PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP:
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED AND
WHERE ARE WE GOING?

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Product Stewardship (PS)

- Concept has been with us for over 30 years
- Responsibility for the appropriate management of a product throughout its life
- Early examples – refillable bottles, aluminum cans
- Today: a range of opinions of what exactly constitutes “product stewardship”…
The Stakeholders

- Designer
- Manufacturer
- Retailer
- Consumer
- Waste Manager
- Government
Product stewardship is a product-centered approach to environmental protection. It calls on those in the product lifecycle—manufacturers, retailers, users, and disposers—to share responsibility for reducing the environmental impacts of products.

Courtesy: USEPA
Today’s products

- Increasingly complex and segmented manufactured products.
- Rapid deployment of new products (and new versions of existing products)….accelerated obsolescence?
And the public’s demands?

- Provision of enhanced diversion programs by municipalities... *but please make them easy to use and don’t raise taxes!*
The *Vicious Circle* vs. the *Virtuous Circle*

- **Vicious Circle**
  - Create your waste…we’ll figure out what to do with it later.
  - We’ll divert it…no matter what it costs!!

- **Virtuous Circle**
  - Enhanced ability to reutilize end of life products at a reasonable cost.
So What Are the Lessons So Far?

● Lesson No.1
  - The technology exists to achieve reuse and recycling objectives.
Lessons So Far (cont.)

- Lesson No. 2a
  - A new legal framework is needed to achieve product stewardship goals:
    - Canada’s current legal framework for PS is fragmented & incomplete.
    - A reliance on voluntary actions leading to weak manufacturer buy in due to competitiveness concerns.
    - A lack of required interaction between the range of waste management stakeholders; designers, manufacturers, consumers, disposal system operators.
Lessons So Far (cont.)

- **Lesson No. 2b**
  - Coordination of public and private sector PS mandates is required:
    - Move away from traditional private sector “produce and sell” mandate.
    - Address fairness/sustainability of simply passing the cost of end of life management to the consumer.
    - Create incentives for novel and progressive designs
    - Address issue of questionable recycling markets.
So What Should Be Done?

1) Level the playing field
   - Establish clear regulatory measures in consultation with Industry.

2) Focus primary stewardship responsibility on producers/manufacturers
   - Learn from other jurisdictions (EU, Japan, S. Korea).
Typical Concerns?

- **Everything is manufactured oversees**
  - Manufacturers respond to market demands.
  - The trend has been established.
- **We are too small of a market to matter**
  - What about our unique requirements for health, safety, environment, etc?
  - Just who is “big enough”?

Yes – there will be transitional issues… but let’s get underway!
In Summary...

- Traditional “consumer bear the cost model” is not sustainable. More waste & more cost.
- The foundation of Product Stewardship needs to be Extended Producer Responsibility.
- New legal frameworks are needed to elevate “EPR” from a sometime policy to an integral element of our economy.
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Questions?