

Who else, but RCM!

Deluge of phone calls ends suspense: master composter training a hit!

An uneasy question gripped RCM's composting project staff as they set about planning a Master Composter training course this spring. The course is designed to



give participants a more detailed understanding of the hows and whys of backyard composting. But what if no one was interested in signing up?

Publication of an announcement in the Winnipeg Free Press put the question to rest. Within a week, more than 50 inquiries had been received. In the end, RCM had no trouble filling the 15 available spots, and now has a waiting list for future courses.

Participants in master composter training learn through lectures, videos, tours, hands-on demonstrations and discussion groups. Topics include provincial and local perspectives on organic waste, and the benefits, methods, biology, and technical aspects of backyard composting. Mid-scale and large scale composting are also covered, but are not the main focus of the course. Sessions also touch on communicating with the public.

The course is directed to community educators, groundskeepers, turf managers, teachers, staff or volunteers of environmental non-governmental and advocacy organizations, gardening groups, landscapers, and students of environmental programs, as well as interested private citizens.

To earn a master composter certificate, participants must attend 22 hours of training; set up and operate

their own backyard composter, vermicomposter or compost demonstration site within two years; and spend 30 hours of volunteer time as ambassadors in the community.

Master composter training is one means by which RCM builds capacity for composting and compost education in Manitoba. Other planned initiatives include distribution of information on mid-scale composting systems and facilitation of training for operators of larger-scale systems. Continuing services include workshops, publications, and a toll-free province-wide compost helpline.

Ophelia Morris and Christine Schroeder staff the project, with support from Manitoba Conservation, the City of Winnipeg Water and Waste Department, the Manitoba Community Services Council, and the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation.

Commuter Challenge '04 prompts Winnipeggers to leave home without it

Without their car, that is. Especially if it is one of those dreaded SOVs!!

The Commuter Challenge is a good-natured competition among Canadian cities that encourages commuters to choose environmentally friendly ways of getting to work and school.

The event promotes alternatives to the SOV -- Single Occupant Vehicle -- including walking, biking, blading, carpooling, and transit.

Last year, 10,000 Winnipeggers at more than 150 participating sites took the Challenge. Their green commuting choices earned a national first place finish for the city.

With the highest participation rate in the country, Winnipeg edged out

larger cities such as Ottawa and Vancouver. Commuters here traveled more than 140,000 green kilometers during the 2003 event.

In the run-up to Challenge Week 2004 (May 31-June 4), RCM staff Serge LaRoche and Andrea Lambo Miln were busy contacting schools and workplaces, preparing workplace kits, writing announcements, arranging prizes, answering calls, and organizing workshops for Challenge workplace co-ordinators.

Many new workplaces came on board this year, including Manitoba Public Insurance and Manitoba Lotteries. They joined experienced Challenge sites such as the Canadian Wheat Board, the Fairmont Hotel, Ceridian Canada, Wardrop Engineering, Frantic Films, Clinic, CJOB/Power 97, Emerge Knowledge Design, CN, Seven Oaks General Hospital, Probe Research, MFL Occupational Health Centre, Red River College, and dozens of others.

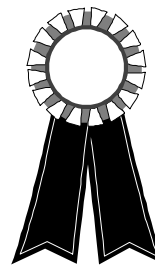
An added event this year was a public workshop on walkable communities featuring active transportation expert Dan Burden.

At the official Challenge launch at the Manitoba Legislature in May, Tim

Sale, Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, urged Manitobans "to contribute to a healthier environment and a better future by taking the commuter challenge." Added Jim Rondeau, Minister of Healthy Living, "Biking, roller-blading and walking are fun ways to

match fitness and transportation.' Councillor Mike Pagtakhn highlighted the need to create an environment "that makes alternative forms of transportation an option for every working person every working day of every year."

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Bob Brennan, president and CEO of Manitoba Hydro, pledged to go all-out to win another first place finish for Hydro again this year. Hydro employees scored Challenge gold in the 1,000-plus employee category in the past two years.

Sponsors of the 2004 Commuter Challenge are Great West Life, Investors Group, the Winnipeg Free Press, Manitoba Hydro, the City of Winnipeg, Winnipeg Transit, the Province of Manitoba, and Environment Canada.

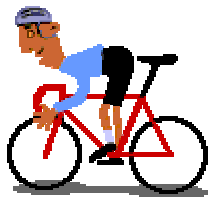
Results of this year's event are posted on RCM's web site.

Commuter Challenge is just the beginning ...

When the last registered commuter arrives home Friday evening of Challenge week, RCM's real work has just started.

For RCM, the Commuter Challenge is not simply an isolated event that takes place once each year. It's a way to get thousands of Manitobans thinking about the environmental, fitness and financial consequences of their commuting choices.

RCM follows up to encourage participating workplaces and schools to take steps to implement sustainable transportation measures year-round.



For example, after the 2003 Challenge, we identified four sites as pilots for detailed work. These were: the Health Sciences Centre, International Institute for Sustainable Development, Manitoba Hydro, and Public Works and Government Services Canada, a federal department.

All now have plans at various stages to support employees in making environmentally friendly travel choices. Surveys have been completed; internal company web pages are being developed; one worksite is considering a ridesharing program; another organized a month-long series of lunch hour workshops for their staff.

RCM promotes what is termed "transportation demand management" (TDM) in order to build

interest, workplace capacity, and participants' commitment to sustainable transportation.

Resource Conservation Manitoba pioneered the Commuter Challenge in Winnipeg in 2000. Now RCM is leading the way in year-round trip reduction at schools and workplaces to help ease traffic congestion, cut air pollution, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve fitness, and strengthen neighbourhood safety.

Keeping RCM up to date on sustainability issues

Staying in touch with others who are doing similar work elsewhere in Canada helps strengthen RCM's ability to carry out environmental education in Manitoba.

While project funders may not always appreciate the value of maintaining these connections, it is through links with peer organizations across the country that RCM learns about best practices, emerging trends, and new developments. This helps RCM bring current thinking on sustainability issues and practices to Manitoba. Some examples:

- Vice-President Elizabeth Troutt represented RCM at a national workshop on stewardship in Halifax in March. This is a key area in which RCM's Board needs to remain informed concerning developments nationally.
- Board member Stephen Walker attended an invitation-only consultation on Canada-US trading in SO₂ and NO_x, organized by Environment Canada. It is significant that the federal department sees RCM as an organization to be included on their list of stakeholders.
- RCM is a member of the national steering committee for the Climate Action Network, a group of ENGOs that monitor Canada's progress on climate change.
- RCM participates on the national steering committee for Waste Reduction Week.
- Last fall, RCM staff attended the annual meeting of the Composting Council of Canada in London, ON.
- RCM attended the annual meeting of the Green Communities Association, of which we are an associate member. GCA actively promotes a

number of programs that RCM supports or delivers, including Active and Safe Routes to School and the federal One Tonne Challenge on climate change.

- RCM is a founding member of a new national association on sustainable urban planning, the Smart Growth Canada Network.
- In Manitoba, RCM is a member of the Manitoba Eco-Network, the Physical Activity Coalition of Manitoba, and Agencies for School Health.

School presentations inspire student action

"One of the rewarding aspects of the Environmental Speakers Bureau (ESB) is that we actually get to return to schools and find out what actions were taken after our presentations were over," says program coordinator Mary Melnychuk.

While direct classroom education on recycling is the primary function of RCM's speakers bureau, a complementary goal is to encourage teachers, students and schools to take practical steps to reduce waste. Some recent examples:

- A cadet group has now started a recycling program for the first time ever, following an ESB presentation.
- At Transcona Collegiate, where a solid recycling program was already in place, students in the Bridges Program persuaded cafeteria management to switch from individual ketchup packages to ketchup bottles. This will make a significant difference, given that the average high school



goes through hundreds and hundreds of disposable ketchup packets weekly, all of which become non-recyclable garbage.

- At Luxton School, after an initial presentation to the school council, student representatives from Grades Five and Six decided to accompany the ESB presenter and help do part of subsequent presentations, as they work on their school recycling program. Needless to say, having kids talk to other kids about recycling is a terrific way to spread the message!

The Environmental Speakers Bureau offers free classroom presentations on environmental topics, provides teachers with background information and activity ideas, and produces reproducible handout sheets for students. For schools outside Winnipeg, a resource kit, *Ready, Set, Recycle*, is also available free from RCM. The program is supported by the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation.

Our thanks to Glenlawn Collegiate for YIP grant

Students at Glenlawn Collegiate in Winnipeg have awarded RCM a grant of \$500 to support our Compost Action program.

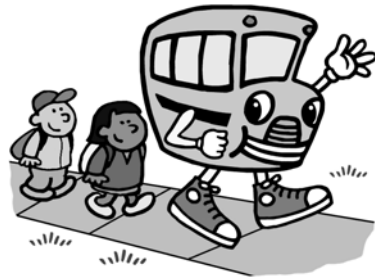
The Glenlawn Youth Action Committee took part in the Youth in Philanthropy Program of the Winnipeg Foundation. YIP provides each participating high school with \$5,000 to be distributed to registered charities in Winnipeg. Students visit eligible organizations to conduct interviews and collect information. They then decide how to allocate their funds among the selected agencies.

The contribution from ecologically-minded students at Glenlawn will help RCM produce handouts and organize 'how-to-compost' workshops. We greatly appreciate this timely support. Thanks, Glenlawn!

Walk to School event boosts kids' fitness, helps the environment

RCM can't expect to keep topping itself -- but on October 8, 2003, Manitoba celebrated its most successful International Walk to School Day yet. One hundred and eighteen schools across the province, representing over 30,000 students,

were registered and participated in the event, an increase from the 58 schools that took part in 2002. Over



half were schools outside Winnipeg.

IWTSD is an internationally recognized day that celebrates the many benefits of walking to school. It's a great way for children to build physical activity into their day. And as schools struggle to cope with jammed streets and parking lots during drop-off and pick-up times, promoting safe walking can also reduce the growing danger of traffic congestion.

In 2003, many schools organized special IWTSD events. These ranged from parades with the local fire department, to a 'Golden Shoe Award,' to poster contests.

As with the Commuter Challenge, RCM builds on participation in IWTSD in order to encourage further sustainable transportation initiatives at schools, as part of our 'active and safe routes to school' program. For example, RCM is now preparing to launch Walking Wednesdays Clubs at schools around the Province. These groups will function throughout the school year to encourage participation and maintain commitment to environmentally healthy travel choices.

Supporting partners in RCM's school-based work this past year have included the Province of Manitoba, the federal Climate Change Action Fund, the TD Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Fund, and the Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Centred Prairie Communities.

RCM also works with the national organization, Go for Green, to promote school-based trip reduction programs and active transportation for all ages. In 2004, International Walk to School Week takes place October 4-8.

Energy efficiency (DSM) benefits environment, jobs, economy: TREE/RCM report

Manitobans could save significant amounts of energy (and money) by using electricity more efficiently. And Manitoba Hydro has plenty of scope to expand the energy efficiency and conservation programs it offers its customers. Those are among the key findings of a report commissioned by RCM and TREE (Time to Respect Earth's Ecosystems).

The report, prepared by Torrie Smith Associates (TSA), an Ottawa consulting firm, examined electricity demand in Manitoba and reviewed Hydro's conservation programs. TSA concluded there is much untapped potential to save electricity in this province through a purposeful program of Demand Side Management. DSM supports efficiency and conservation by energy users.

The analysis was tabled in May at hearings of the Clean Environment Commission into Manitoba's Hydro's proposal to construct the Wuskwatim Dam on the Burntwood River in Northern Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro identified, as the primary purpose of Wuskwatim, the need to maintain current export revenues and profits. But the TSA report found the utility had not comprehensively examined a full range of alternative means of achieving that goal.

The report noted that Hydro could free up electricity for export through an expansion of efficiency measures in homes, commercial buildings and industry. Insulation, fluorescent lighting, and heating system upgrades are examples of such measures.

Skills learned by workers in Northern communities under a DSM program would be more easily transferable and jobs more widely distributed than those in construction at the dam site. And the economic benefits from energy conservation and efficiency would be realized sooner, the report said.

"You will have more direct jobs created per dollars invested through the types of activities that constitute

[... continued ...]

DSM than you will through the activities that are required to build a power plant," Ralph Torrie of TSA told the Commission.

When asked directly whether, in his view, the CEC would need additional information from Hydro on alternatives such as DSM before the Commission could judge whether or not construction of the new dam is justified, Mr. Torrie responded, "Yes."

TREE and RCM received joint intervenor assistance to retain consultants to prepare a report on energy efficiency in Manitoba. Hearings of the Clean Environment Commission, which started in April, were scheduled to wind up by mid-June. The CEC is expected to present recommendations to the Province this fall.

Success puts recycling program in a crunch: RCM urges 'new vision'

The news is really very good! Manitobans are recycling more and more. This means that the value in thousands of tonnes of paper, aluminum, steel, and plastic is now being recovered, instead of being lost in landfills across the province.

However, this heartening success is putting the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation in a serious financial crunch. MPSC collects a levy of two cents on the sale of designated beverage containers, and returns the proceeds to local municipalities to cover up to 80 per cent of the cost of their recycling programs.

With a relatively fixed source of annual income and a substantial increase in payouts to communities as a result of higher recycling volumes, MPSC faces the most serious threat yet to its long-term viability. RCM's Board has endorsed steps to ensure that the program can continue to support recycling, while moving in the direction of stewardship.

In a brief to a Manitoba Conservation workshop in May, RCM urged that MPSC maintain its current level of overall support for recycling programs, including the 80/20 ratio for municipal program funding. RCM recommended continued funding for recycling and waste reduction

education in schools through the popular Star and Star Plus programs.

RCM would look to increasing revenues (rather than dropping the 80 per cent benchmark, or cutting programs), as a means of securing the financial position of MPSC.

Waste reduction is central both to the Province's commitments and to the objectives for MPSC, as set in regulation. RCM recommends setting a target of 10 per cent for a reduction in packaging within the next three years. This could be best achieved by making stewards responsible for the packages they put onto the market through mechanisms that reflect the true cost of collecting and recycling a particular package – not a uniform two-cent levy.

Such an approach would help to deal with the bottom line problem that the stewardship program currently faces, since the cost to stewards would more accurately reflect the cost of dealing with the waste material their packages create.

"It is encouraging that the new MPSC business plan contemplates spreading the levy beyond the beverage industry to other stewards. This is the first necessary step in moving toward the more encompassing stewardship model that we envision," RCM said.

The MPSC plan for the next three years recommends only very modest increases in the amount of waste diverted from landfill. In RCM's view, MPSC should work proactively with municipalities to improve recycling programs, and increase diversion from landfills.

RCM supports the call for a renewed, up-to-date waste minimization plan for the province. Manitoba was once a leader in waste

reduction, with the Waste Reduction and Prevention Act and 'stewardship' program, RCM noted. However, much has changed even in neighbouring provinces, with such programs as electronics



stewardship. RCM sees no room for complacency in this province. Said RCM's Board, "It is time for Manitoba to consider a new vision."

RCM people carry sustainability message into the community

RCM projects include the Compost Action Project (CAP), Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS), Winnipeg Commuter Challenge (WCC), Environmental Speakers Bureau (ESB), Off Ramp Manitoba (ORM), and Waste Reduction Week (WRW). Over the past year, the following people participated in the work of RCM as Board members, project staff, summer student workers, and contract service providers:

Larissa Ashdown (ORM) - Amanda Aziz (summer '03) - Liz Dykman (president) - Rebecca Elko (summer '03) - Linda Eryou (board) - Audrey Friesen (bookkeeping) - Stephanie Fulford (summer '03, '04) - Bobbi-Jo Gauld (bookkeeping) - David Henry (graphic services) - Tim Hudek (summer '04) - Karolina Jastrzebska (board) - Susan Kennedy (CAP) - Peter Kidd (treasurer) - Jim Kirby (graphic services) - Ken Klassen (board) - Serge LaRochelle (WCC) - Kenton Lobe (secretary) - Coral Maloney (ORM) - Maire McDermott (board) - Randall McQuaker (executive director) - Mary Melnychuk (ESB) - Andrea Lamboo Miln (ASRTS) - Ophelia Morris (CAP) - Roxann Nayar (summer '04) - Liz Olson (board) - Christine Schroeder (CAP) - Shirley Thompson (board) - Elizabeth Troutt (vice-president) - Stephen Walker (board) - Iain Whitaker (WRW).

ABOUT RCM

RCM is a non-profit centre for applied sustainability. We promote ecological sustainability through environmental education and the development of alternatives to unsustainable current practices. Membership is FREE for individuals. Please consider joining or donating to support our community-based work in Manitoba. RCM is a registered charity.

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