

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF LITTER, GARBAGE, AND SOLID WASTE IN BEAUTIFUL NEWFOUNDLAND

- Resolutions from a Workshop of the Newfoundland Chapter of the Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists

Patrick M. Ryan (1) and Murray H. Colbo (2)

1. Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Science Branch, P.O. Box 5667, St. John's, Nfld. A1C 5X1 Canada
2. Biology Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Nfld. A1C 5V3 Canada

ABSTRACT

The Newfoundland Chapter of the Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists (CSEB) held a workshop on October 29, 1994 at Memorial University to examine the problem and solutions to litter, garbage, and solid waste generated within the province of Newfoundland. The Society hoped to raise awareness of the problem and seek ways to address the issue of making the slogan "Newfoundland Clean and Beautiful" a reality. The registrants discussed and formulated a series of resolutions concerning future directions to better address litter, garbage, and solid waste generation as well as recycling and disposal within the province. The resolutions were subsequently distributed to various government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the press. These resolutions are presented with a consideration of response initiatives developed subsequent to the workshop.

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists (CSEB) is a national, non-profit, registered society of professional biologists which promotes the management of Canadian natural resources based upon sound ecological principals.

In Newfoundland, as elsewhere in North America, a problem has been identified regarding the generation of litter, garbage, and solid waste. The Newfoundland Chapter of the CSEB hoped to raise awareness of the problem and seek ways to address the issue of making the slogan "Newfoundland Clean and Beautiful" a reality.

METHODS

On October 29, 1994, the Newfoundland Chapter of the CSEB held a workshop at Memorial University. This workshop was held to examine the problem and solutions to litter, garbage, and solid waste generated within the province of Newfoundland.

Publicity for the workshop was accounted for by word of mouth, bulletin-board postings, and announcements via radio, television, and newspapers. Sponsorship, in the form of money, facilities, and labour, had been solicited verbally and by mail and obtained from the following agencies: Environment Canada; Newfoundland and Labrador Department of the Environment; Department of Fisheries and Oceans; and Memorial University of Newfoundland.

The registration fee for workshop participants was \$10 for regular CSEB members and students and \$35 for non-members. The registration fee included lunch.

The workshop format was a series of short presentations in the morning by invited speakers dealing with the following topics:

- 1/ The Problem and its Costs;
- 2/ Garbage and Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling;
- 3/ Government and Public Initiatives; and
- 4/ Education.

Speakers were asked to present a basic overview of the status of the subject at that time, the problems as they saw them, and suggestions for the future.

Over lunch, posters and displays related to the workshop were viewed, including those sent by grades 4, 5, and 6 students for a province-wide CSEB anti-litter contest.

In the afternoon, the registrants discussed and formulated resolutions concerning future directions to better address litter, garbage, and solid waste generation as well as recycling and disposal within the province.

Subsequent to the workshop, the CSEB recommendations were sent to provincial and municipal government leaders, educational facilities, environmental groups, and the various forms of the press.

Following are the solutions recommended by the workshop participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The total environmental cost of the problem should be considered and publicised as a financial cost to the public, describing production and post-consumer waste costs.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle should be adopted as an approach but Reduce and Reuse should be emphasized.

Reduce packaging.

- Use recyclable packaging and identify it as recyclable.
- Recycle cardboard.
- Do not use disposable kitchenware.
- Impose penalties for overpackaging by manufacturers.
- Encourage bulk dispensing at service stations of autoproducs such as oil and windshield wash.
- Campaign against overpackaging.

Create incentives to reuse.

- Get cash at store for reusing old shopping bags, boxes.
- Pay for new bag.
- Encourage uniformity in packaging to reduce production and disposal costs.

Support the use of packaging codes for consumer identification and selection of environmentally friendly products.

Start a Reward Heroes (ie. cleanup volunteers) Punish Offenders (ie. overpackagers) campaign and publicise it.

Celebrate small victories in solving the problem of litter, garbage and solid waste.

Start local initiatives.

- Encourage volunteers to emphasize Reduce and Reuse.
- Discover and examine other local strategies such as Victoria Park Recycle and local bottle taxes.

Dump managers should allow people to scavenge safely and at no charge and thus recycle freely.

Encourage financial support for individuals and groups who Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Individuals and groups are the main drivers of cleanup.

Industry and Governments should create favourable tax/business environment to make small scale Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle companies profitable.

Governments should encourage citizens to take automotive wrecks to the dump with no charge.

Governments should develop and publicise their policies for environmentally friendly products.

Provincial Government should consider the creation of an Office of Environmental Auditor General.

Governments and Groups should examine various models across the country and the world for recycling procedures and solutions in small communities and publicise them.

Municipalities should implement credits for waste reduction and cleanup (ie. garbage cleanup = tax or school credit).

Provide resources to schools as part of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle campaign.

Do not tolerate litter on school grounds. School grounds must be litter free as part of the educational process.

Emphasize Reduce, Reuse, Recycle as part of school curriculum and encourage large-scale projects of this nature.

DISCUSSION

A large number of major response initiatives have been developed subsequent to the CSEB workshop. Based largely upon the participation of the Provincial Minister of the Environment and other public leaders in the CSEB workshop, as well as the timing of these initiatives, the CSEB consider that many of these new developments are at least a partial result of the workshop.

Progress in the removal of the problem of litter, garbage, and solid waste in beautiful Newfoundland will be described in detail in other presentations at this 19th Canadian Waste Management Conference. However, highlighted below are a few developments that we feel are especially consistent with the CSEB recommendations.

Recommendations from the workshop were publicized by environmental organizations provincially (Newfoundland and Labrador Environment Network News Vol.6, No. 1, Dec.1994) and Nationally (CSEB Newsletter Vol.51, No.4, Winter 1994).

In January of 1997, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador launched the Green Back-Trash to Cash Program which is a deposit-refund system for beverage containers. This initiative is expected to reduce litter, add to recycling, and create jobs. Similarly, the provincial government is participating in The Canadian Council of Minister's of the Environment (CCME) Pollution Prevention Awards Program which will, starting in 1997, award organizations showing leadership in pollution prevention. Additionally, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has initiated a Newfoundland Solid Waste Management Program to fund capital costs and studies related to waste reduction at incineration or landfill sites.

Although progress has been made in finding solutions to solid waste management in beautiful Newfoundland, many of the CSEB resolutions still need to be implemented. In this regard, consideration must be given to the enormous cost of not completing the task of finding solutions. For example, the Friends and Lobbyists of the Waterford River (FLOW) obtained approximate \$450,000 in cash, another \$100,000 in volunteer time, and considerable in-kind assistance from municipalities and private businesses from 1990 to 1996. These resources were primarily used to remove solid waste from the Waterford River, a small river basin draining into St. John's Harbour.

The above estimate of cleanup cost is conservative as The Waterford Rotary Club had done previous cleanups and there is still more to do. Furniture, water boilers, fridges, wheels etc. were back in the river this year along with hundreds of garbage bags of litter. Accordingly, as stated in the above resolutions, disposal costs must be added to all solid packages and goods at time of sale so that they have a recycling value at the end of their useful life. Those disposal costs must be enough so the value of the waste will ensure the acceptable disposal of all solid items, preferably through recycling. From a litter viewpoint, this is particularly critical for convenience food packages and shopping bags.

Another area requiring emphasis, listed within the workshop resolutions, is the need to have as much conformity of materials as possible in order to enhance recycling. This is particularly critical in areas of low population such as Newfoundland where the volume of any one commodity may not be high enough to provide for recycling efficiency.

Further additional consideration must be given to product labels which should be of a type that is easily removed in order to reduce the need for large amounts of water and/or other solvents to remove them.

We are pleased with the progress that has been made regarding the problem of litter, garbage, and solid waste in beautiful Newfoundland. However, there are many critical issues that still need to be resolved. We trust that this conference will promote further progress.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the participation of the Newfoundland Chapter of the Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists in formulating the workshop resolutions. Sponsorship was provided by Environment Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of the Environment, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Memorial University of Newfoundland. Loretta M. Ryan and Larry W. Coady constructively reviewed the manuscript.

Correct citation:

Ryan, P. M. and M. H. Colbo. 1997. Solutions to the problem of litter, garbage, and solid waste in beautiful Newfoundland - resolutions from a workshop of the Canadian Society of Environmental Biologists. 5 pages in Diskette 1, Session 4.3. Proceedings of the 19th Canadian Waste Management Conference, St. John's, Newfoundland, September 15-18, 1997. Canadian Environment Industry Association and Newfoundland Environmental Industry Association. 4 diskettes.

The home page of Ryan Environmental is located at
<http://www3.nf.sympatico.ca/patrickm.ryan/>