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| |  | | --- | | The following appeared in a letter to the editor of a local newspaper in Masontown:  “If we want to save money on municipal garbage disposal fees, we need to encourage our residents to recycle more. Late last year, our neighboring town, Hayesworth, passed a law requiring that all households recycle paper and glass, or pay a fine. Since that time, Hayesworth has seen its garbage disposal costs significantly decrease. If we implemented an advertising campaign encouraging our residents to recycle, Masontown would also save money on disposal of its waste.”  Write a response in which you discuss what questions would need to be answered to decide whether the recommendation is likely to have the predicted result. Be sure to explain how the answers to these questions would help to evaluate the recommendation. | |

The argument reaches the conclusion that Masontown must implement an advertising campaign encouraging its citizens to recycle their waste. This conclusion is based on the premise of the decreased garbage disposal costs of Hayesworth, the neighbouring town, after the implementation of a law that required residents to recycle paper and glass. However, in reaching this conclusion, the argument's author fails to definitively answer three important questions, the answers to which could dramatically affect the veracity of the argument's logic.

First, is the population of Hayesworth similar to that of Masontown, in terms of waste types (and other aspects associated with the commercial viability of recycling)? It is possible that Masontown is significantly smaller than Hayesworth, and that recycling plants are far enough from the region that the costs of transporting recyclable waste are unreasonable. There is a possibility that Masontown residents reuse paper and glass products rather than recycling them, and that such a measure would just increase the expenses of waste management. Another likelihood is that the people of Masontown do not generate high amounts of recyclable waste, like paper and glass; they may use materials like plastic that are harder to recycle. In any of these cases, the two towns would not be similar enough to imply that a measure taken in one would work in the other.

Second, even if it is assumed that the answer to the previous question to be 'yes,' would an advertising campaign suffice in encouraging Masontown citizens to recycle their waste? It may be possible that most of its people work in places outside the town, and hence may not encounter the advertisements much. It could also be the case that the people of this area are, in general, less receptive to advertisements. The author has failed to provide evidence that an advertising campaign would work in this area, and thus leaves room for the possibility of such efforts going in vain. If the argument can prove that advertising has worked in the area for similar public messages, only then can it be more persuasive in its claims.

Finally, would recycling efforts in Masontown sufficiently offset the other costs that would be borne by the municipal council for advertising, and other waste? Even if the answer to the previous questions is 'yes,' it is possible that recycling has an extremely high initial cost that would be hard to compensate for via reduction in other kinds of waste. If people continue to use materials like plastic, these recycling measures may not cut the costs of garbage disposal fees to a sufficient extent. Investing in infrastructure related to recycling would have to be allocated a large sum of money, which may not yield returns for a very long time. The local government may not have even considered other ways to reduce garbage disposal costs like, perhaps, requesting its citizens to purchase reusable and more durable products. In fact, if other measures are taken alongisde recycling, such as reusing products (responsibly), and refusing to use plastics, then the author's argument would be much stronger. However, there is no indication of such efforts taken in brainstorming comprehensive solutions.

In conclusion, the argument, as it stands now, considerably fails in its attempts to justify an advertising campaign to encourage recycling in Masontown. The author must formulate a more cogent argument, with substantiative evidence and reliable, comprehensive sources. While they do try to attempt drawing parallels between the neighbouring towns, their argument is not convincing enough to warrant going ahead with its recommendation.