

Cabinet Submission

Ministry Document #: 34098

Minister: The Honourable Sandy Santori,
Minister of Management Services

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Title: *Waste Buster* Program

“Within 90 days of being sworn into office, a BC Liberal Government will act to initiate the following commitment:

- Establish a “*Waste Buster*” website for taxpayers to help identify, report and stamp out government waste.”

DECISION REQUESTED: Design and Scope of Program and Website to Reduce Government Waste

BACKGROUND:

The government is committed to increasing the level of accountability to the taxpayers of BC through the identification and prevention of government waste. Government spending that is considered wasteful includes any process or activity that results in the mismanagement or waste of public funds or resources. The scope of any program that targets government waste includes:

- Hidden waste;
- Wasteful practices; and
- Processes for improvement.

Other jurisdictions have initiated programs to identify red tape, government waste and improper government activities (see Appendix A). Benefits of such programs have included:

- Increased efficiency and reduced operating costs;
- Improved performance and service;
- Proven government accountability and increased citizen confidence.

The success of these programs is directly dependent on the commitment of government offices to participate, respond and act.

Initially, *Waste Buster* website will act as a portal through which citizens can communicate directly with government to provide their suggestions, ideas and examples of waste. The website represents to citizens just one of the ways government is acting to improve performance, service and accountability in a way that responds directly to their input.

The key advantage of this website is that it would specifically target government waste. Currently there are several methods whereby citizens can communicate to the government. Most of these methods are primarily communication based and are not specifically designed as government services or programs aimed at soliciting specific information. These include:

- E-mail through the BC government main webpage. This allows the public to send e-mail directly to the Premier's office and all government ministries and programs with webpages.
- E-mail to government employees. Government e-mail addresses are currently being made available through the on-line government directory.
- Enquiry BC. This service allows telephone access to all government employees and programs.
- Paper correspondence. Government addresses are published through the government directory and there are well established administrative functions to deal with correspondence from the public and stakeholder groups.
- E-mail through the Streamlining Website's "Have Your Say" electronic form for suggesting ways to cut red tape and the cost of doing business.

Design of Program Proposal

The primary goals of the *Waste Buster* program are to:

- Identify unwarranted or unnecessary spending of provincial government funds;
- Reduce waste and duplication;
- Identify any improper activities or processes; and
- To take the necessary action to address the issues raised.

The *Waste Buster* program will be harmonised with the:

- Minister of State for Deregulation's "red-tape" cutting and "streamlining" website which will be revamped, and probably renamed, to reflect the mandate and approach to the government's deregulation commitment.; and
- Public Service Employee Relations Commission's (PSERC) internal-to-government Employee Recognition Program (ERP) that provides awards and recognition for employee contributions to improvements in service, operations and the work environment.

The *Waste Buster* website will link directly to the Deregulation website and vice versa. Differences between the two programs will be communicated on both sites. It is anticipated that there could be submissions from both the Deregulation and the *Waste Buster* website that may cross both programs.

The *Waste Buster*, Deregulation and ERP programs will meet as required to review and advise on submission activity, overlap, common processes, etc.

Scope of the Program

It is important the program be workable and complementary to other efforts already underway in ministries. Ministries will need to be committed to work together vertically and horizontally in government for the program to be a success.

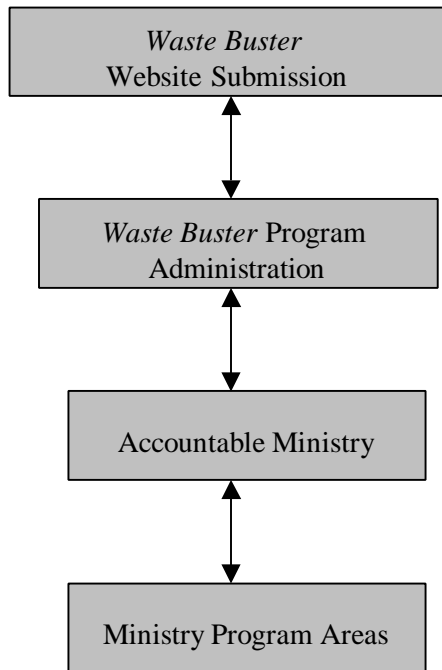
It will be important to:

- Identify a common process for all ministries;
- Address possible impacts to service delivery;
- Work together to:
 - manage emerging issues,
 - inform citizen expectations,
 - communicate effectively,
 - demonstrate commitment and accountability;
- Take appropriate action.

The recommended approach will include the following elements:

- The program will initially include all ministries and will expand to the broader public sector such as Crown corporations, government agencies, boards and commissions, and to harmonize with the deregulation mandate.
- Initially, submissions will be made through a website, with expansion to other media soon after if necessary (e.g. 1-800 or fax).
- Website submissions will by default be anonymous, and the citizen will receive a website-generated reply to their submission.
- Citizens will have the option to request a direct response and voluntarily provide personal information as well as give permission to transfer the submission between ministries if required.
- In order to reduce the required efforts of Ministries, all submissions will be filtered through a central program administrator to eliminate duplications, invalid submissions, and mistaken routing.
- Submissions will then be routed to the accountable ministry for dissemination to the appropriate program area for action and for response back to the citizen through their website. All correspondence to the citizen will be tracked through the *Waste Buster* program office.
- Submissions to the *Waste Buster* website will be tracked using standard records management software.
- Success stories, inventory recommendations, suggestions, responses and results will be posted on the website.

The following diagram shows how a submission would be disseminated to ministries.



Input: Citizen completes and submits suggestions for waste reduction.

Program Administration: Tracks submissions and communications, conducts analysis and reports out progress and accomplishments; identifies duplication, invalid submissions, misdirected submissions, etc. Forwards submissions to appropriate Ministry.

Communication: Dissemination of submission to accountable program area, reports progress and accomplishments to program administrator; responds back to the citizen.

Action: Investigates and implements change where required, provides progress and accomplishments information to Ministry website.

Deliverables

Deliverables of the *Waste Buster* program include:

- A history of reported waste submissions from citizens including the progress of accountable government ministries;
- Monthly or quarterly reports, analysis and measurement;
- Communication of positive changes directly brought about by this initiative.

FISCAL MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS:

Cost estimates to maintain the *Waste Buster* Program are based on similar programs in the BC Government as well as other jurisdictions. They include:

The BC Government's **Employee Recognition Program (ERP)** is a leader in the field: It has won international awards and it communicates its results and information not only internally, but also to organisations across Canada, North America and overseas. With:

- approximately 600 submissions received per year; almost all submissions are valid, (i.e. resulted in or supported change);
- annual operating cost is \$538,950.00;
- during 1996-98 return on investment 26:1 for an annual savings of \$14,000,000.00;
- to date estimates average an annual savings of \$6,800,000.00;
- office consisting of 1 director (part-time), 1 program administrator (full-time);
- costs to ministries varied; approximately 20% of 1 staff was used on a yearly basis.

- Ontario Red Tape Commission** (submissions by website, mail, or phone). With:
- 2000 submissions received in the first two weeks of the program; 95% were valid (resulted in or supported change);
 - annual operating budget of \$1,600,000.00; don't measure return on investment but eliminated more than 1,700 unnecessary regulations as part of the program;
 - office is made up of the following full-time staff: 1 Director, 2 senior policy analysts, 3 policy analysts, 1 legal advisor, 1 communications manager, 1 program administration resource.

(Refer to Appendix B for more information.)

Based on similar programs, it is estimated the cost of the *Waste Buster* program would be:

Cost:	Program Staffing: (salary and benefits)	1 full-time administrator*	\$60,000.00
		1 part-time Director**	32,000.00
	Technical:	Technically develop website using standard templates	10,000.00
		Technically maintain website (servers)	6,000.00
Total:			\$108,000.00

*The full-time administrator would consist of re-allocating an already existing full-time staff.

**The function of the part-time (1/3) Director would be issues management and program responsibility and would be assigned to already existing staff. Other costs incurred by Ministries will be covered within existing budgets.

Should the program generate a large response rate during the first few weeks of the website launch, it is anticipated that additional help would be required for approximately 4-6 weeks.

LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are both legal and privacy issues to be considered which include:

- Government is not permitted to track personal privacy issues in a database (name, telephone, address, etc);
- FOIPP Act prevents the disclosure of personal information except in certain limited circumstances;
- Citizen permission is required to transfer personal information from one ministry to another;
- Individual government employees may be targeted.

In order to manage these issues we will consult with the Freedom of Information Privacy Commission and work closely with the Ministry of Management Services branch responsible for privacy. Submissions will be handled in the same manner as paper correspondence.

Other Implications

Other potential issues to consider are:

- The website may not always be used in “good faith” by the taxpayers;
- Employee/BCGEU and other government employees may perceive the website as a judgement on their work;
- Ministries may have varying abilities and capacities to take action on valid submissions while juggling change and other government and ministry priorities;
- Governments will be obligated to respond and investigate all submissions.
- Government employees may fear reprisals for ‘whistle blowing.’

OPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS:

There are three options:

1. Status Quo. Use existing services provided through the government main webpage and/or e-mail services to government employees.
2. Staged Implementation. Develop *Waste Buster*'s website prior to August 15 and initiate a staged development of administrative and program functions for the program.
3. Implement full *Waste Buster* program as outlined in submission by August 15, 2001.

CONSULTATIONS:

The following inter-ministry consultations were held:

- Ministry of Competition, Science & Enterprise
- Minister of State for Deregulation
- Ministry of Advanced Education:
 - Communications
- Ministry of Attorney General:
 - Legal Services
- Ministry of Management Services:
 - Corporate Privacy and Information Access
 - Information Technology Services Division
 - BC Internet Services
 - Public Service Employee Relations Commission (ERP)
- Public Affairs Bureau

RECOMMENDED DECISION

Option 3.

The Honourable Sandy Santori
Minister of Management Services

Appendix A
Fact Sheet – Other Jurisdictions

Ref: 34098

Fast Facts

- 75% of all British Columbians between the ages of 18 and 65 are connected to the Internet through school, work or home.
- Province of Ontario – introduced The Government Efficiency Act, 2001, carrying out its promise in April Speech from the Throne to streamline government and remove barriers to jobs, investment and growth.
- Auditor of Public Accounts of the State of Nebraska has estimated that 10% of waste claims are founded.
- In Washington State, the 1999 Legislature significantly enhanced protection of employee whistleblowers under the law against discrimination.

What are other jurisdictions doing about government waste?

Other Jurisdictions	Program Description
Canadian Federal Government	No direct program.
Alberta	No direct program.
Saskatchewan	No direct program.
Manitoba http://www.premierspipeline.gov.mb.ca/	Pipeline to the Premier – email the Premier directly with any concerns.
Quebec	No program.
Ontario Red Tape Commission www.redtape.gov.on.ca	This site provides a fully interactive environment for submitting information. Addresses, phone, fax and email are also provided as points of contact. Page indicates that all submissions will be acknowledged, but does not indicate in what timeframe or in what form.
Nova Scotia www.gov.ns.ca/cutredtape/tor_part1/html	Red Tape Reduction Initiative to help create a regulatory business environment that promotes economic prosperity.
USA – Washington State www.sao.wa.gov/Whistleblower/AbouttheProgram/wbform.htm	An offline form for reporting government waste and statistics and online reports on complaints and outcomes.
USA - California State www.bsa.ca.gov/bsa/hotline.html	A guide site to the state Whistleblower 1-800 hotline.
USA - Oregon State www.sos.state.or.us/audits/fraud/fraud.htm	A guide site to Whistleblower hotline.
USA - Office of the House Majority Leader/Freedom House	Waste Watch News/Waste-O-Meter Http://freedom.house.gov/wastewatch/wasteometer.asp Http://freedom.house.gov/results/releases/pr000404.asp
Private Organizations	Program Description
USA - Tax Payers for Common Sense - http://www.taxpayer.net/	Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS) is an independent voice for American taxpayers. TCS is dedicated to cutting wasteful government spending and subsidies in order to achieve a responsible and efficient government that lives within its means.
USA - Citizens Against Government Waste - http://www.cagw.org/	CAGW is a private, non-partisan, non-profit organisation representing more than one million members and supporters nation-wide. CAGW's mission is to eliminate the waste, mismanagement, and inefficiency in the federal government.
USA - Oregon Watchdog/Tax Payer Association of Oregon http://www.oregonwatchdog.com/set-waste.htm	Restore taxpayer influence over the legislative and election process by recruiting 100 taxpayers in every house district. Fund a full-time taxpayer lobbyist to keep our legislators accountable, and maintain a daily taxpayer news website to fight media bias.
USA – Government Accountability Project www.whistleblower.org/	Serves as general information site on Whistle blowing in USA.
Taxpayers League Foundation www.taxpayersleague.org/govwaste.htm	This site provides an online form for reporting government waste in either Canada or the US.
USA - Project on Government Oversight www.pogo.org/	An overview site on government spending in US.

Appendix B
Similar Programs in the BC Government

The BC Government's **Employee Recognition Program (ERP)** is a leader in the field: It has won international awards and it communicates its results and information not only internally, but also to organisations across Canada, North America and overseas.

- Annual operating cost is \$538,950.00.
- Return on investment is 26:1 from 1996-98, equating to an average annual savings of \$6,800,000.00.
- Submissions can take from 1-9 months to review and approve
- Office consists of 1 director (part-time), 1 program administrator (fulltime)
- Almost all submissions are valid, i.e. meet the submission criteria
- Use various outreach mechanisms (i.e. website, internal ministry communications, distribution lists, etc.)

The *Waste Buster* website will link directly to the Deregulation website and vice versa. Differences between the two programs will be communicated on both sites. It is anticipated that there could be submissions from both the *Waste Buster* and Deregulation websites that may cross both programs.

As the internal ERP is already well advertised and impact to the program is estimated to be very low, a link will not be provided on the *Waste Buster* website. Should the *Waste Buster* website receive a submission from a BC government employee that is an idea rather than a complaint, it would automatically be forwarded to the ERP so that it can be awarded should the proposal be adopted.

The Deregulation Office *Waste Buster* and ERP programs will meet monthly or as required to review and advise on submission activity, overlap, common processes, etc.

Similar Programs in Other Jurisdictions

Ontario Red Tape Commission (submissions by letter, phone or website)

- 2000 submissions in the first two weeks, 95% were valid (resulted in or supported change)
- Form letter or email response within 14 days, all communications from the program office
- Annual operating cost of \$1,600,000.00
- Don't measure return on investment
- Office is made up of the following full-time staff: 1 Director, 2 senior policy analysts, 3 policy analysts, 1 legal advisor, 1 communications manager, 1 program administration resource
- A change can take place in 1 phone call or over a 1 year period

Ontario Poll: Citizens' Suggestions for Improvement: 1998 (*Canadian Government Executive, Issue 3, 2001*)

Reduce red tape	78%
Reduce waiting	77%
Simplify forms and documents	70%
Easier to get information	70%
Create a one-stop centre	69%
Improve staff courtesy	63%
Extend office hours	63%
More decision power to staff	61%
Reduce paperwork	59%
Service by computer, Internet	51%

*“Since 1995, the Ontario government has:
Helped more than 170 businesses and individuals with their red tape problems;
Passed 13 red tape reduction bills;
Repealed more than 50 outdated Acts;*

*Amended more than 200 Acts;
Eliminated more the 1,700 unnecessary regulations.”*

“What we do to cut red tape improves customer services, and what others do to improve customer services, ends up cutting red tape ... Either way, the people of Ontario obtain the same result: better government.”

