

June 11, 2008

## **Ontario Zero Waste Coalition announced**

On June 11, 2008 at the MWIN Zero Waste conference in Niagara Falls, Ontario, a new advocacy group announced its formation: the Ontario Zero Waste Coalition (OZWC).

The newly formed coalition, made up of member non-governmental groups from across Ontario, intends to lobby the government and educate the public about adopting Zero Waste strategies that could see waste diversion rates climb from current municipal averages of 20 to 45 per cent to more than 90 per cent. The coalition formed after several grassroots groups came together to discuss more sustainable ways to address waste. The group decided the implementation of Zero Waste initiatives are the most cost-effective and environmentally sustainable solution.

"It's time for Ontario to look at best practices from around the world and start employing successful methods to decrease the amount and toxicity of waste that's generated," says Liz Benneian of president of Oakvillegreen Conservation Association, a member group of OZWC.

In addition to province-wide recycling and composting initiatives to divert waste, more product stewardship programs are needed to keep many kinds of products and packaging out of the municipal waste stream in the first place, she adds.

The Ontario Zero Waste Coalition would like to see:

1. Legislation passed that removes toxic ingredients from the manufacturing of products. These pose a threat during a product's use and end up in waste (and, ultimately, the environment). Europe, the group points out, already has such legislation in place.
2. Regulation to further reduce packaging and packaging waste.
3. Extended-Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws that make manufacturers of goods fully responsible for recycling their goods once consumers are done with them.
4. Enhanced "Take-It-Back" programs that are province-wide for goods such as batteries, fluorescent bulbs, computers, etc. Product stewardship programs should not only fund waste diversion -- they should inspire manufacturers to Design for the Environment (DfE).
5. A provincially-mandated program for the recycling of construction waste and the strict enforcement of waste diversion laws for all industrial, commercial and institutional (IC&I) waste – which is estimated as two-thirds of the waste stream.
6. Requirements for industry to pay 100 per cent (not a portion) of the net cost of blue box recycling, product stewardship programs, and the recycling or disposal of non-recyclable, non-compostable items. Why should ratepayers fund end-of-life management for environmentally unsustainable products?

The group plans to encourage an Ontario version of the municipal-led product stewardship councils that are forming across North America to promote Zero Waste. Examples include councils in British Columbia, California, Oregon and Washington State, as well as a number of mid-west states and Nova Scotia (which has Canada's highest provincial waste diversion rate, above 70 per cent). In addition to towns and cities, many companies are starting to take back their used products in separate systems (e.g., Dell Computers, Sony).

Benneian notes that reducing waste and managing it in a sustainable way through the adoption of Zero Waste principles is part of a global effort that's gaining momentum.

"Just recently, the town of Oki in Japan made a declaration that it will become a town that does not dispose of waste by incineration or landfills by 2016. As part of their declaration, they stated, 'We reviewed our wasteful lifestyle and decided that our town will not let our children shoulder the debts.' I think the people and the government of Ontario should be willing to make the same promise to their children and grandchildren," says Benneian.

For more information about the Ontario Zero Waste Coalition contact Liz Benneian at 905-257-0250 or via email at [lizcdn@yahoo.com](mailto:lizcdn@yahoo.com)

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