



Local government returns responsibility for discarded products and packaging

Is best solution, says Product Policy Institute

ATHENS, Ga./Dec. 16, 2005/ -- The response to the first unilateral action by a local government in North America to “return all responsibility for the management of product waste” to senior levels of government was applauded by the Athens, Ga.-based Product Policy Institute today.

“Product waste” is all the manufactured goods and packaging, or “made stuff” discarded in our society and which local governments are typically responsible for managing or regulating. Product waste is contrasted with “organic waste,” or “grown stuff,” such as food and yard trimmings.

The local body, Kootenay Boundary Regional District (KBRD) in British Columbia, Canada, wrote provincial Environment Minister, Barry Penner in August. In the letter, KBRD Board chair, Rick Hardie, acknowledged British Columbia’s leadership in the use of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies, but said that KBRD’s goal of achieving “Zero Waste” would be difficult if not impossible to reach unless EPR is extended to a broader range of products. (Letters are posted at www.productpolicy.org/resources)

“The underlying problem,” Hardie said, is “that Regional Districts have been given responsibility for managing the discards of our consumer society without being given adequate authority to do so in a way that doesn’t impact the local taxpayer.”

At their Thursday meeting the KBRD Board heard the Minister’s response: “I agree that product waste is an appropriate definition for the ultimate scope of EPR programs which would leave local governments with the responsibility to manage only materials such as: garden or food waste for composting; organic based waste; and demolition, land clearing and construction refuse,” Minister Penner wrote.

“The Board is very pleased with the Minister’s commitment to expand EPR programs in British Columbia to encompass all product waste,” said Raymond Gaudart, Resource Recovery Coordinator for KBRD. “Over time this commitment will relieve taxpayers of the ever increasing cost of managing consumer discards and will provide an incentive to manufacturers to design their products with recycling in mind. Kootenay Boundary will continue to press the province for timely expansion of EPR programs.”

“This is the start of a new trend we will see much more of,” said Vancouver-based Helen Spiegelman, President of Product Policy Institute. “Municipal recycling and landfilling of products is not only costly to taxpayers; it is welfare for the producers of wasteful products and actually encourages production of more waste.

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Product Policy Institute (www.productpolicy.org) is a nonpartisan research and education organization promoting policies that advance sustainable production, consumption and waste management in North America. PPI is working with local governments to develop policies and programs that conserve resources and reduce local taxes by transferring responsibility for product waste management back to the makers of products and their customers.