

A ZERO WASTE TOOL KIT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**THE RECYCLING COUNCIL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S
ZERO WASTE WORKING GROUP**



MAY 2002

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. WHY DOES ZERO WASTE MAKE SENSE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS?	3
3. WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES?	4
4. WHICH OTHER GOVERNMENTS HAVE ENDORSED ZERO WASTE?	4
5. MODEL ZERO WASTE RESOLUTION	5
6. HOW ZERO WASTE FITS INTO OFFICIAL PLANS AND STRATEGIES	5
7. SETTING AN EXAMPLE	6
8. ZERO WASTE TOOLS	7
9. SAMPLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECYCLED PRODUCT PROCUREMENT POLICY	8
10. SAMPLE ZERO WASTE RADIO SPOT.....	9
11. ZERO WASTE RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET	10

A Zero Waste Toolkit for Local Government

May 2002

1. Introduction

This tool kit is designed to assist local governments in evaluating the benefits and feasibility of using zero waste as a framework for resource management planning. In BC we are in the midst of economic reform and adopting a sustainability strategy is a task that should be addressed as soon as possible.

The content and format of this toolkit represent a collaborative effort of the Zero Waste Working Group of the Recycling Council of British Columbia (RCBC). This toolkit will be refined from time to time and will be available as a publication of RCBC. Your feedback on this document is needed and appreciated.

The information in this Toolkit is free. It may be copied, distributed, and/or modified under the conditions set down in the Design Science License published by Michael Stutz at <http://dsl.org/copyleft/dsl/txt>.

Please direct comments to any member of the Working Group via the listserv: zerowastegr@onenw.org, visit our web page, www.rcbc.bc.ca or call RCBC at 604-683-6009 ext. 305.

2. Why Does Zero Waste Make Sense for Local Governments?

The Zero Waste concept offers local governments the framework of a structure they can tailor to their individual needs. Zero Waste planning will give them the tools to reduce expenses, improve the quality of life of their constituents and to create a future where the materials that flow into our communities don't become an expensive liability but rather become the building blocks of a more vibrant and sustainable economy.

Currently most local governments fund garbage collection and recycling programs through taxes. The addition of recycling programs to the local government tax bill in the 1990's means that taxpayers are now paying for parallel collection systems to handle what was once managed by one garbage collection program. But recycling and composting programs have the potential to capture well over 50% of what we once called 'waste'. Why do we continue to fund the old garbage collection and disposal system at the same level when it's doing half the job?

Why do we continue to fund garbage collection at all when the potential exists right now to divert those financial resources to recovering the remaining material resources that find their way into the waste stream? Local government is in a position to plan for the elimination of waste. Imagine the savings to local governments if they no longer:

- Paid to collect garbage
- Paid to dispose of garbage in landfills or incinerators
- Paid to operate landfills
- Were forced to ensure that landfills pose minimal future environmental hazards
- Incurred the potential environmental liability of landfill and/or incinerator operations
- Knowingly created huge green house gas generators
- Wasted valuable resources

A Zero Waste Toolkit for Local Government

May 2002

Instead:

- What was once considered waste becomes the basis for new economic activity in communities everywhere.
- More small businesses are created with a secure supply of raw materials available locally.
- Composting of organic materials produces a soil amendment that revitalizes local agriculture and produces healthy produce for local consumption or is used to reclaim impacted sites (brownfields).
- Less green house gases are generated transporting food and recyclable commodities long distances or from burying organic material in landfills.
- Industry takes responsibility for recovering and recycling its products.
- The quality of life in our communities is enhanced.

Local governments can create the political will to dam the waste stream and make the captured resources generate wealth, jobs, and a healthy environment.

3. What Are the Obstacles?

Zero Waste proponents often get negative feedback from local government officials when they raise the possibility of endorsing this course of action. We hear “That’s not possible – we couldn’t even reach 50%” or “That will cost too much” or “There will always be waste – we’ll always need landfills”. These statements reflect a common theme – a mindset that is fixed on viewing anything for which one person or business has no use as ‘waste’. Our major task is to break that mindset and get people to see that one person’s waste is another person’s resource or that we can structure our society to require the producers of products to be responsible for them even after they’ve been purchased and used. Once the mind is freed from the constraints of the traditional view of unwanted, but not useless resources, the possibilities are endless. Once we refuse to allow disposal costs to be externalized onto the taxpayer much of the waste stream simply returns to its source.

The fact is that Zero Waste is possible...and desirable. Municipalities, states, counties, corporations, small businesses, and non-governmental organizations all have committed to Zero Waste and in many cases are well on their way. All recognize that wasting resources is squandering their wealth and jeopardizing their viability.

4. Which Other Governments have Endorsed Zero Waste?

Environmental and economic development pressures on local governments have never been greater. Many governments are still in the process of assessing the need for an aggressive strategy and weighing the costs and opportunities of linking sustainability to their identification. Zero waste is a strategy that requires buy-in from all levels of government.

Endorsement of zero waste and similar frameworks is happening at a speed much faster than other governance policies over the last century. The following governments have recently endorsed zero waste:

Regional Districts in British Columbia

- Regional District of Nanaimo (Inquiries: email zerowaste@rdn.bc.ca)
- Cowichan Valley Regional District (Inquiries: email bmcdonald@cvr.d.bc.ca)

A Zero Waste Toolkit for Local Government

May 2002

- Regional District of Kootenay Boundary (Inquiries: email zerowaste@rdkb.com)

Local Governments around the World

- Del Norte County, California
- Australian Capital Territory (Canberra)
- Santa Cruz County, California
- City of Seattle, Washington
- Over 40 Municipal Councils in New Zealand (45% of all local governments in NZ)
- Town of Carrboro, North Carolina
- City of Toronto, Ontario

National Governments around the World

- New Zealand
- Canada is giving zero waste serious consideration as part of a national Resource Recovery Strategy currently under development

5. Model Zero Waste Resolution

WHEREAS, the placement of materials in waste disposal facilities, such as landfills and incinerators, is costly to taxpayers, causes damage to ecosystem health, wastes natural resources, and wrongly transfers liabilities to future generations; and,

WHEREAS, a resource recovery-based economy will create and sustain more productive and meaningful jobs; and,

WHEREAS, through the application of Extended Producer Responsibility programs, recycled content regulation, landfill bans, design for the environment, composting programs and other readily available tools, virtually all resources can be recovered; and

WHEREAS, with the understanding that government is ultimately responsible for leading by example and establishing criteria needed to eliminate waste,

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the (Board of Directors, Council of _____) (endorses a Zero Waste Goal, supports the creation of a Zero Waste Plan) in order to eliminate waste and pollution resulting from the traditional disposal of resources to our common environment (land, air and water).

6. How Zero Waste Fits into Official Plans and Strategies

Most Regional Districts are either in the process of or are about to review their Regional Solid Waste Management Plans (RSWMP's). Regions and municipalities may also have Economic Development Plans that are similarly subject to regular review and revision. These review processes provide a perfect opportunity to integrate the Zero Waste philosophy into guiding documents. Now that 50% reduction by 2000 is an historical goal and we've seen what can be accomplished in a very short time, we need to set the bar higher and aim for a waste free future.

- Replace the 50% goal in your RSWMP with a Zero Waste Goal
- Establish policies in your RSWMP that support Zero Waste

A Zero Waste Toolkit for Local Government

May 2002

- Integrate Zero Waste Goals into the Economic Development Strategy for your Region.
- Recognize the economic development opportunities provided by resource recovery at the local level.

7. Setting an Example

Local government is in a position to set an example for the public, business, industry and other institutions operating in the community. Here are some aspects of your operation that can be examined to determine whether or not they contribute to reaching a zero waste goal.

Paper Use

- What portion of your waste stream is paper or paper products?
- What would help your offices and facilities to create less paper waste?
- Are you aware of methods to reduce paper waste?
- Are you aware of options such as non-chlorine bleach and post consumer recycled content?
- What would help to convert current paper use to these more environmentally sustainable options?
- Would you be interested in buying paper in bulk as a part of a paper-buying club?

Water and Energy Use

- Does local government buildings and facilities use any kind of method to reduce water consumption such as tap aerators and low flush toilets?
- Are appliances turned to the most energy efficient setting?
- Are furnaces and water heaters in good repair and efficient?
- Are windows sealed for drafts?
- What kind of lighting is being used and could it be converted into low energy consumption lighting such as compact fluorescent?

Purchasing Policy

- Is transportation or location of products considered when purchased?
- Are there suitable local suppliers, and if so, are they used?
- Does the amount of packaging included with the product affect your decision whether or not to purchase it?
- Are any of the products you purchase known pollutants? Are there suitable substitutes available if this is the case?

Chemicals/Cleaning

- What chemicals or cleaning solutions are used in your buildings and facilities?
- Are these products of low toxicity or environmentally benign?
- Are you aware of non-toxic options for cleaning?
- What would help you to switch to non-toxic products?

Transportation

- Is transportation a large part of your business?
- What steps have you taken to minimize trips?
- Is there an incentive program to encourage employees to carpool or bicycle to work?
- What would help you to do this?

A Zero Waste Toolkit for Local Government

May 2002

Landscaping/Urban Habitat/Aesthetic Quality

- How does your outside building design complement or enhance urban habitat for plants and birds?
- Would you be interested in enhancing the outside appearance of your building?
- What would help you to do so?
- Are you aware of low watering techniques for landscaping?

8. Zero Waste Tools

Listed below are some of the strategies and concepts featured in Zero Waste Plans:

Policy and enforcement tools

- Landfill bans
- Extended Producer Responsibility Programs (e.g. Deposit-refund systems, eco-fees)
- Open Burning Control Bylaws

Infrastructure

- Backyard Composting Programs
- Centralized Composting Programs
- Reuse Centres
- Eco-Industrial Parks
- Zero waste technologies for sewage treatment

Fiscal tools

- User Pay garbage collection programs
- Full Cost Disposal Charges (tipping fees)
- Variable business license fees
- Development Cost Charges
- Green Construction Permit charges
- User Pay water and sewage charges

Political and Community Action

- Lobbying senior levels of government
- Minimum Recycled Content Standards
- Design for the Environment Standards for Industry (business license requirement)
- Education/Public Awareness
- Purchasing Policies (See below)

The Zero Waste New Zealand Trust recommends the following strategies that can be implemented by community governments to move toward their zero waste to landfill target:

- Align all waste policies with the zero waste goal.
- Maintain community ownership (or at very least control) of the waste stream.
- Write contracts that favour recycling and waste minimization over landfilling.
- Keep the community informed – develop internal and external communication strategies.
- Involve and support existing recycling businesses and community groups.
- Tackle the easy projects first.
- Build in maximum resource recovery opportunities at every waste disposal facility, e.g. transfer stations.

A Zero Waste Toolkit for Local Government

May 2002

- Raise tipping fees to realistic levels.
- Use full cost accounting for recycling and landfill processes.
- Where applicable use income from high value commodities to subsidize the low.
- Monitor and report on progress continually.
- Promote a community 'buy recycled' purchasing policy.

9. Sample Local Government Recycled Product Procurement Policy

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF _____
RECYCLED PRODUCT PROCUREMENT POLICY

WHEREAS, the volume of material disposed of at the Regional District's landfills has been increasing annually, and

WHEREAS, sanitary landfill space is at a premium and it is becoming increasingly difficult to site new landfills, and

WHEREAS, much of the material that enters the waste stream can be recycled, reused or incorporated in the manufacture of new products, and

WHEREAS, Regional District of _____ participation in the promotion of recycling programs can significantly reduce the volume of material entering the waste stream thereby extending Regional District landfill life expectancy and reducing expenses, and

WHEREAS, for recycling programs to be effective, markets must be developed for products which incorporate post-consumer materials in their manufacture, are reusable or are designed to be recycled;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Regional District of _____ as follows:

1. Within twelve months subsequent to the effective date of this section, all Regional District departments, agencies, offices, boards and commissions must conduct a review of existing product and service specifications to determine whether existing specifications either require the use of products manufactured from virgin materials or exclude the use of recycled products, reusable products or products designed to be recycled.
2. In the event that such specifications do exclude the use of recycled products or require the use of virgin materials, then such exclusions or requirements must be eliminated unless the pertinent department or entity can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Administrator that these recycled products would not achieve a necessary performance standard.
3. Within the same 12 months period, all Regional District of Kootenay Boundary departments and agencies must recommend changes to the Administrator to ensure that performance standards for particular products can be met, that specifications are not overly stringent, and recommend changes to ensure that specifications will incorporate a requirement for the use of recycled materials, reusable products, and products designed to be recycled to the maximum extent practicable, subject to an alternative showing that either the performance of the product

A Zero Waste Toolkit for Local Government May 2002

will be jeopardized or that the product will negatively impact health, safety or operational efficiency.

4. Outside contractors bidding to provide products or services to the Regional District of _____ must demonstrate that they will comply with the specifications described in paragraph 3 to the greatest extent feasible.
5. Recycled paper shall be purchased and used in all copy machines that will accept it and shall also be used for printing purposes.
6. When recycled products are used, reasonable efforts shall be undertaken to label the products to indicate that they contain recycled materials. Regional District departments and agencies shall use for their masthead stationery and envelopes recycled paper which includes post-consumer recycled content and indicate on the paper and envelopes that they contain recycled material. Other recycled products used by the Regional District shall also indicate that they contain recycled material to the extent practicable.
7. A 10% price preference may be given to recycled products, reusable products offered as alternatives to disposable products, and products designed to be recycled where they are offered as alternatives to non-recyclable products. The preference percentage shall be based on the lowest bid or price quoted by the supplier or suppliers offering non-recycled product.
8. The Regional District will cooperate to the greatest extent feasible with neighbouring Regional Districts and member Municipalities' governments in an effort to develop a comprehensive, consistent and effective procurement effort intended to stimulate the market for recycled products, reusable products, and products designed to be recycled.
9. All related Regional District departments and agencies shall work co-operatively to further the purposes of the policy. The Regional District's economic development process shall incorporate the goal of stimulating the market for recycled material.
10. The Regional District of _____ Board of Directors encourages all member municipalities to adopt the above or similar policies and will endeavour to be of any practical assistance in the implementation of said policies.

10. Sample Zero Waste Radio Spot

The following 60-second radio spot is currently being aired in the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary and can be used as a starting point for developing your own message.

What is WASTE?

Waste is inefficiency. Waste is lost energy. Waste is lost resources. Waste is money down the tube.

That's why the Regional District of _____ has adopted a ZERO WASTE goal. We believe that there's a better way to deal with resources that have been used only once. We don't believe it's wise to extract expensive resources and then bury them in a hole.

A Zero Waste Toolkit for Local Government

May 2002

If you recycle and compost you can divert more than 60% of what we used to call waste and save money in the process. Please recycle and compost because ONCE IS NOT ENOUGH.

For more information please call the BC Recycling Hotline at 1-800-667-4321 or visit the Zero Waste page on our website at www._____.com. That's www._____.com.

This Zero Waste minute is brought to you by the Regional District of _____.

It's our only planet, don't waste it.

11. Zero Waste Resources on the Internet

Recycling Council of British Columbia – Home of the Zero Waste Working Group.
Join our listserv here: www.rcbc.bc.ca

Grass Roots Recycling Network

http://www.grrn.org/zerowaste/zw_world.html

Target Zero Canada

<http://www.targetzerocanada.org>

Discarding the Idea of Waste – Michael Jessen

<http://www.toenail.org/resources.html>

Zero Waste New Zealand Trust

<http://www.zerowaste.co.nz>

Canberra, Australia – No Waste by 2010

<http://www.act.gov.au/nowaste/index.html>

Regional District of Kootenay Boundary Zero Waste Strategy

<http://www.rdkb.com/recover/media/zerowast.pdf>

Eco-Cycle

www.ecocycle.org

Institute for Local Self-Reliance

www.ilsr.org

Materials for the Future Foundation

www.materials4future.org

Zero Waste North

www.zerowastenorth.com

Eco-Cycle

www.ecocycle.org/

Institute for Local Self Reliance

www.ilsr.org/

Materials for the Future Foundation

www.materials4future.org/

Zero Waste by Robin Murray

<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/MultimediaFiles/Live/FullReport/4527.pdf>

***“As a pollutant, waste demands controls.
As an embodiment of accumulated energy
and materials it invites an alternative.”
-Robin Murray***