

Cross country “green”

by Melanie Collison

Policy and practice

From low-lying Prince Edward Island’s fear of rising seas, to Ontario’s smog alerts and heat emergencies, to Manitoba’s lessons learned from hydro-related flooding, to the Yukon’s passion for its pristine wilderness, the risks of climate change are alerting citizens and governments all across Canada to the need to cherish our air, water and land. To that end, governments are pursuing green purchasing policies and energy consumption efficiencies to varying degrees, with much focus on office products and equipment, vehicle fleets and buildings.

The federal government defines green procurement as, “the practice of acquiring goods and services that minimize the use of natural resources, the use and production of toxic materials, and emissions of greenhouse gas (GHG) and other air pollutants over a product’s lifecycle.”

The range of stuff government buys is incredibly broad. Generally the marginally higher prices for green products and services are taken in stride, but there are lots of products that are billed as green whose benefits are open to interpretation, and sometimes the small quantity being purchased does not warrant the investment in research to determine how green it is.

Manitoba is consciously committed. “Stimulated by the obligation to move in this direction, we now have a specs and standards person. It’s still early days, but we feel it’s a good thing,” an official says.

New Brunswick and Nova Scotia voice confidence that manufacturers have adapted to a change in sensibilities. In the North, transportation costs and narrow selection are severe limitations, but the commitment to greening government continues nonetheless.

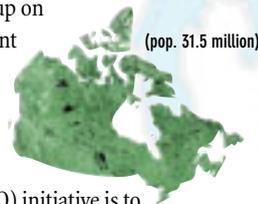
In the accompanying chart, *Summit* looks at where governments stand on formalizing

a green procurement policy, their current practices, and how they conserve energy in managing their vehicle fleets and buildings.

Government of Canada

The Task Group on Green Procurement under the Sustainable Development in Government Operations (SDGO) initiative is to set direction and make greening government happen. Priorities are green environmental management systems, green procurement, sustainable buildings, and guidance to federal departments and agencies (www.greeninggovernment.gc.ca). In 1988, Environment Canada introduced eco-labelling to provide market incentive to manufacturers and suppliers.

Practices: Procurement is somewhat decentralized. To help individuals assess impacts and life cycle costing, a variety of programs are available such as: Energy Star® (www.energystar.gov); Environmental Choice Program (www.environmentalchoice.com/index.html); EnerGuide (<http://www.energuide.nrcan.gc.ca/html/home.html>); and PowerSmart (www.ase.org/powersmart). The Federal House in Order website (www.fhio.gc.ca) offers examples of success stories. By 2010, 75 percent of all federal road-vehicle gasoline purchases will be ethanol blends. Fleets and mileage have been reduced since 1995. Alternative fuel vehicles have been added. The government has committed \$44.2 million over five years to reduce GHG emissions from federal operations, including \$30 million for the purchase of electricity from renewable resources and \$1.2 million for on-site generation demonstration projects.



British Columbia

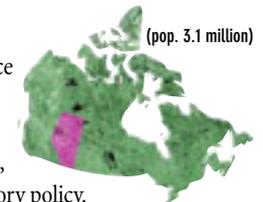
Guidelines are being updated and formalized. The province has not had a concrete green policy, but has been paying attention since the mid '80s. Green practices are routine and include areas with the biggest payoff. Because green benefits are open to interpretation, green commodities are not pursued where the quantity is not large enough to warrant researching how green it is.

Practices: The focus is on recycling materials, including lubricants. Electronic devices – fax, copiers, PCs, printers – meet US federal Energy Star standard. High up-front costs can discourage a purchase, such as using recycled plastic as an alternative to wood. The vehicle fleet includes a substantial number of hybrids and alternative fuel pick-up trucks (some OEM-dedicated, some converted); 15 percent are energy-efficient compact cars. Higher up-front costs are balanced by life cycle savings and spot fuel purchasing. Since 1978, B.C. Buildings Corp. has reduced energy intensity by 50 percent in government buildings. The province provides support and guidelines for educational institutions and hospitals.



Alberta

The province has well-established green practices, but no mandatory policy. Value for taxpayer dollar and longevity of product are considered as important as environment impact. They buy recycled paper and lubricants, rechargeable toner cartridges, recycled plastic garbage bags.



Practices: The government has found green sources for more than 90 percent of its power supply. Standards have been established for environmentally preferable flooring, painting, lighting and fibreboard partitioning. Paint, carpeting and adhesives specs were revised with regard to air quality. Reusable partitions reduce the amount of gypsum board going to landfills. Energy retrofits are part of the government's major commitment to dealing with climate change by reducing GHG emissions. One Eco-Logo certified education and outreach office uses motion detectors that turn lights off; the \$2,400/year savings pays for the investment in fluorescent lights over three years.

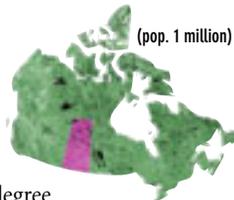
Saskatchewan

There is no specific policy, but the government, as a large property owner, has a high degree of commitment and a history of awareness of environmental impact. It is working on an action plan for procurement, which may include green standards.

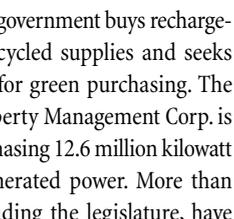
Practices: The government buys rechargeable cartridges, recycled supplies and seeks out opportunities for green purchasing. The Saskatchewan Property Management Corp. is committed to purchasing 12.6 million kilowatt hours of wind-generated power. More than 50 buildings, including the legislature, have been upgraded under a 3-year old energy consumption program. Energy performance requirements for new buildings and major rehabilitation projects are 25 percent better than current Canadian Energy Code standards. Operating costs are down \$300,000/year and GHG emissions are down 3,997,000 kilograms/year due to green light fixtures, high speed drives on ventilation fans, water reduction devices in washrooms, cycling the flow of electricity to car stall plug-ins, and a computer-based building control system which flushes out hot air and brings in cool night air. Modernizing will eventually save \$1,780,000 million per year, including reduced maintenance.

Manitoba

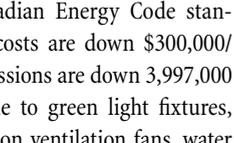
The Environmentally Sensitive Issues Committee of the early '90s matured into the 1998 Sustainable Development Act. It governs



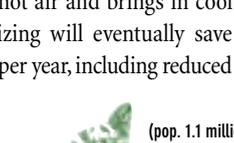
(pop. 1 million)



(pop. 12.1 million)



(pop. 755,000)



(pop. 7.5 million)

social, economic and environmental aspects of development via education, training and awareness; pollution prevention and human health protection; reduction of fossil fuel emissions; and resource conservation. Green procurement standards are drawn from the Environmental Choice Program, ISO 14001, and the Canadian General Standards Board. Departments are required to report.

Practices: The province buys remanufactured toner cartridges, recycled copy paper at 30 percent post-consumer, and green printers. Photocopier defaults are set to double-sided. Courier contracts are assessed for percentage of walkers and cyclists. It is reducing the purchase and use of toxic substances by a minimum of 5 percent; reducing solid waste sent to landfill by 25 percent; and increasing the proportion of green products and services used. Reduction of the number and size of fleet vehicles cut fossil fuel emissions by 5 percent, with more coming from incorporating 10-25 percent ethanol-blend fuels and alternative fuels. By the end of fiscal 2007-08, annual consumption of utilities (natural gas, propane, electricity, water, fuel oil) is to drop at least 15 percent.

Ontario

Tenders valued greater than \$10,000 require reduction, re-use and recycling measures to be incorporated in specs, terms and conditions. Federal Environmental Choice Program standards are mandatory. The provincial commitment is supplemented by an Environment Canada green procurement training course for Ontario staff.

Practices: Internal ministry sources, central common services and corporate vendor of record arrangements ensure compliance with policy. Recycled materials are bought; waste is recycled or composted; packaging materials are reduced; electronic documents are used rather than paper; and water conservation is practiced. The provincial fleet uses newer technology, fewer vehicles and reduces mileage. Vehicles undergo the Drive Clean inspection and maintenance program. Ontario plans to purchase 20 percent of electricity used in buildings from hydro, wind and biomass sources and to do lighting retrofits and water system upgrades. Environmentally conscious design guidelines are used in construction of new buildings. A building profile system assesses waste management, energy use,

indoor air quality, water and resource conservation, and transportation. Building operators are trained. Individuals turn off lamps, computers, copiers, and close blinds to reduce solar heat gain. Large building automated systems are set for maximum conservation; thermostats are raised to counteract smog advisories and heat emergencies.

Quebec

The province has no formal policy for overall purchasing, but green products are routinely purchased such as: recycled paper, toner cartridges and lubricants, two-sided copiers and efficient light bulbs. Through an affiliated agency, the Department of Environment handles waste management and operates recycling programs.

Practices: A plan to buy smaller and hybrid cars will be presented to the new government this fall, once it has established its budget. The Crown Corporation that manages all buildings except schools and hospitals has a green policy that includes reviewing all mechanical components and managing operations to reduce energy use by 10 percent to save \$3.3 billion. New buildings will follow US Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design guidelines (www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED_main.asp).

New Brunswick

An interdepartmental committee on greening government is formalizing policy based on the current practice of actively using green procurement principles. Tenders for office equipment and appliances require Energy Star guidelines where possible.

Practices: The province buys two-sided copying, plain paper faxes and recycled and refurbished toner cartridges. Fluorescent tubes have low mercury content; school cleaning supplies meet strict standards to reduce or eliminate potentially harmful chemicals, nut products and odours.

A major energy retrofit of all major government buildings (office buildings, schools, hospitals and community colleges) has been done as a public-private partnership initiative. Some provincial buildings' heating systems are being converted to natural gas.

Nova Scotia

A widespread commitment to environmental principles has outstripped policy formalized in 1995.

Citizens tidy highways; schools have environmental programs; individual civil servants pursue environmental issues and adopt ideas from other provinces; people pick up their garbage and don't litter the ocean. Purchasers use Energy Star standards. The government focus now is on principles and process.

Practices: The province uses recycled paper products, including cardboard boxes; a silviculture program replaces any felled trees; solid waste is reduced via composting and recycling.

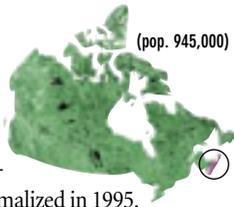
Burned out traffic light lenses are replaced with efficient light-emitting diodes as part of an Atlantic Provinces and New England States initiative. The fleet includes diesel cars and the Department of Energy purchases energy efficient appliances. Several buildings have been retrofitted in partnership with systems manufacturers. New schools or government buildings follow federal guidelines for energy efficiency.

Prince Edward Island

There is no formal policy, but there is a consistent insistence on environmentally friendly products using

independent product specifications. In a mandatory province-wide waste management program, everyone separates all waste at source into compost, recyclable materials and waste, using clear garbage bags and blue recycling boxes. The priority is a realistic conservation agenda to continue over time.

Practices: The province uses two-sided copiers, recycled paper, screen savers, auto shutoff on technology and biodegradable wrapping material. Environmental impact and life cycle costs are evaluated case by case. Leasing equipment downloads disposal costs onto vendors. Despite higher costs, the provincial fleet now has hybrid vehicles. Road clearing and snowplowing vehicles do multiple tasks. Since 1984, the energy management



group has partnered with the private sector to produce efficient heating and cooling scheduling and lighting. A concern about rising sea levels motivates a continued search for efficiencies. Heat for the main government complex is fired by municipal waste, wood biomass and oil. Wind power is being incorporated and hydrogen use is being explored.

Newfoundland and Labrador

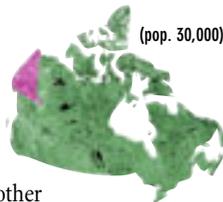
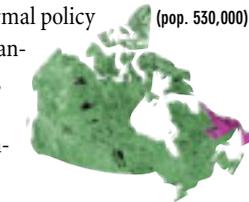
There is no formal policy and no specific management directive, but procurement officers take advantage of available opportunities to buy green.

Practices: The government uses recycled paper and envelopes and rechargeable toner cartridges, and recycles waste paper, glass, cans and water bottles. It explored using hybrid cars but, since the province has no natural gas and propane is expensive, they weren't a practical option.

Yukon

There is no formal policy because everyone is so careful. Tips are gleaned from other jurisdictions. There are well-established recycling programs. The challenge is to determine green values and safety independently – to find a common measurement to compare products.

Practices: The government uses refurbished toner cartridges and Computers for Schools cannibalizes outdated government or school computers or sends them to a recycling facility. Fuel conservation is practised in Whitehorse by picking up household garbage one week, recyclables the next. Hybrid vehicles in the fleet are well received. A separate power company manages the streetlights.



Nunavut

There are no roads, so extreme transportation costs govern practices. Purchasers do everything they can to meet stringent standards, reusing everything as much as possible.

Practices: The Blue Box program includes buying recycled paper and sending shredded paper for recycling. The administration records retrieval system ensures the retention of corporate knowledge via extremely careful paper management – no duplication of papers and books, no discarding, no mess of papers on people's desks. Scarce fresh water is recycled. Garbage is compacted, not burned. Low-sulphur diesel fuel is the main source of power for electricity; heat is captured off diesel manifolds to heat buildings. Gasoline purchases switched this year to low-sulphur. Small, efficient fluorescent light tubes are fitted with electronic ballasts in all schools and other government buildings. Wind and hydro are under consideration for new electricity generation.

Northwest Territories

Established guidelines emphasize the procurement of environmentally responsible or less-harmful products and services, but availability is a problem. Transportation expense limits selection and economic feasibility, especially in regions outside Yellowknife.

Practices: Energy efficient bulbs, low flush toilets and recycled copy paper are used in all government buildings and social service housing. The Arctic Energy Alliance, an independent organization funded by various government departments, is responsible for reducing energy consumption. ♾

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