

Eco-fees for Electronics Products - Almost a Reality

The environmental landscape for the Canadian electronics industry will have a very different look by this time next year, as plans across the country unfold for the recycling of various products and Eco-fees on a variety of electronic products soon become a reality. According to Dave Betts, President and CEO of Electronics Product Stewardship Canada (EPSC), by the end of 2005, "several provinces will have implemented some form of regulated recycling programs for electronics." Betts heads EPSC, the not-for-profit organization that was established in 2003 by sixteen of the leading consumer electronics (CE) and Information Technology (IT) manufacturers. It is working with an array of partners and stakeholders, including the Retail Council of Canada, to design, promote and implement sustainable solutions for Canada's electronic waste.

EPSC's mandate is to create and manage programs for electronic products at the end of their life. EPSC recognizes that individual provinces will deliver programs differently, however its goal is to have common elements included across the country, particularly in the types of products collected and fees established, which would create a harmonized national program.

"The electronics industry must lead the development of stewardship programs to divert items from landfill and to see it recycled properly," outlined Betts, "And to do that, we need to work together with all elements of the industry, from manufacturers to retailers to recyclers, to create a strong program that will be easily understood by consumers." EPSC is ready to manage e-waste programs on behalf of the industry and to work with the provinces as legislation begins to become a reality across

the country. Provincial programs could work within structures, for example municipal or provincial collection programs that already exist, but still have common features across the country. These features would include recycling the same products in the initial phases of the programs - for example printers, computers, laptops, monitors and televisions, with a common fee structure that would cover the cost of handling the collection and recycling of electronics at their end-of-life stage.

Some provinces are further along in the process than others. Electronics Recycling Alberta launched its collection phase in October, 2004. It requires anyone who is a vendor of electronics products to be registered with the Alberta Recycling Management Authority (ARMA), as of October 1, 2004. ARMA plans to begin collecting fees from retailers, manufacturers and other "sellers" of listed electronics in February 2005.

Ontario has released its draft regulation, which formally announced that province's intention to develop an e-waste diversion program. The draft identified over 200 items that could be designated under the program, including cameras, computers, televisions, printers and a wide range of other electronic products - in fact the regulation phases it as "anything using an electric current. The draft regulation was posted for 30 days for public comment. It is now being reviewed before the Minister releases her designation letter that will disclose further details of a program in Ontario. In British Columbia, the province has passed the Recycling Regulation which provides the framework for product stewardship programs. Its intent is to clearly obligate manufacturers, brand owners and first

importers as stewards of the program. The specific schedule for electronics is currently being reviewed.

The Atlantic Provinces are also gearing up towards electronics regulation. They are currently investing in research studies that will help determine Atlantic Canada's capacity for e-waste recycling. Elsewhere in the country, regulations are at varying stages of development. It is clear that with some of the largest provinces at this level of implementation, the others will not be far behind.

Through EPSC, the CE and IT industries are well positioned to represent their membership as legislation continues to be announced. EPSC has accepted the responsibility, on behalf of its members, to develop and implement comprehensive e-waste management programs. It has developed a Recycling Vendor Qualification Program to ensure that electronics recyclers meet and maintain a common standard of performance acceptable to industry. It has researched the costs of collecting and transporting electronics products, so that reasonable and acceptable fees can be assigned to the various products, and that all the pieces necessary to implement sustainable solutions will be in place.

And, EPSC is looking to expand its membership to include all brand owners and first importers. These groups will all be affected by legislation in the various provinces, and EPSC is encouraging them to become part of this strong industry organization that has accepted the challenge to lead electronics stewardship in Canada.

For more information on EPSC and this evolving issue, visit www.epsc.ca

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