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EPR Consultation

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Re: Consultation BC Used Oil Management Association

Thank you for the opportunity for consultation regarding the BC Used Oil Management Association stewardship program. The BCUOMA website presently requests consultation regarding the service standards indicated in the linked presentation and the MNP November 2016th “Development of a User Intensity Matrix for the Return Collection Facility Incentive Program” (MNP) report. The Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) is taking this opportunity to provide comments regarding that document along with comments on the existing program.

Within the RDOS, BCUOMA has seen a sharp decline in the number of depots servicing consumers. This reduction in service has created concerns for residents that depend on these depots, increased the number of callers to our phone lines that threaten to release oil to the environment and increased the potential of used oil being placed in local landfills. These changes have undermined education efforts, mainly provided by local governments, by confusing residents where to take used oil.

BCUOMA is the first EPR program in BC to see such a severe reduction in service. The MNP report seeks to entrench and standardize this decline. The RDOS would prefer to see previous service levels be re-established and a clear goal from BCUOMA to incentivise all locations already dealing with used oil to accept DIY used oil. There are inherent efficiencies in keeping used oil in the hands of the private sector rather than building new infrastructure at landfills and bottle depots.

Minimum Standards Creating a Race to the Bottom

A concern of the RDOS is that the Stewardship Agencies of BC 2013 Action Plan minimum standards appears to be used by BCUOMA as service standard targets. The SABC minimums contain serious problems:

- Certain products pose a greater risk to the environment than other materials. Used oils a recognized pollutant in even small quantities;
- A standard number of depots creates a race to the bottom in terms of number of participating locations. The MNP report uses the terms “**may be overserved**” and “**sufficient number of facilities**” indicating a preference to reduce depots as much as possible;
- The SABC standards clearly indicate a minimum standard (worst case scenario) not a description of a goal for stewards to adopt.

With the recent drop of private sector participating depots in our Regional District, the RDOS is concerned that the service standards will lead to reduced number of depots in our communities. The Stewards for batteries and medicines endeavour to increase the number of



depots per community where possible. Other Stewards strive to increase service. This is the first time a Steward has intentionally looked at reducing service to minimum levels.

A Fragile Private Sector Service

As shown by the recent drop in oil prices, the BCUOMA's reliance on incentives creates a fragile depot model when dealing with the private sector. Service by collectors became more difficult as prices dropped.

Decreased service seems also in part to increased recording for the private sector oil change locations and other changes implemented by BCUOMA. The decision in 2017 to increase the reporting requirements for oil change locations seems to be a barrier for some firms. Incentivising all generators of used oil to become depots should be a priority for BCUOMA to increase capture. Increasing, not decreasing, the number of depots will allow for more used oil to stay out of local water ways and landfills.

Since DIY oil is shown as a small part of the overall used oil stream, combining it with oil change locations would optimally increase service levels while not significantly raising costs for these locations.

Without a better incentive and collection program there are no realistic service standards that BCUOMA can guarantee using private sector depots. Depots can drop out at any time. This does not provide for a stable program without local depots run by the public sector.

The loss of the majority of locations accepting used oil in the RDOS has undermined local education efforts. Depots need to be stable for local governments to provide cost effective public education. This public education is rarely subsidized by the Stewards. It is tax money being wasted as paper documents rapidly get out of date due to long term depots suddenly dropping out of the program. The population of the RDOS is among the oldest in BC and paper remains the preferred method of communication for many residents. This year, BCUOMA has not had any significant presence in the south Okanagan educating residents to the loss of depots and where DIY consumers should go.

Several local Landfills in the RDOS have been partners with BCUOMA since the commencement of the program. The RDOS supports working with Stewards as a 'last stop' for consumers but not as the primary option when private sector groups are available. We have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of used oil coming to our depots as private locations leave the program. Any delay from the used oil collector means problems for Staff and residents using these facilities.

BCUOMA stated that as of April 21st, 2017 they are incentivising local governments to build standalone collection facilities with grants of up to \$8000 per depot. Local government landfills are becoming the depots that backstop the service levels indicated in the MNP report.

Disconnect Between Used Oil Stewards and Depots

Unlike some Stewardship programs, such as used tires and medicines, there is a disconnect between the stewards and depots. Many locations that retail oil to the DIY sector do not presently have the facilities to accept used oil. Used oil stewards wish to reduce the cost of the fees they pay to BCUOMA.

Private sector oil change locations do not want additional costs, such as night dumping, downloaded on them when the incentives do not cover these expenses. As a Stewardship group, there should be clear indication in the consultation documents how BCUOMA will continue to work with oil change locations to increase, not decrease, the number of BCUOMA depots across BC.

The MNP document instead shows how BCUOMA could lose all of their private sector depots within the RDOS and meet the targets through local landfills. That goal is apparent when the MNP report using terms such as “may be overserved”. If all local government depots are removed from the MNP report and identified in future reporting, a truer picture of BCUOMA service levels would be shown across BC. With the fragile nature of the private sector depot program and the massive drop in participating depots, local governments are becoming the backbone of BCUOMA service levels.

Local governments have argued that removal of service at landfills may be the only way to incentivise true EPR programs in their communities. The RDOS would prefer to continue a relationship with EPR programs at landfills as a ‘last stop drop’ while the Province of BC ensures that the private sector remains the primary delivery system of Stewardship programs. It does not make sense for residents to drive past several oil change locations, with built in storage of used oil, to deposit used oil at a landfill or bottle depot. DIY oil should be in the hands of the private sector dealing with used oil already.

Precedent to Other EPR Programs

BCUOMA is setting a precedent in terms of reducing service levels to a minimum level. If allowed to minimize service levels, BCUOMA is sending a clear message to other EPR programs to reduce costs rather than provide exemplary service. BCUOMA was once held up as one of the best EPR programs in BC for its number of depots and educational out reach. Setting a path to re-establishing depots should be the priority not minimizing options for a hazardous material.

cc: BC Product Stewardship Council
BC Ministry of Environment