

**CUSTODIAL SERVICES  
CAMPUS SERVICES AND BUSINESS  
OPERATIONS**

**REPORT:**

**GREEN CLEANING INITIATIVE  
AT YORK UNIVERSITY**

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# 1.0 Background

## General

Custodial Services employees within CSBO are responsible for providing custodial services within York University at both the Keele and Glendon campuses. In order to meet the university goal of providing sustainable services the Custodial Services section of CSBO intends to formalize their historical best practices and enter into a “Green Cleaning” program of service provision. The Director and Manager of the section have researched the green cleaning issue and are in a position to adopt the goals of a green cleaning program into their workplace practices. Many of the principles of green cleaning have already been incorporated into their work processes. This green cleaning project will highlight and enhance these practices, and expand processes in order to meet the requirements of a full green cleaning program. It is expected that this project will position York University as a leader in this area amongst its peers. The numerous benefits of Green Cleaning are described on page 5 of this report - “Issue 3”.

## Environment

York has approximately 50,000 students and 5,000 full-time employees as well as a large number of visitors to the campus. Service provision to the 80+ building spaces must be delivered at an acceptable standard level and in a sustainable manner. Moreover, the Community expects services to be provided in a consistent and predictable manner, as well as in a safe and sustainable fashion; for workers, employees and students.

# 2.0 Current Issues and Impacts

## Issue 1: Definition of Green Cleaning

Going “Green” is defined as “*products or services that have a lesser or reduced effect on health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose*”(USA Presidential Order 13101). As such, the expectation is that entering into a green cleaning program will improve service delivery to the York Community in both the areas of health and the environment. Furthermore, the implementation of a green cleaning program is expected to provide benefits in the areas of economics and the social aspects of the workplace. Stewardship of interior building spaces will become a mutually beneficial responsibility between the Community and Custodial Services employees. For example, calling in a spill will result in prompt action by custodial staff which will reduce the possibility of a slip and allow for lesser actions to clean the spill. Embracing common tri bin waste/recycle receptacles instead of individual desk-side units will improve health (movement), reduce labour and allow for reallocation of resources, and reduce pest control issues.

## Impact.

Implementing a Green Cleaning program will meet sustainability, health and economic objectives of the University.

## Issue 2: Elements of a Green Cleaning Program

A comprehensive green cleaning program provides a framework and guidelines in the following areas: staff training, standards and frequencies of cleaning, equipment and tool purchases, paper issue choices, choice of cleaning products, and choice of other supplies. A brief description of these items with respect to a green cleaning program is detailed below (A number of these items are already in place within CSBO – Custodial Services):

### **Staff Training:**

Employees are trained on the overall goals of Custodial Services. Training occurs with regards to task completion and associated frequencies. Employees receive training on safety in the workplace with emphasis on WHMIS, equipment and tools usage, workplace standard operating procedures, cleaning product usage, and the objectives of a green cleaning program. Supervisors and Staff will be fully trained on Green Cleaning and will be required to sign off on completion of training. This will occur prior to the Green Cleaning program commencing in the York Research Tower Building (expected occupancy July/August 2009).

### **Standards and Frequencies:**

A Green Cleaning program has an identified standard of cleanliness to be achieved within the building environment. The standard describes cleaning tasks and frequency description in the areas of floor care, dusting, washroom care and carpet care. Standard operating procedures are in place and are adhered to by staff. York University has adopted the cleanliness guideline described by the Association of Professional Plant Administrators (APPA) at Level 4. The workload must be consistently applied to all employees with an outcome that is predictable and measurable. Every task must be accomplished with minimal disruption to the Community. All building spaces will be inspected regularly by Supervisory personnel. Deficiencies will be documented and rectified as soon as possible. Staff retraining will commence if required.

### **Equipment and Tools Purchases:**

Equipment and tools must be safe to use (eg. Chemical dispensing systems), provide ergonomic benefits for the employee, and be durable in order to reduce continuous turnover. New technologies such as micro fibre cloths and mops may be incorporated into the tools purchase program. Equipment that reduces water usage and product dispensing is beneficial from an environmental perspective. A full inventory is required in order to plan and control expenditures and to ensure that appropriate equipment and tools are available for staff use. Storage rooms must be kept tidy, clean, and organized.

### **Paper Issues:**

Paper usage is a major issue from both an economic and environmental perspective. Expenditures for purchase and disposal of hand towels should be controlled wherever possible. Electric hand dryers are an acceptable method by which to reduce costs and reduce the environmental waste footprint. Paper should be made from recycled product (not virgin) wherever possible. Also, production of paper should be bleach free. Dispensers for paper products should be the large roll type which reduces transportation costs. Fold type brown paper hand towels must be discouraged as usage significantly increases with this style of paper.

### **Cleaning Products:**

Green products which are environmentally responsible will only be used in the program. These products are much less corrosive, and airborne (volatile) contaminants are reduced because of the surfactants in the formulation rendering the products environmentally acceptable as compared to historical product formulations such as bleach. The enzymes continue to work destroying unwanted germs for a longer period of time, which translates into a cleaner environment and reduced product usage. The products which will be used in the program meet the standards of the accepted independent certification body "Green Seal" and conform to the requirements of Green Seal GS-37. Products will be shipped in a concentrated form and formulated on site prior to use with a safe and accurate product dispensing system.

### **Other Supplies:**

Supplies such as garbage bags must be fitted properly to containers in order to reduce waste because of oversize. Materials should be made from recycled content. Individual waste/recycle receptacles should be discouraged and communal receptacles should be promoted in order to reduce bag liner waste, reduce labour required to service individual units, and reduce purchases of new and replacement receptacles. The concept of a “wasteless lunch” should be promoted as is the case in school boards – the use of Tupperware containers, Ceramic Mugs, removal of waste back to the source, reduction of packaged food items, and organic waste disposal back to the source or deposited on site into a food digester. Appropriate matting should be placed at key entranceways into buildings in order to trap soils from footwear before the soil can be tracked and deposited on floors and interior carpets.

### **Impact**

The Green Cleaning program at York University becomes increasingly more effective when elements of the program are introduced and/or expanded. These combined elements will complete the goals of a green cleaning program which addresses sustainability, economic, and health issues with regards to building cleaning. A green cleaning program is an ongoing, continuous improvement process.

### **Issue 3: Benefits of a Green Cleaning Program**

Benefits of a green cleaning program are:

1. Safety for employees undertaking cleaning tasks and dispensing of cleaning products.
2. Improved indoor air quality in buildings by reduced use of products causing irritation.
3. Improved overall cleanliness as a result of workload distribution and efficiency of service delivery.
4. Reduction of environmental waste footprint and disposal costs.
5. Reduced use of cleaning products.
6. Longer life of tools and equipment and reduced down time.
7. Cleaning effectiveness improved with new technologies (micro-fibre mops and cloths).
8. Shared responsibility between Community members and service providers resulting in mutual achievement of a common goal.
9. Reduced expenditures for paper, cleaning products, and waste liners.
10. Ability to reallocate resources in order to meet planned frequency and task requirements in a given space (ie. High dusting in libraries, bulb replacements etc.).
11. Equipment and tools cost control and reliability.

### **Impact**

Implementing a green cleaning program meets the university’s sustainability objectives and provides substantial benefits to custodial employees, to the Custodial department, and to building occupants.

### **Issue 4: Communications and Community Education Strategy**

The Custodial Services Green Cleaning initiative will be communicated to the University Community via a number of methods and with assistance of various departments. The strategic communication process will generally occur as follows: Draft green cleaning report distributed for feedback (YorkWise personnel, CSBO Administrators, Facilities Managers Group, YRT consultant – Desiree Bowes); Final document presented to AVP – CSBO for commentary; Report posted on Custodial Website and disseminated to the YU Community via

YorkWise/YFile/Excalibur/Committee presentations/Sustainability office and committee; Trial period undertaken in YRT building for 3 months (includes notification to tenants via meetings and informational cards); Report of success/failure with follow up information to the same groups that program will be rolled out to YU buildings / follow up report after pan university program has been underway for 1 year.

### ***Impact***

A comprehensive educational / communications strategy will play an important role in the success or failure of this initiative.

### **Issue 4: Budgetary Implications**

It is expected that the program elements delivered as a whole and over a term of 2-3 years will translate into an expenditure neutral outcome or overall expenditure reductions. For example; installations of hand dryer units will reduce paper purchase and disposal costs, reduction of cleaning product usage (increased enzyme action) will result in reduced supplies costs, and equipment repair costs will be reduced because of improved equipment maintenance.

### ***Impact***

No significant budget impact is anticipated.

## **4.0 Notations:**

1. Green Cleaning is an ongoing process. Managerial and Custodial employees will regularly embark on informational update sessions regarding products, supplies, tools and equipment improvements.
2. This initiative is expected to receive full support from CUPE 1356. Members and Executives will play an important role in the delivery of this program, via initial support of the program and with the ongoing delivery of the services.
3. York University CSBO – Custodial Services by embarking on this initiative will show leadership in the area of institutional green cleaning.
4. Reference Text – “Green Cleaning For Dummies” – Stephen Ashkin and David Holly, ISSA special edition, copyright 2007 Wiley Publishing Inc.

## **Appendices**

### **A - Green Cleaning Checklist**