DAVID A. PATERSON
GOVERNOR

STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12233-1010

ALEXANDER B. GRANNIS
COMMISSIONER

AUG - 3 2009

Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson: Lisa,

I am writing to urge EPA to take a leadership role in addressing one of the serious environmental and economic issues facing communities around the country—a sustainable financing system for municipal recycling programs. Municipalities have traditionally had primary responsibility for implementing recycling programs throughout the country. Sustainable financing for their programs is essential to improving recycling and achieving both our and EPA's goals of conserving materials, reducing waste and combating climate change.

Community recycling programs have made tremendous strides in the last two decades leading to an increase in recycling rates – from 16 percent in 1990 to more than 30 percent in the past few years. The increases experienced in the 1990s have leveled off in this decade, however, in part due to limited funding for outreach, education, enforcement and infrastructure improvements—all essential elements of a truly effective recycling program. We have reached this plateau at precisely the time when the commodity industries – paper, plastic, glass, aluminum and steel – have all set ambitious goals for the use of recycled materials, which will mean a growing dependence on the expansion of recovery efforts.

In most American communities, recycling programs compete for increasingly scarce local tax revenues with other critical public services. Many European and Asian countries and the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Quebec and, soon, Manitoba have implemented innovative approaches to the financing of municipal recycling programs outside of the local tax structure. Such innovation has lead to increased recycling rates and improved efficiency in local programs, while also helping to meet the needs of the commodity industries and the increasing commitment of consumer product companies to more environmentally sustainable packaging.

To address this pressing issue, I would like to work with EPA and other states and local governments to convene a multi-stakeholder group to explore sustainable financing strategies for municipal recycling. To be effective, the participants should be representatives of state and local government, not-for-profit advocacy organizations, and the manufacturers of the products and packaging that are managed in the municipal recycling stream. This initiative would also be consistent with EPA's Resource Conservation Challenge objectives and would contribute significantly to progress in addressing climate change.

I would like to offer New York's assistance and support for an initiative of this type. EPA's leadership in facilitating this dialogue would provide a great service to both state environmental agencies and local governments struggling to bring recycling rates to the next level. I am confident that other states and municipalities would be very interested in supporting this effort as well.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. I look forward to working with you to support municipal recycling programs.

Sincerely,

Alexander B. Grannis

c: Mathy Stanislaus, Assistant Administrator, OSWER
Matt Hale, Director, Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery
Betsy Smidinger, Director, ORCR, Resource Conservation and Sustainability Division