

## **MOE SET TO REQUIRE LONG-TERM WASTE MANAGEMENT PLANS**

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In a draft policy entitled “Policy Statement on Waste Management Planning”, Ontario’s Ministry of the Environment (MOE) is requesting that all waste managers develop a Waste Management Plan.

This policy statement is a result of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005. There, the policy states at section 1.6.8:

Waste management systems need to be provided that are of an appropriate size and type to accommodate present and future requirements, and facilitate, encourage and promote reduction, reuse and recycling objectives.

The policy direction for waste management planning is also set out in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006. This Growth Plan outlines strategies for where and how the Greater Golden Horseshoe region should grow over the next 25 years. The Growth Plan focuses on development of official plan policies and other strategies to support integrated waste management. The requirement for a comprehensive plan with integrated approaches to waste management is set out at section 4.2.4. This section goes on to suggest municipalities consider waste management initiatives within the context of a long-term regional planning and in collaboration with neighbouring municipalities.

The MOE Policy Statement on Waste Management Planning provides specific details on what the comprehensive plan, referred to in the Growth Plan, must contain. This article focuses on the municipal role.

### **Waste Management Plan**

The waste management plan is a document that will outline many aspects of the current waste management system within the municipalities that hold waste management responsibilities, and will require those municipalities to plan for the long-term future. The MOE has stated that the purpose of such a plan is to ensure integrated and sustainable waste management systems.

With this purpose in mind, the ministry has advised that the plan be designed to cover a planning period of 20-25 years. It is necessary for the plan to be designed for long-term use in order to incorporate the following objectives:

- Waste management objectives, including a commitment to meet the provincial target of 60 percent diversion from waste disposal;
- Avoid waste disposal capacity issues by ensuring the necessary resources are committed to meet the needs of Ontario's communities, now and in the future (e.g. Investing in infrastructure, services and systems);
- Ensure waste is managed as close to the source of generation as possible;
- Meet the requirements set out in provincial planning documents, such as the Provincial Policy Statement and Growth Plan, to address the long-term growth and development of communities;
- Be supported by Ontario's communities, through citizen engagement and transparent decision making; and
- Improve access to consistent and comparable municipal data.

The MOE has stated that, for an effective waste management plan, there must be an integrated system with participation from the province, municipalities, private sectors, IC & I sectors, producers and stewards, and the public. The waste management plan designed by the municipality under this draft policy must address the responsibilities of the municipality in this integrated system. These responsibilities have been outlined by the ministry as:

- Planning for and providing direct waste management service to residents and, in some cases, local businesses, including programs for waste diversion and disposal of residual waste;
- Planning for, siting and investing in necessary waste management infrastructure;
- Complying with provincial waste management standards and requirements; and
- Funding and implementing diversion programs under the *Waste Diversion Act*.

### **Basic Principles Observed**

This MOE draft policy includes a guideline to assist municipalities in drafting a waste management plan. All municipalities – even those with a waste management plan – are required to ensure their plans conform to the requirements of this policy statement. The elements within the guideline are considered an essential minimum by the MOE. The MOE has advised that municipalities should add to the plan as is deemed suitable. The MOE has suggested that, when assembling the content under these elements, the basic waste management principles should be kept in mind. These include:

- a) Environmental protection is a shared responsibility;
- b) Integrated waste management systems that reflect local circumstances are in place;

- c) Diversion of materials from final disposal is maximized in consideration of the provincial 60 percent diversion target, including the creation of incentives where appropriate;
- d) Public and private sectors cooperate, where possible, to realize cost savings and maximize efficiencies;
- e) Waste management choices consider economic, social and environmental costs;
- f) Investment in infrastructure is made to accommodate growth;
- g) Waste is managed as close to the source of generation as possible;
- h) Producer responsibility is incorporated into waste reduction and management;
- i) Decision making is open and transparent;
- j) Informed citizens support waste management choices and participate in waste management programs;
- k) Maximum value from waste is recovered from the waste stream; and
- l) Innovative waste management technologies and approaches are incorporated as appropriate to local circumstances to achieve sustainable solutions.

### **Preparing for Future**

In drafting a Waste Management Plan, municipalities will be required to analyze the current state of their waste management system and plan for the future. In doing so, municipalities are expected to be able to address concerns before they arise and better prepare for them.

The MOE has stated in this policy that the Waste Management Plan developed will not be used as a binding document against the municipality, but will be a method by which municipalities can fulfil their role and meet their responsibilities in the greater waste management system.

Most Waste Management Plans, while encouraging waste diversion, will include landfilling as a necessary component. It is likely, for this reason, that many municipalities may have avoided preparing a long-term Waste Management Plan. This policy will force all municipalities (and in turn residents) of Ontario to face the realities of waste management.

Dealing with the reality of waste management planning over a 20-25 year period is one more issue that encourages municipalities to work together to seek efficiencies, while achieving mutually acceptable solutions.