

Request from Ontario Zero Waste Coalition

Presented to:

Jerry Khouri, Director of Policy, Waste Management

John Vidan, Director of the Ministry's Waste Management Policy Branch

Meeting Date: April 27 2011

Dear Mr. Khouri and Mr. Vidan:

The 14 members of the Ontario Zero Waste Coalition commend this government for the many positive environmental policies it has enacted. However, we believe that improvements can and must be made to the policies concerning waste reduction and diversion.

Problems with the E-Waste collection program, a public backlash against an poorly-conceived Eco Fee implementation and growing citizen anger over this government's tacit approval of municipal waste incineration are threatening to undermine much good work the Provincial government has done in other environmental areas.

The apparent abandonment of both Waste Diversion Act reform, and the promise of a Zero Waste future for our province, greatly concerns us.

We are not naïve. We know that in an election year, the government is not suddenly going to implement new policies, however, we look forward to the day in the fall of this year, when a newly elected government will reinvigorate Zero Waste plans and implement the 12 requests listed below by our coalition.

12 Recommendations

Implement Zero Waste

1. Move forward as swiftly as possible, to introduce a new Waste Diversion Act, that will propel us to the Zero Waste future that former Environment Minister Gerretsen promised. The Province's strategy must focus on "why are we generating so much waste" rather than on "what do we do with it". With that focus, action must revolve around ways to REDUCE, reuse, recycle, compost — in that order.
2. Work with municipalities to standardize diversion policies across Ontario. It's shocking how many municipalities around the Province are still not separating organics. Business likes certainty. If entrepreneurs were confident about the types and quantities of materials being diverted you can be sure they will create businesses to recycle/reuse/compost it, creating more jobs here in Ontario in the process.
3. Ban organics from any kind of disposal. Organics in landfills are the source of methane. Given that organics comprise 40 to 60 % of all municipal waste and composting it creates a valuable commodity, mandate composting and ensure it's returned to our depleted soil.
4. Ban ash/thermal treatment residues being used or mixed with other materials and sold as a product, whereupon it falls through the cracks of legislation. Ash and other residues can leach toxins into the environment. Allowing them to be sold as

“products” or used in onsite paving for example, absolves incinerator operators from disposal costs hiding the real cost of their operations.

5. Implement diversion targets for municipalities, track performance and penalize failures. Many municipalities are jumping to incineration without even harvesting the low hanging fruit of waste reduction like organics collection.
6. Find a way to include First Nations Communities in blue box, take-it-back and other producer-sponsored diversion programs.

End Support For Incineration

7. Repeal the March 2007 exemption from the Environmental Assessment Act this government gave to pilot and demonstration incineration projects with a maximum capacity of 75 tonnes per day.
8. Ban new municipal waste incinerators. We ask that your government reintroduce legislation that would ban the building of new incinerators/gasification/plasma arc/pyrolysis plants for municipal waste. These projects have a long history of operating problems, cost overruns and put-or-pay contracts that can bankrupt municipalities. As well, they generate emissions that are a danger to public health and greenhouse gases that add to global warming. In a world where over-consumption is at the heart of most of our problems it makes no sense to burn resources.
9. Issue a clear statement backed up by policies, to municipalities and incineration companies, that incineration is not “green energy” and that this government will not support it. The incineration industry is engaged in “greenwashing” promoting incineration as green energy and garbage as a renewable resource. Municipal politicians are actively promoting incinerators as a “green” solution to garbage and incinerators as the kind of business they want to attract to new green business parks.
10. End taxpayer-funded incentives and subsidies to the incineration industry. In December 2008, former Ontario Energy and Infrastructure Minister George Smitherman added impetus to the Plasco Ottawa incinerator by directing the Ontario Power Authority to purchase electricity from it at a rate of 8 cents per kilowatt-hour - almost three times the resale rate and representing a significant taxpayer subsidy. Plasco received \$5.9 million from Sustainable Development Technology Canada, \$4 million non-interest loan from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, \$8 million a year from city of Ottawa. If the government has money to invest it should be spent on recycling, reuse and composting plants that will create more jobs and have more benefits for people and the environment.

Empower Citizens/Consumers

11. Redesign Stewardship Ontario so there is citizen involvement and oversight. The problems with E-waste collection, as outlined by the Toronto Star on May 11 2010 and the several recent articles about the Eco Fee fiasco should highlight that you cannot leave foxes in charge of the henhouse.
12. Reinstate Eco fees “on the shelf” not “at the counter”. We should be looking to incentivize the things we want (i.e. less toxic, better packaged products) and discourage those we don’t (i.e. toxic and wastefully packaged ones). Because we don’t consider a product’s cost to the environment, many “green” products cost more than

less-environment-friendly ones. Put the “eco tax” on the shelf price so consumers can make wiser choices.

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