



**Packaging Waste Reduction Forum  
Historic Fort York, Toronto  
September 10, 2008  
Forum Summary Notes**

## **Welcome Address**

At 9:10 a.m. Toronto City Councillor **Glenn De Baeremaeker** introduced Mayor **David Miller** who gave a welcome address to forum participants.

## **Opening Presentation**

At 9:25 a.m. **Geoff Rathbone**, General Manager of Solid Waste Management Services for the City of Toronto opened the forum with a presentation entitled, "Garbage is changing".

*Presentations are available on the City of Toronto's website at*  
<http://www.toronto.ca/garbage/packagingforum/index.htm>

## **Voluntary vs. Regulatory approaches to waste reduction - Panel Discussion**

This panel discussion began at 9:40 a.m., moderated by **Vincent Sferazza**, Director for Policy & Planning at the City of Toronto.

Presentations were given by:

- **Jim Downham** – Packaging Association of Canada
- **Kim McKinnon** – Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors
- **Guy Perry**, Manager Technical Services, Stewardship Ontario
- **Phil Zigby** – Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators

Comments and discussion from forum participants:

**Vincent Sferazza** said that some panellists spoke about partnership opportunities between government and industry and of both environmental and economic incentives to reducing packaging. Given the fact that it is the municipality who is responsible for managing the product at the end of its life, he asked panellists to comment on the possibility of involving the municipality at an early stage of product design.

**Kim McKinnon** said that starting partnerships early could help retailers better understand the municipalities and help businesses in making their packaging decisions. **Jim Downham** said he could

not speak on behalf of Wal-Mart, but said they work with a sustainable value network that is continually looking for individuals, NGOs and government officials to join in a consultative process that helps them implement their packaging process in Canada. That may be an opportunity for those interested to get involved at the design stage.

**Jeffrey Oliner**, City of Orillia, asked the panel about instituting a program to have vessels produced at a common size and volume, as is done with beer bottles. These vessels and containers could go back to grocery stores on a deposit return basis and then be returned to manufacturers and suppliers for reuse. In this way a tremendous amount of glass could be eliminated. **Kim McKinnon** said that refilling packaging has not been pursued in the food industry but consumers can reuse plastic bags many times over. She added that glass has always been a problematic material in recycling and that the reuse process is governed by federal regulations regulating the number of times packaging can be reused. **Jim Downham** said he thinks the idea of standardizing packaging is a good one and there are some closed loop opportunities - but it's a complex subject. For example, beer is controlled, so its container can be standardized. However, wine comes for Chile, South Africa, Australia, etc. It would be difficult to tell wine producers around the world that you can't sell wine in Ontario unless it comes in a particular bottle.

**John Dransfield**, National Research Council of Canada, raised the issue of identifying the different compounds found in plastics and glass that is a necessary step in the recycling process and the need to educate the public and industry on the adoption of resin mouldings in plastics. **Kim McKinnon** agreed and said that one area that needs improvement is identification of plastics through the recycling stream. Retailers will often use a particular recyclable plastic thinking they're doing a good thing, but then get into trouble when it can't be identified in the recycling stream. **Jim Downham** said he supports and endorses education on this subject, which is what the Sustainable Packaging Movement, backed by industry, is trying to do.

A **forum participant** said that while design changes are great, municipalities are still struggling to pay for recycling programs. If regulations targeting packaging are put in place this could push industry toward taking more responsibility for their products after they are consumed. **Guy Perry** said that one of the advantages of the blue box program right now is that it is a multi-material system, which is very efficient as a collection system for managing and diverting a large amount of material. The partnership that the blue box has with municipalities that have access to their residents, as well as industry, is making sure that that system is as efficient as possible. Now additional investments are required as we increase the range of materials it is handling.

## Perspectives on Stakeholder Responsibilities

This session began at 11:20 a.m.

Presentations were given by:

- **Milena Avramovic** – Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
- **Karen Leacock-Bingham** – Project Manager, Food Safety and Quality, Guelph Food Technology Centre
- **Lisa Mychajluk**, - Senior Policy Coordinator, Waste Policy Branch, MOE
- **Michael Pacholok** – Solicitor, Municipal Law, City of Toronto

### Comments and discussion from forum participants:

**Stephanie Jones**, Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, spoke about misunderstandings about how the system works and said that her industry is charged for all the packaging they produce, even if it doesn't end up in the blue box. Currently, businesses in Toronto pay municipal taxes and for private collection when the City is unable to provide them with services. In this case, taxes are being paid for services that are not being provided. She raised the issue of some restaurant materials that cannot go into municipal recycling programs universally, for example, coffee cups can be recycled in Essex and Windsor, Ontario but not in Toronto. As packaging decisions by large chains are made at the national or provincial levels, this creates an obvious problem. She said she would like to hear how to get those materials into the blue box universally. She added that it is a myth that the current system encourages businesses not to use recyclable packaging, as stewards are penalized for material that doesn't end up recovered.

**Milena Avramovic** said the difference in what municipalities collect is based on the value they can get for recovering these items. AMO doesn't have a problem partnering with industry but municipalities have made it clear that they are not willing to subsidize industry for decisions they make. She said that municipal taxes are an inappropriate vehicle for paying for recycling and collection programs.

**Paul Heatherington**, Baking Association of Canada, said there is no reference to food safety concerns in the principles of packaging reduction initiative. Food safety is paramount to the baking industry and their packaging is a cornerstone of their food safety plan. He asked the panellists what concerns they have regarding food safety and packaging should bans or taxation make packaging more expensive.

**Milena Avramovic** said AMO's position doesn't argue with the issue of food safety, they are just saying that when you design a package you have to have in mind how you're going to manage that package at the end of the day and incorporate that into your operating costs. **Lisa Mychajluk** said the Ministry of Environment is working on a national packaging strategy looking at a wide variety of policy options to address more sustainable packaging, and health and safety is a concern there.

A **forum participant** asked what Ontario's position is on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) based on their participation with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME). **Lisa Mychajluk** said the Ontario Ministry of Environment doesn't have a public position on EPR, but they are continuing to engage in a discussion at the national level on the potential use of EPR as a guiding principle and tool for increased diversion.

A **forum participant** asked if AMO or the City of Toronto have a position on Sustainable Packaging Criteria (SPC) and the respective panellists replied, no.

## **International examples of packaging regulation**

At 1:20 p.m., **Maria Kelleher**, Kelleher Environmental, gave a presentation entitled, "Case studies of targeted packaging from Ireland, the European Union and Asia".

## Case Studies of Return to Retail and Take-it-Back

This session began at 1:40 p.m.

Presentations were given by:

- **Paul Berto**, Home Depot of Canada, Return to retail program for compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL) and MHSW
- **Joe Hruska**, Environment and Plastics Industry Council on retail and industry led source reduction of plastic bags
- **George Reimer**, City of Ottawa Take-it-Back program

Comments and discussion from forum participants:

**Tim Croll**, City of Seattle, said another possible model of Take-it-Back is in the retail setting, setting up a chain of businesses that provide a take-back service for another chain of businesses. **Paul Berto** said Home Depot have two models in place, one of which is return-to-vendor. They donate many products to Habitat for Humanity and are recycling a lot of return-to-vendor products through them. He said there are a couple models out there and selecting the right one depends on the product category and what works for the consumer. In the case of CFLs, which contain mercury, to ensure those are properly recycled it makes sense for Home Depot to collect them in-store. For other items such as sinks and doors they have another recycling stream.

A **forum participant** said it is encouraging to see retailers taking ownership of their products and asked **Joe Hruska** when the plastics industry is going to take ownership and responsibility for their products. **Joe Hruska** said that brand owners are working hard to toward this end. Currently there is a lot of recycling infrastructure for paper in Toronto, but plastics are a different story. He said his industry is interested in discussing and working out a solution on how to allocate responsibility for recycling plastics.

Bruce Davidson, Municipality of Brockton, Walkerton, said there is a lot of frustration from people who want to see more interaction with industry, but they can channel this frustration into communication with people like **Joe Hruska**. He gave an example of the community of Walkerton, which sends a tractor-trailer load of polystyrene every 3 weeks for recycling. If citizens can partner with industry and get help from the Ontario government there can be real successes.

## Regulatory approaches to drive waste reduction

This session began at 2:45 p.m.

Presentations were given by:

- **Ruth Abbe**, Vice-President, HDR Engineering, Inc. on research for the City of Los Angeles
- **Tim Croll**, City of Seattle Green Fee and EPS Foam Ban
- **Jay Stanford**, City of London, single-use bottled water procurement policy
- **Bryan C. Weinart**, City of Ann Arbor Michigan plastic bag ban

## Wrap up Panel

This panel began at 3:50 p.m., moderated by **Guy Crittenden**, editor of Solid Waste and Recycling Magazine. Forum Panelist were invited to address questions and comments from participants.

### Comments and discussion from forum participants:

**Ray Erlich**, Dart Container Corporation, said the two stated goals of the Seattle initiatives were reduction of greenhouse gases and reduction of energy use, but the data shows that banning polystyrene would increase the use of energy and waste. He asked **Tim Croll** to clarify why the City of Seattle still chose to ban polystyrene based on these findings. **Tim Croll** said the ultimate goal is to get everything compostable and elected officials thought the litter implications of polystyrene were enough to call out polystyrene first.

**Guy Crittenden** asked what the City of Toronto hoped to get out of the day's Forum and if there is anything in specific that Toronto has in mind to move forward with. **Geoff Rathbone**, General Manager of Solid Waste Management Services for the City of Toronto, said the three major areas the City will be reporting on in November are carry out retail bags, hot cups and carry out food containers. They have had discussions with a number of municipalities around the world asking for assistance and some of the feedback today, for instance regarding food safety, was very helpful and will be added to the City's criteria. He said they are looking at continuing dialogue after today's session. Learning what other municipalities are doing and seeing common thinking is incredibly useful.

**Claudia Marsales**, Town of Markham, said that Markham totally supports the comments made earlier in the day by AMO and thanked them for their forward thinking paper. She said success stories in reducing packaging can be found close to home. The Town of Markham Council has banned polystyrene and starting in 2009, any public event with public funding must be zero waste while all town facilities in Markham had to go zero waste starting April 2008.

A **forum participant** thanked representatives from the U.S. and asked about the cost of programs in Los Angeles. **Ruth Abbe** said the multi-family program is free to multi-family buildings, paid for by a fee on the gross revenue of commercial haulers who give 10% of their gross fees to the City of Los Angeles. They are currently unable to roll that out to commercial establishments, so small and medium-sized businesses do not have access to recycling. For single-family residential, there is a per-household fee for all their services, a base fee that everyone pays.

**Keith Bouchard**, Entropex, said that PVC is a difficult product to deal with and asked if the representatives from the U.S. knew of any approaches for dealing with PVC. **Ruth Abbe** said PVC is recyclable in Los Angeles and other communities as there is a market for it, but was not aware of any other initiatives.

**Heather Ducharme**, 3Rs Working Group, said her committee has a particular interest in looking at promoting reduction to citizens and asked about any examples of mandatory communications programs at the point of retail that the panellists knew of such as labelling or signage that tells citizens what to do with the stuff they buy. She said the information piece seems to be discretionary. **Ruth Abbe** said that California has a mandatory bottle bill, which requires retailers to tell folks where they can recycle bottles. The City of Los Angeles has looked to the European "green dot" model, but what they really need is a "blue dot" - if a product is recyclable it should be labelled as such. This would be an

enormous help.

A **Bruce Davidson** said that in Walkerton, prior to instituting their polystyrene program they did months worth of public information while they made sure their depots were ready. He also congratulated the City of London on their reduction of bottled water, commenting that bottled water is a convenience, not a necessity.

**Guy Crittenden** asked if bottled water is one of the packaging forms the City of Toronto is looking at putting a fee on. **Geoff Rathbone** said this would be addressed in their November report. The powers the City has distinguished are more with respect to in-store packaging, so they will probably be looking at options closer to what London has done.

A **forum participant** commented on the confusion between classifying an item as biodegradable or compostable. For example, if you put a car in a field for 1000 years, it will biodegrade. Compostable means something different and it is quite important for municipalities to emphasize that biodegradable items often just gum up their recycling services. **Geoff Rathbone** said he agreed and that he doesn't see any viable option for biodegradable plastics and doesn't want them entering Toronto's system in any way, except as liners for the green bin program. The definitions they will set out in their November report will differentiate between compostable and biodegradable.

A **member of the media** asked for elaboration on the issue of banning take-out food containers and asked whether adding polystyrene was not a contradiction if the City wants to ban these items. **Geoff Rathbone** said they are talking about targeting any food that is packaged at the point of purchase. With regard to polystyrene in the blue box, they do not consider it to be a contradiction; they first want to reduce, then reuse, and only afterwards do they want to recycle the bags that remain.

A **forum participant** asked for confirmation that the cost to collect film plastic at the curb is \$4000/ton. **Guy Crittenden** said that collection of film plastic is extremely expensive. While it is great that so much can be made from recycled plastic film, there is still the outstanding question of who should pay for its collection.

A **forum participant** asked the panellists for their opinions on waste-to-energy plants. **Bryan C. Weinart** said that the City of Detroit has had such a plant for 20 years but it is looking like it might close down because of cost and public pressure. **Ruth Abbe** said the City of Los Angeles has seen proposals for different new technologies such as gasification and anaerobic digestion among others and are currently reviewing proposals from vendors around the world. **Jay Stanford** said the City of London, Ontario has been down that road and found it was too expensive. They have been inundated with proposals for gasification but have found that modern, efficient and environmentally strong landfill proposals are still cheaper.

## Closing Remarks

At 4:20 p.m. Councillor **Glenn De Baeremaeker**, Chair of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee, City of Toronto, made closing remarks. He thanked everyone for coming out to listen, learn and participate in the Forum, and that the City of Toronto appreciates their input.