This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 5:53:49 2026 / +0000 GMT

E-waste recycling fees are a necessity

By Michael Scott

Over the past few days, there has been some discussion about the recycling 'fee' in Ontario for some electronic equipment, particularly televisions with screens larger than 29 inches.

Let's consider a few key facts.

To begin, there has been a television recycling 'fee' in this province since Ontario's e-waste program began in April 2009.

Why a ?fee?? Who is charging it? Why are some of them increasing? Why are some of them decreasing? And where does this money go?

Ontario Electronic Stewardship is the organization that was created to manage the recycling of our e-waste under the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Program. E-waste accepted for collection under this program includes much more than just TVs: 44 different items are included, ranging from cell phones, cameras and radios, to computers, televisions and printers.

Just like almost all items recycled in Ontario, the manufacturers and importers of these products now must pay for the actual costs of recycling them. They are charged this fee by Ontario Electronic Stewardship who is responsible for developing and managing the recycling of e-waste.

This money is then used to pay for the costs of picking up, transporting and recycling this material into new raw material sold to manufacturers of a wide range of products.

These are not eco fees. Nor are they eco taxes. They are the cost of recycling these products. Some of these so-called ?fees? are increasing for two simple reasons.

First, the cost of recycling some kinds of e-waste, including large flat-screen TVs, is increasing. We now have the actual costs, because this relatively new program has had a few years of operating experience.

And second, it is the e-product manufacturers who decide whether to pass along either none, some or all of these costs to consumers. Most of them pass along the total costs to consumers.

A more accurate description of these costs would be ?recycling fees,? because they are used to pay for the collecting, transporting, and recycling/processing of old electronics or other electrical products. And it's not correct to call them a tax, since none of the recycling fees go to government ? they are used to cover the costs of recycling.

The e-waste recycling fees in Ontario are being adjusted on May 1 to be based on actual costs and actual sales, a true reflection of market reality. Previously ? as a new program with no historical data to go on ? fees were calculated using estimated sales in the market, estimates of material recovered, and estimates of program and material management costs.

The process to calculate the revised e-waste recycling fees wasn't decided by accident. The consultations involved Ontario Electronic Stewardship, stakeholders like the manufacturers and importers who are responsible for paying the fees, Electronics Product Stewardship Canada, and the Retail Council of Canada.

As of May 1, consumers in Ontario will pay a recycling fee of $39.50 when they buy a new TV with a screen larger than 29 inches. They previously paid $27.60. Comparatively, consumers in Quebec and B.C. pay a TV recycling fee of $42.50 and $31.75 respectively.

However, other recycling fees are going down in Ontario on May 1. This includes portable computers ($1.50, down from $2.30), desktop computers ($3.00, down from $3.40), and floor-standing printers ($173.75, down from $341.20).

In 2012 alone, OES collected 75,702 tonnes of e-waste, which equals the weight of over 25,750 empty Zamboni ice resurfacing machines. This amount is 45 percent more than OES collected in 2011. It also represents 5.61 kg collected per capita, which exceeds the European Union standard of 4 kg/capita.

In closing, let's remember that recycling old electronics keeps toxic substances out of our landfills like lead, cadmium, chromium, mercury and even PCBs found in televisions and computers made before the early 1980s. Computer monitors and televisions contain an average of four pounds (1.8 kg) of lead each. E-waste contains valuable materials like base and precious metals and plastics and glass that can be safely recycled as resource materials to manufacture new products.

Diverting e-waste from our landfills is the right thing. Requiring the producers of these products to now pay the actual cost of recycling their products is the fair thing.

Michael Scott is CEO of Waste Diversion Ontario (www.wdo.ca), which oversees Ontario's recycling programs for electrical and electronic equipment, used tires, Blue Box material, and household hazardous waste. As part of its oversight role, WDO monitors these programs to ensure they are fully funded by the producers of the materials being diverted from our landfills.