GREEN INITIATIVES AT
SKILLS CANADA – ONTARIO COMPETITIONS

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Green Initiatives at Skills Canada – Ontario Competitions

Every organization, including Skills Canada – Ontario, has a responsibility to address its impact on the environment.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to recognize green initiatives currently being implemented at the Qualifying and Ontario Technological Skills Competitions, facilitated by Skills Canada - Ontario, to identify any green initiatives that can be implemented at these competitions at no further cost or through sponsorship, and to outline any projects that raise awareness of green trends in trades and technologies that can be incorporated into these competitions.

Green Initiatives at Skills Canada – Ontario Competitions

Skills Canada – Ontario implements many green practices into the competitions, from general recycling to the use of non-toxic products and materials. Outlined below are the current initiatives effectively being carried out at these events.

General plastic, paper, glass and can recycling

Recycling programs are common at event locations. The Qualifying Competitions, hosted at six colleges, all have recycling and waste disposal programs as well as RIM Park and Manulife Financial Sportsplex, the location of the Ontario Technological Skills Competition. Bins are clearly identifiable and accessible for the use of the general public.

Metal recycling

Welding, Electrical Wiring, Plumbing, Auto Collision, and Sheet Metal Work are all contests that produce metal scrap. Skills Canada – Ontario contracts a professional services company to pick up the scrap metal from the Ontario Technological Skills Competition for recycling purposes.

Car parts reuse

Both the Auto Collision and Auto Painting contests make use of scrap car parts in their projects. Car parts are diverted from landfills to be used in these contests. After the contest, some parts are taken to a metal recycler and other parts are given to schools to be used by shop classes.

Wood projects that are practical and lumber use

It is the general practice of Skills Canada – Ontario to create projects for lumber-using contests that are functional and practical. For example, both the Individual Carpentry project at the Qualifying competition and the Team Carpentry project

at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition were picnic tables. The Team Carpentry projects were donated to Scouts Canada. In the Cabinetmaking contest, competitors are allowed to take their projects home. Any lumber that is left over is used for future competitions. Any usable wood scrap or projects are donated to organizations such as Habitat for Humanity.

Plasma screens instead of sign boards
Before replacing sign boards with plasma screens, Skills Canada – Ontario was using approximately 85 sign boards throughout the Ontario Technological Skills Competition. Every year, a percentage of the sign boards were being replaced due to damage or general wear and tear. In replacing the sign boards with plasma screens at this event, Skills Canada – Ontario was able to reduce waste output.

Competitor bags made of recycled materials
Over 1500 competitors participate in the Ontario Technological Skills Competition. All competitors receive a registration package for their participation in the form of a bag filled with various giveaways. Skills Canada – Ontario is able to provide these students with plastic bags made from recycled materials through a donation from OCAS.

Electronic evaluations instead of paper
Skills Canada – Ontario relies on participant feedback as a way to continually improve events and programs as well as to gauge the impact of our events and programs. The Ontario Technological Skills Competition uses online surveys instead of paper surveys to gather this information.

Use of water-base paint in Auto Painting contest
Traditional solvent-based paint coatings used for auto painting emit volatile organic compounds (VOC) and other substances into the air as they dry. VOC contributes to the formation of ground-level ozone or smog. Water-based paints emit significantly less VOC. Skills Canada – Ontario uses water-based paints in the Auto Painting contests.

New office location
In October 2008, Skills Canada – Ontario moved to a new office location that includes 3200 square feet of warehouse space. Equipment and materials owned by Skills Canada – Ontario for use in the competitions, including Cardboard Boat Races, are currently being stored at various locations across southwestern Ontario. This equipment and material will be brought onsite to the Skills Canada – Ontario warehouse, which is only seven kilometres away from RIM Park and Manulife Financial Sportsplex. Having a warehouse space close to RIM Park minimizes travel needed to get the event equipment and material to the event location, therefore, minimizing fuel usage as well as number of vehicles needed to transport the equipment and material since there is less storage locations.

Waste is discouraged in contests
At the competitions, participants are encouraged to be less wasteful. Contest scopes, the document that outlines the contest's technical information, state that marks will be deducted from a competitor who unnecessarily uses too much product or produces waste. For example, food wastage in the Culinary Arts contest or the unnecessary use of extra lumber in the Carpentry contest result in a deduction of marks.

New Green Initiatives

The following green initiatives can be implemented into Skills Canada – Ontario competitions at no additional cost to the organization.

Computers and monitors in sleep mode
Skills Canada – Ontario utilizes approximately 400 computers at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition in all the technology contests. In order to reduce power usage, Skills Canada – Ontario can arrange to have computers and monitors go into a low-power "sleep" mode after a period of inactivity.

Green bin wet food waste
The green bin program has been implemented in many parts of the province including the Region of Waterloo. Organic materials like food scraps and food soiled paper products, such as paper towels, are collected to process into compost instead of being sent to a landfill. Skills Canada – Ontario will use green bins in both the Culinary Arts contest and Restaurant Service contest.

Baking project donation
At the end of the Baking contest, Skills Canada – Ontario is presented with a large amount of baked goods. Instead of disposing of these treats, Skills Canada – Ontario can donate the Baking projects to a local charity such as House of Friendship or Mary's Place or hold a silent auction to raise funds for the Skills Canada – Ontario Bursary.

Judging directly from computer screens
In the technology contests, the traditional way of judging is to print the projects off and judge from the hard copy. Where possible, Skills Canada – Ontario will encourage project judging directly from the computer screen. In the event that printing is necessary, Skills Canada – Ontario can provide contests with recycled paper to print the projects.

Use of non-toxic and/or eco-friendly cleaning products
In preparation for and tearing down of the Ontario Technological Skills Competition, staff and volunteers are responsible for the general cleaning of surfaces and equipment. There are many cleaning products available that are non-toxic and eco-friendly at a cost comparable to commercial brand name cleaners. Skills Canada – Ontario can easily implement this practice into our event.

Green Initiatives with Sponsorship

With sponsor support, the following green initiatives can be implemented at Skills Canada – Ontario competitions.

Water

Currently Skills Canada – Ontario purchases cases of 500ml bottles for participants at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition. Although the event location does provide plastics recycling, Skills Canada – Ontario needs 3000 bottles to accommodate competitors and volunteers. There is a large amount of waste involved. An option for water distribution is to purchase 5 gallon water bottles and water pumps. Water solutions companies sell bottles and cleaning and refilling services making large bottles reusable. A new bottle at a local water solutions store is $10 plus tax. Refills are $3.06 each. Bulk refills can be pre-paid at a discounted rate. Water pumps can be purchased for $15-20 at a local water solutions store or hardware store. In order to accommodate the Ontario Technological Skills Competition's water requirements, Skills Canada – Ontario would need to purchase approximately 80 5 gallon bottles and 80 pumps (calculated at 3000 500ml bottles; therefore on a litre per litre basis). However, strategic placement of water on contest sites may allow Skills Canada – Ontario to require fewer bottles. For example, two contests could share one bottle or an area, such as the gymnasium, could have a certain number of water dispensing stations.

The most eco-friendly type of vessel for drinking water at the competition would be reusable, 100% recyclable stainless steel water bottles from between $7-12 per piece. A reusable plastic water bottle is also a good option and less expensive with some products as low as $3 per piece (based on a minimum purchase of 250 pieces). This product could be part of the giveaways included in the competitor bag; therefore, Skills Canada – Ontario would require at least 1500 pieces for competitors alone. With the opportunity to market their organization, this solution would be appealing to current sponsors. As an easily accessible and recyclable choice, paper cups could be used for volunteers and staff, although waste output would be a problem.

Use of ENERGY STAR appliances and computers

The international ENERGY STAR symbol identifies products that are among the most energy-efficient on the market. Only manufacturers and retailers whose products meet the ENERGY STAR criteria can label their products with this symbol. Skills Canada – Ontario relies on the generous donations of products and equipment for use at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition. Equipment such as baking ovens, refrigerators and computers are all lent for the purpose of the competition. In addition to this, Skills Canada – Ontario owns stoves and some refrigerators. By acquiring ENERGY STAR appliances and computers, Skills Canada – Ontario would use less energy and less electricity would be produced. As appliances owned by Skills Canada – Ontario need replacing, it is recommended that these are replaced with Energy Star products.

Reusable cloth bags instead of plastic
Although Skills Canada – Ontario provides plastic competitor bags made from recycled products, a more eco-friendly solution would be to provide competitors with cloth bags. Not only are cloth bags reusable and more durable but they are viewed as more of a giveaway or gift than a plastic bag. Logos can be printed on a cloth bag as easily as on a plastic bag allowing for a marketing opportunity. With a distribution to over 1500 competitors and exposure to 30,000 visitors as well as the public at large after the event, the benefits of this initiative would be appealing to many potential sponsors. Some companies produce their own cloth bags. These companies may have additional inventory that they would be willing to donate.

Green Awareness Projects

At the Ontario Technological Skills Competition, contests test competitors' knowledge through projects. The project in a contest such as Home and Team Building requires competitors to build a framed shed with plumbing and electrical components. The competitors in the Auto Service contest work on actual cars. Raising awareness of green trends in these trades could include displaying on the contest site a green version of the project or a green alternative. For example, in the Home and Team Building contest, a display of the finished project with solar panels on the roof or a water-saving solution for the plumbing would help raise awareness and interest, and at the same time exhibit the green trends happening in that field. In the Auto Service contest, Skills Canada – Ontario could bring in a hybrid vehicle and allow visitors to view the differences between a hybrid and a regular vehicle's engine.

Another awareness raising project Skills Canada – Ontario could implement at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition is to display, using the presentations on the plasma screens, slides that demonstrate emerging green trends in the trades. For example, the presentation running on the screen in the area where mostly transportation contests are being held could have a slide that illustrates green trends in that sector, such as alternative energy transportation or hybrid vehicles. The area where mostly service contests are being held could explain the green bin project and in the area where the technology contests are held, the presentation could include a slide outlining what ENERGY STAR means or energy-saving computer tips.

Skills Canada – Ontario offers a wonderful opportunity for companies and organizations to display their services, products or message through the Career Exploration Showcase, which is held in conjunction with the Ontario Technological Skills Competition. There are a couple of initiatives that can be implemented to promote environmental awareness at the Career Exploration Showcase. The first is to provide a theme to the Showcase on an annual basis. For example, the theme could be "Going Green", where attendees display at their booths how they are making changes to help the environment or how their trade or field has changed to become more eco-friendly. With this initiative, Skills

Canada – Ontario could provide a prize for best green idea or booth. It is recommended that this initiative be introduced in 2010.

The second initiative is to invite environmental groups to attend the Showcase to help raise green awareness to visitors at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition.