



Saskatchewan Waste Reduction Council

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sent by email

Hon. Nancy Heppner, Minister of Environment
Room 315, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive, Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Re: The "Bad Apples" Campaign: a public awareness initiative to achieve recycling efficiencies

As you know, municipal recycling programs across the province are struggling. Low salvage values, high transport costs and long distances are significant issues. We look forward to some relief from these pressures when the Multi-Material Recycling Program is implemented.

Communities are currently experiencing problems with contamination in recycling bins. This includes recyclables put in the wrong place (i.e. plastic in the paper bin) and non-recyclables / garbage included in the recycling bins. While a small amount of accidental contamination is expected and allowed for, the current levels have reached unacceptable limits, and have resulted in loads being rejected by processors. The community then has to forego the small salvage value, absorb the transport costs, and in addition, pay landfill tipping fees to dispose of the rejected material. This puts further stress on the recycling program and nullifies the efforts of those who dropped off the correct materials in good faith. In some cases, constant contamination has caused processors to stop accepting materials altogether, forcing programs to either shut down or incur significant expense to change their systems.

Contamination in recycling bins is an issue, to some extent, for nearly all programs. Any activity that resulted in less inappropriate material being placed in recycling bins would benefit all the recycling programs in the province.

We propose that your department take on an education campaign aimed at encouraging people to recycle, and to recycle correctly. We've called it the 'Bad Apples' campaign. We believe that widespread public education would help to create norms around doing recycling the right way and would go a long way toward reducing the contamination problem. In the long term, this type of campaign would undoubtedly fall under the purview of the Multi-Material Recycling Program. In the absence of the MMRP, your department is the logical choice for a general campaign of this nature.

This is an urgent request. The pressures on municipal recycling programs are intensifying with increased transportation costs and fluctuating commodity markets. The programs need every edge to survive, and cleaner product will reduce costs for everyone. In addition, such a campaign should have the side effect of increasing recycling in general, which benefits all of us.

The SWRC is willing to assist in this effort in any way we can. Our membership is multi-stakeholder and collectively has vast experience with waste reduction issues. Please feel free to let us know how we can help.

We look forward to your reply,

Bert Weichel, Chairperson
cc. Chuck Lees, Manager, Corporate Policy & Planning Branch, MOE