

Practical steps toward environmental sustainability

Active, healthier kids and cleaner air are goals of RCM's SAGE Project

It's a familiar sight at many schools in Winnipeg – cars jamming the streets around the school, dropping off children in the morning and picking them up again at the end of the day. Of course, there are good reasons why some parents want and need to drive their children to school, including neighbourhood safety concerns and convenience in juggling a busy schedule of work and family responsibilities.

But the result is often massive traffic congestion, the risk of serious accidents, air pollution from exhaust fumes, tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, and kids who aren't getting some needed exercise.

The pattern is repeated at schools across the country. A study of over 6,000 Ontario children by a York University researcher found that fewer than half walk to school and only 3.5 per cent ride their bicycles.

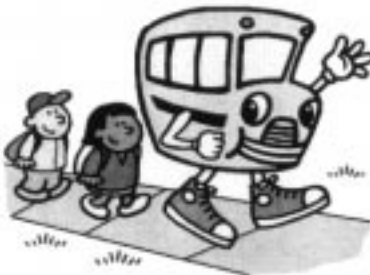
"Heavy traffic has reduced the independent mobility of our children and youth," says Catherine O'Brien of the York Centre for Applied Sustainability. "If parents understood the detrimental effects of the car society on their children, they might think twice about how they use their cars."

Almost 75 per cent of the children interviewed for the study said they would prefer to walk or cycle to school.

RCM's new SAGE Program tackles these problems by promoting 'Safe, Active, Green, Easy' ways of getting kids to and from school. Former RCM staff Laurie Ankenman came up with the fitting name for the program, the latest of RCM's Green

Commuting Initiatives. The idea is to develop alternatives to help families avoid driving their children in motorized vehicles every day.

Modeled in part on a national 'active and safe routes to school' program, SAGE will encourage the



organization of 'walking school buses' to bring youngsters safely to school in the company of trained adult volunteers. The project also includes traffic safety audits ('urban jungle mapping') and establishment of reduced vehicle idling zones at schools. RCM will promote International Walk to School Day (October 2, 2002) as a SAGE activity for Manitoba schools.

SAGE is being piloted at four Winnipeg locations this year. Project co-ordinator Andrea Lamboo Miln is developing a kit of suggestions, checklists and other practical tools for use in implementing the program.

On board with financial support for the project are the Winnipeg Foundation, the George Cedric Metcalf Foundation, the Thomas Sill Foundation, the Manitoba Climate Change Action Fund, the Eco-Action Program of Environment Canada, and the Community Mobilization Program of the federal and provincial Justice Departments. RCM thanks these sponsors for their contribution to children's safety and environmental health.

In Year Two of SAGE, RCM will reach out to other communities in the province, providing schools with resources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help Manitoba kids stay active and fit.

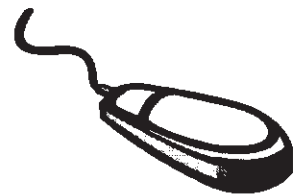
For information on SAGE, please contact Andrea at 925-3773 or by e-mail at:

andrea@resourceconservation.mb.ca

Latest RCM news and publications available on revamped web site

Composting tips, green commuting information, and announcements from RCM are now available on-line at our new and expanded web site.

Visitors will find it easy to get directly to the information they want, whether they are looking for a list of presentation topics for the Environmental Speakers Bureau, details about registering for the Commuter Challenge, plans for building a compost bin, suggestions for Waste Reduction Week, or news about RCM's SAGE Project. Membership information and this newsletter are also available on the site.



Jim Kirby of Web Feats designed the welcome page and introduction to the site. Along with David Henry of Adrenalin Rush Publishing Services, he is assisting in developing and maintaining the site.

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The aim is to provide ready access to the many publications produced by RCM's climate change and waste reduction projects. Expansion of the site is part of an effort to extend the reach of our work. And making information available on-line also reduces paper waste, conserves resources, and cuts mailing and distribution costs. Check it out at www.resourceconservation.mb.ca and tell us what you think.

Schools turn to ESB on climate change

While *Tracking the Blue Box* is the most popular topic offered by RCM's Environmental Speakers Bureau, an increasing number of teachers are asking for presentations on climate change. Presentation co-ordinator Mary Melnychuk has developed three grade-appropriate presentations on the topic.

In keeping with RCM's approach in our work with children, the presentations provide basic information, avoid doom-and-gloom, and suggest positive, practical steps students can take to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Teachers receive a kit of background information, activity ideas and reproducible handouts they can use with their students.

● *Our Greenhouse World:* The Earth is a greenhouse that keeps people warm and helps plants grow. We explain how a greenhouse works, consider the effect of increased heat on our greenhouse planet, and discuss ways of keeping the Earth healthy and safe. Suggested actions include recycling, saving energy, and conserving water. (Grades 2-4)



● *The Greenhouse Effect:* Starting with the science of the greenhouse effect, this presentation identifies gases (and their sources) that contribute to climate change. Possible actions by students, schools and communities, to help bring atmospheric greenhouse gases down to stable levels, are discussed. (Grades 5-8)

● *Climate Change:* This presentation for older grades examines the causes, effects and implications of climate change. More than just "global warming" is involved. Large-scale shifts in ecosystems, disruptions in species populations and increased incidence of severe weather are among the predicted effects. Students are introduced to this issue as a case study in environmental decision-making. (Senior 1-Senior 4)

Other ESB topics include paper recycling, composting, water, and the ecological footprint concept. The Bureau is supported by a grant from the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation. For information on booking a classroom presentation, please call Mary at 925-3771.

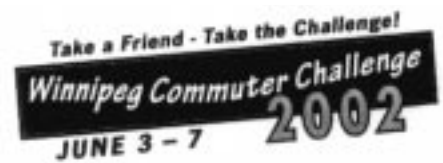
Walking team wins race; Commuter Challenge set to go June 3-7

Team Walkers strode away with top honours in the Amazing Commuter Race and kicked off the run-up to 2002 Winnipeg Commuter Challenge in brisk style.

Challenge supporters crowded the lobby of 200 Main Street on May 15 to hear Mayor Glen Murray, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism Ron Lemieux, and Assiniboine Credit Union CEO Al Morin accepting the Challenge. The launch event was organized by RCM staff Andrea Lamboo Miln and Serge LaRoche.

The quick downtown commute began at the International Institute for Sustainable Development, a participating workplace in the Commuter Challenge for the third year. The race included a checkpoint at Winnipeg Square, where participants posted a letter to federal Environment Minister David Anderson, urging

Ottawa to support the Kyoto climate change treaty.



The walking group, headed by Kathleen Leathers of Prairie Pathfinders, were the first to arrive at the main branch of Assiniboine Credit Union. Team Cyclists, led by IISD employee Dennis Cunningham, finished in second place, arriving just ahead of Team Transit leader Karen Funk and her crew of Transit Riders.

ACU has been taking the Challenge since it began in 2000. "We are looking forward to participating in the upcoming Challenge and are committed to beating our 2001 participation rate of 63 per cent," declared CEO Al Morin. The enthusiastic green commuters at ACU appear determined to achieve his ambitious goal.

City of Winnipeg Mayor Glen Murray, himself a dedicated cyclist, was pleased with the City's first-place finish in their category last year. He endorsed the Challenge as a first step toward reducing the number of vehicles on the street. Murray noted that "single-occupancy vehicles account for 90 per cent of cars on Winnipeg streets. The average number of people traveling in these cars is 1.2 people." It's a statistic Winnipeg's Mayor would like to see improved.

Physical activity associated with alternative transportation can reduce stress and improve personal health, the Honourable Ron Lemieux, Provincial Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, pointed out. An active lifestyle is "one of the best remedies" for easing stress and improving employee satisfaction, the Minister reminded the Challenge audience.

The Commuter Challenge is a friendly five-day competition to see how many individuals in workplaces and schools in Winnipeg can take alternative forms of transportation to get to work and school. Results are compiled for each participating organization. Those with the greatest proportion of green commuting trips

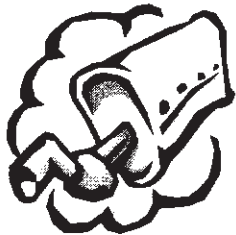
are the winners of the Challenge. In fact, the whole community wins with the Challenge through cleaner air, less traffic congestion and improved health and fitness.

The 2002 Commuter Challenge takes place June 3-7. Larger workplaces, including Red River College, Manitoba Hydro, Health Sciences Centre and the City of Winnipeg, are back again this year, eager to improve their showing. New workplaces joining in 2002 include Air Canada, Great-West Life, and Investors Group. More information about the Commuter Challenge and other RCM Green Commuting Initiatives is available on the RCM web site: www.resourceconservation.mb.ca.

RCM praises City's EcoPass program

Citing benefits to community health and the environment, RCM has welcomed Winnipeg Transit's pilot EcoPass Program and has urged local employers to get on board. The program makes monthly bus passes available at a discount to employees at participating work sites.

Automobile travel is the single largest source of greenhouse gases in Manitoba. And fossil fuel burning produces harmful air emissions, contributes to smog and acid rain, and is a factor in a number of respiratory illnesses.



Getting more people into buses replaces the use of individual, single-occupant vehicles, thereby saving fuel, reducing air pollution, and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. A bus takes the place of about 40 cars on the road – with far less environmental impact. And at Winnipeg's average vehicle occupancy rate of 1.2 persons per car, two buses can carry as many people as 100 cars.

Not only is transit good for our environment, it's a healthy choice for employees and businesses, too. Studies show that use of active

forms of transportation improves employees' fitness, reduces stress, and cuts absenteeism.

It's encouraging to see that EcoPass pilot workplaces value transit as highly as parking for their employees. RCM congratulates Winnipeg Transit and the City of Winnipeg on a great new initiative to make our city a healthier, greener place to live.

Win a compost bin! Free how-to-compost workshops scheduled

As gardening season moved into high gear (finally) this spring, staff with RCM's Compost Action Project were busy preparing for a city-wide compost education blitz from June 5-18. Following last year's record interest, RCM has geared up to deliver 'how-to-compost' information to hundreds of enthusiastic homeowners and gardeners. Composting is a simple way of recycling organic wastes into a rich soil amendment for lawns and gardens.

The free one-hour workshops offer information on how to choose a bin, what to compost and what to avoid, how to have a happy compost pile, and what to do with the finished product. Winnipeggers can register for the workshops by calling the Compost Infoline at 925-3777.

As an extra incentive, participants who attend a workshop are eligible to win a free compost bin. "There are many great door prizes to win at our workshops," says Susan Kennedy, project co-ordinator. "We want to help make it as easy as possible for people to begin composting. A free bin is a great incentive to get anyone started."

Given recent attention to waste reduction in Winnipeg and the fact that some 40 per cent of residential waste is organic yard and kitchen waste, composting offers a cost-effective and readily available solution that can really help cut waste.

More information, including bin plans and fact sheets on a variety of composting topics, is available through the Compost Infoline or on RCM's web site.

The Compost Action Project receives financial support from the

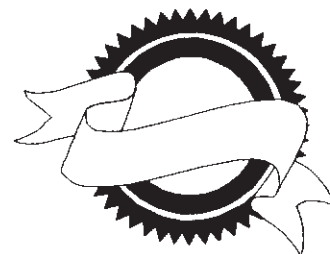
City of Winnipeg, Manitoba Conservation, and the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation.



Awards recognize RCM's environmental achievements

- Students at Nelson McIntyre Collegiate have awarded RCM a grant of \$1,000 under the Youth in Philanthropy Program of the Winnipeg Foundation. YIP provides each participating secondary school with \$5,000 to be distributed to registered charities in Winnipeg. A committee of students at each school researches eligible organizations and makes site visits to conduct interviews and collect information. They then decide how to allocate their funds among the selected agencies. YIP is a great way for students to learn about the many volunteer and non-profit organizations that work to meet a wide variety of community needs. Students at Nelson McIntyre decided to make three major awards and a series of smaller ones. RCM was selected to receive one of the major awards. We greatly appreciate this vote of confidence in our work.

- The Manitoba Public Health Association has awarded RCM a Healthy Communities Distinguished Service Award. The award is presented to "an individual or group in recognition of an outstanding con-



tribution to the achievement of a broad vision of public health in the Province of Manitoba, which recognizes the interrelationship of a healthy community, a healthy environment, and a healthy economy."

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The award acknowledges the unique role of RCM's Green Commuting Initiatives (including the Winnipeg Commuter Challenge) in encouraging active transportation and environmental health in Manitoba.

● An award to the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation last year was due in part to the outstanding work of RCM's Environmental Speakers Bureau. MPSC received a Silver award in the school curriculum category of the 2001 SWANA Excellence Awards. SWANA is the Solid Waste Association of North America, and MPSC was up against competing entries from across North America. MPSC supports recycling and waste reduction education in schools through their STAR (Student Action for Recycling) Program for elementary and high schools, STAR Plus for post-secondary institutions, a partnership with children's entertainer Al Simmons, and funding for RCM's ESB.

Earth Day – celebrating 'people power' and the rewards of sustainability

(RCM's Executive Director, Randall McQuaker, participated in a panel sponsored by the Consumers Association of Canada, Manitoba Branch, on Earth Day in April. Following are excerpts from his remarks:)

If you look at what people actually throw out, the residential waste stream can be roughly sorted into three piles. About one-third can be recycled, about one-third can be composted, and only around one-third is really waste – at present. At RCM, of course, we think we need to work at getting that last third down, partly through the 'Re-use' R and the 'Recycle' R, but especially through the 'Reduce' R.

Other countries have approached this problem of waste quite decisively. In Europe and Japan, for example, landfill space is at a premium. Those kinds of pressures have forced adoption of stewardship measures that are barely beginning in North America.

* In the Netherlands, a law passed in 1999 requires manufacturers of

computer equipment and appliances to take their products back at the end of their useful life.

* In the European Union, by 2005, motor vehicle owners with what are called "end-of-life" vehicles will be required to obtain a certificate of deregistration that verifies that the vehicle has been recycled.



This brings us to the point that the problem of waste is not just the responsibility of individual consumers. In fact, the structures, systems and companies that benefit from, and perpetuate, the production of waste need to be part of the solution, as well.

Further, among these generalizations and averages, it is important to stress that not all Canadians share equally in this affluence. It would be an error to read out of this analysis the idea that somehow the anti-poverty movement should give up because, after all, it is just going to fuel consumption and use up more resources if low-income people get more. That's neither socially nor ecologically sustainable, and avoids critical issues around redistribution that are central to the struggle for sustainability.

It is no coincidence that ecologically sustainable ways of meeting individual and community needs are also more likely to be socially sustainable. Things like organic community gardening and urban agriculture, for instance, are wonderful examples of the complementary nature of social and ecological sustainability.

On Earth Day, we surely need to acknowledge and celebrate the strengths and the successes of people and communities, the imagination and the capacity of

people to work together to make a positive difference, to act in defense of themselves and the living earth on which we all depend.

The honest thing to say, I think, is that some people do fear that acting to protect the natural environment also means, necessarily, acting against their own economic self-interest. That may be our biggest barrier. People worry that they will have to do without ... there will be hardships.

In fact, experience around the world confirms the opposite. Life is richer for people and communities who take sustainability to heart. Environmental well-being and economic well-being, it turns out, are complementary goals, and could not be otherwise. There are tremendous opportunities. There are rewarding partnerships. There is greater security for families and communities.

Beginning to see Earth as 'home' – home for humans and for other species with which we share the planet – helps build the ground for celebrating many more Earth Days in the years to come.



About RCM

RCM is a non-profit centre for applied sustainability. We promote ecological sustainability through environmental education and 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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