



January 2008 Report: Waste Bytes! Diverting Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment in Ontario

Quick Facts:

- In 2004 approximately 14,586,000 household appliances, information technology equipment, telecommunications equipment, and audio-visual equipment were discarded in Ontario. Only 1,325,000 of these units (9.1%) were collected for reuse or recycling.¹
- The ever-increasing waste stream from electronic goods is referred to as Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). It is estimated that WEEE has been growing at a rate of 3-5% per year; this is three times faster than the average waste stream.
- WEEE often contains a variety of dangerous materials and compounds including heavy metals (lead, cadmium, mercury, and chromium), other hazardous substances (PCBs, CFCs, and brominated flame retardants) and products (batteries, cathode ray tubes, and printed circuit boards).
- Up to 90% of WEEE from jurisdictions without a formal recovery program is currently landfilled, incinerated, or disposed of without pre-treatment.²
- Landfilling of WEEE is dangerous because toxic materials and compounds can leach or evaporate. Uncontrolled landfill fires may lead to toxic emissions including dioxins and furans. Landfilling is also inefficient because space is taken up by highly recyclable and economically valuable materials.
- In 2004 Ontario defined and designated WEEE under the *Waste Diversion Act*. In June 2007 the province formally asked Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) to develop a waste diversion program for WEEE. The current deadline for WDO to present the Program Plan to the Minister of the Environment is March 31 2008.
- Designated Stewards (brand owners, assemblers, and first importers of products) must finance all of the Program costs. These include education and research in addition to diversion.
- The Minister requires Ontario's WEEE diversion Program to include: ambitious collection and diversion targets; programs that are effective and convenient for consumers; strong public education and outreach campaigns; tracking and monitoring; and effective vendor qualification standards and vendor audits.
- Alberta established a WEEE management program in 2004. British Columbia approved a stewardship plan for WEEE in December 2006 and implemented the province-wide "Return-It Electronics" program in August 2007. The Saskatchewan Waste Electronic Equipment Program (SWEEP) came into effect in February 2007.
- The European Union (EU) has been a leader in WEEE management. In 2002, the EU introduced two directives: the *Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive* (WEEE Directive) to address the collection, treatment, and materials recovery of WEEE; and the *Restriction on Hazardous Substances Directive* (RoHS Directive), to ban the use of six hazardous materials.
- A product's life cycle involves a number of phases from cradle to grave: design, production, sale, consumer disposal, collection, re-use, recycling, energy recovery, and final disposal. Responsible waste management must be considered at each of these stages.

Download the Full Report at www.cielap.org

¹ Numbers from a report by CSR, RIS International Ltd., MacViro Consultants Inc. and Jack Mintz & Associates Inc. *Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment Study*. Prepared for Waste Diversion Ontario, 2005 at 74.

URL:

<http://webservices.siriusweblabs.com/dotconnector/files/domain4116/Final%20WEEE%20Study%20Report%20for%20printing%20with%20revisions.pdf>.

² PHA Consulting Associates. *Electronic Waste Recovery Study*. Prepared for Resource Recovery Fund Board, 2006 at ES-2:

URL:

www.epsc.ca/pdfs/atlantic_report.pdf.

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