



2009 | Waste Management

City of Victoriaville

Québec

Population: 64,000



Journée Normand-Maurice

Summary

Since 1998, the youth organization Groupe Solidarité Jeunesse and the City of Victoriaville have organized an annual environmental awareness campaign to raise funds for humanitarian missions.

The campaign culminates each October in the Journée Normand-Maurice — a one-day door-to-door collection of household hazardous waste (HHW) by local youth volunteers. The number of participating municipalities is on the rise: from one in 1998, to six in 2006, to 20 in 2008. The 2008 event diverted a total of 44,687 kilograms of HHW from landfills, resulting in direct savings of \$3,828.34 in landfill costs. The project also encourages environmental awareness among young people and the general population, and develops a sense of community responsibility towards the environment.

Background

Halfway between Montréal and Québec City, Victoriaville is regarded as the capital of the Bois-Francs region, in the RCM of Arthabaska. With a population of 64,000 in 24 municipalities, the region once famous for forestry now depends on agriculture and industry. One of Québec's pioneers in curbside recycling, Victoriaville has been providing a three-stream waste collection service since 1996 and has already reached the 60 per cent recycling target established by the Quebec Residual Materials Management Policy.

Named for Normand Maurice — Québec's "father of recovery and recycling" and the founder of Victoriaville's Centre de formation en entreprise et récupération (CFER) — the project is aimed at reducing the amount of HHW going to landfill through curbside collection; a disposal method that poses both environmental and public health risks. By establishing an annual HHW collection, Victoriaville wanted to reduce the harmful effects of landfills (such as soil, water and air contamination) and also to educate residents through a related awareness and information campaign. By joining forces with Groupe Solidarité Jeunesse, the city hoped to also develop a culture of community initiative and social responsibility by allowing the youth participants to raise funds for humanitarian projects in Haiti and Nicaragua.

Project Development

Before the Journée Normand-Maurice was established, Victoriaville residents had limited access to proper HHW disposal facilities. In 1997, Groupe Solidarité Jeunesse proposed a door-to-door collection that would recover twice the amount of HHW. The first collection took place that same year in the Arthabaska sector of Victoriaville and was expanded in 1998 to the entire municipality.

In 2006, neighbouring municipalities were invited to take part and five municipalities joined Victoriaville in the annual collection. In 2008, the Société de développement durable d'Arthabaska (SDDA, now Gesterra) took part in the awareness campaign and 20 municipalities participated in the Journée Normand-Maurice.

School-age youth are in charge of planning and coordination for the event, and are encouraged to take part through classroom visits by Groupe Solidarité Jeunesse. Two weeks before the Journée Normand-Maurice, the youth volunteers hand out information to residents in participating municipalities, and then conduct the door-to-door collection on event day.

The participating municipalities fund the disposal of the HHW collected, while Peintures Récupérées du Québec Inc. oversees operations and works with a specialized firm that assists the volunteer team in sorting the waste collected and in obtaining the required provincial authorizations. Disposal costs depend on the amount of waste collected.

Project Implementation

The City of Victoriaville budgets \$10,000 annually to help Groupe Solidarité Jeunesse plan the event, and an additional \$25,000 for HHW disposal.

The initiative falls under the framework of the MRC's Action Plan for Waste Management, established in 1996 with a zero landfill objective. With its three-stream waste collection system and an enviable 60 per cent waste diversion rate, Victoriaville is clearly on the right path. "Very few cities in Québec meet their target," declared Roger Richard, mayor of Victoriaville, in an interview with *Le Devoir* on March 28, 2009. "The problem is that they always wait until the last minute until they are obliged by law. But people do not become recycling or composting enthusiasts overnight [...]. They must integrate these practices into their daily lives."

Mr. Richard's view echoes the principles of Normand Maurice — a visionary teacher who was at the forefront of sustainable development in the region. As early as 1975, he observed that "recycling relies on habit" and established the first selective waste collection in Victoriaville, using paper recycling as a way to create awareness of reusable resources. The Journée Normand-Maurice builds on this foundation by rallying various players around the same cause. Youth participation and engagement is essential: their involvement in the project encourages them to become active, contributing members of a community that is connected and environmentally aware.

Above and beyond the volunteer involvement and educational aspects, the Journée Normand-Maurice is a win-win situation for everyone involved. The municipality receives help with the HHW collection in exchange for a financial contribution that, in turn, supports the youth volunteers' projects, thereby encouraging their continued interest in the annual event.

Another advantage to the annual event is ease of implementation. Over the years, Groupe Solidarité Jeunesse has developed a "turnkey" project plan, available on request to other municipalities, and offers advice and support to those wishing to implement similar projects.

The Municipality of Sainte-Thérèse, north of Montreal, recently requested advice on conducting a door-to-door HHW collection. Here are the key steps recommended by the Journée Normand-Maurice organizers:

- Choose a responsible and reliable project coordinator.
- Collaborate with a youth organization willing to conduct a door-to-door HHW collection in return for a financial contribution to support their projects. In Victoriaville, Groupe Solidarité Jeunesse is the core of the initiative, but it could be a youth centre, scout troop or other youth group in another community.
- Enlist the services of an organization equipped and qualified to dispose of the HHW collected, including delivery of containers, training of volunteers and distribution of safety material.

The event's success also relies heavily on an effective awareness and information campaign. In 2008, advertisements for the Journée Normand-Maurice reached 150,000 people, excluding website visitors. Colour posters, information pamphlets, advertisements in the local newspaper, and daily radio and television spots are also used to promote the event.

Outcome

- In 1998, the event was held for the first time and Victoriaville was the only participating municipality. In 2006, six municipalities joined forces for the project and this number increased to 20 in 2008. A total of 40,000 residents were involved in 2006, and 72,000 in 2008.
- In 2008, 44,687 kilograms of HHW were diverted from landfills; an increase of nearly 41 per cent from the previous year.
- The 2008 collection led to combined direct landfill cost savings of \$3,828.34 for the participating municipalities.
- HHW collected is composed primarily of acid solutions, hydrocarbons, propane gas, aerosols, paint, pesticides, oxydants, tar, and electronic waste such as computers and cell phones.
- Most volunteers are students under the age of 18. There were 200 volunteers in 2006, and 500 in 2008. The awareness and commitment of these young people will have a positive, long-term impact on both a social and an environmental level.
- In 2007, the Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs ; the Ministère du Développement Économique, de l'Innovation et de l'Exportation; Collecte Sélective Québec; and RECYC-Québec awarded a Phénix Environmental Award to the Journée Normand-Maurice organizers.

Lessons Learned

- Youth are awareness agents. “We’ve always believed that popular education must be initiated through our youth,” declared Rock Tourigny, of Groupe Solidarité Jeunesse. In his opinion, the knowledge gained by school-age youth leading up to the Journée Normand-Maurice is quickly shared at home and has a “snowball” effect.
- The win-win collaboration guarantees success. According to Charles Verville, communication agent for the City of Victoriaville, “The secret behind the Journée Normand-Maurice’s success is that all partners are satisfied.”
- By definition HHW is dangerous! Changes have been made over the years to ensure the safety of volunteers. For instance, propane gas containers are no longer picked up along roadsides.

Related and Future Initiatives

Victoriaville’s environmental concerns are being transformed into concrete actions. Three-stream waste collection has been conducted since 1996 and since 2005, the CFER has provided deposit containers for small electrical appliances. The city has begun installation of three-stream refuse containers in public places and, this year, will distribute counter containers for domestic composting. According to Charles Verville, “The success of the Journée Normand-Maurice relies on these habits (composting and source sorting of waste) which are already deeply implanted in the region.” The event is well-conceived and organizers hope to continue to increase the number of participating municipalities. In 2009, they further enhanced project implementation by producing a single information pamphlet for all participating municipalities.

Partners and Collaborators

Groupe Solidarité Jeunesse

City of Victoriaville

Centre de formation en entreprise et récupération (CFER)

Peintures récupérées du Québec inc.

Other participating municipalities, depending on the year.

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Photo Information

Photo Caption: The 2008 event diverted a total of 44,687 kg of HHW from landfills.

Photo Credit: City of Victoriaville