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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the organization, process, and impacts of the Hamilton Consensus Conference on Waste Management held in May 2000. The evaluation focuses on the practicality, effectiveness, and fairness of the consensus conference as a public participation method that can facilitate the public input and further stimulate debates on controversial issues.

As shown in Table I-1, the structure of the evaluation of the consensus conference is reflected into three main criteria – acceptance, process, and impact – that provide a comprehensive framework to evaluate a public participation method. A few different types of method are used in the evaluation including reviewing and analysing the official and unofficial documents, reports, and articles, and interpreting results of a survey of both the expert and non-expert participants.

Table I-1 summarizes the assessment of each criterion according to the findings from the evaluation of the Hamilton Consensus Conference on Waste Management.

**Table I-1: Evaluation of the Hamilton Consensus Conference on Waste Management**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Sub-criteria</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Acceptance Criteria	Representativeness of Participants	Moderate success
	Independence of Participants	Successful
	Early Involvement of Participants	Successful
	Transparency of the Process to the Public	Limited success
Process Criteria	Resource Accessibility	Moderate success
	Task Definition	Moderate success
	Structured Decision Making	Successful
	Cost Effectiveness	Successful
Impact Criteria	Actual Impact	n/a
	General Thinking	Successful
	Training of Knowledgeable Personnel	Successful
	Interaction with Lay Knowledge	Successful for the public participants; Marginal success for the general public

The following points are ascertained from this report:

- The findings support that the organization and process of the Hamilton Consensus Conference were proved to be a success as an effective public participation method.
- The citizen participants, the Panelists, were found to be the most benefited group, receiving all the substantive, procedural, and reflexive learning from their experience.
- Although the evidences endorse the actual impact of the Citizen Panel's recommendations on the final policy, the new Solid Waste Management Master Plan, it needs to be re-examined to assess the actual impact in 2004 when the policy is schedule to be completed.
- Clear understanding of the participants' task definition in the early stage of the process will ensure their commitment and reduce any procedural confusion.
- More active approaches to inform and involve the general public will increase the chance to maximize the benefit for them to obtain the substantive, procedural, and reflexive learning, and to stimulate further public debates on the particular issue.

Although the methodology used in this report is comprehensive enough to cover the evaluation of all the organization, process and impact of the consensus conference, some information is not available to the author. For example, because the survey of the general public is not conducted, the evaluation of impact on the lay public is done indirectly by examining the amount of media coverage and opinions of other participants. Such survey would have provided more accurate source of the lay public's opinions. Another limitation includes the evaluation of two criteria using circumstantial evidences: "actual impact on the final policy" (Section 3.2.3.1) and "transparency of the process to the public" (Section 3.2.1.4). The final policy is not completed yet at the time of writing this report. Similarly,

no person asked for the information about the process of the consensus conference even though such information was available. Therefore, the evaluation of these criteria is feasible only by speculation upon given indirect evidences.

Overall, the Hamilton Consensus Conference demonstrates that this relatively new public participation method can be used in seeking public input on a public policy-making process in an effective and efficient way. Both the positive and negative findings will help organize a better consensus conference in the future, which will provide an open dialogue to exchange knowledge and opinions among the bureaucrats, experts, and citizens.