

The State of Environmental Action within the Business Community of Abbotsford, BC



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Fraser Basin Council is pleased to contribute to this project. This step towards best management practices in sustaining this wonderful part of the world is a new beginning. At the time of this writing, new partnerships are moving forward to deliver business environmental actions with District of Mission, Mission-Abbotsford Recycling, BEPP, Community Futures and the Fraser Valley Regional District.

Thanks everyone!

Marion Robinson
Manager, Fraser Valley
Fraser Basin Council

Executive Summary

Abbotsford, becoming the 4th largest city in British Columbia, is taking steps towards sustainability, including environmental actions in the business sector. To this end the Business Environmental Pledge Program (BEPP) was developed by the BEPP Committee, a community- and business-driven organization. The program is intended to help businesses take environmental actions and to recognize them publicly for doing so. At the time of this survey, there were no available data describing environmental practices within the Abbotsford business community. After working with businesses for two years, the BEPP Committee wished to learn how to refine the delivery of this program.

With support from the Fraser Basin Council, Human Resources Development Canada and Community Futures Development Corporation (South Fraser), the BEPP Committee undertook a survey, intended to help BEPP to a) clarify its role in service delivery; b) provide information to interested bodies; c) effect positive environmental change; and d) continue to promote awareness of BEPP and environmental actions.

Findings

1. The survey shows that the Business Environmental Pledge Program is a valued service and that businesses indeed want help to take environmental actions. Over 50% of respondents indicated that they would consider joining an organization such as BEPP, taking into account their cost and time restrictions.
2. The majority of Abbotsford's business owners, whether or not involved in BEPP, are aware of high-priority environmental concerns such as purity of the local aquifer, airshed and input to storm sewers.
3. Small, independently-owned businesses can benefit the most from BEPP's aid and resources. While most larger businesses follow environmental regulations provided by internal or external agencies, small businesses have no such authority or help to turn to. Those organizations that support or regulate small businesses rarely provide guidance in environmental matters.

However, a concern was raised by many respondents that membership in the program must make minimal demands of time and cost to them, or carry enough benefit to offset these. Small business owners typically work long hours and make little profit in their growing years. BEPP must consider the most effective means of attracting and keeping member businesses.

4. "Information" was frequently cited as an area of need. Respondents report using the local Recycling Hotline and the internet for information about improving their environmental practice. A listserv or an up-to-date webpage with newsletter-type bulletins and links to other resources might be widely used if properly advertised to small businesses and the public.
5. Public recognition, for many a strong factor in the decision to join BEPP, has not been forthcoming as expected. Advertising means value to businesses, and over 70% of BEPP members stated that they do not feel adequately recognized for their efforts or membership. Member advertising can also help increase public and business awareness of BEPP. Promotional methods might include storefront decals; an annual newspaper advertisement in appreciation; and mention in flyers or signs at recycling sites and related to events such as Rivers Day and business excellence awards.

6. As BEPP is an under-resourced, volunteer group considering future directions, questions were asked about the minimal service delivered so far. Several members of BEPP mentioned that they feel little connection with the program, as there has been no noticeable follow-up in calls, visits or literature distribution. Some respondents expressed a need for information or help, while others wanted to feel that they are more than simply members of a token program. There is a general interest in seeing BEPP add to its services and public profile. A call or visit twice a year to assess business needs and interests, answer questions, or offer new services would help keep members in touch. The challenge remains to resource BEPP to enable program delivery.
7. A business opportunity exists to provide low-cost, low-hassle recycling services to businesses. Concerned business owners currently have no option but to take recyclables home or make special trips during business hours. Most respondents were willing to pay a small fee for such a service. The City of Abbotsford might also find the cost-benefit ratio (triple bottom line) worth considering in regard to support for this potential business. Funds from the sales of composted soil and recycled products could go back into the program.
8. Similarly, there is a need in Abbotsford for some type of composting program for restaurants, caterers, hospitals and care homes. The majority of food-producing businesses dispose of their organic waste in the garbage, which then ends up in the landfill. The biggest reasons for not composting on site were (i) lack of time, and (ii) pest control issues. However, the majority of non-composting, food-producing respondents expressed a need and desire for a compost "pick-up" service if efficient and affordable enough.
9. Any government environmental programs offering rebates, discounts or subsidies are of interest to small business. About half of those responding said that they would take advantage of help in locating and applying to such programs. This response suggests a service opportunity for BEPP and its partners.
10. An Eco-Efficiency Centre in Dartmouth, NS, has been established in conjunction with Dalhousie University. As a non-profit, arms-length agency, it offers small and medium-sized businesses information about economic and ecological advantages to making the right environmental choices. The administrator of this program has offered to host visitors from Abbotsford who would like to learn more about the program. (www.dal.ca/eco-burnside)
11. Since this report, new delivery partnerships are taking place with the FVRD, IC&I Programming, the new Mission/Abbotsford Recycling initiative in Mission, and with the Community Futures BEPP-type survey in Mission. These interests will be meeting with the BEPP Committee members in Nov/Dec 2004.

I Introduction

1.1 BEPP

The Business Environmental Pledge Program (BEPP) is a community-based, community-driven volunteer organization, dedicated to helping businesses maintain a healthy environment in an economically sustainable manner, and recognizing them for doing so.

Abbotsford has recently seen several public environmental controversies, including a plan to build a gas-fired electrical generation facility in Sumas, WA (the SE2 initiative), and issues pertaining to the 260 square-kilometer Abbotsford-Sumas Aquifer. This aquifer is used by over 100,000 people in BC and Washington and is affected by land-use activities on both sides of the border.¹

Recognizing the sensitivity of the aquifer, the broad goals of the BEPP Program have been to reduce the amount of waste placed in landfills and the amount of hazardous waste produced by businesses, in order to reduce the potential for contamination from BC's Lower Mainland.

BEPP takes a holistic approach to environmental stewardship and is focused on various areas of environmental impact, including water quality improvement, water conservation, energy conservation, air quality improvement, green purchasing, solid waste management, naturescaping/landscaping with native plants, transportation alternatives, and reduction of toxic and hazardous waste.

Since its inception in 2002, BEPP has approached 1000 small and medium-sized businesses in the Abbotsford area, and worked more closely with 45 businesses, in order to help them reduce negative environmental output and effect positive environmental change.

1.2 Scope and Methodology

At the time of this survey, there were no available data describing environmental practices within the Abbotsford business community. In June, 2004, the BEPP Committee decided to implement this survey to help it a) clarify its role in service delivery; b) provide information to interested bodies; c) effect positive environmental change; and d) continue promoting awareness of BEPP and environmental actions.

The survey is intended to help determine the state of environmental action in the business community, and to facilitate the BEPP committee's decisions by providing:

- insight into business environmental awareness and action;
- information from which to judge how, and how much, BEPP will be utilized within the business community;
- information from which to determine the impact of BEPP on businesses that have already made BEPP pledges.

The survey was designed to assess the current environmental practices of Abbotsford businesses, as well as to determine the impact of BEPP on businesses already involved in the program.

¹ www.gov.bc.ca/wat/aquifers/absumas).

It specifically assesses

- companies' environmental awareness and attitudes,
- companies' environmental policies and practices,
- feedback and evaluation from BEPP members, and
- owners' and managers' input about other possible roles for BEPP in working with their businesses.

The survey was designed with input from the BEPP committee, and was implemented through both face-to-face and telephone interviews with Abbotsford business owners and managers (Appendix A).

1.3 Participant Selection

The BEPP committee initially considered a wider geographic area for the purpose of this survey, but felt that Abbotsford is representative of surrounding communities in terms of environmental concerns. Thus the survey remained within the Abbotsford area. However, because Abbotsford shares environmental concerns with many surrounding communities, these communities would also benefit from information provided by the survey's results.

Between June 17th, 2004 and August 13th, 2004, 78 Abbotsford business owners or managers were contacted in person. All of those contacted participated in this survey. Of the 78 businesses, 29 (37%) were BEPP members, and 49 (63%) were not. (Throughout this report, percentages have been rounded off to the nearest whole number.) To ensure that the environmental needs and outputs of each subgroup of the business community were represented, the respondents were divided by business category—institutional, industrial, and commercial—and geographic location.

For this purpose the researchers divided Abbotsford was divided into six geographic areas of business concentration:

- Sumas Way/Vye Road
- Peardonville Road/Abbotsford Airport
- Abbotsford City Centre
- MacLure Industrial Park
- Clearbrook
- Mount Lehman

Non-BEPP businesses were randomly selected from each of these areas to ensure a broad representation of the Abbotsford business community.

In accordance with assurances made to prospective respondents, business owners and managers, the names of participating businesses do not appear in this report.

LIMITATIONS

Those businesses that agreed to be interviewed for this survey are most likely already making positive environmental contributions. Thus, the results of this study may be positively skewed.

Although a wider sample of businesses would have provided greater statistical validity, cost and time constraints did not allow an increase in the number of participants.

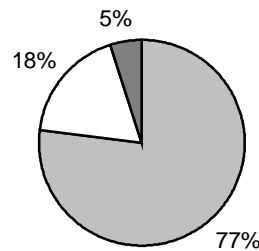
2 Survey Results

2.1 Business Categories and Descriptions

BUSINESS CATEGORY

Of the 78 participating businesses (including home-based businesses),

- 77% are commercial enterprises concerned primarily with sales, service and marketing.
- 8% are industrial enterprises which manufacture or assemble marketable products.
- 5% are either government or non-government institutional organizations.



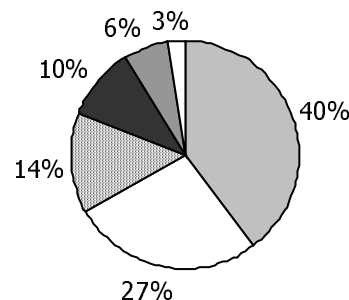
What is the nature of your business?

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Gov't/Institution

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Of 78 businesses surveyed,

- 40% are located in the Abbotsford city centre
- 27% Sumas Way/Vye Road area
- 14% Peardonville/Abbotsford Airport area
- 10% Clearbrook
- 6% Mount Lehman
- 3% MacLure Industrial Park



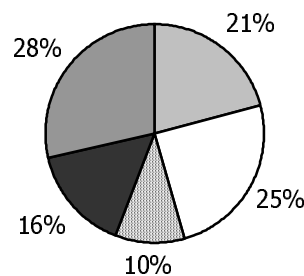
Where is your business located?

- Abbotsford City Centre
- Sumas Way/Vye Road
- Peardonville/Airport
- Clearbrook
- Mt Lehman
- MacLure Industrial Pk

BUSINESS SIZE

- 21% of the participating businesses employ less than five people
- 24% have between 5 and 10 employees
- 10% have between 10 and 20 employees
- 15% have between 20 and 30 employees
- 28% have more than 30 employees

Several respondents are members of chains, with employees across Canada, North America, and/or Europe. For these businesses, only information regarding the Abbotsford branch was requested.



How many people does your company employ?

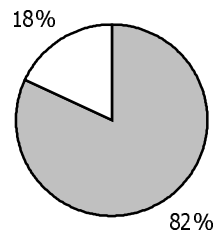
- Fewer than 5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20-30
- More than 30

2.2 Company Environmental Awareness and Attitudes

MEMBERSHIP in an INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION

Business owners were asked if they knew of an industry organization (such as the Better Business Bureau or the Canadian Standards Association) that either regulates, certifies, or suggests best practices for their particular business.

82% were aware of one or more such organizations.

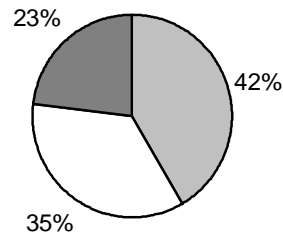


Are you aware of an association that regulates, certifies, or suggests best practices for your

- Yes
- No

The 63 respondents who said "yes" were also asked if that organization made any recommendations for environmental protection.

42% answered "yes", 35% answered "no", and 23% did not know.



If so, do the organization recommend positive environmental actions?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

When asked if having a business environmental policy was important, 94% of all those surveyed answered "yes."

AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

As a means of gauging environmental awareness, business owners/managers were asked three questions related to environmental issues in Abbotsford, in order to determine whether or not environmental awareness can be associated with proactive environmental action:

- a) Are you aware that Abbotsford is on a sensitive aquifer?
- b) Were you involved in learning about or campaigning in the SE2 plan?
- c) Did you know that when storm sewers drain into streams, lakes and rivers, their contents are untreated?

At least 75% of all responding business owners answered "Yes" to all three questions. Members of BEPP scored somewhat higher, although it is not clear whether or how their membership is related to their answers.

2.3 Company Environmental Policy and Practice

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Business owners/managers were asked if they had noticed specific indicators of environmental considerations within the workplace. The purpose of this question was to determine the degree to which employees and/or management considered environmental implications in everyday life.

90% said that at least half of all employees regularly brought bag lunches to work.

86% said that employees brought their own utensils to work, or that reusable utensils were provided for them in the kitchen area.

96% said that lights, computers, photocopiers, air conditioning, heating, equipment etc. were turned off at night, and/or when not in use.

49% were aware of frequent efforts in their workplace to minimize energy and fuel costs of transportation to work (e.g. carpooling, walking, biking, taking direct routes, etc.).

74 (95%) of the 78 respondents were able to name several items that were routinely recycled at their workplace. The most common were paper, cans and bottles. Three specifically mentioned that recycling was not available to the business, and that thus no recycling occurred at the workplace.

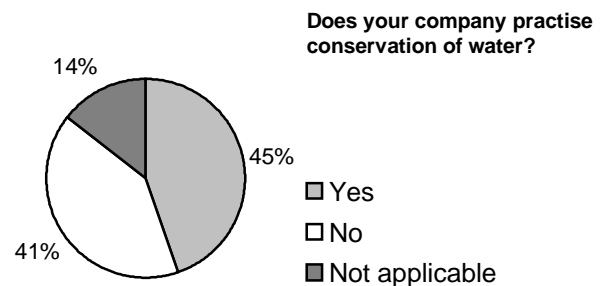
Several respondents mentioned that in order to recycle they had to take recyclables home with them and include them in their blue bags, or make special trips to proper facilities on their own time.

WATER, ENERGY AND RAW MATERIAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Water Conservation

44% could describe some type of water conservation practice within the business.

These practices included monitoring the amount of water used from month to month, limiting dishwasher and laundry usage, reusing water used to clean floors, and installing water-efficient plumbing and taps.



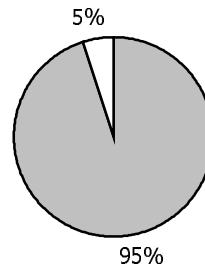
Of the 41% who said that they did not practice any type of water conservation, most said either that the business does not use much water in its operations (e.g. retail store, cinema), or that regulations required sanitary conditions to be maintained with water (e.g. food processing).

Energy Conservation:

96% of respondents knew of efforts to conserve energy at their workplaces.

The most common ways were turning off lights, equipment, heavy machinery, air-conditioning, heat and/or ventilation, either after business hours or when not in use.

Three businesses had assessed their power usage through the BC Hydro PowerSmart program.



Does your company practise energy conservation?

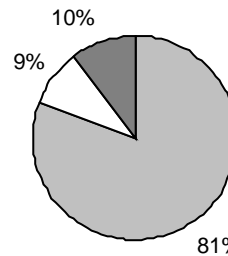
Yes

No

Conservation of Raw Materials:

81% of respondents could name their efforts to conserve raw materials, the most common of which were duplexing paper and buying recycled paper.

11% said that they had no raw materials to recycle.



Does your company conserve raw materials?

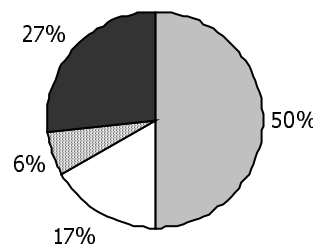
Yes

No

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CLEANING PRODUCTS

56% said that they always or sometimes use environmentally friendly cleaning products; 17% responded that they did not use them.

Most of the other 27% of respondents said that they have cleaning contractors and do not know what they use.



Does your company use environmentally friendly cleaning products?

Yes

No

Sometimes

Don't know

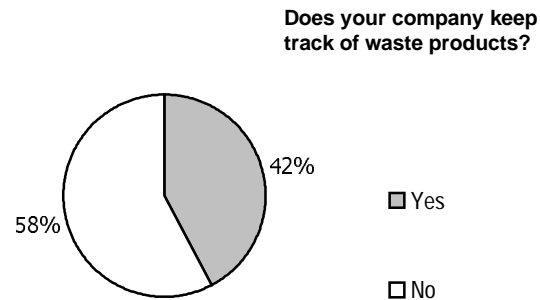
The most common reason given for not using environmentally friendly cleaning products was that some products were more costly or did not perform as well as their "green" equivalents.

WASTE OUTPUT AND DISPOSAL

42% said that they keep track of waste products, either through a company generated waste report, or through the invoices given to them by a garbage hauling service.

57% said that they do not keep track of their waste products.

Companies that did generate waste reports or keep track of waste output in some other way tended to be either industrial companies or larger commercial companies.



Solid Waste: It was difficult to assess waste output, as it was hard to find a standard measurement of waste output (i.e. tonnage, number of bins, number of bags, number of truckloads, liters, etc.).

However, solid waste output varied from one garbage bag per month, to 8 metric tones per month, and obviously depended on the size and nature of the business. Larger industrial businesses tended to yield a higher waste output, but also tended to be more likely to seek alternative uses for scrap raw materials in order to divert material from the bins and cut costs.

Liquid Waste: 87% of respondents did not know how much liquid waste they produced in a month, and 23% considered their liquid waste output to be so small as to be insignificant. Those business owners/managers with the highest awareness of liquid-waste output and disposal methods were auto-wreckers, garages, and oil-change specialists.

Organic Waste: Of the 20 food-handling businesses interviewed that produce organic waste, only 4 (20%) compost it. The others dispose of their organic waste in the garbage (which then goes to the landfill). The biggest reasons for not composting on site were lack of time, and pest control issues. However, the majority of non-composting, food-producing businesses expressed a need and desire for a compost "pick-up" service if efficient and affordable enough.

DIFFICULT ITEMS TO RECYCLE

Business owners/managers were asked to name some of the items they encountered in business that were particularly difficult to recycle. The following are the most common answers:

Styrofoam chips	Fluorescent tube lighting (transportation issues)
Organics (no room or time to compost)	Fax cartridges that retain sensitive information
Dirty cardboard	Used ink and toner (not cartridges, just the liquid and powder)
Industrial paints and paint thinner	Large equipment (i.e. old photocopiers)
Paper cups (can't recycle if dirty)	PCB lighting ballasts
Hair color tubes	TV monitors
Plastics from seat covers (polyurethane)	Paper egg pallets (also called "paper filler")

Drywall and insulation
Computers
Laptop batteries

Class 3 and 5 plastics
Paper (because the city does not provide a
pick-up service for businesses)

2.4 Determining the Role of BEPP for Abbotsford Businesses

BUSINESS INTEREST IN IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

The 49 non-BEPP businesses were also surveyed for their interest in and suggestions about BEPP.

94% of respondents expressed an interest in improving the environmental performance of their businesses. However, many of these affirmations came with concerns about cost and time resources. The four respondents who were not interested in improving environmental performance stated that they felt they were already doing all that could be done at the time of the interview.

USEFUL AID FROM BEPP

Business owners/managers were asked what types of help they felt would be useful from an organization such as BEPP. In addition, those business owners/managers who had the time to do so ranked these services in order of importance to them. The results are as follows:

Public education, awareness and recognition of the environmental commitment of participating Abbotsford businesses. 72% felt that public recognition and advertising would be useful to them. 24% indicated that this would not be useful, some saying that they did not require advertising for a successful business. A few also answered "no" because they wished not to draw attention to their businesses.

Provision of information and resources. 65% felt that information and resources regarding business environmental issues would be useful to them, while 30% did not. The most common reasons were that this service was already available through an internal environmental organization, and that their companies had already effected environmental change and no longer need this type of resource.

Provision of a means of coordinating businesses' environmental efforts in the City of Abbotsford (for example, through a business mentorship program). 58% felt that having either a mentorship program or a biannual seminar that brought businesses together to network would be useful to them. However, many stipulated that the time commitment had to be manageably small. 40% did not feel that this type of service would be useful to them because the time commitment was too great, or because they doubted that their businesses would benefit from mentorship.

Assistance in pursuing public funds. 51% felt that having assistance to research and fill out paperwork for government funding for environmental change would be useful to them. 47% did not feel this type of service would be useful to them, as they did not spend very much on environmental concerns anyway.

Co-ordination with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air so that any questions you have can be answered in an anonymous, confidential manner. 8% felt that this service would be useful to them.

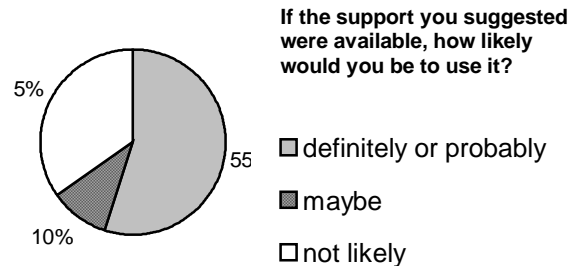
Other services suggested by business owners/managers that they would like to see from BEPP:

- help set up a computer recycling program
- help set up a recyclable pick-up service, including compost material
- police businesses and create legislature to ensure proper disposal practices
- provide clear information regarding what can and can't be dumped at the landfill

LIKELIHOOD OF USING BEPP SUPPORT

The 49 non-BEPP business owners/managers were asked how likely they would be to take advantage of support and services which they had suggested. 55% indicated that they would definitely or probably use this support.

35% indicated that they probably not use BEPP support. These tended to be larger companies with corporate offices outside Abbotsford, who have an internal environmental committee providing the same types of support and recommendations as BEPP.



Reasons which members gave most often for joining were a) to improve environmental health, and b) to cut garbage disposal costs.

The reasons most frequently given for not joining BEPP involved time and financial considerations. As well, some business owners/managers felt that they were already doing as much as possible given the size of their (usually small) businesses.

Some business owners/managers wanted to know more about what BEPP would offer them before stating the likelihood of their joining.

2.5 Feedback From BEPP Members

JOINING BEPP: MOTIVATING FACTORS

The 29 BEPP members were asked about their motivation for joining the program. Respondents who had time also ranked these incentives in order of importance to them. The results are as follows:

Doing the Right Thing for Abbotsford. 90% indicated that doing the right thing for Abbotsford was a factor in joining the program. Seven members said that this was their primary reason.

Being a Good Citizen. 90% responded that this was a factor that led them to join the program. Three members identified it as their primary reason.

The Ability to Satisfy Consumer Demand. 48% said that the ability to satisfy consumer demand had been a factor in their decision to join the program. However, no one listed it as the primary reason.

Financial Gain/Increased Business Efficiency. 28% indicated that the possibility of financial gain or increased business efficiency was a factor in their decision to join the program. Only one respondent mentioned it as the primary reason.

Public Recognition. 69% of the members said that public recognition was a factor that led them to join the program. Of the seven BEPP members who ranked motivating factors in order of importance, four indicated that this was their primary reason for joining.

Respondents offered the following additional reasons for their decisions to join:

- To find creative ways to reuse things
- To gain recognition for environmental commitments made prior to joining BEPP
- To keep up with competitors who had already joined
- For access to a full-time environmental resource and support team

MEETING EXPECTATIONS OF BENEFIT

75% of the 29 BEPP members stated that they felt they had received or accomplished all or most of the results they sought in joining the program. Many business owners/managers who had not achieved all of their hoped-for outcomes said that they had not been able to do so because of the time or costs involved, but that they were continuing to work on these items. Some business owners did not feel that they had received the recognition or information that they had desired from the program.

BEPP SUPPORT AND SERVICES REQUESTED

The 29 BEPP members were asked what types of support or services they would like to see from BEPP in the future. The following suggestions were made and appear in order of most- to least-often requested. An asterisk* indicates that more than half of survey participants requested this service.

- Implementation of a recyclables delivery/pick-up program for Abbotsford businesses (including compost materials) *
- More follow-up with BEPP members*
- Increased promotion of BEPP members*
- A newsletter (electronic or otherwise)
- Help with fine-tuning recycling practices and finding more resources
- Increased promotion of BEPP
- Listing of suggested places to drop-off recyclables / more information regarding how to dispose of unusual items on the BEPP webpage
- Adoption of a more proactive/leadership role for BEPP
- Education of children in the school system
- New initiatives (i.e. battery exchange)

- Waste audits
- BEPP representative on City Council
- Biannual BEPP meetings (for BEPP members)
- Approach businesses from a cost-benefit perspective rather than an environmental perspective
- Increased public education and awareness of Abbotsford's environmental considerations and what Abbotsford businesses are doing about it

3 Discussion

One of the primary reasons for this survey is to aid the BEPP committee in deciding its role and the degree to which it will be utilized within the Abbotsford business community. Within this context, this survey has brought to light the following points.

3.1 Establishing the Need For BEPP in Abbotsford

Results from this study indicate that within Abbotsford there is awareness, willingness and a need to use a service such as BEPP, as supported by the following findings:

- A large majority of Abbotsford business owners/managers demonstrated awareness of Abbotsford's environmental sensitivity by correctly answering the survey's "local environment" questions:
 - Are you aware that Abbotsford is on a sensitive aquifer?
 - Were you involved in learning about or campaigning in the SE2 plan?
 - Did you know that when storm sewers drain into streams, lakes and rivers, their contents are untreated?

At least 75% of business owners answered "Yes" to all three questions; members of BEPP scored somewhat higher, although it is not clear whether or how their membership is related to their answers.

- According to Abbotsford business owners/managers, the majority of industry organizations—those that regulate, certify, or make suggestions as to best practices for businesses—do not make any positive environmental recommendations. Thus, for a large majority of Abbotsford businesses, particularly small businesses, there is no external governing body recommending or overseeing environmental practices.
- An overwhelming majority of Abbotsford business owners/managers involved in this study (94%) indicated that having a business environmental policy was important to them.
- When asked how likely they would be to utilize support and services provided by BEPP, 56% of respondents indicated that they would definitely or probably utilize BEPP support.

However, it is important to note here that almost 60% of non-BEPP business owners/managers stated cost and/or time as obstacles to BEPP membership. Thus, any role that BEPP successfully plays must make minimal demands on the money and time spent by small businesses.

3.2 Determining a Role For BEPP in Abbotsford

Business owners/managers were asked what types of aid an organization such as BEPP could usefully provide. The following services were among the most likely to be used by those business owners/managers interviewed.

- **Public education, awareness and recognition (advertising) of the environmental commitment of participating Abbotsford businesses.** The majority of those asked (72%) felt that recognition and advertising would be useful services.
- **Provision of information and resources.** 65% of all respondents also felt that provision of information and resources would also be a useful service.
- **Coordination of the environmental efforts of participating businesses.** 58% were open to suggestions of either a mentorship program within Abbotsford, or biannual environmental seminars relevant to the majority of Abbotsford businesses (such as those provided by Economic Development Edmonton, which involves presentations regarding development and environmental issues). (Business commitment to this activity, however, would heavily depend on the return on time and costs involved.)
- **Provision of avenues to pursue sources of funding.** 51% of respondents felt that it would be useful to have help to research and fill out paperwork for government funding for positive environmental change.
- **Low-cost, low-hassle pick-up service for recyclables and compost.** In addition to the selection choices on the survey, many Abbotsford business owners made suggestions about what they felt would be a useful role for BEPP in the future. The service most requested by BEPP members and non-members alike was pick-up of all recyclable and compostable material for a small fee. Current services are very selective in the types of recyclables they take (i.e. only cardboard, or only ink cartridges) , and unreliable because the haulers pick up only when the price of various commodities is high—when the prices drop, the service is discontinued until they rise again.

3.3 Making BEPP Work – Feedback From Abbotsford Businesses

In past years it has been difficult for BEPP to achieve a large membership. Part of the aim of the survey is to address this issue as part of helping to promote BEPP.

Several respondents—both BEPP members and non-members—candidly described their business and environmental needs. Suggestions followed a common theme: to attract more members, BEPP needs to offer more obvious benefit. These suggestions are grouped below.

MARKETING A TANGIBLE SERVICE

BEPP provides information, resources and assistance in addition to the site assessment. However, perhaps this service is not concrete enough for business owners/managers who want to know exactly what they are getting for their money. It was difficult for many business owners/managers to understand the actual service that BEPP provides, even after reading the information in the BEPP brochure.

Several BEPP members felt that they had paid a membership fee, and were then given “work” to do (in the form of three pledge items), which left these businesses feeling dissatisfied with the program. One business manager went as far as to say, “it’s not what can we do for BEPP—we paid money for a service—we want to know what BEPP is going to do for us.”

SMALL/INDEPENDENTLY OWNED BUSINESSES NEED HELP

Large chain-businesses such as Safeway and Wal-Mart already implement environmental challenges for themselves, based on recommendations from an internal environmental committee. These businesses tend not to require aid from organizations such as BEPP. BEPP’s help and resources are most likely to benefit Abbotsford’s many small, independently-owned businesses, which would like to pursue positive environmental changes, but which are restricted by either cost or time considerations. These are the businesses that have the fewest resources, but need aid the most. A big challenge for BEPP will be to provide this help without taxing the resources of these businesses.

MAKING BEPP SUSTAINABLE

The majority of businesses have no problem paying a reasonable amount for a tangible service. Many respondents noted that there is no comprehensive and reliable pickup service for recyclables and compostables in Abbotsford. It may be possible for BEPP to develop a service of this type (especially a composting service, as there would be no competition with existing recycling businesses), and charge an affordable service fee. These funds, in addition to money made from composted soil and recycled products, could go back into the program. An expansion of services could be considered at a later date.

4 Sources of Information and Encouragement for BEPP

National

The BEPP program is one of the first of its kind established in Canada. For this reason, finding appropriate informational resources to run a program such as this can be difficult. However, another Canadian program, established at the Eco-Efficiency Centre in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, is running very successfully today.

The Eco-Efficiency Centre is "a not for profit, arms-length agency that brings an important message to small and medium sized businesses (SME's) - that there can be both ecological and economical advantages to making the right environmental choices. The Eco-Efficiency Centre works to improve the efficiency of individual companies on the one hand, while encouraging an ecosystemic perspective, by supporting co-operation between businesses. The Centre focuses on providing information in an integrated fashion on eco-efficiency/pollution prevention, resource conservation and economic efficiency." (www.dal.ca/eco-burnside)

One reason for this program’s success may be the involvement of Dalhousie University’s students and resources in its administration.

Ray Cote, the manager of this program, has offered to host anyone from BEPP who would like to visit and learn more about the program. He can be reached at rcote@mgmt.dal.ca.

Local

In the course of these interviews, a few individuals also offered their time and resources toward BEPP. They are as follows:

- Greg Dickinson, Matsqui Institution: Mr. Dickinson has an extensive understanding of recycling and composting practices in the Lower Mainland, having single-handedly taken responsibility for establishing and maintaining recycling programs at both the William Head and Matsqui Institutions. Mr. Dickinson has offered both his time and expertise to establish a community-run composting and/or recycling program. He can be reached at (604) 870-7700 x 3307.
- Dennis Shepit, Flyte Enterprises: Mr. Shepit is a community-minded businessman who has offered the use of some of his business space in which to store fluorescent bulbs until there are enough to take to Nu-Life recyclers in Aldergrove. Mr. Shepit can be reached at 604-850-8508.
- Rob Adamson, Catra Solutions: Mr. Adamson has offered to pick up old computers from businesses or individuals so that they may be recycled. Mr. Adamson can be reached at 604-852-6971.
- The RCBC Recycle Hotline: The Hotline provides British Columbians with a quick and comprehensive list of ways to reduce hazardous wastes around the home. This useful resource provides information about depots and services in your area, government regulations, environmental organizations, hazardous waste information, an overview of the 3Rs in BC, and more. (www.rcbc.bc.ca/resource/hot.htm 1-800-667-4321)

Appendix A: The BEPP Committee

The Business Environmental Pledge Committee has provided consistent support, in-kind time and expertise for the duration of this project:

- BASF Canada Inc.
- The Abbotsford News
- Community Futures Development Corporation, South Fraser
- Fraser Basin Council
- Mission Abbotsford Recycling
- City of Abbotsford
- City of Abbotsford Environment Department
- City of Abbotsford Council
- District of Mission
- District of Mission Engineering Dept.
- Fraser Valley Regional District Environment Dept.
- Golder Associates Ltd.
- VanCity Savings Credit Union
- Kryolutions Training & Management Services
- W. J. Mouat Secondary School

Appendix B: The Fraser Basin Council

The Fraser Basin Council is a non-profit organization that brings people together to solve difficult sustainability challenges in the Fraser Basin. It serves an area that is the same size as California, contributes 80% to the provincial economy, is home to some 2.7 million people, and is one of the world's largest salmon-producing river systems. The Council's vision for sustainability—*"social well-being supported by a vibrant economy and sustained by a healthy environment"*—is realized through action-oriented cooperative projects that address daunting challenges such as economic diversification in rural communities, regional river management, agricultural nutrient management and flood hazard mitigation.

Fraser Basin Council acts as a conflict resolution agent, an impartial facilitator, a sustainability educator and a catalyst to help people and institutions integrate social, economic and environmental considerations in decision making. The Council's unique Board is comprised of representatives throughout the Basin: all levels of government; First Nations; economic, environmental and social interests; and citizens from all walks of life.

See www.fraserbasin.bc.ca or call the Fraser Valley Regional Manager at 1-604-826-1661.

Appendix C: Community Futures of the South Fraser

Founded in 1992, the Community Futures Development Association of BC was established to promote, coordinate and facilitate community economic development initiatives; to foster a better understanding of the Community Futures program; and, to serve as a catalyst in promoting strong partnerships between key stakeholders involved in the community economic development process.

Community Futures South Fraser is located in Abbotsford, BC, and serves those residing in the Greater Chilliwack and Abbotsford area, from the US border north to the Fraser River.

Community Futures...

- nurtures community economic development and entrepreneurial culture in the greater Chilliwack and Abbotsford area by providing support and services for community well-being.
- provides the practical tools and direction to turn dreams of self-employment into reality, by nurturing entrepreneurial spirit and offering the resources and direction to start, grow, or expand successful businesses.
- is funded by Western Economic Diversification (WD).
- is a not-for-profit, community operated organization consisting of committed volunteers and staff who provide leadership and act as catalysts to improve the social, cultural, and economic well being of rural communities.

For more information call 604-864-5770.

Appendix C: Survey Questions

1. Approximately how many people does your company employ?
2. (a) Many Canadian businesses belong to industry organizations such as the Canadian Standards Association and the Better Business Bureau, which serve to develop standards and codes that enhance public safety, improve quality of life, preserve the environment and facilitate trade. Are you aware of an association such as this that either regulates, certifies, or makes suggestions as to best practices for your particular business?
 - (b) If so, do the recommendations made by this association include positive environmental actions?
3. Would you say that having a business environmental policy is important to you?
4. Within your business, either at a company policy or individual level, have you noticed any of the following environmental considerations?
 - i) Use of bag lunches
 - ii) Use of reusable kitchen utensils as opposed to disposable plates, cups and cutlery
 - iii) Turning off lights/computers/photocopiers/air conditioning/heating/vehicles/heavy machinery etc. when not in use
 - iv) Minimizing energy and fuel costs in transportation practices (i.e. employee carpool, direct routes, minimizing idling, etc.)
 - v) Recycling Efforts: (describe)
5. Does your company practice:
 - (a) Water Conservation?
 - (b) Energy Conservation?
 - (c) Conservation of Raw Materials?
6. Does your business utilize environmentally friendly cleaning products?
7. Does your company keep track of waste products (i.e. generate a waste report, or in another way)?
8. (a) Are you interested in improving the environmental performance of your company?
 - (b) If so, what type of aid do you feel would be of benefit to you in making the transition to environmentally safer practices?
 - i) Provision of information and resources?
 - ii) Provision of avenues to pursue sources of funding
 - iii) Provision of a means of coordinating the environmental efforts of participating businesses in the City of Abbotsford (for example, through a mentorship program)
 - iv) Public education, awareness and recognition of the environmental commitment of participating Abbotsford businesses

- v) Coordination as a liaison with the Ministry of Water Land and Air so that any questions you may have can be answered in an anonymous, confidential manner

(Non-BEPP members ONLY)

- 9. If the type(s) of support you specified above were made available to you to create a healthier environment, how likely would you be to utilize this support?

(BEPP members)

- 10. (a) What motivated you to join BEPP?

- (i) Public recognition
- (ii) The ability to satisfy consumer demand
- (iii) Being a good citizen
- (iv) Financial gain or increased business efficiency
- (v) Doing the right thing for Abbotsford

- (b) Do you feel that you have been able to accomplish these goals through BEPP?

(All)

- 11. Are you aware that Abbotsford is on a sensitive aquifer?
- 12. Were you involved in learning about or campaigning in the SE2 plan?
- 13. Did you know that when storm sewers drain into streams, lakes and rivers, their contents are untreated?