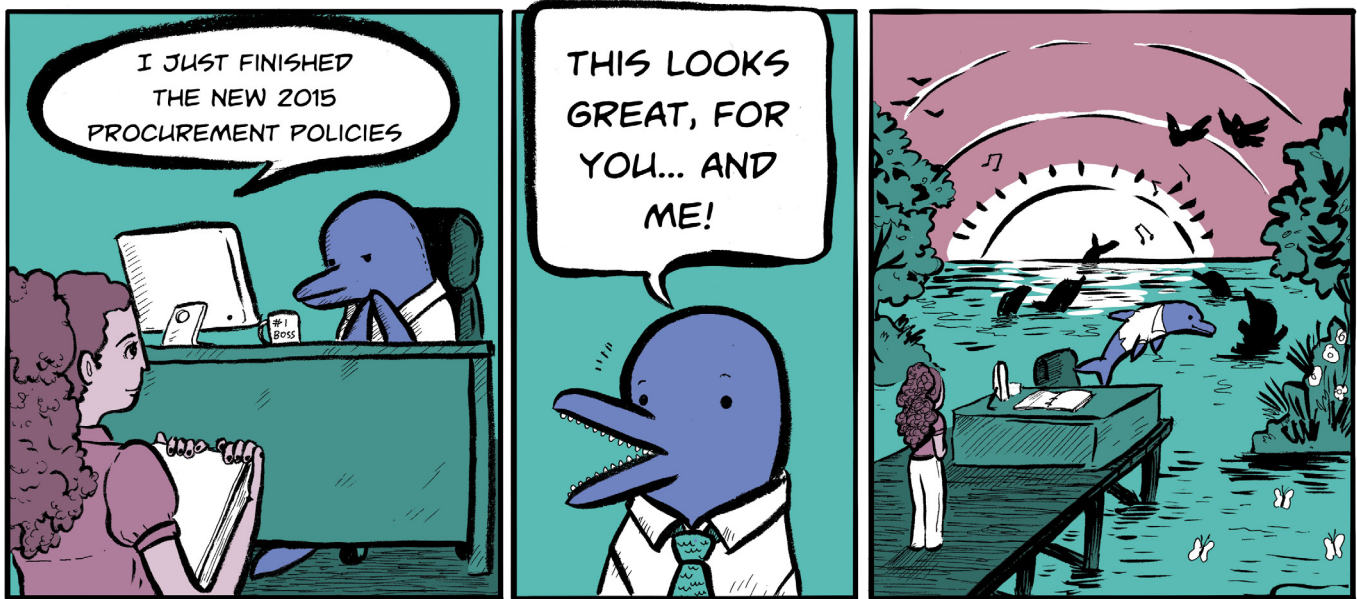


# Buying safer cleaning products.

*How do you set good procurement policies for informed substitution?*



Everyone's happy. You, the environment, especially your boss.

**We know there are cleaning products** that are certified as “green” or “best in class”. How do we get them? It comes down to the policies about what’s bought and what’s brought into the workplace – the procurement “rules”.

This section lays out what should be in those policies, including recommendations about using ecolabel products and having enforcement and evaluation processes.

The B.C. government has very good procurement policies that recommend ecolabel products. Their specifications for cleaning supplies state that buyers:

*Shop at Product Distribution Centre first for EcoLogo certified biodegradable cleaning products. If you can't find it there, use the Corporate Supply Arrangement for Cleaning Equipment and Supplies, and ask for EcoLogo or Green Seal certified products.  
.. Cleaning products must be:*

- *EcoLogo or Green Seal certified where certification exists in product type ..*

BCGEU members are affected by Shared Services BC's decisions about purchasing cleaning products. The agency sets criteria for buying cleaning products as part of managing the buildings for which it is responsible.

It has a property management contract with the Workplace Solutions Inc. subsidiary of Brookfield Johnson Controls (now called Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions). Section 10.3 of the terms and conditions for suppliers specifies that "Suppliers will use only environmentally friendly products if available ..". This applies to Bee Clean, the cleaning sub-contractor. (It's the first Canadian company to be certified by the Cleaning Industry Management Standard for green building cleaning.)

Despite the requirements, our *Tools for Informed Substitution* project found that Bee Clean workers are given products that don't meet the procurement specifications. So how can we make sure that these good policies get implemented and that everyone participates in making that happen?

## *What are the best practices for green procurement policies?*

**Best practices for a green cleaning procurement policy** are to:

- ✓ reference third-party ecolabel standards,
- ✓ designate staff to manage the program,
- ✓ allocate a budget,
- ✓ link to the health and safety committee,
- ✓ include the policy in the health and safety programme, and
- ✓ include benchmarks and reporting requirements (including regular checks for compliance).

The process is continuous, as shown in the commonly-used “Plan, Do Check, Act” process (see Figure 5.1). As such, it will include enforcement and evaluation in each cycle.

Figure 5.1  
The continuous process



The Responsible Purchasing Network (RPN) lays out best practices to structure and implement a comprehensive “green” cleaning program designed for long-term success. It recommends a series of steps, that we summarise (see all the steps in Figure 5.2) and apply to the British Columbia situation.

### Step one

**Form a strong team** with representatives of all the stakeholders. They should include health and safety committee members, middle and top management and come from departments involved with, or affected by, the use of cleaning products. The representatives need to be committed to green purchasing and trained about what it means.

### Step two

**Establish a baseline inventory** of all cleaning products currently used, and their ingredients. Note how many are ecolabel certified.

Review the results of the Tools for informed substitution screening of cleaning products that Bee Clean uses in B.C. government buildings. A fair number of the products reviewed contained hazardous chemicals and almost three-quarters were not ecolabel certified.

### Step three

**Review the procurement policies, comparing** them to the best practices listed above; for more details, see the resources. Ensure the policies are part of the health and safety programme and make adjustments to synchronise them.

In this project, there are two procurement documents: one from Shared Services BC, and the other from Brookfield’s WSI. Check that they are clear, up-to-date, have a compliance process, and meet other best practices.

### Step four

**Improve practices** in the continuous improvement model of plan, do, check, act.

**Figure 5.2**  
Best practices flow chart from Responsible  
Purchasing Network.



Set a goal to screen out all cleaning product ingredients that are GreenScreen LT-1, replacing them with products that are ecolabel certified, as required in the Shared Services' procurement specifications. To ensure compliance, ask that third party ecolabel certification be attached to the product bid.

(For example, the Illinois *Specifications for Green Janitorial Products* requires that, for each product they will use, the bidder must provide two copies of the third party certificate or documentation and a copy of the SDS.)

### **Step five**

**Measure and report progress,** including the cost savings of using third party certified products, and reported illnesses, etc. Survey workers (formally or informally) to find out what they like and don't like about the products/methods and if any new hazards have been introduced with their use. Check on training about using the new products or methods. Ensure someone is specifically responsible for checking compliance and reporting back to the stakeholder team.

Make sure that any key performance indicators in the annual review of suppliers' performance include the use of third party certified ecolabel products, the decrease in the use of cleaning products (through alternative methods), and the money saved.

## *What about the costs?*

**Studies show that green certified products** are no more expensive than traditional ones.

For example, a [review](#) by the City of San Francisco's Department of the Environment details the cost competitive value of green cleaning products. In 2010, another study of New York's Green Cleaning Program found

### **Green products do not necessarily cost more**

Considering the popular impression that "it takes green to go green," we were surprised by the relative affordability of green cleaning products. Even without considering potential cost savings from other elements of a green cleaning program, such as automatic dilution systems or microfiber mops, the prices of green and conventional products were substantially the same. This finding should prove useful for green cleaning advocates seeking buy-in from skeptical managers.

[City of San Francisco: The Real Costs of Institutional "Green" Cleaning.](#)

that green cleaning products cost the same or less, and work as effectively as traditional cleaning products. (See the RPN's webinar [Advancing safer chemistry in government procurement - April 4, 2013](#) and other RPN [webinars](#).) The RPN also [supports](#) these findings about costs.

## *Where can you get more information?*

The RPN is an excellent source of information about good procurement practices, including Canadian networks. See the many examples in their web page about [model specifications](#) for cleaning products.

The Network also has model city and state procurement [frameworks](#) that could easily be replicated by B.C. or municipal governments. For example:

- the [City and County of San Francisco](#) has 18 mandatory specifications for the procurement of janitorial products; and

- New Jersey's RFP for Environmentally Preferable Cleaning Products details *how Request for Proposals cover all aspects of an environmentally preferable cleaning programme. They specify standards including Green Seal GS-37 and GS-40, EcoLogo, or recognition from the U.S. EPA's Safer Choices program, which provides resources for manufacturers.*

## What's next? Implementing informed substitution in your workplace

We've come a long way. This toolkit started with recognising the hazards of cleaning products and our right-to-know. We've gone through screening chemical ingredients for hazards to finding ecolabel products, and the ingredients of good procurement policies. Now it's a question of how all this gets implemented.

Section 6 includes a useful checklist for health and safety committees and resources to ensure you have informed substitution of cleaning products at work.

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# TOOLS FOR INFORMED SUBSTITUTION

HOW DO YOU FIND SAFER CHEMICALS FOR THE WORKPLACE?

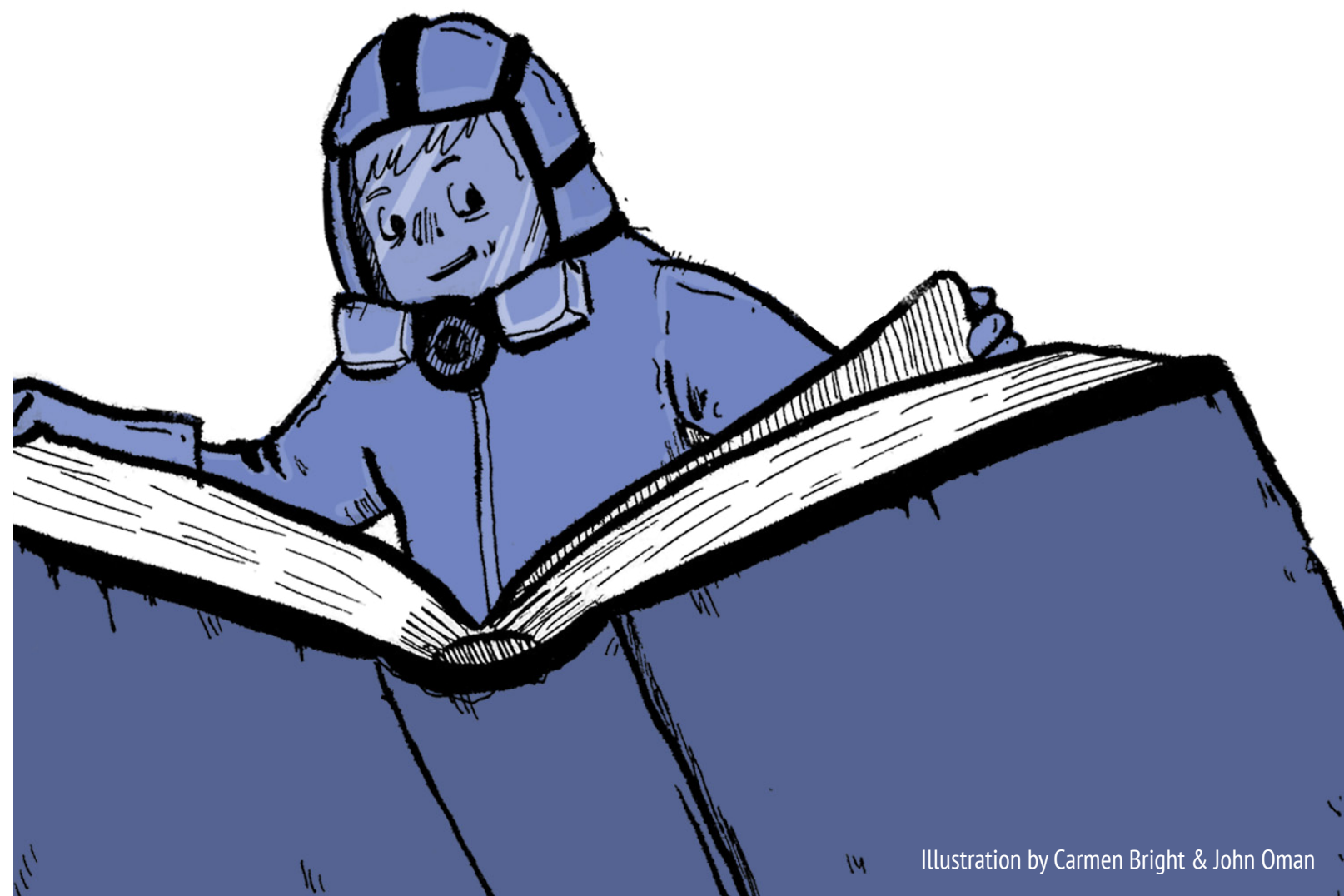


Illustration by Carmen Bright & John Oman

# Table Of Contents

## Introduction

### *Why this toolkit?*

## Section 1

### **Toxics in our cleaning products.**

#### ***Why do chemicals matter?***

- *How do cleaning products affect people and the environment?*
- *What resources are out there to help people understand how cleaning products can affect our health and environments?*
- *What's next? How do we find out what's a hazardous cleaning product?*

## Section 2

### **From the right -to-know to the need to act. *How can WHMIS 2015 and B.C.'s safer substitution regulation take us there?***

- *What's new with WHMIS?*
- *What are the new hazard symbols? What do they mean?*
- *What are the new labels? What are they supposed to say?*
- *How are data sheets different?*

- *Does WHMIS apply to every product used at work? At home?*
- *How can you use a SDS to get to safer substitutes? Moving from right-to-know to action*
- *Where can you get more information?*
- *What's next? Prioritizing the most hazardous cleaning products for substitution.*

## Section 3

### **Checking on chemicals of high concern. *What on-line tools can help?***

- *What information do you need before doing an on-line search?*
- *What's the Pharos database?*
- *How do you find a chemical's hazards with Pharos?*
- *What other on-line tools could you use?*
  - Chemical Hazard and Alternatives Toolbox (ChemHAT)
  - RISCTOX
- *What other resources can help us know what to avoid?*
- *What's next? Finding third-party ecolabel products*

## Section 4

### **Finding informed substitutes. *How can you find third party certified ecolabel cleaning products?***

- *What are third party certified cleaning products?*
- *What's Ecologo?*
- *What's Green Seal?*
- *What's Safer Choice?*
- *What is SF approved?*
- *What else is available to help find informed substitutes?*
  - A Cleaning Solutions database
  - Microfibre mops and cloths
- *What resources are out there to help choose informed substitutes?*
- *What's next? Preparing a good procurement policy*

## Section 5

### **Buying safer cleaning products. *How do you set good procurement policies for informed substitution?***

- *What are the best practices for green procurement policies?*
- *What about the costs?*
- *Where can you get more information?*
- *What's next? Implementing informed substitution in your workplace*

## Section 6

### **Keeping the workplace healthy and safe. *How do you implement informed substitution?***

- *What are the steps?*
- *What are the benefits of informed substitution?*
- *What can you do to get informed substitution of cleaning products?*
  - *What can health and safety reps and staff do?*
  - *What if you're a worker?*
  - *What about supervisors, employers, and procurement staff?*
- *What does all this add up to?*
- Some resources for screening chemicals (especially in cleaning products)
- Some resources for informed substitution for workplaces
- Some resources for informed substitution for consumers

## Appendices

### **More resources about hazardous chemicals and informed substitution**

- Appendix 1
- Appendix 2
- Appendix 3