

Waste Reduction and Recovery Program Expansion

*Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger
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Statement to the Legislative Assembly*

Mr. Speaker, reducing consumption and recycling waste products is a way for all of us to help reduce the impact we have on the environment. It means we use fewer natural resources, use less energy to make new products, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save money.

Individually, the people of the Northwest Territories can make positive choices to help reduce their impact on the environment, but they look to government to take initiative in developing programs to recover and recycle products and materials rather than put them into landfills. When given the opportunity, people willingly participate in recycling programs. The Beverage Container Program⁵, with a recovery rate of 81 per cent last year, is a good example of how successful recycling programs can be. At the appropriate time today I will be tabling the Beverage Container Program Annual Report 2007–2008.

During January of 2008 the Department of Environment and Natural Resources developed and distributed a discussion paper on expanding the Waste Reduction and Recovery program. Based on what we heard, ENR is preparing a five-year action plan outlining both short- and long-term goals for the program.

Details will be outlined in the departmental business plan, but it is our intention to add electronics, milk containers, paper and cardboard to the list of products we recover and recycle. Longer term plans envision tires, lead-acid batteries and fuel drums being added to this list.

Recently we have seen various communities across Canada take steps towards limiting the use of single-use retail bags. The GNWT has the same goal. The department will initiate a program aimed at reducing, and eventually eliminating, the use of these bags within two years. As mentioned earlier, details will be outlined in the departmental business plan and will include education, alternatives and environmental levies in this area.

It is clear that waste reduction and recycling is important to the people of the Northwest Territories. Expanding this program will not only help greatly extend the lives of local landfills but will also maintain and improve the quality of our environment.

Thank you.