

ONTARIO CENTRE FOR MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES

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BEST PRACTICE SUMMARY REPORT

March 2003

Waste Management – Waste Diversion Community Partnership-building (BP 6-03)

Practice identification: Waste management - Waste diversion – Community Partnership-building

Case study municipality: City of London

Keywords: Management
Operating procedures

Benefits which resulted from the adoption of this Practice

- **Greater public awareness and participation in diversion programs**
- **Lower cost Promotion and Education (P & E) campaigns**
- **Linkage of community “influencers” with diversion objectives**
- **Linkage of civic pride with diversion objectives**
- **Transfer of knowledge between local government, non-government organizations and business**
- **Encouragement of private sector waste diversion initiatives**

Description of the Practice in the Case-Study Municipality

The Waste Management Division in the City of London established a Waste Management Community Partnership Program (CPP) with various non-profit organizations and for-profit companies in 1996. Today, with over 30 partners, the City has direct contact with a wide band of community “influencers”, while directly encouraging waste diversion and promoting other community benefits.

It is the synergy between community groups, and the city staff and political leadership which has been selected as a best practice for diversion of waste in municipalities. This practice provides a link to the community influencers who may have an impact on the

social behaviour of the general population, encouraging people to think about, and then undertake the process of diversion within the individual household.

Through these contacts, the City is able to communicate waste diversion to the general public in a unique and cost effective manner. Traditional communication programs used by the City were having minimal impact in reaching the target audience. With the encouragement of multi-partner and private sector programs, the City supports new entrepreneurial companies that provide unique recycling services to the residents of London.

Key initiatives under the CPP framework includes composting partnerships, the use of a garbage and recycling calendar (which indicates which businesses provide direct services to the community), and linkages to community food drives. The London Cares Curbside Food Drive was the 2000 Recycling Council of Ontario winner of the Waste Minimization Awards (Outstanding Promotion Award).

The City of London (population 352,800) is a single tier community located in mid south-western Ontario. For the 146,500 households serviced by the Waste Management Division in 2001, 141,000 tonnes of material were managed through various waste diversion and disposal systems. Of the 141,000 tonnes, 34% of the materials were diverted from the city-owned landfill (with diversion, the landfill life is expected to be approximately 22 years). Although London has a range of heavy and light industries, it is more often thought of as a “white collar” city, with a large university and several institutional head offices.

Evaluation of the Practice

Efficiency

Based on the 2000 MPMP Results, the City of London has one of the lower costs per diverted tonnes of material in Ontario. The City does not have dedicated staff for promotion and education programs. Instead all waste management staff have this responsibility, which broadens the network of contacts and relationships in the community. The Waste Management Division does rely on technical input and some coordination from the City’s Corporate Communication Division. Each project has different financial requirements and sponsorship needs; therefore, it is difficult to quantify the cost elements of the Community Partnership Program. A general rule of thumb for City staff is that the City’s investment (financial or “in-kind”) in partnering with a local business or community group to undertake a waste diversion initiative will quadruple with the support of partners. On some projects the investment of partners is well beyond this proportion.

Effectiveness

Strong community group and business involvement, as well as strong liaison/outreach by municipal staff with these groups, has been noted among most of the municipalities contacted which displayed above-average MPMP waste diversion results. While it is difficult to directly measure the impact of community participation to diversion rates, community leaders certainly can significantly impact the behaviour of the general public and the priorities of the elected leadership. This influence has encouraged a continuing strong diversion participation rate among the general City of London populace. In addition, volunteers and businesses work to increase the range and variety of waste diversion opportunities available in London.

Legislative Initiatives

With the implementation of the provincial Waste Diversion Act, and the creation of the WDO (Waste Diversion Ontario), municipalities will be fiscally rewarded for attaining higher diversion rates, at lower costs. The program, expected to start in 2003, provides up to 45% diversion funding for municipalities based on efficiency and effectiveness measures compared to other similar municipalities in Ontario. The CPP contributes toward these goals.

Replication

Many of the municipalities with below-average costs and/or above-average diversion rates have some form of public liaison with local businesses and organizations in order to promote and work cooperatively on waste diversion programs, and to increase public awareness. Most small to medium-sized communities contacted had either a Political Liaison Committee, or an independent body (such as an Environmental Advisory Committee or a Recycling Association) concerned with diversion. In either case, it was noted that the key to success was a waste diversion staff group that were able to match the enthusiasm and take advantage of the influence of these committees.

While the nature of potential waste diversion partners will differ in each community, the London experience suggests that local businesses such as food services, nurseries and landscaping supplies, scrap and second-hand dealers, and many more may be willing to work closely with the municipality in ways which increase public awareness and waste diversion. Church groups, youth organizations, service clubs, naturalist and conservancy organizations, and resident associations are among the long list of community organizations which have worked with the municipality to initiate and promote waste diversion ideas in London and other communities. In many areas, waste diversion programs have been spearheaded by community groups which have coalesced in opposition to proposed landfill or waste incinerator solutions.

In the larger communities, fewer community groups are active throughout the whole community. Because of this, the waste management staff may have to search for, and initiate the contact with, these groups.

As this type of program requires little direct investment, other than staff time, it can easily be implemented by most municipalities. However, unlike directly-operated municipal diversion programs and direct municipal advertising, municipal staff are required also to adopt an active role in liaison with local businesses and organizations and facilitating their initiatives. While existing staff will need to direct some of their time to this outreach, liaison, and facilitation activity, no additional staff are required.

While an active program can be initiated immediately, the impact of the programs is incremental with time (years), and cannot be directly measured.

The program described above was undertaken by a larger municipality, but can be implemented in any size of community.

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