

## **The Waste Reduction Act Needs a New Name—and More**

**By Glenn Maidment, President**

Over the past six months or so, RAC has been pre-occupied with Ontario's Waste Reduction Act, simply because it will fundamentally change the used tire program—one which we've all spent a great deal of effort developing, nurturing and turning into a very successful program. While the WRA has reasonably sound good intentions, i.e. to make producers responsible for the end-of-life products they bring into the market, it misses the mark in some very fundamental ways, starting with the name—The Waste Reduction Act.

The WRA takes as its underlining supposition that “wastes” need to be managed and controlled. This leads to the need to create an “Authority” to oversee the responsible management of said waste. Hence we get this outdated command and control mentality that is at the heart of the objection from many producers.

Today across the industrialized world, scrap tires are routinely collected and recycled, with 80%-100% capture rate in most cases. We believe the reason the tire industry has been so successful over the past fifteen years or more in recycling scrap tires—irrespective of the regulatory requirement or jurisdiction—is because we collectively began to think of scrap tires as a resource, not a waste. It seems like a simple thing and yet it has profound implications. When you think of scrap tires as a resource and start thinking of it as molecules waiting to be mined, rather than a waste which must be managed, then that opens up a whole range of possibilities.

Traditional scrap tire markets are still very important around the world. Tires are used as a fuel supplement, taking advantage of its very high BTU value and clean burning properties. Tires are also still important as a civil engineering material, taking advantage of its relatively lightweight and compressible properties. The aggregate markets such as playgrounds, sports surfacing and rubberized asphalt all use ground rubber for its inherent elasticity and usability and all are very important long-term sustainable options.

And now, as innovators, scientists and entrepreneurs explore this material at the polymeric level, we see new opportunities to mine the molecules for even more dynamic uses with other polymers and plastics to create new and exciting new materials and products never before contemplated.

Waste reduction is ancient history. The tire industry is about resource recovery and we need new rules and regulations that recognize this new reality.