

Leading to Green Procurement!

by Linda Penrose and Anoushka Fernandes

The Alberta Environment agency manages the use of Alberta's diverse landscapes to sustain a healthy environment, a prosperous economy, and strong communities – while striving to be a leader in addressing climate change and waste management. For this organization “Leading the Way, Working Together, Making a Difference” isn't just a slogan – it's a way of life!

Alberta Environment's staff-run “Office Ecology” Program is a significant way in which the department implements leadership practices in responsible procurement. In 2002, Office Ecology began as informal coffee breaks between some Edmonton-based staff members who wanted to share waste reduction tips between work units. The successes this small, committed group achieved convinced the department's Executive Committee to grant Office Ecology full committee status in 2004. The team comprises members from all departmental branches around the province with a formal budget to undertake special projects each year.

The Office Ecology Team made several advances in helping staff “green” their purchasing practices and procurement behaviours. In 2005, Alberta Environment adopted an official *Green Procurement Policy*

(www3.gov.ab.ca/env/Waste) committing the department to ensure that the procurement of environmentally preferred products and services is supported, even if price differentials increase up to 10 percent.

In keeping with the *Green Procurement Policy*, Alberta Environment also adopted:

- a *Green Procurement Guideline* for Major Electronic Infrastructure, committing the department to purchase equipment that is energy efficient and contains energy-saving features; and
- a *Green Procurement Guideline* for Publications, committing the department to producing promotional paper products using the highest possible amount of recycled and/or post-consumer recycled content.

In 2006, a policy was approved that sought to reduce the department's annual orders of paper-copy phone directories. By promoting various on-line phone directory resources (like Yellow Pages Online), all branches' annual orders of paper-copy directories were either drastically reduced or completely eliminated!

In 2006, team members successfully encouraged staff members to “pledge” their commitment to use re-useable beverage

containers at the office and at home, to raise awareness and reduce the volume of waste from disposable coffee cups.

In 2007, in partnership with a supplier, a system was implemented that tracks monthly expenditures of identified environmentally preferred office supplies against overall departmental spending on office supplies.

Alberta Environment's Office Ecology Team shows that commitment to environmental purchasing makes a difference

In 2008, in partnership with the Government of Alberta's central purchasing agency, Alberta Environment adopted a new standing offer making it easier for staff to purchase office copy paper that is 100 percent post-consumer recycled content.

The Office Ecology team has also successfully promoted itself to external parties. Team members mentor individuals interested in developing similar programs for the environment ministries in British Columbia, Ontario, and Nunavut.

The Office Ecology team continues to welcome opportunities to share their successes and lessons learned with interested organizations. For more information contact office.ecology@gov.ab.ca.

Government of Alberta staff, **Linda Penrose** and **Anoushka Fernandes** are the 2008-09 Office Ecology Co-Chairs.



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More details to come in the November/December issue of *Summit*. Watch for it!