

CITY CASE PARTNERS IN PROJECT GREEN: MATERIALS EXCHANGE NETWORK RUN BY TORONTO AND REGION CONSERVATION

“Businesses need help to find and connect to waste solutions, since waste isn’t their core business. Often they don’t know where to start. The material exchange program directly addresses this by playing a facilitating role: providing businesses with access to resources and support, and connecting them to solutions tailored to their individual challenges.”⁹⁹

Partners in Project Green¹⁰⁰ is an organization run by Toronto and Region Conservation, which provides a materials exchange network service to partners in the Pearson Eco-Business Zone, Greater Toronto Area, the Region of Peel, the City of Brampton, York Region, and the City of Mississauga. This catchment area includes some 12,000 businesses employing 350,000 workers. Partners in Project Green supports businesses, government entities, institutions, and utilities to extract maximum value from pursuing sustainability in waste management and resource recovery through the Materials Exchange Program,¹⁰¹ established in 2013.

Business-to-Business Exchanges

The Materials Exchange Program facilitates the exchange of materials between organizations and service providers, diverting materials from landfills, lowering disposal and input costs, and maximizing the value and recovery of resources. This is achieved through the Materials Exchange Network,¹⁰² an online platform¹⁰³ and staff support program that works to match and connect organizations looking to sustainably dispose of materials. It is important to note here the significance of reframing ‘waste’ streams as ‘materials.’ Such a reframing can shift perspectives on by-products and reveal the value latent in traditional waste streams.

Businesses and organizations enroll in the Materials Exchange Program voluntarily, at which point Partners in Project Green performs a site visit and materials stream analysis to identify potential exchanges. Project Green staff then work to match organizations who can solve materials challenges, and facilitate the exchange of identified materials. Exchanges are conducted as business transactions, underscoring both the commitment of Project Green to enhance their members’ bottom line, and to reframing waste as a resource.¹⁰⁴ For fiscal year 2014, the Materials Exchange Program logged more than 240 tonnes of materials exchanged between members.¹⁰⁵

The Role of Municipalities

A key feature of the Partners in Project Green Materials Exchange Network is the inter-municipal nature of the partnership. Early in the development of Project Green it became apparent that no single municipality could achieve their sustainability goals without the active participation of their neighbours. The online platform behind the Materials Exchange Network is emblematic, as it is provided by Second Cycle,¹⁰⁶ a successful exchange network operating in the neighbouring province of Québec.

A second critical aspect of the Materials Exchange Network is the active participation of the municipal governments in the program.

Partners in Project Green receives a majority of its core funding from the partnering municipalities, drawing additional funding as needed from granting foundations active in the sustainable development sector. Oversight of Partners in Project Green Materials Exchange Program is also provided by municipalities and participating businesses and organizations. The Waste Management Committee provides oversight for the Materials Exchange Program, and is staffed by members of municipal and provincial governments, as well as management from participating businesses in the Pearson eco-business zone.¹⁰⁷

Partners in Project Green’s membership includes several municipal governments and entities, including the City of Toronto, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Greater Toronto Airports Authority, the Region of Peel, the City of Brampton, York Region, and the City of Mississauga.