



*The National Zero Waste Council is a joint initiative of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Metro Vancouver. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been the national voice of municipal government in Canada since 1901. Close to 2000 members include Canada's largest cities, small urban and rural communities, and 21 provincial and territorial municipal associations. Working together, local governments partner constructively with the federal government and influence policy and programs.*

*Metro Vancouver is a federation of 22 municipalities, one unincorporated Electoral Area and one Treaty First Nation located on British Columbia's southwest coast. With over 2.3 million residents, it is Canada's third largest metropolitan area. Metro Vancouver is responsible for managing the region's utilities, including solid waste, and its solid waste management plan gives a top priority to reducing the generation of waste and increasing recycling rates.*

### **Reframing the Solid Waste Discussion**

Every year local governments in Canada spend approximately \$2.6 billion to manage waste – a consequence of Canadians producing 34 million tonnes of waste materials, and disposing over three quarters of that in landfills or incinerators. Unfortunately the waste volumes are growing, along with the costs of managing them, and the environmental impacts from such a high level of waste. However, the factors driving waste generation, such as lifestyle expectations, product design and packaging, are substantially beyond the control of local governments.

Given this situation, Metro Vancouver and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have collaborated to establish a National Zero Waste Council (NZWC) that will act as a unified, national voice for local governments and other stakeholders to advance a waste prevention and reduction agenda in Canada. The Council aims to better align and harmonize waste prevention and reduction initiatives across Canada and establish links with leading work across the globe.

Tackling this kind of agenda requires a new frame of reference – one that involves greater collaboration among key stakeholders. All orders of government, businesses, NGOs, and community groups will need to work together to implement actions that will reduce the amount of waste that needs to be handled – by not producing it in the first place.

*The Council will develop two streams of work:*

- 1.** Advocating for the development and enhancement of government policy and regulation and other approaches that encourage manufacturers and retailers to redesign products and packaging to reduce material intensity and allow them to be more easily be reused, repaired and recycled.
- 2.** Developing and broadly utilizing social marketing programs to influence consumer behaviour and reduce the amount of waste entering the waste stream.

### **The Cornerstones of Waste Prevention and Reduction**

Conventional solid waste management is focused on how best to recycle and dispose of products at the end of their life – a linear, cradle-to-grave approach. Ambitious recycling and material recovery programs have been successful in increasing the amount of waste diverted from final disposal, but not in reducing the aggregate amount of waste being handled. Moreover, the cost and challenges of handling solid waste are effectively disconnected from the decisions made in the early stages of a product's life cycle (i.e., during the design, manufacturing and packaging stages). Waste prevention and reduction is necessary to reduce the amount of resources, materials and energy used the production and distribution of goods that eventually end up in the waste stream.

The objective is to continue to provide a high quality of life, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity while consuming fewer resources and less energy. Taking early action will ensure that Canadian businesses are well placed to effectively compete in a resource constrained world.

**The elements of the Council's approach to waste prevention and reduction are:**

**Behaviour change** on the part of consumers as well as within the private and public sector. Education and marketing campaigns can sway consumer decisions toward more durable and recyclable products. In addition, governments need to look at new approaches, such as regulatory and procurement policies, and businesses need to follow new practices.

**Design for the environment** refers to changes in products and packaging that take into account the total product lifecycle at the design phase. Designing for the environment, or a cradle-to-cradle approach, will result in less material and energy being used, and eventually discarded. It will also reduce or eliminate the use of toxic chemicals, and will lead to the manufacture of products that can more easily be disassembled into reusable and recyclable components. Design change is normally initiated by businesses that recognize opportunities to reduce costs or to create new markets for their products, but governments will need to ensure the regulatory and economic environment supports cradle-to-cradle design.

**Regulation and incentives** will continue to be tools that governments use to manage natural resources and waste in a manner consistent with public health and environmental objectives. However, in order to reduce the generation of waste, Extended Producer Responsibility policies and similar programs will need to be strengthened and harmonized in order to send appropriate signals to global markets about new waste objectives. As well, financial programs can be designed to stimulate the desired behaviours among businesses and consumers.

**Changes in the market** refer to new approaches by businesses that support lower consumption of material products, such as businesses retaining ownership of their products while ensuring customers gain the services they need. For example, some printing companies have transformed their operations from selling printers to servicing printers for their customers. In this way, there are strong incentives to design durable, re-usable, recyclable products. Similarly, business and community organizations have been effective at creating sharing arrangements for products such as tools and cars so that they are more efficiently and effectively used.

**Transparent collaboration** among all stakeholders – industry and business representatives, governments and non-government organizations – to address issues and identify initiatives that that could promote the adoption of zero waste practices in all business sectors. Developing each of these approaches effectively may

involve initiatives and efforts of multiple stakeholders. Together they can create the conditions for waste prevention and reduction

**Next Steps for the National Zero Waste Council**

On September 15, 2012 – as an adjunct to its second annual Zero Waste Conference – Metro Vancouver collaborated with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to bring together national stakeholders in a roundtable discussion to assess interest in and support for the concept of a National Zero Waste Council. The roundtable attracted 46 representatives from local and provincial governments, businesses and business associations, and non-governmental organizations from across the country. Another 90 people participated by live stream.

The roundtable participants were unanimous in supporting the establishment of a National Zero Waste Council to better collaborate on waste prevention and reduction. Following the Roundtable, Metro Vancouver was asked to prepare a briefing on the Council for the B.C. Minister of the Environment, Terry Lake, who presented the idea and discussed it at a meeting of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.

A follow-up meeting of National Zero Waste Council in November began work on detailed terms of reference and initial shared advocacy and communications initiatives.

An Interim Steering Committee is being formed, with representation from local and senior levels of government, businesses and non-government organizations. The Steering Committee will appoint working groups to develop the two streams of activity: advocacy with senior levels of government, and broad social marketing campaigns with the public.

The National Zero Waste Council will be formally launched in 2013.

Discussion document attached.

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