

Alberta Environment created Action on Waste in 1991 with the objective of diverting 50 per cent of waste from landfills. The program disbanded in 2000, having met its goals in some waste streams, but failing to do so in others.

While it didn't reach all of its objectives, the umbrella program worked with government departments and municipalities to explore and establish new forms of waste diversion. It also offered \$3 million a year to build infrastructure to support municipal waste diversion programs.

Alberta Environment, through its Pollution Prevention and Conservation Branch, has continued many of the voluntary programs that arose during the Action on Waste days.

As well, three not-for-profit organizations have been created to deal with the diversion of old tires, used beverage containers, and electronics.

Today, Alberta Environment is working with stakeholders to establish new programs for construction and demolition waste, paper-packaging materials, and organics. Through this consultation, it is expected that Alberta Environment will be developing regulations for several major waste streams. Most recycling programs that have been created rely on voluntary participation by citizens and the establishment of such programs by the waste management authority.

Residential waste management, however, is left to individual municipalities, which pay for it through user fees and/or property taxes. Recycling systems are generally initiated and funded locally.

In many municipalities, businesses help cover residential waste and recycling programs through their property taxes, even though businesses generally have to pay private contractors to haul away their refuse.

Although the province does offer a number of waste management initiatives, without a banner program that facilitates projects and educates the public about them, most Albertans have little idea of diversion efforts.

Also, while the province leaves residential waste management up to municipalities, it offers negligible financial support to encourage or initiate new ways of waste diversion.

Alberta is lacking a holistic response to waste management to promote participation, explore, develop and fund new initiatives, and help expand proven methods throughout the province.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce recommends that the Government of Alberta:

1. Resurrect Action on Waste, or create a new program that can act as an umbrella to facilitate residential and corporate waste reduction throughout the province, educate the public about existing waste programs, and raise the profile of new initiatives.
2. Provide municipalities and businesses with incentives to operate waste programs, and encourage them to initiate new methods of recycling and energy generation.
3. Incorporate the 4 R's hierarchy – recycle, reuse, reduce and recover – into future programs.
4. Provide continued support for Alberta businesses' efforts to develop, manufacture, market and distribute innovative and world-class waste minimization management and recycling technologies.

– Submitted by Red Deer Chamber of Commerce