

Notes for remarks

By

**The Honourable Laurel Broten
Minister of the Environment**

**Waste Diversion Ontario Annual General Meeting
"New directions in waste management in Ontario"**

**Metropolitan Hotel, Toronto
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Check against delivery

Thank you, Gemma, and good morning to all of you. (Minister introduced by WDO Chair Gemma Zecchini.)

First, let me say how appropriate it seems that I should address you in the course of Earth Week. Around the globe, people are honouring the day by doing their part for the environment. Unlike you though, most individuals' efforts to protect the environment are nominal. You, on the other hand, have the potential to affect change. So I salute you - and Happy Earth Week.

I think you're all well aware of the value our government places on Waste Diversion Ontario. You continue to be our key partner in the delivery of an internationally recognized, high quality waste diversion program.

With dedication and ingenuity, WDO is shaping the landscape of our province for the future while helping to create a culture of conservation.

Nous apprécions votre travail et votre dévouement. Les efforts que vous déployez permettent - et c'est beaucoup - de préparer l'avenir de la province et de contribuer à promouvoir une culture d'économie d'énergie.

I am also pleased that we have been able to stabilize funding for WDO. And today, I'd like to take this opportunity to provide you with some insights and much-needed direction to help you fulfill your role.

It was Theodore Roosevelt, speaking at the start of the last century, who said: "I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use our natural resources, but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

Those words still ring true more than 100 years later. And they raise some hard questions: How far have we come? Are we managing our waste effectively? Are we moving in the right direction? And are we meeting expectations with regard to 'extended producer responsibility'?

I think we have to be frank and acknowledge here and now that the answers aren't as good as we'd like - at least not yet. We're not where we need to be.

So where are we heading?

Obviously, we need to increase waste diversion rates in Ontario to deal effectively with the requirements of our growing population.

We need to stop shipping waste to Michigan - that's clear.

And we need to move forward in manageable, incremental stages starting by delivering the most benefit in the quickest way.

The good news is that we are turning the corner, thanks in no small part to Waste Diversion Ontario and all of our partners here today.

We're seeing real gains in waste diversion in communities across the province.

We're all proud of the success of the Blue Box - it's become a symbol of diversion and the collective effort we've undertaken as a society to keep materials out of landfills.

The Blue Box was the first approved program under the Waste Diversion Act. It's incredible to think that by obligating industry stewards to pay municipalities 50 per cent of operating costs, municipalities have received funding totalling 81 million dollars to date.

In 2004, the Blue Box program diverted more than 824,000 tonnes of recyclable materials - a 5.6 per cent increase over 2003 - and achieved a diversion rate of about 55 per cent.

The Blue Box program has also provided more than five million dollars to fund numerous research and development projects.

For example, one project will add 60,000 tonnes of processing capacity for mixed broken glass to help develop new markets

And credit must go to Stewardship Ontario for helping ensure the long-term viability of the Blue Box.

We're seeing many other advances as well. In addition to the Blue Box, we now have material recovery programs that make it possible to capture a wider assortment of materials that would've previously slipped through the cracks.

More and more communities are offering composting programs like the green bin.

Over the last 10 years, the total amount of recyclable materials recovered has increased by 74 per cent.

These are the types of positive developments that we need more of! Many of you here today were instrumental in getting us this far. But now it's time to go the distance. And you can be sure that we will continue to rely on your hard work and expertise as we move forward.

Let me try to give you a better idea of what we have in mind. You will be hearing in greater detail about all of this in the near future, but here is a snap shot.

We will be asking WDO to develop two new programs. First, we will request a new program for household hazardous and special wastes. In short order, I intend to provide a program request letter that gives direction on timing and delivery. But I can tell you that we want to see this program developed in a timely manner.

The program you will develop will help meet the demand for a co-ordinated, province-wide approach to these problematic materials.

Many municipalities have been running HSW programs for years, so some of the infrastructure is already in place. This is a great opportunity to build on the solid groundwork that has been laid.

With the household hazardous and special wastes program, we want WDO to help us address program management options for a wide range of materials. These include paint, household cleaners, fluorescent tubes and batteries and we will consider opportunities for staging in the implementation of the program.

I will ask WDO to include used oil containers and filters in the household hazardous and special waste program. After that, I will ask WDO to cancel further development of the used oil program. The current collection rate of used oil is already about 78 per cent and I believe we can achieve greater successes by focusing our energies and efforts elsewhere.

The second program is one that you've already started work on - it will focus on electronics.

In the immediate, we need to deal with computers, printers and cell phones - basically, the mainstays of our everyday lives! These tools that we can't seem to live without are becoming a major waste management problem we need to solve as soon as possible.

In brief, we need an effective mechanism to keep electronics out of landfills.

WDO's Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment study was very helpful in recommending that we take a staged approach. We are following that advice and moving in stages on the development and implementation of the household special waste and electronics programs to make the process more manageable for WDO and participating industries and stakeholders.

We understand how challenging your work is and the phasing-in of these programs will allow you to focus your efforts on the tasks at hand.

I want you to be able to concentrate on laying solid foundations for successful programs that will divert waste for generations to come.

Turning now to the used tire diversion program, I want to thank WDO and Ontario Tire Stewardship for your commitment to finding innovative solutions to this difficult issue. We have carefully reviewed the options on how to proceed and I have decided to defer the finalization of a used tire program for the immediate future. I would like to spend our collective energies and fixate our immediate attention on the two programs I have already outlined.

I want WDO to be a strong and viable entity for years to come, so with respect to governance, we plan to work closely with WDO to develop a revised structure. Our goal will be to better position WDO to develop the new programs we are seeking.

Our attention to diversion does not end with WDO - we are also developing new and better tools to enable municipalities and industry to divert more waste from disposal. We see some interesting possibilities emerging.

And to minimize the creation of waste in the first place, I intend to push for a review of the national packaging protocol.

Another area where we are determined to make changes for the better is the Environmental Assessment process.

The EA process is troubled - we all know it. It takes too long to approve landfill sites and other projects designed to help us meet our waste management requirements.

EA delays mean more red tape but not necessarily better environmental protection.

We need to be able to say 'Yes' faster to worthy projects, and 'No' equally fast to the projects that are not environmentally responsible or feasible.

I hope to soon announce plans to streamline and speed up the EA process.

It's an exciting time for waste management in Ontario.

Major change is coming and I want to use this opportunity to reaffirm two things: WDO will play a key role in guiding this change. And the Ministry of the Environment and the Ontario government will support you all the way.

Des changements importants se profilent à l'horizon, et je voudrais réaffirmer que, d'une part, Réacheminement des déchets Ontario aura un rôle clé pour aider la province à s'adapter à ces changements et que, d'autre part, le ministère de l'Environnement et le gouvernement de l'Ontario vous appuieront jusqu'au bout.

I know I can count on WDO to continue to work hard and find the innovative waste management solutions Ontario needs for this new century.

Working together, I know that we can continue to make conservation one of the foundations for a healthier and stronger and sustainable Ontario.

Thank you.