

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY PROJECT – CASE STUDY

Collection and Recycling of Cardboard in Wynyard

Methodology: Mike Solohub, Town Superintendent for Wynyard for forty two year, now retired, and Jerome Karakochuk, public works employee for Wynyard for thirty years, the last fourteen as Town Superintendent, were interviewed by myself. The more subjective parts are from my recollection of the events.

Background: In the mid 1980's legislation was passed forbidding burning at disposal sites. The quantities of cardboard collected by municipal workers were stockpiling at the disposal sites. It was expensive to create new sites and at the same time, the ban on burning garbage was enforced by threats of high fines to councils or, more serious, incarceration of councils. These councils were having an increasingly difficult time persuading the Department of the Environment that the latest blaze at their site was an "act of God".

In 1989: Wynyard town council accepted the recommendation of Superintendent Solohub that cardboard be collected, baled and sent to be recycled. Solohub personally visited the biggest discarders of cardboard, namely the grocery stores, the hardware stores, the lumberyard, the chicken eviscerating plant and other lesser users in the commercial sector. He requested that they flatten their boxes and store them in containers. Public works picked up the cardboard three times a week. The plant often had a pick up four times a week and was restricted to only clean boxes.

Using material from around the shop, Solohub made a cage in which to park the cardboard. It had slots and wire and the sides had pins so they could be removed. For six thousand dollars a one ton truck was purchased at an auction in a neighbouring town. High sides were built on and four feet were added at the back, with a swinging door.

The cardboard was hauled to Tisdale and recycled into egg cartons. One load of a thousand to twelve hundred pounds earned one hundred and fifty dollars. This paid for the trip. As Tisdale became over crowded, the cardboard was hauled to Regina. Quill Transport took the bales on their back haul. A baler with hydraulics which flattens, stacks, packs and wires is now used. Loads are now thirty five thousand pounds.

Council Buy-in: Council bought in to the idea for at least three reasons. Firstly, Superintendent Solohub said the plan would save the town money. He was correct in his prediction. There are fewer trips to the disposal site and the life of the site has been lengthened considerably. Secondly, the idea of recycling or, finding a use for something rather than throwing it away had a strong appeal. Lastly, and not to be ignored, is the fact that the legislation forcing excessive spending on a site every few years or fine and jail terms for non-compliant councils provided a strong motivation to consider new options.

The businesses bought in because as taxpayers they also were interested in town finances. Residents of the community bought in because they were very interested in maintaining

the town's good finances as well as its tidy and well organized appearance. Also, most people had come to believe that recycling is a Good Practice.

Funding: External funding was never requested. The municipality paid for the public works initiative and it had broad support from the community.

Lessons Learned: There are many lessons learned. The public works department have learned to be innovative and to put their time to better use. Council learned that new opportunities do present themselves and that the town staff, along with council support had the ability to bring about significant change. They also learned that what some call the "green" way was possible and, in this case, better than the "old" way. The commercial sector and the public learned that each in their own small way could make a difference and that some recycling is possible for everyone. In fact, people have embraced the idea of recycling even more. Schools have been enthusiastic and have spread the word to the parents. Some businesses collect used tires. Institutions and individuals take newspapers, glass, metal containers, used oil, milk containers (both plastic and waxed) to the town recycle centre. They also take glass and plastic bottles, aluminum cans, juice containers, used paint containers and electronic computer equipment to SARCAN.

Conclusion: The collection and recycling of cardboard in Wynyard, initiated by now retired Superintendent Mike Solohub has proven to be a cornerstone in our attempt to accomplish sustainability.

Respectfully submitted
Sharon Armstrong
Mayor, Town of Wynyard