recovery parks, require appropriately zoned industrial or light industrial land. In many urban communities across B.C., however, the quantity of appropriately zoned land that is available for this type of development is extremely small and constantly decreasing. The retention of industrial and light industrial zoned areas, therefore, is integral to ensuring that the zero waste infrastructure of the future has room to expand.

4.0 Local Government and Extended Producer Responsibility

Full EPR in British Columbia on all products and product packaging will relieve local governments of the responsibility and cost of managing the majority of solid waste materials within their jurisdictions. Local governments may still have an important role to play in the EPR process, however, particularly during the transition phase to full EPR.

4.1 Waste Composition Studies

Many local governments across B.C. conduct waste composition studies to determine the quantity of various categories of materials in their waste stream. These studies are an extremely useful tool that, if conducted regularly, can provide valuable information for the design of targeted diversion programs.

Local governments can accelerate B.C.'s move towards full EPR on all products and packaging.

In general, these studies categorize waste based on material type, such as paper, metal and glass. B.C.'s general approach to EPR programs, however, categorizes waste based on its application or product type. A beverage container, for example, is covered by the beverage container category, regardless of whether it is made from aluminum, plastic, glass or waxed paper.

Local governments would benefit from waste composition studies that, in addition to studying the materials within the waste stream, categorized waste based on its application. This information could be used to track the success of current EPR programs, identify opportunities for future EPR programs and strengthen local government's knowledge base as it consults with stewards and the province on EPR-related issues.

In keeping with the 'producer pays' principle of EPR, a cost-sharing arrangement should be struck between the stewards of current programs and the local government that is conducting a waste composition study. Local governments currently provide a de facto subsidy to stewards by managing the EPR-product waste that slips into garbage and recycling systems. Such a cost-sharing arrangement would assist local governments in recouping some of these funds. One possible cost-sharing formula would involve stewards reimbursing local governments for the composition study based on the percentage of the waste stream that is comprised of their products.

4.2 Advocating for EPR Programs

Local governments can play an important advocacy role for the establishment of new EPR programs, as they are well versed in the challenges of managing the huge segment of waste that is comprised of products and packaging. Local governments, therefore, can provide a unique perspective on the need for EPR programs to policy-makers at the provincial level. The recent economic downturn and the resulting challenges in marketing commodity materials that were not designed with recycling in mind provide a unique opportunity for local governments to advocate for more product stewardship in B.C.

Local governments can accelerate B.C.'s move towards full EPR on all products and packaging by drafting EPR resolutions, writing in support to the Premier and relevant Cabinet Ministers, gathering public support within their jurisdictions and working with other local governments through the British Columbia Product Stewardship Council and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities.

4.3 Consultation Processes

EPR consultation processes, which are commonly conducted during the drafting of a stewardship plan or during the review process of an existing stewardship program, are prime opportunities for local government to shape the direction of current and future programs. Local governments should take full advantage of these opportunities to advocate for their needs and discuss any challenges with both the province and the relevant stewards.

For example, according to the principles of EPR and the Recycling Regulation, local governments and general taxpayers should not be paying for the management of product waste once an EPR program has been established. Local governments, by managing the product waste that slips into local recycling programs, garbage collection programs, transfer stations and landfills, are, in reality, providing a subsidy for these EPR programs. After estimating the cost, local governments should be reimbursed by the relevant stew-

ards for this service. Where possible, this subsidy should be eliminated by working to end the collection of products that are supposed to be collected through EPR programs.

4.4 Disposal Bans

To encourage greater public participation in EPR programs and ensure stewards cover the full cost of their programs, disposal bans on products covered by existing programs should be implemented. While some regional districts, such as Metro Vancouver, have banned many materials from landfill, citizens in most regional districts in B.C. do not face such bans. If, for example, citizens are still permitted to drop a television off at their local landfill (as is still the case at many landfills in the province) the incentive to participate in EPR programs is greatly diminished.

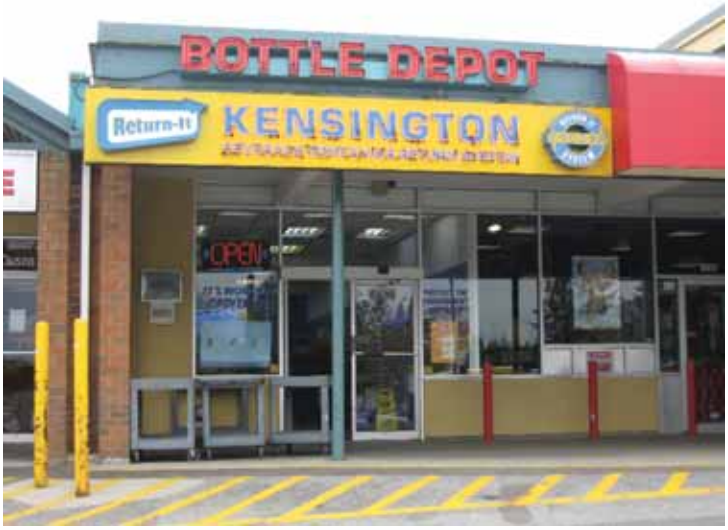
Disposal bans without adequate enforcement are, of course, only symbolic, and the required resources must be provided to ensure bans are taken seriously.

4.5 Education and Social Marketing

Despite the success of many EPR programs in British Columbia, many citizens are not fully informed as to the options available. People remain confused by the patchwork of disposal options, do not know where items can be dropped off or are simply unaware that programs even exist. These challenges will only increase as more EPR product categories are added unless a coordinated effort to effectively inform and educate the public occurs.

Residents are used to looking to their local government for waste management options and guidance, and local governments can play a coordinating role amongst the various EPR programs by ensuring their residents and businesses are fully informed of the options available. Public participation is likely to increase if existing programs are advertised more extensively and the public is educated more extensively on the EPR concept.

It is important to remember, however, that product stewards are legislated to achieve specific material capture rates by the provincial government. Stewards, therefore, should not be absolved of their responsibility to adequately and effectively advertise their programs to the public. While stewards should fund advertising programs and ensure the visibility of their programs, local governments can support these efforts by reinforcing these options and ensuring citizens do not illegally use local government facilities or collection systems to dispose of EPR covered materials.



4.6 Drop-Off Locations

In many regional districts, people have grown accustomed to dropping off waste materials at a facility operated by their local government, be it a recycling facility, transfer station or landfill. Theses spaces can provide a convenient location for citizens to sort and drop off products covered by an EPR program. This provides an opportunity for local governments to coordinate with product stewards and perform a collection service on a contractual basis. It is important, however, that the full cost of this service is compensated to avoid a taxpayer subsidy to an EPR program.

One possible model would see each steward contribute money to rent space and provide an attendant at an eco-depot. This depot could be located on the site of the local government's facility to maximize convenience for residents already there to self-haul waste. This model may be particularly suited to dense urban centers where stewards often find it difficult to site depots.

In the future, as the quantity of products covered by EPR programs expands, there may be further opportunities for local government to provide contractual services to product stewards. Local governments should study each of these opportunities closely to ensure the basic principles of EPR, including that of 'producer-pays', are upheld.

5.0 Conclusion

While full Extended Producer Responsibility will eventually shift much of the burden of waste management from local governments, there are many concrete actions local governments can take now to encourage waste reduction within their jurisdictions. These policies are explored in detail above, but can be summarized as the following:

- Comprehensive organics collection and management programs
- zero waste plans with realistic goals, timetables and action items
- Pay as You Throw systems that charge residents based on how much garbage they produce
- Bi-weekly garbage collection and weekly recycling and organics collection
- Disposal bans with strict enforcement at the curb and landfill
- Recycling requirements at the commercial and residential level
- Construction and Demolition policies including planning/diversion requirements, deconstruction requirements, deposit systems and alternative rate structures
- Well-funded and effective education and social marketing campaigns
- Local budgets that address the funding gap between waste reduction and disposal facilities
- Green procurement policies at the local level
- zero waste infrastructure at public spaces and events
- Zoning and tax policies to encourage zero waste businesses

Local governments can also support the move towards EPR during the transition phase to full EPR by:

- Conducting waste composition studies based on product type, not just material type
- Advocating for EPR programs
- Participating in EPR consultation processes by providing a unique perspective
- Enforcing disposal bans on products covered by EPR programs
- Participating in education programs about EPR-covered materials
- Coordinating with stewards to host drop-off locations for EPR materials

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