Sample Letter to the Editor

(A response to an article about an aging landfill)

Letter to the Editor
re: (article name, date)

Our garbage is a gold mine of rich organic material, valuable metals, paper produced from our nation's forests, glass and plastics made from non-renewable resources. With just a little foresight, effort and planning, most materials you find in landfills today can be easily sorted, processed and reused.

The solution to our community's landfill woes is not to search for another "appropriate" location. The noxious gases they give off are hazardous to public health and the toxic liquids they release pollute our lakes and rivers.

It may not smell very pleasant, but the solution is under our noses. By adopting a recycling program that's more effective than our current Blue Box program we can expand the life of our existing landfill for years to come.

As one example, the City of Guelph adopted the Wet/Dry recycling program – where residents separate their garbage into wet and dry material. The material is then sorted and processed. After adopting this simple yet innovative plan, Guelph has managed to reduce the amount of waste it sends to the landfill by over 60 per cent. The cost of the new system is in line with what the City paid for waste collection and Blue Box recycling.

Wet/Dry recycling is a win win situation. It's not only a benefit to our community, it's a benefit to our natural environment.

Sincerely,

NAME
ADDRESS
CONTACT NUMBER FOR VERIFICATION

Sample News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE OCTOBER 3, 1999

INNOVATIVE RECYCLING PROGRAM ONLY OPTION, MUNICIPALITY TOLD

CAPE VERTE – Municipal government could save money and reduce pressure on Cape Verte's aging dump with a new Wet/Dry Recycling Program. That's the message the Cape Verte Coalition of Concerned Citizens (CVCCC) delivered to municipal council last night.

The coalition presented council with a report stating that with proper planning and some up-front investment, the community can own and operate its own Wet/Dry program. A Wet/Dry program would divert three times more waste from Cape Verte's landfill, generate 60 jobs, and cost the same as municipality's current waste pickup and the blue box program.

"Wet/Dry recycling is not only better for the environment, it's also better for taxpayers," says Dee Crease of the CVCCC and member of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 100. "For an extra couple of dollars we could divert three times as much garbage from our already overburdened landfill."

Wet/Dry recycling programs operate in the same manner as a conventional curbside garbage pickup system, except residents split their waste into wet and dry material. The separated waste is taken to a plant and processed. The wet material like vegetables, lint and meat is composted and dry material like paper, cans and glass is sorted and prepared for market.

"Towns and cities across Canada have adopted Wet/Dry recycling with great success," says Reid Deuce, Council of Canadians activist and member of the coalition. "Putting in place a Wet/Dry program is just a matter of political will."

The City of Guelph, in southern Ontario, went ahead with Wet/Dry recycling in 1995. The program diverts more than 60 per cent of the waste from the landfill site.

"Isn't it about time we put our environment first," says Crease. "This council needs to look forward and make some concrete decisions that not only keep our community economically viable but also environmentally sustainable."

CVCCC is made up of approximately 500 people from various groups within the community. Copies of the coalition's report on Wet/Dry recycling are available and more information is contained on the CVCCC Web site at: www.cvccc.ca.

For more information you can contact:

Dee Crease at 234 – 5678 or
Reid Deuce at 345 – 6789

Sample Brochure

front

LANDFILLS ARE NOT THE ANSWER

Support the Campaign for Wet/Dry Recycling

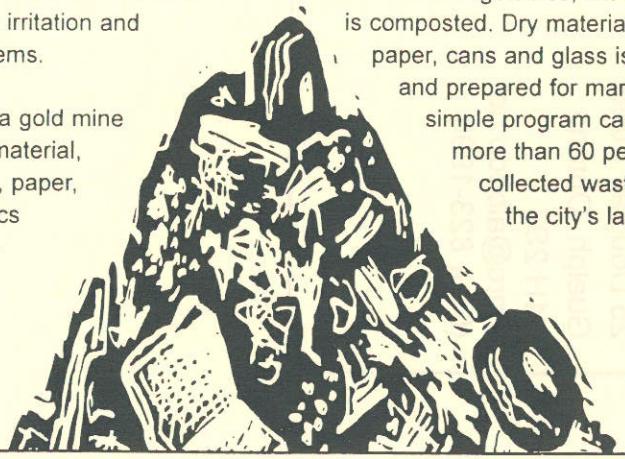
Our dump is nearing the end of its life. Our community needs an alternative. The real solution to our landfill woes is cutting down waste, and this can be done through Wet/Dry Recycling.

Landfills are bad for our health and bad for the natural environment

Toxic liquids produced by our landfill sites seep into lakes and streams. People who live close to landfills are more likely to contract cancer. Landfills produce foul-smelling gases that contribute to global warming and contaminate the soil they're located on. People who live near landfills often experience skin irritation and breathing problems.

Our garbage is a gold mine of rich organic material, valuable metals, paper, glass and plastics made from non-renewable resources. This valuable material doesn't have to be wasted.

What's Wet/Dry Recycling?
Wet/Dry recycling programs operate in the same manner as a conventional curbside garbage pickup, except residents split their waste into wet and dry material. The separated waste is taken to a plant and processed. The wet material like vegetables, lint and meat is composted. Dry material like paper, cans and glass is sorted and prepared for market. This simple program can divert more than 60 per cent of collected waste from the city's landfill.



back

Waste reduction benefits everyone. A Wet/Dry program would create more jobs and benefit the local economy. Recycling and re-using precious resources means that we can slow down the rate at which we're depleting the earth's natural resources.

Blue box programs aren't enough. They're expensive, operate on a voluntary basis and, in most cases, divert less than a quarter of the garbage from landfills.

It's about jobs. Landfill sites usually provide work for just one person while recycling programs like Wet/Dry would create employment opportunities for dozens of people. The money to pay employees comes from the sale of sorted materials.

A privately run program is not the answer. Public ownership ensures real environmental protection, and saves the taxpayer money. The goals of the private sector are short term and not in the interests of the community.

You can put a stop to the creation of a new landfill. Contact the mayor or your municipal councillor and let them know that a Wet/Dry program is good for our natural environment and the only alternative for our community.

A recent study by the New York State Department of Health reports that women living near solid waste landfills, where gas is escaping, have a four-times greater chance of bladder cancer or leukemia.

Wet/Dry recycling is not only better for the environment. It's better for taxpayers.

The City of Guelph, in southern Ontario, went ahead with Wet/Dry recycling in 1995. The program diverts more than 60 percent of the waste from the landfill.

For more information about our campaign or about Wet/Dry recycling, please contact the Cape Verte Coalition of Concerned Citizens (CVCCC) at 234 - 5678.

List of Organizations

The Composting Council of Canada
16 Northumberland Street
Toronto, Ontario
M6H 1P7
ccc@compost.org
(416) 535-0240

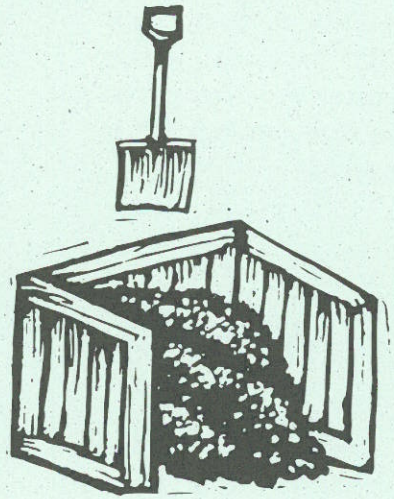
Canadian Environmental Network
National/Regional/ and Affiliate Network Offices
300-945 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1Y 2X5
cen@cen.web.net
(613) 728-9810

Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators
25 Douglas Street
Guelph, Ontario
N1H 2S7
amrc@albedo.net
(519) 823-1990

Towards Green COMMUNITIES

Tools

Starting Your Own Composter



Composting can be done at home and at work. It is an easy way to reduce the amount of garbage by about one third. As well, it produces a valuable natural fertlizer for use in gardening and landscaping.

Composting is a natural process that converts organic material into a soil-like product called compost or humus (pronounced "hue-mous"). The process works with the help of micro-organisms such as bacteria and fungi combined with air and moisture.



What's in the Mix?

Most organic waste can be composted at home or at work. For composting to work best, use a mix of the following:

From the Kitchen

- Fruit scraps
- Vegetable trimmings
- Egg shells (crushed)
- Tea bags
- Coffee grounds with filters
- Shredded paper

From the Garden

- Leaves (chopped - to speed their breakdown)
- Grass (not wet)
- Plants & Weeds (without ripe seeds)
- Old potting soil
- Soft plant stems

Do not include meat, fish and bones, plastics, metals, fats and oils, dairy products, pet waste or cheese.

Canadian Union of Public Employees - www.cupe.ca

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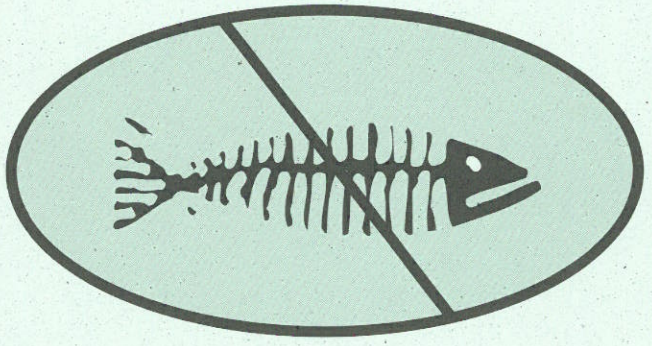




How to Compost

You can build your own composter or use a commercial unit, often available through your municipality. An important first step to getting started is to place your composter in a sunny area with good drainage. Make sure that the location is convenient and accessible year round.



Getting Started...

Turn the soil in the location where the composter will be.

After placing the composter, cover the floor of it with a layer of small branches. This will allow for air movement and drainage.

Alternate wet (e.g. kitchen scraps) and dry (e.g. yard material) waste.

If available, add some "finished" compost, garden soil or a compost starter (available at most garden centres) to the pile. This helps speed up the start of the composting process.

Clues on Composting

The composting process works best when the organic pieces are small. Weeds and trimmings should be shredded.

Don't add thick layers of any one kind of waste. Grass should not be more than 6 cm deep, leaves up to 15 cm deep (cut, chop, dry and crumble them if you can). Let grass dry first, or mix it with dry, coarse material such as leaves, to prevent compacting.

The composter contents should be as moist as a wrung-out sponge. If the contents are too dry, it will take overly long to compost; and if too wet, the contents may begin to smell.

Turn or mix the compost every couple of weeks or each time you add new material. This keeps the compost well aerated.

You can add materials to your composter all winter long. The breakdown process slows down or stops when the pile is frozen, but it will start up again in the spring. Thorough turning in the spring will reactivate the pile. Empty the composter in the fall to make plenty of room.

Troubleshooting

Composting is not difficult but sometimes the process requires a little extra attention. Here are some easy solutions to correct certain situations that may occur.

If the pile does not decrease in size or generate heat, composting may need a boost. If the pile is dry, add



Use it on your lawn, in your garden, around trees or combine it with potting soil for your plants.

water - mixing thoroughly. If the pile is wet and muddy, spread it in the sun and add dry material. Remember to save "old" compost to mix with incoming material.

If the centre of the pile is damp and warm, but the rest is cold, the pile may be too small. Try to keep your composter as full as possible. Mix new with old, dry with wet, breaking up mats and clumps.

If the pile is damp and sweet smelling but not heating, it may need nitrogen. Add grass clippings, table scraps or a sprinkling of organic fertilizer from the garden centre.

If the compost pile develops a foul odour, it may not be getting enough air. Loosen up the pile, break up clumps, unblock vents and perhaps add some wood chips to help the pile "breathe". Turning the pile always helps aeration.

Compost in a container with a cover to prevent animals from getting into the composting materials. A wire mesh around the base can help to prevent pests from digging under the pile. Dig in or cover food waste immediately.

Is It Finished Yet?

The composting process can take from two months to two years, depending on the materials used and the effort involved. To accelerate the process, the pile must be a balance between wet and dry material. Turn it frequently and make sure the waste is shredded or in small pieces.

Compost is ready to be used when it is dark in colour, crumbly and has an "earthy" smell. You can sift the compost to eliminate material that has not yet finished composting. Return this back to the pile to complete its transformation into humus.

Put Compost to Good Use

Composting can benefit your soil and plants in many ways. It increases the soil's organic content and its moisture-holding capacity. Compost improves drainage and helps to control soil erosion. It also enhances plant and flower growth and helps plants develop strong roots.

Use it on your lawn, in your garden, around trees or combine it with potting soil for your plants.

More Information

For more information about composting, please contact:

The Composting Council of Canada
16 Northumberland Street
Toronto, Ontario M6H 1P7
e-mail: ccc@compost.org

3Rs SPEAK – a Glossary of Terms

Capture Rate: For any material collected in a reuse or recycling program some will ultimately end up in the garbage. The capture rate is the percentage of material that is actually captured by the recycling or reuse program. The Prince Edward Island deposit system for pop bottles has a capture rate of over 90 percent.

Diversion Rate: A percentage of all materials that are either reused or reduced. For example, Blue Box recycling programs tend to have a 20 to 25 percent diversion rate.

Household Hazardous Wastes: These are toxic chemicals people use to maintain their house, yard and car. Things like paints, solvents, waxes, cleaners, and polishes can do serious damage to the natural environment if they're not recycled or disposed of properly.

In-Vessel Composting: The organic material is composted inside a drum, silo, agitated bed, covered or open channel, batch container or other structure. The process conditions are closely monitored and controlled and the material is aerated and mechanically turned or agitated.

Participation Rate: The percentage of people who actually take part in a reuse or recycling program. In Guelph, 98 percent of all the people who live in the city participate in Guelph's Wet-Dry program.

Waste Management Hierarchy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle): This is described as a hierarchy because reduction – using less – is better than the other options. Reuse – using something more than once – is better than recycling.



Waste Stream: One type of material from one source. Fine paper from office buildings can be referred to as a waste stream.

Wet-Dry Recycling: A system in which wet materials such as food scraps are separated from dry materials like paper or plastic containers. The wet material is then composted while the dry is sorted and recycled.

Windrow Composting: Compostable material is formed into elongated piles, known as windrows, which are turned mechanically on a regular basis.



Towards Green COMMUNITIES



Introduction

THE NEXT TIME YOU throw your garbage into a dumpster or drag it curb-side for someone to collect the following morning, think about what you're discarding. Our garbage is a gold mine of rich organic material, valuable metals, paper produced from our nation's forests, glass and plastics made from non-renewable resources. This array of valuable material doesn't have to be wasted. With just a little foresight, effort and planning, these materials can be easily sorted, processed and reused.

Until recently, people in their homes and work places had little regard for what they threw away and what impact their actions had on the natural environment. Garbage was merely something that the city picked up and took away.

By the 1980s excessive waste had begun to take its toll. Community leaders were alarmed by the continued impact of dumping on the environment and, as a result, reducing, reusing and recycling (3R) programs began to emerge. The most common program is the Blue Box - where residents use plastic blue boxes to collect their glass, paper, metals and plastics. On garbage collection day they set it out with their regular garbage for pick-up.

Blue Box is a great start to recycling but it's by no means perfect. It's expensive, operates on a voluntary basis and, in most cases, diverts less than a quarter of the garbage from landfills. Even with Blue Box recycling programs in place in most Canadian communities, we still produce close to 30 million tonnes of garbage every year. That's the second highest amount of garbage production per person in the world.



The environmental threat, the employment opportunity

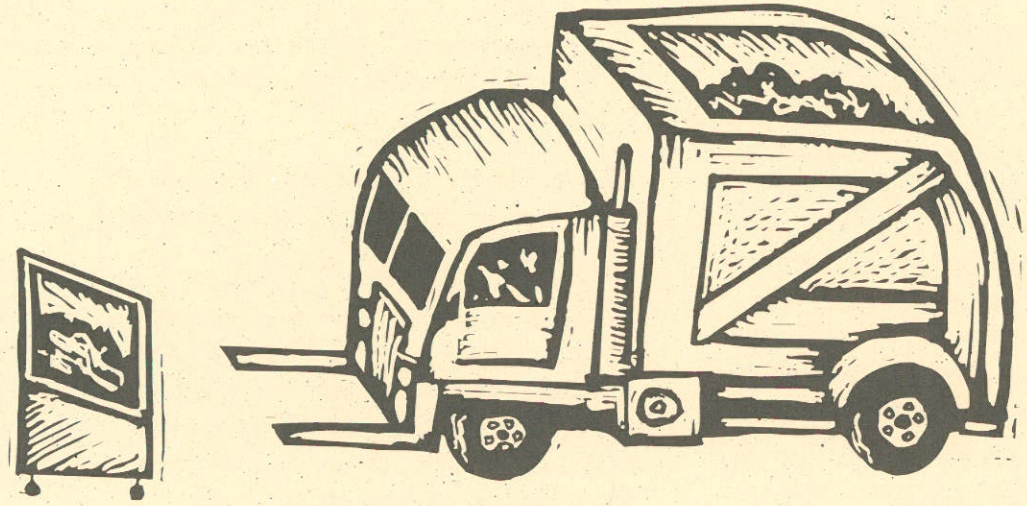
The status quo cannot continue. The survival of our planet is more important than convenience and short-term economics. Creating new landfills to store our garbage is not the answer. Canadians have realized the importance of 3Rs and are pressuring local governments to introduce or enhance 3R programs to reduce the amount of garbage we produce.

Canadian Union of Public Employees - www.cupe.ca

Blue Box programs aren't enough. Communities are pressuring local governments into finding ways to reduce garbage yet save money.

A new study by the New York State Department of Health reports that women living near solid waste landfills, where gas is escaping, have a four-times greater chance of bladder cancer or leukemia. The new study examined the occurrence of seven kinds of cancer among men and women living near 38 landfills where naturally occurring landfill gas is thought to be escaping through the air. Of the 14 kinds of cancer studied, 10 were found to be elevated but only two were significant. Landfill gas consists of naturally occurring methane and carbon dioxide that forms inside the landfill as the waste decomposes. As the gases form, pressure builds up inside the landfill. Some of the gas escapes through the surrounding soil or into the atmosphere.

- Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly
September 24, 1998



As a CUPE member, you play an important role in the development of 3R programs in your community and workplace. Developing your expertise on the 3Rs and taking a proactive approach on the issue will go a long way to establishing clean and ecologically sustainable waste practices in your community. It will also help to keep new jobs in the recycling industry unionized and public.

This kit includes:

- basic information about waste and waste diversion;
- ways of identifying the recycling opportunities within your workplace and your community;
- tools for mounting a public information campaign;
- tips on improving 3R programs already in place at work and in the community;
- techniques for lobbying local councillors and provincial politicians;
- ways of building support within the workplace and the community; and
- examples of what other communities are doing.

This kit will help you convince community leaders that 3Rs is better for our health, the natural environment and our jobs. It's amazing what you can accomplish with a little time, knowledge and determination.

Toronto Prepares to Dump on the Province

Toronto must make an environmental decision within the next year because its existing dump, at Keele Valley in Vaughn, is filling up. The city has begun whittling down its short list, which includes dumps and incinerators in various locations across the province.

One option is an energy-from-waste facility (a euphemism for an incinerator) in Innisfil. The Conservative MPP for the area has already commented that the project will proceed over his dead body.

Other options involve construction of composting facilities and/or transfer stations in the suburban belt around Toronto affecting a large number of communities.

Council is considering a stop-gap option, extending the life of the Keele Valley dump as a way to buy Toronto some more time. The dump is located in the riding of Ontario's minister of economic development and he has already fired warning shots with letters to the mayor and chair of the works committee. "The environment and the quality of life for the families in Maple and Vaughn have suffered long enough," the minister wrote to the chair last week. "Toronto needs to consider alternative long-term solutions that would see the Keele Valley dump close by 2002 or sooner."

- Ian Urquhart, *Toronto Star*
July 21, 1999 (edited text)

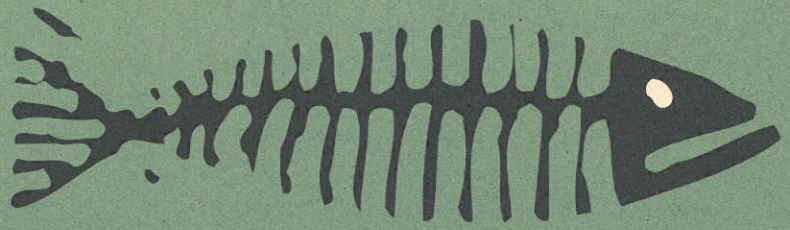
Quality of life for your family

The pressure to reduce waste has never been greater. Toxic liquids produced by our landfill sites seep into lakes and streams. They produce foul-smelling gases that contribute to global warming and contaminate the soil they're located on. These landfills have a direct impact on our health. Often, people who live near landfills experience skin irritation and breathing problems. According to some experts, people who live close to landfills are more likely to contract cancer.

In response, many municipal governments have chosen to transport their waste. Some municipalities in Southern Ontario are even paying to have their garbage shipped to another country. Huge trucks can often be seen along Hwy. 401 transporting waste to landfills in the U.S. But transporting garbage is only a Band-Aid solution. It can be expensive and more unreliable than dealing with waste in the community.

The real solution to our landfill woes is cutting down waste, and this can be done through reducing, reusing and recycling - the 3Rs.





CUPE wins fight to keep Waste Watch public

CUPE members on Prince Edward Island, especially the Charlottetown Civic Employees (Local 501), are celebrating their success in keeping Waste Watch in public hands.

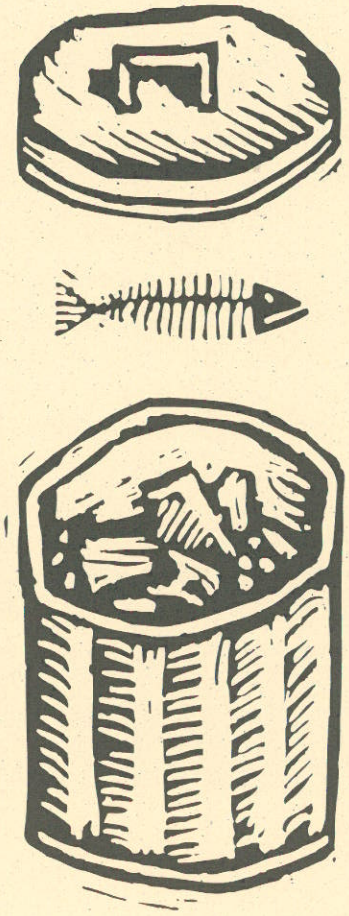
On May 21, PEI Environment Minister Mitch Murphy announced that the Waste Watch program will not be privatized but instead turned over to a public utility. "This announcement illustrates the power of people to move our elected officials away from actions that under-mine public services," says Bill McKinnon, president of the CUPE PEI Division. "We are proud of the campaign put forward by the sisters and brothers of Local 501."

The cost-effective Waste Watch program – considered the most successful recycling-composting system in Canada – was threatened with privatization for almost a year-and-a-half. But through hard work and perseverance the local kept the issue in the public spotlight and forced the government to reconsider.

- Fast Facts
May 27, 1999

Government commitments

Governments at all levels recognize the need to reduce our waste and are committed to cutting garbage in half by the year 2000. This commitment among provincial governments was adopted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. But Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia are the only provinces likely to meet the 50 percent 3Rs goal.



EU Wants Auto Makers to Recycle All Old Cars

Automakers that sell vehicles in the European Union will be required to take back used cars for recycling. Under rules accepted by EU governments cars sold as of 2001 will be subject to the new rules and automakers are expected to cover the recall costs in 2006.

Car manufacturers will collect the cars, then dismantle them at recycling centres. They will separate plastics and metals for recycling and shred the parts that won't be recycled. The law will apply to all cars sold in EU countries, no matter where they are produced and will require manufacturers to recycle 80 percent of their weight.

The law proposed by the European Commission in 1997 aims to reduce pollution caused by cars at the end of their working lives by reusing and recycling as much of them as possible. Currently end-of-life cars release about 1.7 million tonnes of fuel, motor oil, antifreeze, heavy metal and other hazardous substances into the environment in Europe each year.

It is estimated that the new Europe-wide car-parts reuse and recycle law will create 100,000 new jobs.

In North America, Ford Motor Company has created a recycling business that takes apart old cars and trucks and resells parts to body shops, insurers and consumers. By creating a used-parts clearing house, Ford expects to make an extra $1 billion a year in revenue.

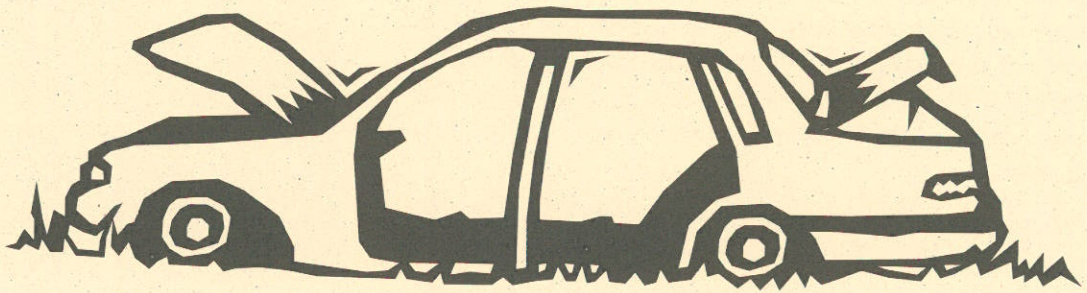
- With files from the *Ottawa Citizen*
July 30, 1999

It's about jobs

"Jobs versus the environment." That's the big card that polluters often play to stop communities from forcing them to clean up. But environmentalists and trade unions have a card of their own that trumps this old debate - green jobs.

The emerging 3Rs industry represents a golden opportunity for employment as recycling programs are expected to create thousands of jobs in Canada. 3R programs are labour intensive. Landfill sites usually provide work for just one person while recycling programs create employment opportunities for dozens of people. With these recycling programs, the money to pay employees comes from the sale of sorted materials. It's estimated that 3R programs generate six-times more jobs than landfill sites.

- In Germany packaging laws are believed to have created 15,000 recycling and reuse jobs.
- Nova Scotia's aggressive waste diversion program has created 450 jobs since 1996 and is likely to go further in the next few years.
- The City of Guelph's recycling program has created between 65-70 jobs for CUPE members.





Corporations: motivated by profit

The trend to download programs to the municipal level has local governments scrambling. They're under ever increasing pressure to further stretch tax dollars. With the added strain of closing landfill sites and improving waste diversion, many cities and municipalities are looking to the private sector for options.

At first glance, it may look appealing. Private-sector waste management companies promise to introduce new recycling programs that will cost less. But the goals of the private sector are short term. Why would a profit-driven company work to cut garbage when the money they make is based on how many tonnes they handle?

Private-sector firms rarely have the patience to build new 3R facilities. They have a hard time justifying to shareholders and parent companies the expense of

Selected quotes from an interview with the general manager of TCR Environmental, a waste management company that specializes in recycling.

Reporter: The work is quite labour intensive and is done by about 40 employees who work at minimum wage or close to it. Gord Carless is a general manager at TCR Environmental. Now he says this work, while it is decidedly entry level, provides employment for people and it helps them learn.

Gord Carless: We like to think that we're recycling people also. 85 percent of our staff have come off of welfare or unemployment rolls to work in this plant. We don't require a particular education or skills, simply the willingness to work. It takes a very short time to train them, perhaps three or four hours and it works terrifically.

Reporter: Are you taking people through Workfare by chance?

Carless: Yes we are.

Reporter: How do your workers feel? Are they okay with this?

Careless: The older people who for unfortunate reasons didn't get an education are quite happy. We find some difficulty with young people who say, "Oh it's waste. We
really don't want to do this. We want a better job than this." Well unfortunately they didn't get the education to get the better job. My personal feeling is, better that they're working at some job than being paid by taxes to sit and do nothing. It's not productive for the people who have to come up with that money and it's certainly not productive for them.

- CBC Radio, *Ontario Today*
July 26, 1999

investing in new facilities that might take years to turn a profit. When they do go ahead with the investment, it's often because of a healthy government grant or loan.

As well, private-sector waste management companies have a record of treating their employees poorly. Their employees are non-unionized, earn very low wages and work in deplorable conditions.

Waste reduction benefits everyone

Programs that recycle, reduce and reuse create more jobs and benefit local economies. Recycling and reusing precious resources means that we can slow down the rate at which we're depleting the earth's natural resources and perhaps ensure that there will be something left for our descendants.

You can play a role. Lead the way in getting 3R plans implemented in your community and work place. It's the first step on the road to sustainable communities. Put the case clearly for better public services and for a better, cleaner future. If we don't do it, there are many private companies eager to move into our communities and take our jobs.

Public ownership ensures real environmental protection and saves the taxpayer money. Public control over the 3Rs makes plain hard-headed sense. Most of the reuse and recycling programs in Canada are creations of citizens and workers. The Blue Box program itself was started by people who were tired of the growing litter problem in their community.









Towards Green COMMUNITIES

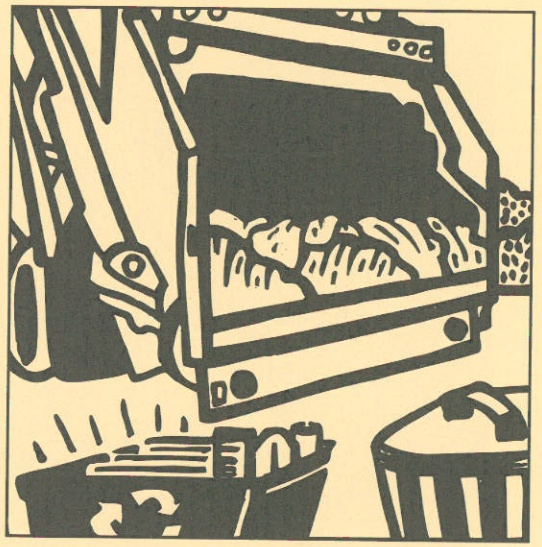
Recycling in the Community

FOR THE PEOPLE OF Guelph, garbage day is much like garbage days in other communities across Canada. Every week they go through that all-too-familiar ritual of dragging their bags of waste curbside for someone to collect. But that's where the similarity ends. Rather than transporting their "garbage" to the local landfill, waste collectors take their refuse to a nearby recycling plant where it's processed, sorted and resold as raw material.

This simple Wet-Dry recycling program diverts almost 60 percent of collected waste from the city's landfill, yet it's surprisingly unique not only to Canada but all of North America.

Most communities are still glued to Blue Box recycling programs that are not nearly as efficient or effective. These programs cost a bundle and they don't come close to matching Guelph's high rates of waste diversion. Guelph's Wet-Dry recycling program operates in the same manner as a conventional curbside garbage pickup system, except residents are asked to split their waste into wet and dry material.

Residents are asked to keep their waste separated - to keep the wet material in green-tinted bags and dry material in blue-tinted bags. CUPE members then bring the waste to a processing plant where wet waste is composted and dry waste is sorted and prepared for market. Approximately 70 CUPE members play a pivotal role in operating and maintaining Guelph's highly respected recycling system.



Wet material:

- food wastes (including meat)
- diapers
- dryer lint
- pet feces

Dry material:

- paper
- cans
- glass
- plastics
- clothes
- shoes

Canadian Union of Public Employees - www.cupe.ca



Over 98 percent of the houses in the community willingly take part in the program every week. In 1997, almost 40,000 tonnes was processed for a total diversion rate of 58 percent.

The total cost for the Wet-Dry facility was $36 million, including $24 million for the facility itself, $1 million for land purchases and $11 million for the approval process, legal fees, public consultation, the annual monitoring program and consulting fees. The city generated the funds to pay for the plant by collecting a levy on top of landfill tipping fees for 10 years prior to the program's launch.

The city is optimistic that the program will eventually break even. In 1998, processing wet waste cost $80.27 per tonne and processing dry waste cost $73.65. That's down dramatically from $175.22 and $110.81 it cost in 1996.

Guelph's common-sense approach to reducing waste is a great example of what communities can accomplish. It also illustrates that recycling can generate decent paying public-sector jobs within the community.

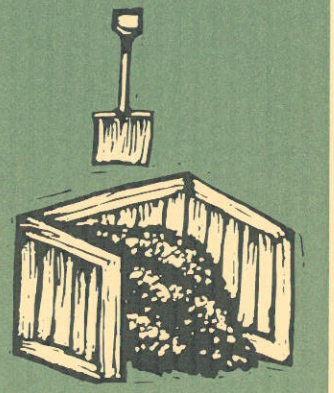
Getting started

Guelph's publicly run Wet-Dry recycling facility, with its unionized workforce (CUPE 241), is an excellent example of what a community can accomplish. This section of the kit was inspired by Guelph's program and was compiled to help you develop a similar program for your community.

This section of the kit covers:

- the basic information about community 3R programs
- apartments, condos and 3Rs
- budgets and financing for community 3R programs
- working with elected officials and community leaders
- ways of developing community support
- developing public information campaigns
- working with local media
- quickstart or small-scale programs

Food and yard waste account for 26 percent of all waste. Municipal composting programs can virtually eliminate organic wastes going into the waste stream. In fact, eliminating organic waste from landfills has become so desirable, Nova Scotia has made it illegal to throw food and yard waste into the garbage. Compostable material can be sold as fertilizer and that money can be used to further enhance the environment. Do you want to make your own composter? Flip to the Tools Section to find out how.



What's there to know about garbage?

There are two main garbage sources or waste streams: household waste and institutional, commercial and industrial (ICI) sector waste. To simplify things further, households can also be separated into two categories - single-family homes and multi-unit residential buildings like apartments, co-ops, and condominiums.

The goal of any 3Rs system is to divert waste from going to the landfill by setting up programs for reusable and recyclable materials as efficiently as possible. It has to be in line with what a community can afford and convenient for the people who are asked to participate.

Single-family homes

Single-family homes are certainly the easiest to reach with 3R programs. They have space for storing recyclables and compostables, and recycling trucks can easily pick up materials at the curb.

There are many different approaches to waste management for single family homes and no one program gets it all right. Guelph's Wet-Dry program is the best system for this kind of recycling. But even in Guelph, 3Rs can be taken further.

For example, the program could expand to handle:

- deposit/return or refillable pop-bottles
- used paints, pesticides, solvents and motor oil collection
- yard waste (Grass can be left on lawns for mulch, items such as leaves and branches can be collected.)



Billions are spent on waste disposal in Canada every year. Toronto's plan to transport its waste to other communities is expected to cost the city $1.5 billion over 20 years. Any 3R programs that can reduce these costs will free up tax dollars for cash-starved community social programs.



Apartments, condominiums & co-ops

People who live in multi-unit buildings, like apartments or condominiums, typically produce less waste than people who live in single-family homes. As well, the garbage collected is usually very similar from one unit to the next. Despite this, apartments and condominiums have lower waste diversion rates than houses.

Part of the problem with getting multi-unit buildings to participate is that people usually have no place to store their recyclables while they wait for pick-up day. As well, a designated person responsible for overseeing a recycling program normally doesn't exist. Multi-unit residential buildings are also quite diverse. They range from three-unit apartments to 300-unit condominiums. So each multi-unit building requires its own customized system.

Institutional, commercial & industrial (ICI) wastes

This is a catch-all category that includes businesses, office towers, factories, schools, airports, hospitals and more. Some ICI wastes can be easily included in a community Wet-Dry program. In Guelph, businesses use three categories of waste: wet, dry and by-pass. The by-pass is for material that can't be handled by the Wet-Dry system and goes to the dump.

The cost of reducing waste

Here's a break down of the costs associated with Guelph's Wet-Dry program.

Organic processing facility and composter	**$ 7 million**
The rest of the recycling facility	**$17 million**
Design, permits, consultations	**$11 million**
Land	**$ 1 million**
TOTAL	**$36 million**

This is a big expenditure for any community, but much of that additional cost is offset by increased revenue. Guelph's Wet-Dry facility sells most of the material it sorts. It also:

- charges tipping fees like a regular dump
- sells the organic material as compost
- reduces the garbage vehicle fleet by four trucks (Separate trucks to collect garbage and recycled goods were no longer needed.)
- extended the life of the landfill

In the end the cost of sorting and processing the community's waste is comparable to merely dumping it in a landfill. In 1998, the cost of recycling dry and wet waste came to $80.27 and $73.65 per tonne. The amount landfills charge for dumping garbage ranges from $45 to $115 per tonne.

Experts estimate that Wet-Dry costs between 5 and 10 percent more that than the old garbage/Blue Box system the city used to operate. But in terms of value-for-dollar, there's no comparison. For that small increase in expenditure, the Wet-Dry program diverts approximately 200 percent more material from the landfill.

What you can do in your community

Local leaders, weary about rising costs and increasing property taxes, will most likely be apprehensive about a brand new 3Rs program. By making it clear that 3R programs like Guelph's Wet-Dry system are a much better value than current recycling programs and can actually save money - you can get most community leaders listening to what you have to say.

Here are some tips for understanding the economics behind waste and recycling.

- To implement a Wet-Dry program, you must have access to facilities that can sort and process the material. Guelph for example has a population of almost 100,000 people and could support a Wet-Dry processing plant on its own. To make the plant more feasible, the facility also processes waste from several surrounding communities.
- If your community is smaller than Guelph, you may want to consider proposing 3R partnerships with other towns and villages in the area. The cost of acquiring a 3Rs sorting and processing plant can be shared if your community launches such a venture with other communities.
- Go to your city or municipal hall and ask for your community's budget for garbage disposal and recycling. A good place to start is with a comprehensive municipal waste audit and/or a 3Rs performance report. A financial audit of your municipality's waste diversion numbers is also a useful source of information.
- With the relevant information in hand, here are a few examples of what to look for:

  1. landfill tipping fees (What do dumps charge per tonne?)

  2. transportation (Does your community's garbage or recycling get transported long distances to some remote landfill or recycling facility?)

  3. number of trucks your community uses for collection (Does your community use different trucks to collect garbage and recylables?)

In Ontario, municipalities recently found that a cost analysis of individual materials collected in the province-wide Blue Box program was misleading. When calculated by volume, container collection received rave reviews. But when calculated by weight, plastics were the most expensive item collected. Coupled with weak collection numbers, the municipalities discovered that curbside beverage container collection did not make environmental or financial sense. A Wet-Dry program such as Guelph's, or a deposit-return program, would be better for managing these materials.



The kind of relationship you have with other community groups will have an effect on the strength of your campaign.

Networks allow community groups to organize campaigns together, but lets each group remain independent. Establishing networks makes it easier to communicate and organize lobby efforts. You should identify what resources and expertise your local can bring to the network and offer these at the founding meeting.

Coalitions are powerful because they state clear, common goals between members. This can also lead to friction among groups when consensus cannot be reached but action needs to be taken immediately. In some instances goals may have to be watered down to accommodate everyone involved.

Working for change

By working together with others in your community you can make a difference. Political action is about people getting together to involve themselves in the community's political process. It's what you do when you publish a leaflet, talk to co-workers and neighbours, phone reporters, cajole administrators and pressure politicians to bring about change in your community.

Building support

CUPE members, from hospital workers and school staff to outside municipal workers, are an important and respected group within any community. Using that credibility will go a long way in campaigning for better 3R practices.

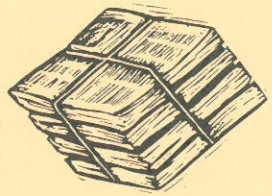
Public pressure drives public policy. So organizing public support for effective 3R programs includes looking beyond your membership. The more citizens who support your campaign the better the chance your council will adopt good 3R policies.

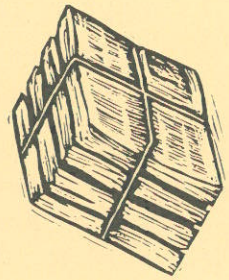
The public is often divided into sectors: environmentalists, health advocates, business, academia, labour, and others. Coordinating your activities with these groups strengthens your voice, deepens your resources and adds legitimacy to your 3Rs cause.

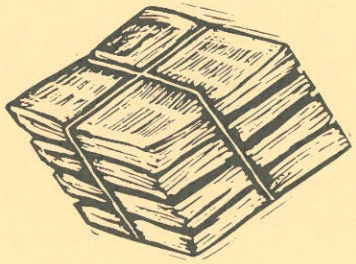
Each new community group will bring unique expertise and credibility to your campaign. But developing a coalition takes work. Recruit your allies slowly, starting with people who are the most vocal or passionate about reducing waste. As the campaign gathers steam, you may want to consider bringing other community groups into the fold.

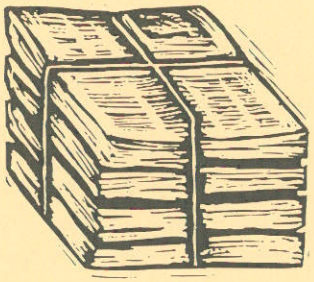
Here are some community groups you may want to approach.

- health advocacy groups
- college or university student groups
- local environmental groups
- other unions such as nurses or teachers
- tenant organizations
- citizens and citizen groups living near disposal sites
- experts outside your community with practical experience
- church groups











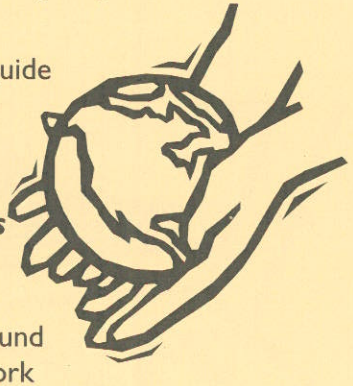
Quick Starts & other small-scale programs

Quick Start programs are practical ways of getting immediate action on reducing waste in your community. They are small, simple, low-cost initiatives that yield results. Quick Starts can help pilot new programs, test new technologies, and expand existing programs.

Toronto recently experimented with Quick Starts as a way to improve 3Rs. The city gave a 3Rs taskforce a small budget to fund 10 different waste-reducing pilot programs for one year. They invited CUPE members as well as councillors, city staff, environmentalists, and the public to participate and suggest possible Quick Start projects.

Partnerships between CUPE and community groups helped deliver these Quick Starts and the community then used what they learned to gather support for full-scale programs. Here are a few examples of these programs.

- Door-to-door distribution of free backyard composters
- Apartment building recycling
- Yard wastes
- Re-use centre and guide



Examples of Quick Starts and other small-scale programs

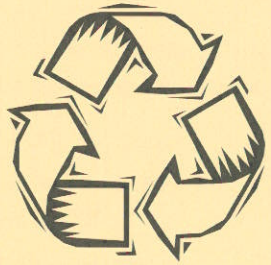
Recycling textiles

A group in Washington found that curbside pick-ups work for recycling fabrics and clothing. This is what they learned.

- **Keep the textiles dry.** Most communities ask resident to put textiles in clear plastic bags.
- **Be patient.** The best recyclers in town are probably already taking these materials to charities, and may keep doing so.
- **Work with charities.** The group encourages residents to give their best quality materials to charities, and save the rest for recycling.

Tire Recycling - Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Alberta

Demand is rising for old tires. Old tires can be ground up and used for:



- road construction
- rubber mats
- protective surfaces
- horse-stall flooring
- patio decks
- swimming pool decks
- welcome mats

Some provinces have legislated fees on new tire sales to fund recovery programs. Nova Scotia has banned car and truck tires from disposal, creating a secondary business to handle tire recovery and reuse. The new industry employs 50 people in the province. In Alberta, the scrap tire management program is responsible for the reuse of 2.6 million tires.

Scrap Tire News, a monthly publication, is a great resource for up-to-date information on tire recycling trends, regulatory developments and technology advancements.

Household Hazardous Wastes

Household hazardous wastes (HHW) account for one percent of the waste stream, yet their impact on the natural environment is devastating. Estimates vary but it is commonly believed that there are up to 100,000 chemicals in commercial use worldwide, with about 1000 new chemicals entering the market every year.

When poured down drains or dumped in landfills, paints, solvents, motor oil and pesticides produce lethal gases or end up in lakes and rivers. One litre of oil can contaminate up to two million litres of water.

British Columbia has recognized the seriousness of this problem. Five years ago, the provincial government introduced a program that calls for paint and chemical manufacturers to collect and recycle leftover paints and chemicals. People who want to get rid of their old paint and chemicals take them to specially designated return depots. All drop-off depots must be:

- open six days-a-week
- within four kilometers of points of purchase in urban areas and 10 km. in rural areas
- advertised in paint shops and hardware stores

The program has been a great success for B.C. After five years, over 10 million litres of leftover paint has been diverted from landfills and sewers.

Computers and electronics

The computer age translates into a growing environmental contamination problem. There are traces of toxic heavy metals in computers. and computer monitors have lead-based glass cathode ray tubes (CRT). Over the next decade standard TVs will be phased out as the broadcasting industry shifts to high density services (HDTV).

- In Binghampton, New York, spring and fall clean ups, using curbside pick-up, recover electronics and computer materials that are 90 percent recyclable.

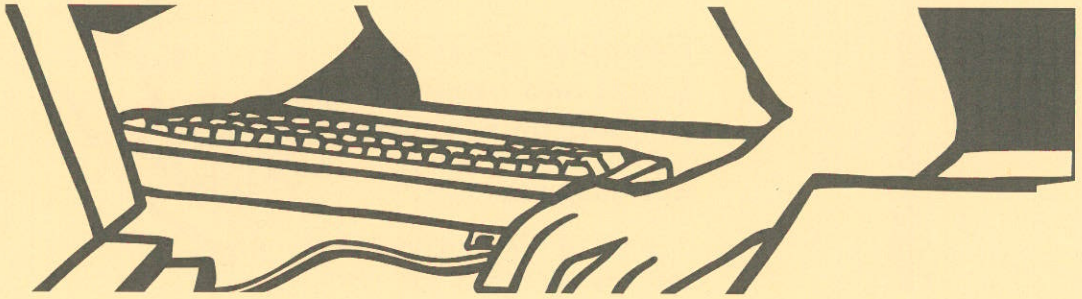
- In San Jose, California, three large electronics stores voluntarily take back unwanted computers and electronics every October. The stores resell 62 percent of what they recover.

- Minneapolis, Minnesota has a curbside pick-up of TVs and computers. Over 15 tons of electronic goods are collected each month. The city donates TVs to local charities and also runs a collection centre with onsite job training in dismantling equipment. The city then resells the used components.

Special events

Parades, concerts and other special events require special 3R strategies since litter is often the main product of these events.

- Every year, the Ben and Jerry's *One World and One Heart Festival* attracts 40,000 people. In the early 1990's event organizers concentrated on recycling glass and aluminum cans. In 1994, they introduced composting and collected 350 bags of food scraps and biodegradable containers. They generated about 60 cubic yards of compost.



Working with local government

Your municipal or city government is the most important target in your drive for more effective 3Rs programs. The mayor and councillors are solely responsible for what happens to your garbage after it's picked up.

Local governments can:

- Pass by-laws that influence what people throw in their garbage bag or pour down the drain.

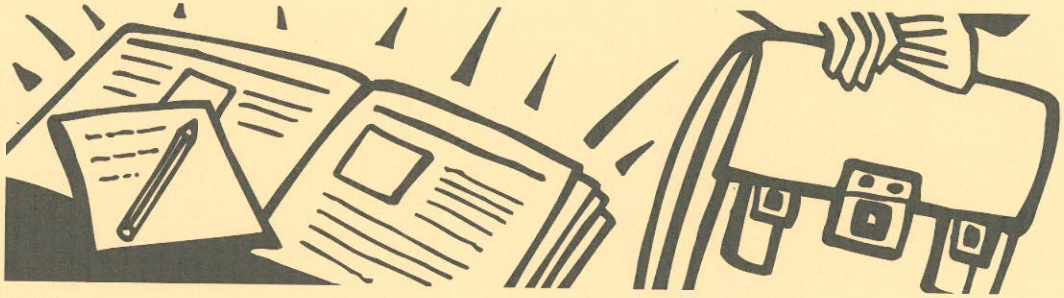
  Many municipalities, including Guelph, Halifax and Kingston, have banned compostable and/or recyclable material from the landfill. These by-laws give your city or municipality the authority to slap fines on offenders.

- Introduce education programs such as public awareness campaigns and pilot projects.

  The Wet-Dry pick-up program in Guelph began as a pilot project. By starting off as a pilot, workers were able to get feedback on what worked with the system and what didn't. Residents were also given the opportunity to get accustomed to the changes.

- Change waste disposal practices within your community.

  City councils have the authority to change disposal practices. They even have the authority to scrap one system (*Blue Box for example*) in favour of another (*Wet-Dry pick-up*). Budgets and political will are their only limitations. Guelph provides the best example of this. The community abandoned its traditional Blue Box program in favour of an entirely new system that included building an advanced waste processing facility.



Public support for programs, by-laws and budgetary spending are three important areas that will determine the success of your 3R goals at city hall. It's also important to remember that councillors normally have several initiatives on the go and may not be aware of alternatives to Blue Box recycling programs. By building 3Rs support in council you improve the chances of having better waste diversion programs adopted.

Some basic tips for dealing with local governments

- If you have never dealt with municipal or city councillors before, start off by contacting the councillor who represents your neighbourhood. Ask about where council stands on 3Rs and whether it is considering any new 3R initiatives.
- Look through back issues of your local paper. Chances are you'll find articles about waste management and the councillors who support new waste diversion initiatives. Checking the voting record of long term councillors provides insight into what environmental initiatives they have supported or blocked in the past.
- New council members should be sold on the opportunity to take the lead on 3Rs. Eventually you will have to meet with all councillors and some staff to develop support.



- Draw up a list of councillors categorized as green, fence-sitters (possible swing votes) and nay-sayers. Include what issues push their buttons. For example, a councillor may have asthma and therefore hates pesticide spraying, or a budget-conscious councillor will need to be swayed with financial arguments.
- Get to know the municipal staff in charge of waste removal programs. Councillors rely on municipal staff for information. Making sure key staff are aware of 3R options such as the Wet-Dry model will give a boost to your campaign.
- What 3R programs do councillors most favour? For example, curbside recycling programs are popular with residents and councillors may resist changes to the program.

- Convince your council that collecting beverage containers through a deposit return system will be more effective than through the Blue Box (recycling) program.
- Offer examples of recycling programs that work to council, council members, working groups and/or city staff. The best parts of Guelph's Wet-Dry program include:
  - achieving 60 percent waste diversion
  - processing compostables
  - reducing pick-up costs
  - high participation rates
  - excellent value for additional investment

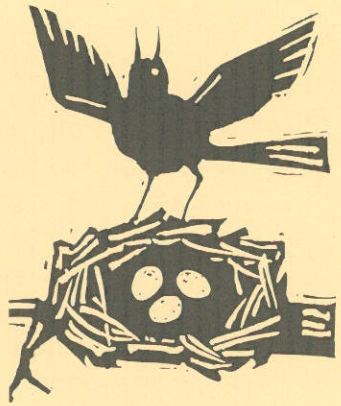
Mobilizing public support

Learning about your local government and where your councillors stand on 3Rs issues, is an important first step. But to bring about change, you need the public on side.

With enough public support, politicians are more open to persuasion. In many cases all it takes are a few hundred letters sent to the mayor, or a long petition list to council, and policy decisions begin to shift.

Before you start mobilizing public pressure, determine precisely what it is you want to accomplish. For example, do you want your community to adopt a Wet-Dry system similar to Guelph's? Perhaps a ban on household hazardous wastes (HHW) or compostable material from landfills is a more appropriate goal.

Whatever it is, it's important to decide on a goal together with the members of your committee, union local, coalition or network. From there, you and your group



can decide on what steps to take to achieve your goals. Here are some helpful ideas to consider:

Establish a Council Watch within your local or 3Rs campaign group.

A Council Watch would be responsible for keeping an eye on relevant waste issues being discussed at public works meetings. Then you'll know about proposals before decisions are made and you can raise concerns and propose alternatives.

Help get 'green' councillors elected

Municipal elections happen every two or three years. They are an excellent opportunity to elect people who are passionate about their community's environmental record. This strategy will pay dividends down the road when you and your group have 3R-related issues on the council agenda. Elections also provide a chance to improve the profile of 3R-related issues. The added public spotlight will help you make the case for alternatives to the traditional Blue Box recycling programs.

Produce pamphlets, leaflets, flyers and buttons for the public

1. Educating the public about your cause is key to the success of the campaign. Producing your own information material is a quick and inexpensive way to make this possible.
2. Keep your message short, clear and precise.
3. Make the connection between better 3R programs and green jobs.
4. Outline the benefits to the community and the local economy.
5. List your group or union local's intentions.



6. Let the public know what they can do: vote for certain candidates, write a letter to council members or the mayor, or simply pass on the message to friends and neighbours.
7. Access to a computer or to someone who can lay out a flyer or a leaflet will be a great help.

You can find an example of a brochure in the Tools section of this kit.

Leaflets can be used for organized drops – where members take them door-to-door to let people know what's at stake. You can also use them for information pickets in front of the city or municipal hall for instance, or for an information table you set up at a local mall.

Participate in public consultations on waste-related issues.

When your local government considers a large decision on waste diversion, usually meetings are set up and the public is invited to air its concerns. These meetings provide an excellent opportunity to have your views heard. To make the case for 3Rs:

1. Be prepared by knowing all your facts.
2. Speak clearly and concisely. The longer you speak, the less people will listen.
3. Emphasize that a better 3Rs program means more jobs and helps the local economy.
4. Explain that a Wet-Dry program represents a better value for your municipal dollar.



Talk to councillors before any committee or council votes on 3Rs.

1. Before each vote, prepare a brief letter to councillors asking for them to vote in favour of or against a particular motion. If necessary, suggest a replacement motion or an amendment to a motion in front of your council. The letter should be short and to the point as most councillors will spend less than 5 minutes reading the brief. Always state 3-5 reasons (in bullets) why your position is good for the environment, the community and the local economy.
2. Talk to each councillor in person about the upcoming vote. If you have the opportunity, ask each councillor directly if he or she will be supporting your concerns. If time is short, speak with those councillors who are undecided about the particular motion.
3. Attend council meetings and make sure supportive councillors know your group is there.

Circulating petitions

Circulating petitions is one of the oldest and cheapest ways to getting the public involved. Here are some tips to ensure the success of your petition campaign.

1. Write a simple statement that captures the essence of your campaign. For example:

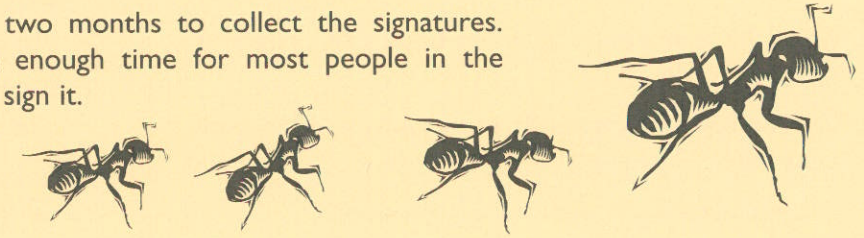
   In the interests of protecting our health and saving our environment, we the undersigned residents of Lookout Falls call upon the Lookout Falls Regional Municipality to adopt a Wet-Dry Waste Reducing Program.

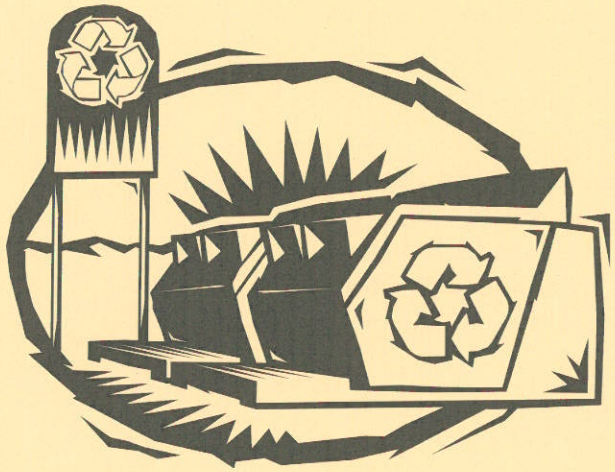
2. Below the statement, design a table for people to sign and print their names and addresses. You might ask for their phone numbers so you can inform them when the petition will be delivered to council.

A petition is good not only because it gives you something to present to council, it also generates conversation about the subject within the community. People who are asked to sign it will, in many situations, not be aware of the issue and will ask for more information.

To get as many signatures as possible make sure you give copies of the petition to everyone you know. Ask them to gather signatures at their workplaces, social club meetings and from friends. In some cases, ask volunteers to spend the afternoon collecting signatures at shopping malls, community events or on city streets.

Give yourself two months to collect the signatures. That will give enough time for most people in the community to sign it.





Letter writing and fax campaigns

This is another effective low-cost approach to getting your community to participate. All it takes is drafting a form letter addressed to the mayor or particular council members. Distribute copies, so members of the public can sign and send them to city hall.

You can be creative in engaging the public. Here's some examples:

- Build a 3Rs parade float - constructed of recycled material for summer festivals.
- Create a toll-free hotline for the public to phone with questions and comments.
- Organize a 100 percent recyclable and compostable picnic at your municipal or city hall.

Helpful tips on media relations

Your local newspapers, radio stations and TV stations can play a key role in getting your message to the public. Reporters are always interested in issues concerning garbage because decisions made by your local government impact directly on people in the community.

To ensure you get the kind of coverage that helps your cause, it's important that your group:

- is knowledgeable about garbage
- maintains good relations with reporters, and
- takes a proactive approach and informs reporters about any new developments

Here's how to get started:

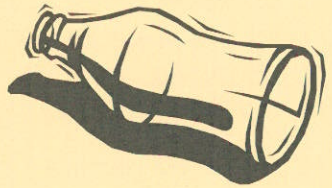
The Media Needs a "News Hook": when contacting the media make sure you let them know that this is news. Remember, news reporting is a job and you are helping journalists by offering a story worth writing about. A special event, a development or a different angle on the story is what is known as a news hook.

Here are some examples:

Campaign launch: you and members of your group decide on your goal and wish to kick off your campaign publicly. It's important to give a name to your campaign such as Public Works for 3Rs, or 3Rs Make Cents. Naming your campaign will help people remember what your group is about.

New information comes to light: a study or results of a survey are released. For example, local landfill nears capacity or study finds local landfill increases health risks.

Important person comes to town: a person who is known as an expert on environmental issues or waste management. For example, David Suzuki or the mayor of Guelph would be good for media interviews.





Important event takes place: for example, mayor signs a commitment to reduce waste by 20 percent, or council votes in favour of exploring alternative 3R programs.

The news release:

When something important happens and you want reporters to know, you send out a news release. News releases are short documents (no more than one page) that consist of relevant "newsworthy" information. In fact, much of what you read in newspapers or see on TV newscasts originates from news releases.

- Make sure you have news to report.
- Be accurate, honest, and check your facts.
- Avoid jargon. Use everyday words and short sentences.
- Use direct quotes from the person involved in the story.
- Proofread before faxing your release to news outlets.
- Include a contact name and a phone number.
- Follow up with a phone call.

You can turn to the Tools section for an example of a news release.

The press conference:

Like news releases, press conferences are also used to draw attention to information that would serve the public. Press conferences are more elaborate than press releases and require considerably more time to plan. Your group should hold press conferences only for the most important developments.

- Find out what the deadlines are for news outlets in your community.
- Provide advance notice of a press conference by phone and/or press advisory at least one day in advance.
- Provide fact sheets and other background information at press conferences and media events.
- Find a visually interesting site for press conferences and other media-related events.
- Have names of speakers and groups (spelled correctly) available before press conferences and media-related events.
- Each press event should have only one main message, but you should offer reporters more than one angle by organizing a diverse panel of speakers. Speakers can range from heads of organizations to concerned citizens.

Opinion Pieces:

Newspaper opinion pieces are an excellent way to get your point of view clearly stated and publicized on a particular issue. Wait until a local issue is hot and there are at least two sides to the debate before you submit your view.



Community & Alternative Newspapers:

The great advantage to lower-circulation newspapers is that they're willing to take on stories big newspapers otherwise wouldn't cover. They are also more likely to follow up on a news release you send them.

Radio Talk Shows:

Radio stations like the CBC often run talk or interview shows three times a day - morning, noon and before supper. These spots offer 5 to 15-minute discussions on an issue. Call a producer before a press event and offer to come on the show. Another bonus: you don't necessarily need a link to a media event. You can pitch your story if your issue is hot and something is about to happen. For example, Council is about to vote on expanding its Blue Box program. Talk radio and call-in shows are also great ways to get your message heard.

Community-Access TV:

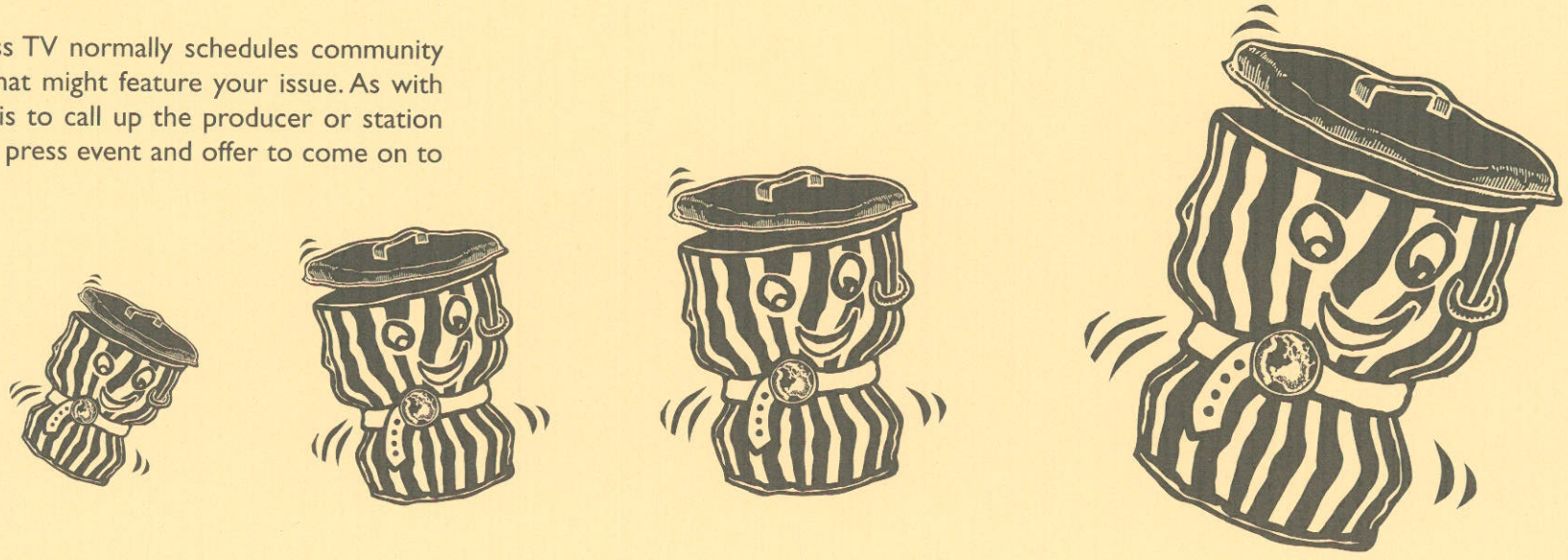
Community-access TV normally schedules community news programs that might feature your issue. As with radio, all it takes is to call up the producer or station manager before a press event and offer to come on to the show.

Feature Press:

Think beyond news articles in the paper to the business, home living, and even entertainment sections. A local reuse guide, listing stores and opportunities to re-use, repair and rent goods, can become a home finance story or a thrifty fashion tips article.

Letters to the Editor:

Writing a 100 to 200-word response to an article in the paper is certainly the easiest media attention to get. Read the papers every day. When you write, be succinct and to the point.



Towards Green COMMUNITIES

3Rs at Home & in the Workplace

AS A CUPE MEMBER AND a member of your community you can play an important role in starting a 3Rs program at work and where you live. By learning the basics and taking a lead, you can help promote clean and ecologically sustainable communities. Your actions will also help to keep new jobs in the recycling industry unionized and public.

This section will give you a head start. Inside you will find suggestions and step-by-step instructions on starting your own 3Rs program for your workplace and where you live. You will also find helpful tips and examples of other successful 3R programs.

Recycling at Home and the Workplace includes sections on:

- Multi-unit residential buildings like apartments and co-op housing
- Offices
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Construction sites
- Parks and grounds
- Cafeterias and food service departments



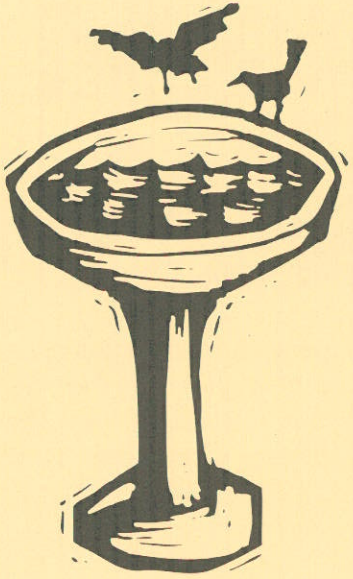
Some workplaces such as garages and maintenance yards are not included in this part of the kit. We are still developing our expertise on 3Rs and we hope to include these workplaces in a future edition.

Canadian Union of Public Employees - www.cupe.ca

Apartments







APARTMENTS, CONDOS AND CO-OPS REQUIRE A personal touch. Programs need to be tailored for each individual building to fit the different size, layout and type of building. But with a little creativity and persistence, 3Rs for multi-unit buildings can be a great success.

If you live in an apartment, condo or co-op, you have an excellent opportunity to start a 3Rs program in your own building. Here are some tips to show you how.

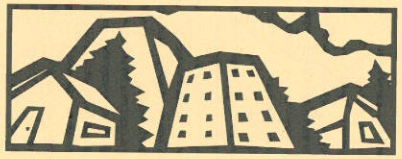
- Explore your options. Can you propose a Wet-Dry system? If not, what kind of program can your building accommodate? You have a number of choices, from setting up a composting site to establishing separate containers for paper, metals, glass and plastics.
- Talk to friends and neighbours. Are they interested in having a 3Rs program? Perhaps they'll want to take part. You may even be able to form a committee or working group to divide up the work.
- Generate interest by approaching your neighbours. Consider developing a flyer or letter about the merits of starting a 3Rs program and distributing it to all tenants.
- Follow up your letter or flyer by going door-to-door and keeping a list of tenants who support





the idea. You can also keep track of any ideas they may have for the program.

- If you live in a condo, you can make a presentation about a possible 3Rs program to your property management committee.
- Be prepared. Read up on 3R programs and how they work. Many tenants may seem disinterested or will have questions about separating their waste. By knowing about the issues, you will be able to demonstrate to fellow tenants that a



3Rs program is a good idea. (You can find information at your local library, or you can contact 3R organizations that are listed in the Tools Section.)

Building managers can strengthen your 3Rs effort. He or she probably knows the building better than anyone and is constantly in touch with all tenants. Your manager can:

- educate tenants about waste diversion programs when they sign their leases;
- attach a brochure to the lease that explains how tenants are expected to participate;
- give new tenants information and collection containers the day they move in;
- attach information sheets to the fridge or cupboard in each unit or on the collection containers themselves; and
- place reminders and program guidelines throughout the building including the elevator and laundry room.



Hospitals

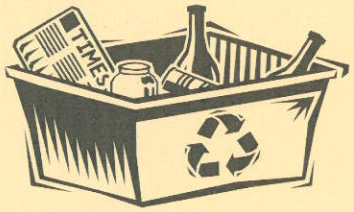
Because incinerators are a major contributor to air pollution, researchers are currently testing microwave technology to destroy biomedical waste.

HOSPITALS PROVIDE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR recycling. Hospitals tend to have a large staff serving hundreds of patients. Establishing a good 3Rs policy within your hospital will require patience, planning, perseverance and cooperation.

Hospitals have special waste management challenges because of the presence of infectious and biologically hazardous materials. But that shouldn't deter you from pursuing a 3Rs program in your hospital. 3R programs make economic and environmental sense and many workers in Canadian hospitals have taken on and won the 3Rs challenge.

You can influence what happens in your hospital. Here's a simple set of guidelines to help you and your co-workers establish a 3Rs program.

- Find out what's being done right now. Does your hospital have a waste diversion program in place? If so, how much waste is being diverted? Does the hospital have a special committee to deal with these issues? What are the goals and targets? Are employees represented on that committee and if not, are they being consulted?
- Read up on the 3Rs and how they work. The more you know about the issue, the more people are prepared to listen. (You can find information at your local library, or you can contact 3R organizations that we have listed in the Tools Section.)
- Establish a small committee or working group within your hospital. Tack up posters in the lunchroom and other common areas. Circulate a letter among co-workers inviting them to a meeting about the 3R's. It doesn't take a lot of people to get a campaign started. It's amazing what you and a few dedicated volunteers can do.





Example

Toronto hospital targets waste

The Toronto Hospital for Sick Children (HSC), world famous for its high standard of care for children, is also becoming famous for its waste busting. In 1990, HSC burned 100 percent of its waste. But by 1997, HSC was recycling 34 percent of its waste and had reduced its garbage disposal costs from $1.2 million /yr. to $500,000/yr. The hospital has now closed its incinerator and, through ongoing audits, continues to identify and solve problem areas.

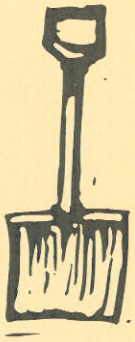
The key to HSC's success was education. The hospital developed a guide that explained how specific materials were to be handled and outlined the responsibilities of each employee.

- At your first committee meeting, decide on your objectives and agree to divide up the work. You can split the campaign into areas like planning, research and outreach.
- Construct a plan. Get a sense of how much waste your hospital produces and find out how it's paying for waste disposal. Perhaps your hospital even has a existing waste audit you can use as a reference.
- Build up the program one step at a time. You can start your 3Rs program with paper recycling. Once that's off the ground, you can concentrate on plastics, metals, glass and then food waste. You may want to include a proposal for a waste management coordinator.
- No plan is complete without guidelines for education. Doctors, nurses, administration staff and even patients and visitors need to know about how to follow the 3R rules. In your plan, include a set of guidelines that states each staffer's responsibility for separating, collecting and handling waste and recyclables in each department.
- Once you've completed your recycling plan, call for a meeting with the hospital's operations and maintenance manager and hospital board members. Keep your points short and concise. Highlight the economic benefits of the 3Rs and the number of hospitals across Canada that have adopted their own 3R programs. You can also point out how the 3Rs will boost the hospital's public image. To strengthen your case, you can circulate a petition – signed by fellow staff members – to present at the meeting.
- If management is reluctant to adopt a plan, ask for a commitment – whether it's studying the issue more closely or revisiting it in three months. Be sure to keep the pressure up and collect whatever additional information you need.



Construction & Demolition

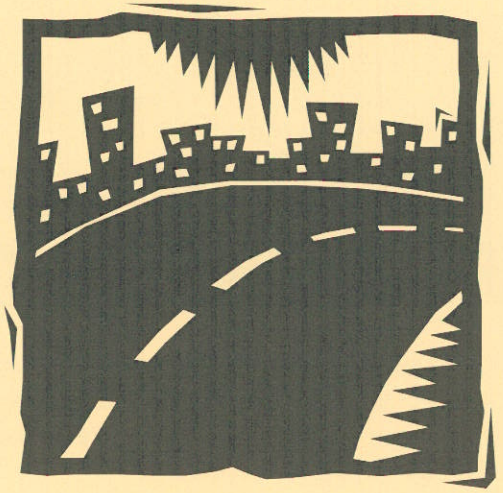
When you consider that construction and demolition account for between 25 and 33 percent of waste in Canada, taking steps to implement the 3Rs on construction sites can go a long way in protecting our environment.



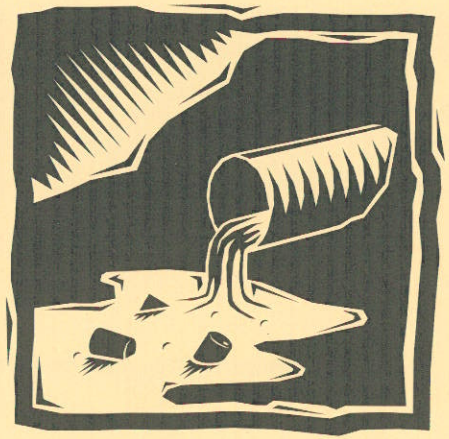
IMAGINE BUILDING A HOUSE FROM SCRATCH and at the end of the day all you end up with is a couple of bags of garbage you can take to the curb. That's what a group of builders did recently with a house they built in Kitchener-Waterloo. This may sound like an amazing accomplishment, especially considering that building an average home normally creates about 2.5 tonnes of waste. But the construction crew relied on common sense and put together a simple plan before they started building. The crew:

- ordered exact quantities of building materials and returned unused material to the supplier;
- took leftover building supplies such as paint and wood to the next job site;
- inserted scraps of building materials such as drywall and insulation within interior walls and in the ceiling; and
- crushed leftover concrete and used it for aggregate and drainage on other construction sites.

Reducing and re-using the building materials you use is only one step in adopting a plan for 3R building practices. For future building projects, you may want to include used and recycled materials. Here are some examples:



- Fibre-reinforced wallboard made of old newspapers and gypsum
- Concrete containing residual fly ash from coal burning
- A metal roof made out of recycled material
- Wood flooring salvaged from demolished warehouses



- Carpeting made from recycled pop bottles
- Used fixtures such as bath tubs and kitchen sinks

Recycled materials don't have to cost more than regular building supplies and no special skills are required to handle them.

Tearing down old buildings is another practice that's notorious for producing mountains of waste. As with other areas within the building industry, all it takes is some foresight and common sense to cut the impact of demolition on the natural environment.

One method of dealing with tearing down buildings is deconstruction. As the name suggests, deconstruction is essentially the reverse of construction. Buildings are carefully dismantled and the salvaged materials are resold and reused.

Deconstruction is a very simple process. It begins from the roof down. After the windows, doors and furnishings are salvaged, the roof is removed and the rest of the building is dismantled. And, like the home in Kitchener-Waterloo, all it takes is some planning and forethought.

- Before deconstruction can begin, put together a plan. Salvaged material will have to be separated into several piles: concrete, metals, lumber, insulation, doors and windows, as well as mechanical and electrical equipment. A waste audit would be helpful to determine the amount of material you expect to salvage.
- The material you salvage can either be recycled or reused. Windows, doors, insulation, lumber and mechanical equipment can be resold or donated to a non-profit housing group. Materials such as scrap metal, drywall, glass and plastics can all be recycled.
- The extra time it takes to deconstruct a building normally pays off in the end. Usually, you can sell the salvaged material for more than it costs to deconstruct the building.



Schools

GETTING A 3RS PROGRAM STARTED IN YOUR school can serve two purposes. It will divert waste from landfills and it can also serve to educate students about the merits of reducing, reusing and recycling.

Establishing a 3Rs program is a popular way for kids to learn about the environment. For example, Earth Day Canada promotes 3Rs through a program for elementary school students. Teachers use the program to educate about 3Rs and the role they could play in preserving the natural environment. The program is approaching its fourth year and has been used to educate over 250,000 kids.

Like offices, schools are also known for using a lot of paper in day-to-day activities. Teachers rely heavily on photocopiers for handouts, exams and worksheets. By concentrating on paper alone, you can wipe out at least 40 percent of the waste that a typical school produces.



Here are some ideas to consider if you want to get a 3Rs program off the ground in your school.

- Write a short letter for teachers and co-workers outlining your intentions for a 3Rs program. In your letter, explain how the program would benefit the environment and serve as a project to bring together teachers, students and staff. Include a time and a place for a first meeting and invite staff members who would be interested in participating.
- Post your letter in common areas like the staff room and circulate it among teachers and co-workers.
- People are going to ask a lot of questions, so be prepared. Read up on paper recycling and how it works. The more you know about the issue, the more people will be prepared to listen. (You can



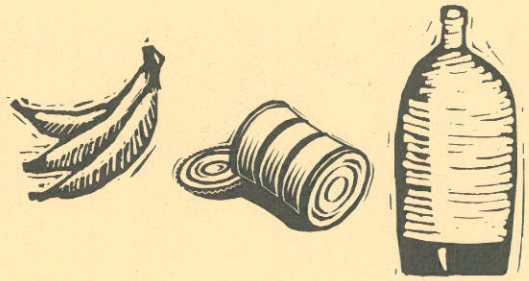
Example

Students in Ontario start their own recycling programs

Students of Bradford District High School in Bradford, Ontario took the initiative to start a 3Rs program for their own school. After establishing their own recycling club, one of their first orders of business was to have large recycling bins placed in high-visibility areas throughout the school.

The idea was a success. The school diverted a large amount of waste from the landfill and the location of the bins made it easy for everyone to see how much material can be salvaged through recycling. The school's caretakers played an important role in the program's development. They helped the students with the program and set up workshops in other schools to teach staff and students outside Bradford how to set up their own 3Rs program.

At Concord Elementary School in Windsor, Ontario, even the youngest students are involved in 3Rs. The grade one and two students collect lunchtime food scraps for the school's four composters. The school's caretakers help keep the composters operating by mixing in leaves and grass clippings.



find information at your local library, or you can contact 3R organizations that are listed in the Tools Section.)

- At your first meeting decide on your objectives and agree to divide up the work. You can divide it into planning, research and outreach. Also find out how finances work at your school and who to approach to discuss your plan. It could be a principal, school board members or the superintendent.
- Construct a plan. Get a sense of how much waste your school produces. Find out how much it costs to dump it and then compare that figure with how much a 3Rs program costs. If the research shows that recycling would be cheaper, use that information for your proposal or discussion paper.
- Once your committee has finished writing a proposal, it's time to approach the people who have the authority to make a decision. Keep your points short and concise. Let them know it's a great opportunity that students can learn from and that it will go a long way toward benefiting the community. Also stress that a program shouldn't cost any more than what the school already spends on garbage.

Caretakers for one school discovered that separating materials for collection is no different and no more expensive than transporting it to a landfill.

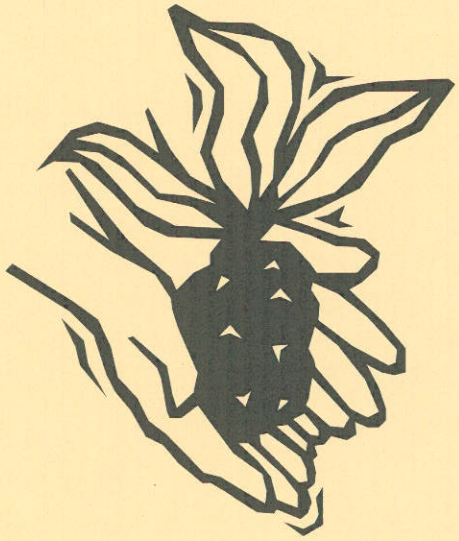


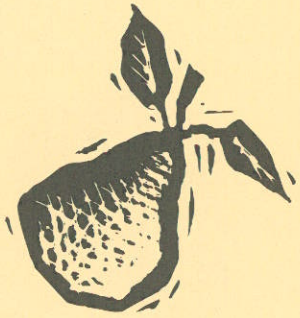
Cafeterias & Food Services

AS WITH OTHER WORKPLACES, BIG GAINS CAN be made to reduce waste in food service departments and cafeterias. Food scraps make up a large part of the total waste produced by cafeterias and food service departments. You can also target suppliers who use excessive packaging and you can start an awareness program to curb the use of disposable napkins, plates, cups and utensils found in most cafeterias.

There are a lot of opportunities in the food service industry to start up a 3Rs program.

- Depending on where you work, you may want to campaign for an in-vessel composter. These are special composters that can handle high volumes, compost all food waste and convert food scraps into compost in just 35 days. In-vessel composters make sense for hospitals and large busy cafeterias.
- An alternative to in-vessel composters is collecting food waste in clear plastic bags (so employees don't mistake it for garbage) and have it picked up regularly by a composting company.
- For smaller cafeterias and food service work places, a simple on-sight composter maintained by you and your co-workers, may be the solution. (To learn how to build a composter, flip to the Tools section.)



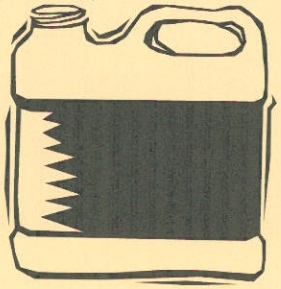


- You can also focus your 3Rs campaign on reducing the amount of paper, plastics, metals and glass that would otherwise end up in the garbage. Convince suppliers to use less packaging. A solution may be switching to

Example

In 1991, a group of Kingston-area restaurants took on the 3Rs challenge and within three months they had reduced their garbage output by 30 percent. After just one year of recycling and composting food scraps, 45,000 tonnes of garbage was diverted from the landfill.





reusable shipping containers for buns, milk, eggs, pop and meat deliveries.

- Campaign for a recycling program that allows for the separation of glass, plastics, paper, Styrofoam, and aluminium pop cans.
- Make education a top priority. Colour-coded bins in convenient locations, and signs that clarify what materials go where, will give employees and customers some direction and will ensure the success of your program.
- Establishing a good 3Rs program is not difficult. All it takes is some patience, planning, perseverance and cooperation. You can influence what happens in your work place by convincing your co-workers that starting up a 3Rs program doesn't take a lot of work and that it's a great way to protect the environment.

3R programs make economic and environmental sense and many food service workers in Canada have taken on and won the 3Rs challenge.



Parks & Grounds

COMPOSTING IS A SIMPLE, LOW-MAINTENANCE way to get rid of branches, grass clippings and leaves. Establishing a composting site doesn't take a lot of effort. Here are some helpful tips on how you can start up a composter at your workplace.

Compost is a cheap alternative for restoring degraded parkland and improving community gardens.

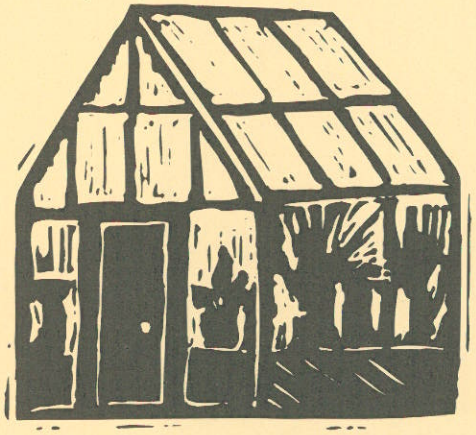
Example

Groundkeepers take action on composting

Groundkeepers at the Botanical Gardens in New York developed their own lawn trimmings compost program. The program provided training in collection and compost pile construction, maintenance and use. The 400-square foot compost area, enclosed with a chain link fence, diverts about 6500 cubic feet from the landfill every year. The program is also very low maintenance, requiring workers to turn the pile only once or twice a month. It takes about a year before the compost is ready to use.



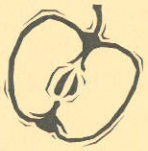
- Explore your options. How much waste do you collect and what kind of composter would best suit your needs. For more information about composters the local library is a great resource or you can contact 3R organizations that are listed in the Tools Section.

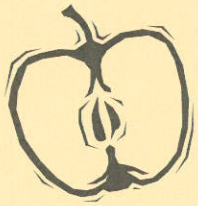


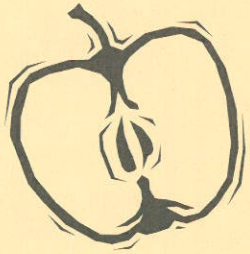
- Talk your co-workers. Tell them that starting up a composter is a simple low maintenance way to protect the environment.
- Get the appropriate approvals. Suggest the idea to your supervisor and/or management. They will have the last say on where the composter can be located and how big it can be. If space for a composter is limited, suggest switching to mulching mowers and fertilizers that limit heavy growth.

Offices

You and your co-workers can establish a composter to recycle lunch scraps. (To find out how, flip to the Tools section.)







A TYPICAL 500-PERSON OFFICE CAN GENERATE over 50 tonnes of waste each year. That's enough waste to fill 25 dump trucks. But with some basic common-sense approaches to reducing, reusing and recycling, the waste your office produces can be cut by over 90 percent.

Thanks to computers and photocopiers, the amount of paper that collects in the trash bin can really pile up.

Fortunately for the environment, most office managers and building personnel recognize the benefits of recycling. Today it's not uncommon to see big blue bins by the photocopier and blue buckets next to people's desks.

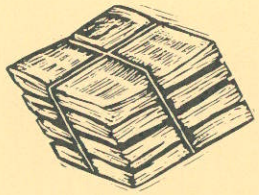
Does your office have a paper-recycling program? If not, here are some tips to help establish a paper-recycling program in your workplace.

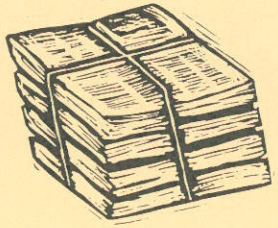
- Talk to your co-workers. Are they interested in having a 3Rs program? Perhaps they'll want to take part. You may even be able to form a committee or working group to divide up the work. You can follow up by producing a leaflet explaining your concerns about the environment and the state of recycling in your office.
- Send the leaflet through your office's e-mail system or write it on the back of used paper.

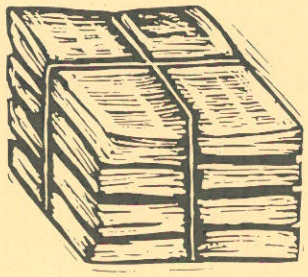


This simple gesture will help get the campaign started on the right foot. Also try tacking up the leaflets in the lunch room and other designated bulletin boards.

- Follow up on your leaflet by talking to co-workers. Keep a list of employees who support the idea. When the time comes to make a presentation to your employer and building manager, you will need their support.







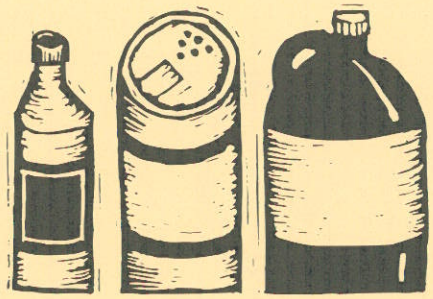
You can raise 3Rs awareness by writing a column in your office newsletter or posting a list of tips on an office bulletin board.

- Be prepared. Read up on paper recycling and how it works. The more you know about the issue, the more people are prepared to listen. (You can find information at your local library, or you can contact the 3R organizations that are listed in the Tools Section.)
- Construct a plan. Get a sense of how much paper your office produces and find out how much your city or municipality charges for pick-up and recycling. Find out how much your office spends to dump its paper in the landfill. Compare the two figures and find out if there could be a savings.
- Once you and your co-workers are prepared to make the case for recycling, call for a meeting with your employer and building manager. Keep your points short and concise. Let them know that recycling paper is common in most offices across Canada, makes economic sense and will give your employer a better public image.
- If officials are reluctant to adopt a paper-recycling plan right away, ask for a future commitment. Be sure to keep the pressure up and collect whatever additional information you need.

If your office already recycles paper, look at other alternatives for reducing waste.

- Campaign for printers and photocopiers that print or copy on both sides of the paper.
- Use paper without bleach and with a high level of recycled content.
- Use your office e-mail system to send letters, memos and newsletters.
- Re-use old envelopes for mail-outs.
- Use the back of printed paper for keeping notes.

A successful 3Rs program doesn't only include paper. You can also expand your 3Rs campaign to include food, plastics, glass, aluminium cans, Styrofoam containers and wax paper. The above steps outlined for a paper recycling program could also be used for reusing or recycling other materials. All you need are four other containers to separate food, plastics, glass and aluminium.



Example

Federal government office reduces waste by over 90 percent

In response to a growing concern about the environment, Natural Resources Canada launched a radical 3Rs program in one of its office buildings in Ottawa. The program called Enhanced Waste Free allows for the recycling of 98 percent of all materials used in the building. As well as paper, plastic, Polystyrene, metal, glass and plastics, the list of recyclable material includes toners, fluorescent tubes and batteries. The only materials that can't be processed are blueprints, carbon paper, waxed cardboard, and vinyl plastics.

The program takes 3Rs a step further by replacing desk-side waste containers with mini waste bins that clip onto the side of the paper-recycling containers. Employees empty their containers at a central recycling station found on each floor.

The results of the program have been outstanding, reducing the amount of waste that's sent to the landfill from 11,295 kg to 978 kg annually. That's a 93 percent diversion rate.



