



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF
L.D. 1541, “An Act to Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money”

By Mark Draper, Solid Waste Director
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Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources, my name is Mark Draper, and I am the Solid Waste Director for Aroostook Waste Solutions. I am submitting these comments in support of L.D. 1541, “An Act to Support and Improve Municipal Recycling Programs and Save Taxpayer Money”

As was the case during consideration of the previous packaging recycling bill, AWS is generally in favor of the concept put forth in this bill, but we do have a number of questions regarding the implementation of the program. However, the bill directs and allows for municipal input into the development of the program details, and that provision provides us with a level of comfort that questions and concerns will be addressed, as long as those provisions remain intact.

Of a general nature, we believe this program is one way (maybe not the only way) to provide stabilizing income to municipal recycling programs that have struggled with cyclical markets for years. That market uncertainty has, in part, prevented us from expanding the list of materials that we accept for recycling. Although we have seen some recent improvements in the markets for recyclable materials, we instinctively know that there will be another downturn sometime in the future. When that happens, lost revenue has to be made up for through lowered costs or higher fees elsewhere. If the cyclical trend continues, it threatens the viability of recycling programs as property tax payers prioritize other municipal services over recycling. Recycling has generally been considered a municipal service that provides certain environmental benefits;

and while that's true, it ultimately is tied to (and has been long-dependent upon) business forces to generate revenue from the sale of recyclable materials.

So, it is from that standpoint that we look favorably upon L.D. 1541.

Now, for the specific questions and comments.

- **Section 1.H:** The definition of “packaging material” remains confusing; particularly with the description of “material with similar management requirements and similar commodity values.” Perhaps this will become clearer with more discussion and as the details emerge.
- **Section 3.A(1)(b) and elsewhere:** It is appreciated that the bill directs municipal input into the development of the program, plan, documents, and forms. Otherwise, it would be difficult to consider and evaluate all aspects of the bill at this time.
- **Section 9:** Given the myriad of questions and uncertainty, it is essential that municipal participation in the proposed program remains voluntary, as stated in this section.

Ultimately, this bill outlines a complex program that could yield significant benefits to municipal recycling and waste management programs, but which could also potentially collapse under its' own weight. I anticipate significant discussions going forward, and am looking forward to providing AWS's perspective during those discussions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my thoughts.