

## **The Environmental Purchasing Policy**

### **The City of Richmond's Environmental Purchasing Policy**

In order to increase the development and awareness of environmentally sound products and services, City of Richmond staff will review their contracts and tender specifications for goods and services, to ensure that wherever possible and economically feasible, specifications are amended to provide for consideration of environmental characteristics. Consideration may be given to those environmental products that are certified by an independent accredited organization.

The City of Richmond as a whole will endeavour to increase its use of products and services that are more responsible to the environment in the way that they are made, used, transported, stored and packaged and disposed of. It is recognized that analysis is required in order to ensure that the products are made available at competitive prices, and that the environmental benefits provided by a product or service should not significantly affect the intended use of that product or service.

## In Plain English

Like every good news story, the policy addresses the questions of who, what, where, when and why.

**Who** should implement this policy?

The short answer is “everyone”!

**What** actions should be undertaken?

City staff are asked, “wherever possible and economically feasible”, to consider the environmental characteristics of goods and services they may purchase or recommend for purchase. This includes reviewing contracts and tender specifications and revising them to reflect environmental considerations as appropriate.

**Where** does this policy apply?

Again, the short answer is “everywhere!” Staff are asked to add environmental considerations to the way they judge every product or service. That means looking at the way a product is made, used, transported, stored, packaged and disposed of.

The policy recognizes that environmental criteria are only one way in which staff will judge a product or service. Analysis is needed in order to ensure that environmentally responsible products are made available at competitive prices, and that the environmental benefits provided by a product or service do not undermine the overall performance.

**When** does this policy take effect?

Now.

**Why** establish a policy?

An environmental policy is established “in order to increase the development and awareness of environmentally sound products and services.” Environmentally preferable products are often better, serve

longer, save money over the long-term and become less expensive after widespread acceptance. The desired outcome is that the whole organization strives to increase the use of products and services that are more responsible to the environment.

## A Little Background

The City of Richmond Environmental Purchasing Policy is modelled after the groundbreaking Statement of Principle advocated by the Association of Canadian Cities for Environmentally Sound Strategies (ACCESS).

When ACCESS members — senior procurement officials representing major urban areas across Canada — first met in 1989 there were limited, almost non-existent sources and supplies of recycled content products. Members felt that, in order to ensure the continued success of waste reduction and recycling programs, sound procurement policies were needed. The Statement of Principle, now endorsed and/or adopted by over fifty Canadian municipalities, was seen as the starting point toward the development of environmentally sound purchasing strategies.

ACCESS’s approach has proven to be sound. In the last decade the availability of recycled products has increased significantly. The price gap between recycled products and standard stock have narrowed dramatically, and in a number of cases the prices for recycled products are at par or lower than prices for standard stock. Market conditions and factors of supply and demand, not artificial price preferences or premiums, have largely determined pricing.

For a closer look at how ACCESS has revised its “Statement of Principle” over the last decade, please see “Evolution of Environmental Procurement Policies”, Appendix A.