

## *A community voice for sustainability in Manitoba*

### **Response confirms need for education for new compost bin buyers**

When the City of Winnipeg offered backyard composters at a discount through a truckload sale last summer, the bargain price brought out thousands of Winnipeggers. Some 9,000 recycled plastic bins were sold at the one-day event.

RCM was on hand at all four locations to sign up purchasers for free workshops. Good thing!

A number of those who had not previously composted needed help figuring out what to do with their new Earth Machine bins. Questions ranged from ... "What do you put into it?" ... to ... "How long does it take?" ... to ... "Where do I plug it in?"

RCM's Compost Action Project arranged a series of specially designed workshops to provide novice composters with basic information on how to get the most from their new bins. Fact sheets on the five key elements in successful composting were made available at the workshops. And participants were reminded about RCM's free composting helpline – 925-3777 – where callers can get information and answers to composting questions.

The experience was a lesson in the critical importance of education to accompany the distribution of bins.



Without basic information, prospective composters may never get started composting. Or they may compost inefficiently, with poor results. Worse, they may become permanently discouraged and declare that the process doesn't work.

RCM's aim was to provide bin purchasers with knowledge that would enable them to use their new composters effectively. Our free publications, workshops and Compost Infoline offer support and information to improve composting success.

Backyard composting is a form of 'source reduction' that cuts the amount of organic material sent to landfill. RCM's composting project is supported by Manitoba Conservation and the City of Winnipeg.

### **RCM supports home canners in jar lid flap**

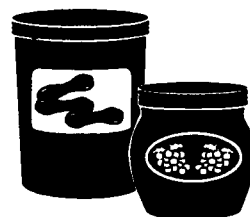
A storm of controversy erupted in Western Canada this summer when home canners realized that the company that makes lids for a popular size of canning jars was no longer distributing the needed lids.

Suddenly, hundred of thousands of re-usable glass canning jars became unusable, at least until an alternative source of re-usable lids could be identified. Home canners were sent scrambling to cope with tonnes of vegetables and berries for which they no longer had jars.

When the furor over 'Gem jar' lids reached RCM, a number of important sustainability issues became evident. RCM wrote to Bernardin Ltd. to outline our concerns and to request a temporary change in policy.

RCM appreciates that other sizes of canning jars are available to home canners, but notes that many thou-

sands of existing jars will become obsolete unless a supply of appropriately sized lids can be secured.



RCM acknowledges a waste issue in the disposal of single-use canning lids, and supports their replacement by safe, re-usable lids. The present difficulty, we understand, is that a longer transition period is required for producers of re-usable lids to develop sufficient inventory to begin supplying the Western Canadian market, and for home canners to make the switch.

RCM has long-standing interests in waste reduction and ecological sustainability, and supports the continuing use (and re-use) of home canning jars. Our concerns include:

- **Avoiding Pollution** -- Home canning is a preferred alternative to the transportation of food from distant locations. Transportation is a major contributor to air pollution and climate change.
- **Saving Energy and Resources** -- Repeatedly re-using containers such as home canning jars saves energy and reduces waste that would otherwise result from commercial packaging.
- **Fostering Sustainability** -- Sustainable living encourages the adoption of self-sufficient and environmentally sound practices (such as home canning) for meeting individual and community needs.

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To date, RCM has not received a response from the firm that discontinued supplying the canning lids. A web site with related information: [www.members.shaw.ca/gemlids/](http://www.members.shaw.ca/gemlids/).

## Conference to highlight economic benefits of waste reduction

"Turning Green to Gold" is the theme of the upcoming waste reduction conference planned by RCM, the Manitoba Association of Regional Recyclers (MARR), and the prairie chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). Scheduled to take place



in Brandon (April 27-30, 2003), the conference will feature workshop and panel presentations on incentive programs, public education, backyard and

commercial composting, household hazardous waste, material recovery facilities, oil and electronics recycling, and topics of special interest to Northern, remote and First Nations communities.

Major sponsors include Manitoba Conservation and the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation.

The conference is expected to attract municipal program managers from the three Prairie provinces, elected officials, recycling practitioners, industry, community groups, provincial policy-makers, university researchers, and others with an interest in resource conservation and waste reduction.

For registration and trade show information, contact Morag Puteran at the City of Brandon at 204-729-2290 or by e-mail at [m.puteran@city.brandon.mb.ca](mailto:m.puteran@city.brandon.mb.ca).

## Cutting waste in daily life theme of Waste Reduction Week 2002

Every year, Canadians use 200 million aerosol cans, discard 1.7 billion disposable diapers, bring over 2 billion plastic grocery bags home from the supermarket, and spend



\$1.5-billion on flavoured soft drinks.

It adds up. Canadians also produce nearly their body weight in garbage every month.

In light of realities like these, RCM and a dozen other waste reduction groups across the country organized the second annual Waste Reduction Week (WRW) during the third week of October.

WRW is a national campaign to raise awareness of resource consumption, conservation and waste. Schools, municipalities and community organizations are encouraged to use the week to promote recycling, composting, energy conservation and water conservation. Provincial sponsors included Manitoba Conservation, the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation, Manitoba Hydro, the City of Winnipeg, the Manitoba Association for Resource Recovery Corporation (used oil stewardship), and the Tire Stewardship Board.

To kick off the week, Manitoba Hydro hosted a noon-hour "brown bag" presentation on composting by Manitoba WRW co-ordinator Iain Whitaker. The Town of Roblin showed a video tour of their recycling depot on the community television channel, and took recycling information into their local school. Red River College staged a series of workshops, including a session on energy efficiency. Students at the University of Winnipeg held a 'dumpster diving' scavenger hunt, and rescued a number of usable items from the trash heap.

A different theme for each day of the week encouraged Canadians to reduce waste at home, work and school; while traveling, playing, and shopping; and in the community. A poster and handbook were prepared.

RCM's WRW co-ordinator compiled and distributed 'top ten' idea lists for schools, municipalities and local groups, and worked with designer Jim Kirby on the Manitoba WRW web site. (See RCM's main site for the link.) RCM also issued news releases, directly contacted prospective participants, and spread the word through the Environmental Speakers Bureau and our Commuter Challenge network.

Dates for the 2003 event have already been set, and the theme days from 2002 will be carried over for another year to again encourage Canadians to practice waste reduction and resource conservation in all aspects of their daily lives.

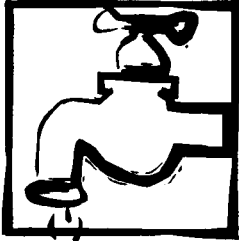
## Waste Reduction Week names 'champions'

A community video production, a new green building, a water conservation pilot, and a major recycling program expansion were highlighted during Waste Reduction Week in Manitoba. Four waste reduction 'champions' were acknowledged for taking important (and in some cases innovative) steps to reduce waste and save resources.

● **Town of Roblin:** Former councilor and deputy mayor Dale Yeo produced a 53-minute video that takes viewers behind the scenes at the community's recycling depot. The video explains the importance of recycling and shows how materials are prepared for shipment to markets. Officials credit the low-budget production for contributing to an increase in the collection of recyclables in the community.

● **Mountain Equipment Co-op:** The company's new Winnipeg store has incorporated some 75 per cent of the materials recovered from two old buildings that formerly occupied the site, diverting a huge amount of material from landfill to productive use. MEC also designed the structure to optimize energy efficiency, reduce waste and avoid pollution. Water conservation systems, composting toilets, and use of low toxicity materials help to minimize the environmental impact of the store and make it one of the greenest retail buildings in Canada.

● **Pembina Trails School Division:** In partnership with Manitoba Hydro, Pembina Trails has launched a Power Smart program to reduce water and energy use in division facilities. A pilot involving installation of water reduction devices at five schools has cut consumption by 70 per cent. On the basis of the pilot experience, water utility costs at the five schools are projected to drop significantly – from over \$50,000 to less than \$15,000 in total per year.



● **City of Winnipeg:** Winnipeg's Water and Waste Department launched a successful recycling program for apartment and condominium residents in November 2001. In the first six months of 2002, collection of recyclable materials increased by 15 per cent, boosting the City's efforts to recover some 31,800 tonnes of recyclables in 2002.

Many Manitoba communities are making great strides in waste reduction. The Waste Reduction Week awards are intended to recognize the important progress that has been made and to encourage resource conservation by companies, organizations and communities throughout the province.

## Winnipeg wins Second spot in 2002 National Commuter Challenge

A record 96 workplaces and schools signed up to take the third annual Winnipeg Commuter Challenge in June 2002, up from 72 sites last year. Participation more than doubled. Some 5,000 participants logged more than 400,000 kilometres of travel and earned Winnipeg a second-place finish in the national Challenge standings (our best result yet).

By choosing greener alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle, Winnipeg participants avoided over 95 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, helped reduce air pollu-

tion, saved money, and improved their fitness level.

Schools participating in the Challenge enjoyed fresh air and packed bike racks on Clean Air Day (Wednesday of Challenge Week).

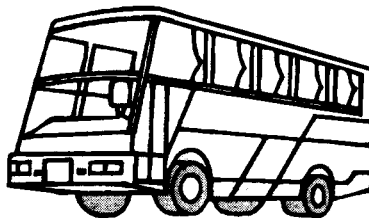
Kelvin High School geography students produced a giant map showing Challenge results. The map recorded distances traveled, routes taken, and methods of transportation used during the week.

Several workplaces distinguished themselves. Manitoba Hydro earned the Gold award in the largest category (workplaces with over 2,000 employees) with 4.7 per cent participation, edging out the City of Winnipeg, which took Silver this year.

Said Hydro President and CEO Bob Brennan, "While we as a corporation are committed to reducing our own emissions and helping Canada develop greenhouse gas management systems, I think this result clearly demonstrates our employees are just as committed to reducing emissions and having a healthy lifestyle."

Thirty-eight new workplaces and eight new schools hopped on board the 2002 Challenge.

Dave Benson, vice-principal of Bairdmore School, reported, "Our school had a lot of fun with the Challenge, resulting in 94.8 per cent participation. We noted fewer cars around the school and far more walkers." Bairdmore took first place in all of Canada among participating elementary schools – a truly outstanding achievement. Way to go!



Sponsors of the 2002 Commuter Challenge were the City of Winnipeg, Manitoba Conservation, Winnipeg Transit, Manitoba Hydro, Great-West Life, Investors Group, and the International Institute for Sustainable Development. Major contributors of prizes included Olympia Cycle and Ski and Mountain Equipment Co-op.

## How they finished

● **Winning workplaces in RCM's Commuter Challenge –** Manitoba Hydro, City of Winnipeg, Investors Group, Agricore United, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Assiniboine Credit Union, St. John's Ravenscourt School, EISI, Parks Canada, Arctic Co-ops, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram Landscape and Architecture Planning

● **Winning Challenge schools –** Bairdmore, Arthur E. Wright, John W. Gunn Middle School, Kelvin High, College Beliveau



## RCM protests dumping of City waste committee

RCM's Board has expressed dismay over the demise of the City of Winnipeg's Waste Minimization Advisory Committee (WMAC).

The City disbanded the long-serving community advisory committee following the creation of the Civic Environmental Committee earlier this year. The City's view is that the CEC will be in a position to bring forward concerns on waste issues.

But RCM, which was heavily involved in WMAC activities for several years, strongly disagrees.

"The dissolution of WMAC has not been officially communicated to the organizations represented on the committee," noted RCM President Liz Dykman in a letter to Mayor Glen Murray. "It is unclear why the committee has been disbanded or how its functions will be fulfilled in the future."

WMAC was responsible for the creation of programs like "Let's Chip In" and policy initiatives like the Waste Minimization Strategy. RCM members spent considerable time and effort in the development of such programs and policies on behalf of WMAC and the City.

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Waste reduction and diversion continue to be critical issues, deserving of more City staff time and resources. The combined expertise of WMAC members and their history of working to address waste issues was a valuable asset that is now lost.

RCM does not view the Civic Environmental Committee as a credible replacement, as they simply cannot address all the pressing environmental issues that face our city in an effective way, given their limited resources and time.

RCM emphasizes the need for a continuing means of communication and co-operation between the City and interested groups on issues of waste minimization and broader waste management concerns.

## New ESB presentation aims to cut waste with 'litterless lunches'

Mary Melnychuk makes the most wasteful lunches in Winnipeg. On purpose. You should see!

As presentation co-ordinator of RCM's Environmental Speakers Bureau, Mary lugs a huge lunch bag along when she goes into classrooms to talk about 'litterless lunches.' She takes the most wasteful lunch you can imagine – individually wrapped slices of cheese, plastic cutlery that gets thrown away after use, small serving-size containers (non-reusable, of course) of juice and pudding, individually packaged cookies, everything separately wrapped in disposable film ...

There's a normal amount of food in there, but it produces an unbelievable mound of disposable and non-recyclable packaging and waste.

Mary gets the students to set her straight with suggestions on how she could pack a different sort of lunch



using re-usable containers for sandwiches, vegetable snacks, beverages and dessert.

'Litterless lunches' is becoming one of the most popular presentations offered by the Environmental Speakers Bureau. RCM developed the presentation after hearing teachers' comments about the amount of garbage produced over school lunch periods. At one school, an average of sixty bags of garbage were collected every day. It is estimated that a school-age child who takes a disposable lunch on a daily basis generates 67 pounds of waste per school year. Encouraging kids and parents to prepare waste-free lunches can reduce that significantly.

Classroom presentations by the Environmental Speakers Bureau are available free to Winnipeg schools, thanks to support from the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation. RCM also produces a resource kit on environmental topics for teachers outside Winnipeg. For information, call Mary at 925-3771.

## Climate Change Connection builds public awareness

A Manitoba clearinghouse for information on climate change, the Climate Change Connection offers presentations, resources, publications, and tips for climate-friendly living. RCM's Past President, Harvey Stevens, participates on the Steering Committee for this provincial information hub.

The Connection is funded by the Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba's Climate Change Branch, and Manitoba Hydro, and co-chaired by the Manitoba Eco-Network and Fort Whyte Centre.

The new agency encourages Manitobans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, both individually and within communities. It also promotes action planning on climate change within two key areas – the North and the Red River Basin. Access to the Climate Change Connection is available through their web site ([www.climatechangeconnection.org](http://www.climatechangeconnection.org)) or by calling (204) 943-4836.

## Reduce vehicle idling: 10 reasons to Turn It Off

The following reasons to switch off idling vehicle engines were compiled by Rachel Van Caesele of the Climate Change Connection. The Connection is currently conducting a public information campaign to promote reduced vehicle idling.



1. 10 seconds of idling burns more fuel (and money!) than restarting your engine.
2. Let's enjoy a little less noise pollution.
3. Relax. The caboose is nowhere in sight.
4. Repeated idling lowers your engine's fuel efficiency by four to five percent.
5. The drive-thru is actually slower than counter service.
6. Spare your muffler. Idling encourages rust formation in exhaust systems.
7. Acid rain (enough said).
8. Every year over 5,000 Canadians die prematurely because of air pollution.
9. Face it. Your friend has never been, is not now, and will never be on time.
10. Global Climate Change. (It's that greenhouse gas thing ...)

### 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. Please consider joining, donating or renewing your membership to support our community-based work in Manitoba. RCM is a registered charity.

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