

Brief of the Green Coalition concerning the PMGMR

This will be the fifth major hearing on solid waste in the last twelve years: the City of Montreal in 1992, the RIGDIM hearings in 1993, the MUC consultation in 1994, the *Generic Hearings of Quebec* in 1996, and now the CMM hearings in 2003.

The *Green Coalition* is pleased to be a part of these hearings. Our comments are a result of our reflection over the last fifteen years.

Three stream collection makes sense. It was one of the recommendations arising out of the *Generic Hearings of 1996* (p. 170). When you make two collections per week and when you mix food waste with paper you end up with two truck loads of garbage. When you collect food waste in one truck and paper in the other, you end up with two truck loads of resources.

Of very considerable concern, is the timetable for the adoption of three stream collection and the proposal to delay implementation from the mandated 2008 to 2013. The CMM has not built a case as to why such a delay would be necessary, beyond stating that no contracts for collection would be broken and that most contracts now coming for renewal are renewed for the maximum allowed five years. No details are given; no cost benefits analyses are done. When asked whether any study was done to determine the cost of breaking contracts to meet the 2008 deadline, the CMM replies simply: "Non".

Just what are the costs to the municipalities of breaking their contracts, and what benefits would come from meeting the 2008 timetable? What costs will arise from delaying to 2013? For example, with the education and awareness campaign for the collection of table waste taking place in 2006, and the implementation occurring over a seven year period, from 2007 to 2003, it is conceivable that the education and awareness campaigns will have to be repeated a number of times with additional costs being incurred.

Besides, the change from the present system of garbage collection of one pickup of recyclables and two pickups of garbage per week to one of

recyclables, one of organic waste, and one of garbage, is not so much a change in the frequency of collection, or even the type of collection vehicle used, but rather a change in the mix of the content of the collections. Is it not possible for the CMM, the municipalities, and the Transport Companies involved, to look ahead and negotiate some flexibility into the soon to be negotiated contracts to allow for the coming implementation of three stream collection by 2008?

The funds to finance the CMM plan are of primary importance. The municipalities must have the means to begin the process of carrying out these programs, so the changes to bill 102, and the promulgation of bills 102 and 130 need to be made immediately. Funding should be arranged simultaneously with the finalization of the plan. This would also provide funding so that boroughs could begin work on adopting the required municipal regulations.

The original goal was for 50% reduction in 2000. Then the goal was changed to 60% reduction by 2008. Now the CMM would like to extend that to 60% reduction in 2013. What other future extensions might we see? Will the municipalities themselves, who must implement the CMM plan, ask for further extensions? These successive delays are of considerable concern to us.

La Commission sur la gestion des matières résiduelles au Québec recognized (p. 168-169) that organic waste was very problematic:

"...ces matières (organiques) sont la principale source de pollution découlant des pratiques actuelles de mis en décharge."

Moreover,

"Pour les décharges non imperméabilisées, il en résulte un potentiel considérable de contamination des eaux souterraines."

So serious did they consider the problem that their very first recommendation concerning organic waste was that major changes occur by 2003:

"le gouvernement doit interdire la mise en décharge des résidus verts à partir de l'an 2000 et des résidus organiques à partir de l'an 2003;"

The CMM is proposing that the removal of organics from landfills only be completed in 2013, ten years late, and then only with a partial removal of 60%.

The establishment of eco-parks is a welcome idea. Not all waste metal, for example, is accepted in the blue box. Old computers can be disposed of, and hopefully recycled and so on. But what about the materials not included in the list for eco-parks, smaller items such as skis, pet and other household items. Is not the network of resourceries necessary to deal with these kinds of material?

In the Plan of Action 1998-2008, the Quebec Government recognizes the very important role played "aux entreprises d'économie sociale". Speaking of these organizations the Plan says (p. 18):

"Elles représentent une richesse inestimable à la fois pour l'amélioration de l'environnement et de la qualité de la vie, et elles contribueront à la création d'emploi. Ces entreprises doivent occuper une place de choix dans la gestion durable des matières résiduelles."

It is therefore surprising that this is not reflected in the recommendations of the CMM. It is our opinion that the network of resourceries now operating in Quebec become part of the plan for the CMM.. Not only are they auto-financing, but they recycle materials, create employment, train workers, and provide a link into the community which is so important for the acceptance of implementation of plans dealing with waste.

It is fortunate that such a large percentage of citizens support a responsible management of the collection and elimination of solid waste, according to the sample surveys carried out by the CMM. We must keep this good will on the part of the public and build on it. The Green Coalition recommends that as part of the education and awareness program on the part of the CMM, a brief but cogent summary of the problems with our present waste management system and the reasons for it's over-all goal be stated: that the acids in organic and table waste together with the toxic

substances and heavy metals from household hazardous waste create a most serious problem for both the contamination of our air and water and thus serious health problems. That organic waste enclosed in the oxygen deprived environments of landfills creates methane gas which is a serious greenhouse gas and much more potent than carbon dioxide. That citizens oppose living by landfills, and without reduction we are likely to see many more. We may have a mountain of garbage on our north shore blighting the landscape.

The *CMM* need also highlight the many benefits accruing from reduction, reuse and recycling: the number of trees saved because we need not rely on virgin material for paper; the savings in energy and pollution obtained from using recycled materials rather than mining virgin materials from the ground; the restoration of organic materials into our top soil and so on.

On Oct. 22, Diane Andre from the City of Montreal, in reference to collection and the kinds of containers used, spoke of the need to make this aspect of collection of waste and resources as convenient as possible. We concur and add that we need to make the collection within the home or business as convenient as possible as well.

In our minds, the experts at this task are at Bell Canada with their "zero waste" program. In the mid-nineties, the Company placed large recycling bins for paper at strategic locations on their office floors. But then they went a step further. They removed all employees' waste baskets, and replaced them with cleaned and refurbished recycling bins. Now each employee has at their desks a convenient and handy recycling bin. Used paper could be disposed of immediately in a recycling bin and was treated as a resource, not as waste.

We must do the same thing in our homes. We must make recycling as convenient as possible. We must replace our waste baskets with recycling bins and have a recycling bin at our disposal in our dens, our kitchens, our basements or, wherever recyclable waste is generated.

The *Green Coalition* recommends that the *CMM*, as part of its publicity, give examples of how individuals and companies like Bell Canada

have made recycling so convenient. We believe that this is a very necessary part of any waste strategy, and indispensable, if, we are to reach the levels of waste reduction mandated by the Government in its plan for 2003-2008.

We are a culture of waste baskets. We have grown up with waste baskets and view everything which we do not need as waste. A change in mind set is required. Of help, might be the creation of a distinct and attractive set of recycling bins for use in home and office, including containers for table waste, which would signal, visually as well as intellectually, that a change is occurring.

Maybe we suggest that these new containers be marketed as resource bins.

Post script. The Bell Canada resource bin included a very small garbage bin affixed to its side to collect the garbage that is still produced. However, opening the bag is a minor chore compared to disposal in the large opening of the resource bin. The psychological message is clear: recycling is easy and disposal is difficult.

We hope that our homes and businesses will soon be equipped with two or three stream containers, as we now see on some Montreal streets.

It may be necessary, at some point, to charge the householder for the amount of garbage produced, whether by volume or by weight, if we are to meet the targets established by the plan. We won't take recycling seriously, until there is a dollar value attached to the amount of garbage we produce. As the CMM's own research shows, charging for garbage is an effective means of reducing waste sent for disposal and increasing recycling.

Care and sensitivity must be used if charges for garbage are adopted. We must not act coercively. It is our opinion, that the good will of the citizen will prevail if they are given solid reasons why changes are required in the way solid waste is handled. This is why we recommend that the CMM include as a part of its awareness program, problems with the present means of handling waste, and the benefits to be obtained from handling it in another way. It is also why we recommend that the CMM or the municipalities make it easy for the citizen to recycle within the home or

small business, through the promotion of attractive and effective recycling bins. We also recommend that individuals or small business with effective and efficient recycling systems be highlighted in the CMM awareness program to provide us with models as we go through a significant mind change.

It would be very effective, if one of our entertainment or sports hero's were to promote recycling.

Concern has been expressed, and very rightly so, that should a charge for garbage be required, it would unduly effect those with modest incomes. However, there are two different concepts at play here. The first is to make each of us responsible for the garbage we produce. The second is to ensure that each of us has at least a modest income at our disposal. It is our recommendation that any charges for waste disposal be offset by what would be only modest increases in either minimum wage or welfare payments.

Responsibility is the underlying basis for the Government Plan for 2003-2008: corporations take responsibility for the packaging they produce, MRC's take responsibility for the waste produced in their territory. If we as citizen's are to take responsibility for the waste we produce, then we must assume monetary responsibility as well. We each must assume the full cost for the disposal of our garbage. Only then will we be motivated to deal with our waste habits.

When the costs for disposal comes out of general revenue, we, as citizens, are unmotivated to deal with the amount of garbage we produce; when our efforts at recycling have no effect on the amount of we pay for garbage disposal, we have no motivation to recycle.

If increases in the cost of disposing of waste are required, it would be of value to publicize the fact that the cost of collecting and processing waste is, on average, less than \$100, and a relatively modest part of a property tax bill. The homeowner seeing multiple waste collections each week may assume that the costs of waste processing and disposal are much higher. Should a rate hike become necessary, knowledge of the actual cost of garbage disposal would keep the rate hike in perspective.

It is our recommendation (It was also the recommendation of la Commission sur la gestion des matières résiduelles au Québec p. 170) that the municipalities have access to the expertise which would allow them to determine the optimum collection methods based on the kind and quantities of waste and recyclables (including organic waste) to be collected, routes taken, distances from the processing centres etc. It is also our recommendation that scenarios with various collection vehicles be examined, including multi compartment vehicles allowing for the co-collection of waste e.g. garbage and recyclables, or recyclables and organic waste. Guelph, Ontario saved considerable money by adopting a single collection per week, by picking up the recyclables and organic waste in a single, multi-compartment collection vehicle.

It is our recommendation that all waste be stabilized before being landfilled, such as is done in Halifax. Not only would the reduced volume cost less to landfill, but it would lessen or eliminate problems with lixiviate and air pollution.

There is some concern that this would be too expensive. This needs to be further examined and weighed against the long term costs of landfilling. Of the approximate one tonne of waste produced per person per year, 60%, or more could be recycled. This leaves 40% to stabilize and landfill. Assuming a five fold increase in the costs of landfill if stabilization is involved, (a figure put forth during the information sessions) and a cost of disposal of \$40 a tonne, this is an increase in solid waste costs of \$80 per person per year. Using figures from Halifax of less than one half this amount (under \$100 a tonne) for stabilization and disposal, this would mean an increase of less than \$40 per person per year.

The cost of the collection and handling of recyclable and organic material should continue to be taken from general revenues so as not to discourage these kinds of activities.

In conclusion, there are some very positive elements in the PMGMR. However, proposing a ten year time frame is inappropriate and unnecessary. We have been discussing solid waste for the last fifteen years. The direction that the CMM is taking was already recommended during the Generic Hearings in 1996. Do we really need another ten years?

The bulk of organic waste (yard waste) is already separated out and put on the curb and requires no further action on the part of our citizens. We merely need to change our method of collection from one of mixing wastes and getting garbage, to collecting separately and obtaining resources.

In our homes, whether we recycle or not, we are dealing with the same waste material. Recycling is simply a matter of handling it differently, i.e. keeping the different waste streams separate.

Now what we need is the will and imagination to "get the job done". Now what we need is some creativity and enthusiasm. Let us make the waste project "le grand projet" of the next five years.

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