

# zero|waste

W i s e C h o i c e s



## IN THE ZERO WASTE HOLIDAY SPIRIT!

### Garbage — Is it what you really want for Christmas?

"It's the most wonderful time of the year" the popular Christmas song reminds us. But there's another side to Christmas and its celebration of life and family. Along with gift giving, kids jingle belling and everyone telling you to be of good cheer, there's something we all get but nobody wants — garbage.

Yes, for many of us Christmas has also become the most consumptive and wasteful time of the year. In 2001, Canadians spent more than \$16 billion on gifts alone and are expected to exceed that amount this Holiday Season. That works out to \$740 per person for gifts and more than \$1300 when entertaining and eating is added in.

The impacts of our Christmas and Holiday Season buying and consumption are far reaching. High-tech is the buzzword for hot gifts this Christmas. But much of the packaging from power tools, computers, small wireless electronics and other trendy gadgets will end up in the trash.

When you add in all the marketing materials used to promote gifts and all the materials used to wrap

them, an additional 300,000 tonnes of garbage is generated in Canada between mid November and New Year's Day. Here are some other surprising statistics:

#### Getting into the Zero Waste

**In Canada the annual waste from gift-wrap and shopping bags equals about 545,000 tonnes.**

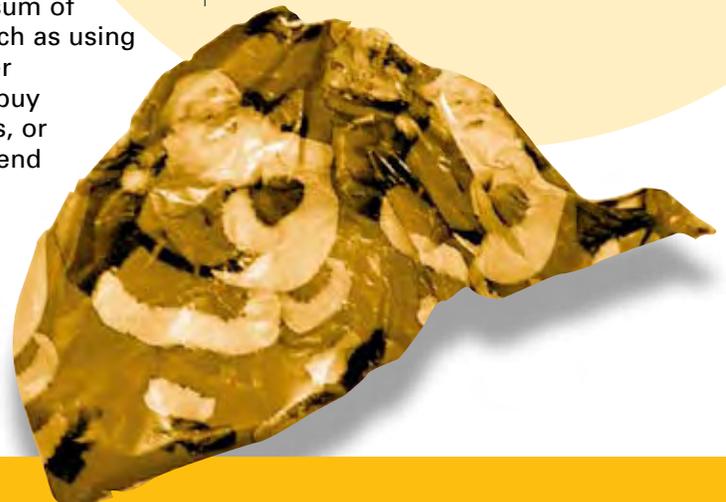
**If every family in Canada reduced its weekly waste during the holidays by just one kilogram, 34,000 tonnes of garbage would be eliminated.**

**If everyone in Canada wrapped just three gifts in reused paper or gift bags, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 hockey rinks.**

holiday spirit doesn't mean turning into an obsessive recycler or going out of your way to locate special products at environmentally friendly stores. The sum of individual actions such as using cloth instead of paper napkins, refusing to buy over-packaged goods, or limiting what you spend as a family can keep thousands of kilograms of garbage from our landfill.

Being aware of what you buy is

the most important thing that you can do to reduce waste and your impact on the planet this holiday season. Recycling is one way to divert the amount of garbage going to our landfill but the real key to making a dent in our holiday waste generation is moving beyond recycling to reuse and reduction. Reducing spending and devoting less time to buying things doesn't mean losing out on the spirit of Christmas and the Holidays. If anything you will feel better for being able to spend more time with friends and loved ones and knowing you're helping to protect the Earth.



**IN THIS ISSUE** New RDN Recycling Directory available  
Get in the Zero Waste Holiday Spirit  
RDN reduces greenhouse gas emissions

## GREEN HOLIDAY ALTERNATIVES

### Rejoice by making the 3Rs part of Christmas and the Holidays

While traffic and sales at shopping malls increases dramatically at this time of year, remembering the vision of Zero Waste for the Region can reduce our impact on our landfill and the planet. Christmas is traditionally a time for giving, however, the spending and getting that leads to bags of garbage and ballooning credit card bills aren't really in keeping with the spirit of the season.

Here are some green alternatives for the Holiday Season that won't cost the earth and show that you care both for those receiving your gifts and the environment.

#### Avoid the packaging trap

Packaging makes up half the volume and one-third of the waste going into our landfill. And for luxury items such as cosmetics and perfumes, the packaging can account for up to 66 per cent of the total waste. Avoid buying goods that are over-packaged. Consider "green gifts" such as rechargeable batteries and chargers or backyard composters.

#### Create a memory

Time is one of the most precious gifts we can give. Consider giving your time or service instead of a material gift. Help someone out before the festivities start by putting up their lights. Lend a hand to an older relative or friend by helping with their shopping. Offer to clean someone's house, yard or to baby-sit. Take a friend to a concert or holiday event. Make and give "coupons" for special services that you will provide such as babysitting, gardening, cooking or teaching a skill. Give a gift certificate to a restaurant or the movies. Give your certificates in a reusable container that you've decorated.

#### Give gifts that don't cost the Earth

Give gifts that replace disposable products. Or give stationery, cards, and envelopes made with recycled fibre. Make a gift such as homemade baking. Involve the kids in giving gifts they have made or



decorated themselves. Gardeners on your list will appreciate a selection of seeds, bulbs or gardening books "wrapped" in a new planting pot. Give a plant that you have grown yourself along with your own compost in a reusable container. Promote environmentally sound transportation by giving bus tickets or bicycle accessories. Give a donation to a charity in the name of a young person or let them choose the organization. Swimming and skating passes or signing someone up for a recreational or cultural program offered by your local municipality or college are outstanding gifts that can help develop the mind and body.

#### Christmas is for kids

Christmas is for kids but when it comes to gift giving what are we teaching them? Help your children understand that every product manufactured comes from resources extracted from the Earth and that things don't just disappear when the garbage is picked up. Consider the suggestion of Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*, to limit purchases to \$100 per family. This encourages people to be more creative with gift giving and spend more time with each other.

#### Give them a "good wrap"

Use reusable gift bags or make reusable cloth gift bags out of colourful fabric. Be creative. Wrap gifts in the comics, kids' drawings, used posters, maps or sheet

music. Give a gift in a gift: wrap a cookbook in a new tea towel or a book inside a pillowcase. Save wrapping paper and bows for reuse.

#### Make your party or celebration waste-wise

When possible, avoid disposable items such as paper plates, napkins and plastic cups. Ensure everyone knows where to put returnable and recyclable containers. Offer condiments in bulk instead of individual packets. Compost kitchen scraps (no meat, cooked food or grains).

#### Lighten the landfill load

Remember to use your curbside recycling program or the Recycling Drop-offs in your community to recycle unwanted wrapping paper, gift boxes, cards, catalogues, flyers, metal and glass food containers and household plastic containers. If you're unsure about what items are accepted or how to prepare them check out the City of Nanaimo website at [www.city.nanaimo.bc.ca](http://www.city.nanaimo.bc.ca) or the RDN website at [www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca), your Curbside Recycling Guide or Recycling Drop-off signage. Watch the local papers for Christmas tree recycling programs in your community.

#### Keep the Zero Waste Holiday Spirit going year round

Trimming our wasteline during the holidays generates a host of benefits from saving money and alleviating stress to conserving scarce landfill space and reducing greenhouse gases. But don't stop when the Holiday Season is over, keep the Zero Waste spirit year round.

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## HOLIDAY WASTE REDUCTION RESOURCES ON THE WEB

The Internet has hundreds of sites with information about how to reduce our impact on the environment during the Holiday Season. Here are just a few sample sites:

- Check the Recycling Council of Ontario's Website at [www.rco.on.ca/publication/rrrr.html](http://www.rco.on.ca/publication/rrrr.html) for its Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, REJOICE section filled with gift ideas that won't hurt the earth.
- Go to the Use Less Stuff Website at [www.use-less-stuff.com](http://www.use-less-stuff.com) for 42 ways to Trim Your Holiday Wasteline.
- Visit [greenchristmas.com](http://greenchristmas.com) for information on subjects from e-cards to preventing Christmas debt.
- Find out if the gift you're thinking about buying was tested on animals or is bad for the environment by visiting [www.responsible shopper.org](http://www.responsible shopper.org)
- The Simple Living Network's [www.simpleliving.net](http://www.simpleliving.net) is devoted to those seeking to live "a more conscious, simple, healthy and restorative lifestyle." Its online holiday newsletters offer articles on the ecological cost of Christmas, ideas for non-material gifts and volunteering as a family during the holidays. Also check out [www.greenmatters.com/gm/](http://www.greenmatters.com/gm/)
- Some sources for green buying: The following web sites provide information on a range of environmentally friendly products, from clothing and books to candles and aromatherapy. [www.realgoods.com](http://www.realgoods.com) [www.ecomall.com](http://www.ecomall.com) [www.redjellyfish.com](http://www.redjellyfish.com)
- With the constant barrage of messages to consume that children receive, it is a real challenge to teach them that over-consumption is not sustainable. Check out the following web sites for ideas on teaching your children to recognize marketing hype versus real knowledge: [www.parentkidsright.com/pt-consumerism.html](http://www.parentkidsright.com/pt-consumerism.html) [www.medialit.org/consrpt.htm](http://www.medialit.org/consrpt.htm)

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## LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE RECYCLING WITH NEW RDN DIRECTORY

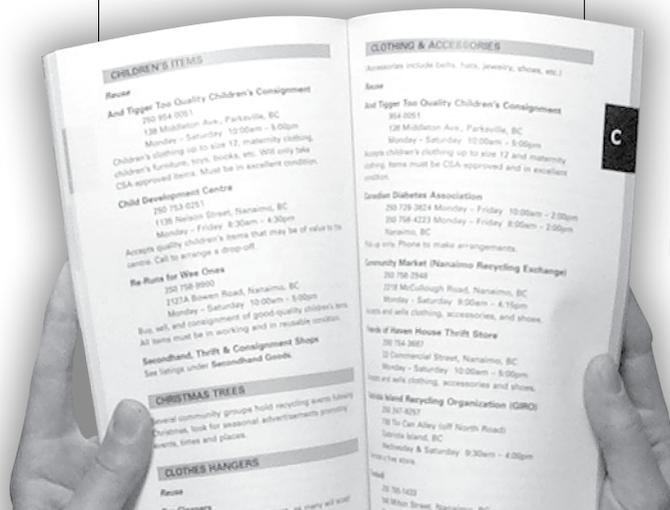
Recycling items ranging from appliances and batteries, to paint and pesticides, to yard and garden trimmings is a snap with the updated RDN Recycling Directory. The Directory is organized like a phonebook and provides quick access to a wealth of recycling and reuse opportunities throughout the RDN.

The booklet features province-wide recycling programs and contacts, information about the Region's Zero Waste

program and an easy-to-use alphabetic directory. It lists more than 100 materials and the locations where they can be taken for reuse or recycling.

The RDN Recycling Directory is \$3. It's available at the RDN offices on Hammond Bay Road in north Nanaimo, the Nanaimo Recycling Exchange in Nanaimo, the Regional Landfill on Cedar Road in south Nanaimo, the Church Road Transfer Station near Parksville, the District 69 Arena in Parksville and the Ravensong Aquatic Centre in Qualicum Beach.

The updated Recycling Directory can also be accessed through the RDN's Website. To search it on-line, simply go to [www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca), click on Zero Waste and then Recycling Directory and follow the instructions.



## RDN LANDFILL GAS REDUCTION PROJECT

### RDN landfill project leads way in reducing greenhouse gases

A recently approved pilot project at the Regional District of Nanaimo's Cedar Road Landfill will significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions, provide a green energy source and lead the way for other municipal landfills across Canada.

On October 7, 2002, the RDN was awarded a \$500,000 grant for the pilot project from the Green Municipalities Investment Fund (GMIF). Established by the Government of Canada through a \$250 million endowment to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Green Municipal Fund projects increase energy efficiency, protect the environment and improve municipal services.

Caused by decomposing garbage, landfill gas is mostly methane and carbon dioxide. Both gases contribute to climate change but methane has 21 times the global warming potential of CO<sub>2</sub>. Landfill gas (LFG) is one of the largest human generated sources of methane emissions to the atmosphere in Canada.

The first step in the RDN project is to expand the collection system to increase LFG recovery from 10% to 75%. The amount of greenhouse gases removed from the atmosphere would be equivalent to eliminating the emissions from 7,500 sports utility vehicles, or 14,400 compact cars.

### NEXT ISSUE OF RDN ZERO WASTE

#### Garbage and its impact on climate change

Climate change is a hot topic these days with the federal government set to ratify the Kyoto Protocol by the end of this year. Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol will commit Canada to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions between 2008 and 2012

by an average of 5.2 % below the 1990 levels.

The products we consume generate greenhouse gas emissions at almost all stages, from extracting and processing resources for raw materials, to the energy required in manufacturing, to the methane and carbon dioxide released when waste decomposes in landfills.

It's estimated that for every can of garbage we take to the curb, another 71 garbage cans of waste are created in mining, logging, agriculture, oil and gas exploration, and the industrial processes that contribute to those finished products and their packaging (source: Grassroots Recycling Network).

Canadians are the second highest per capita consumers in the world but individual choices to reduce, reuse and recycle can have a huge impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Learn more about the issue of garbage and climate change and what you can do to reduce your impact in the Spring 2003 edition of RDN Zero Waste.

### HELP KEEP BC AT THE FOREFRONT OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

#### RCBC needs your support

The Recycling Council of BC is Canada's oldest recycling council and is one of the most widely respected environmental organizations operating in the province today. Through its Recycling Hotline, RCBC responds to 60,000 inquiries annually from residents and businesses throughout the province, including 1,885 calls from RDN residents in 2001. The Hotline dispenses up-to-date information on recycling, pollution prevention and waste management. The RCBC Hotline is 1-800-667-4321.

RCBC has played a key role in the development of BC's successful industry product stewardship programs such as the expanded



### Zero Waste goes to school

Facilitators Amy Rose (left) and Alex McCallum (right), from the Nanaimo Recycling Exchange Eco Education program, use a "garbage pizza" to show children at the Georgia Avenue Boys and Girls Club in Nanaimo what goes into our landfill. The program sponsored by the Regional of Nanaimo and the City of Nanaimo teaches young people about Zero Waste – and how they can make informed decisions.

beverage container deposit-refund program. As a not-for-profit organization, RCBC depends on sponsorships and donations to provide its many services. If you would like more information about RCBC and are considering making a donation, visit their Website at [www.rcbc.ca](http://www.rcbc.ca). You can now make a charitable donation to RCBC through Charity.ca, a new Website linking donors to Canadian charitable organizations.

### GARBAGE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION SCHEDULES

#### 2003 Garbage and Recycling Collection Schedule Information

If you live in the City of Nanaimo, your schedule will be mailed to you in mid-December. Schedules are also available on the City of Nanaimo website at [www.city.nanaimo.bc.ca](http://www.city.nanaimo.bc.ca).

For City of Nanaimo collection program information call 250 758-5222.

If you live in the RDN, simply flip your schedule to the 2003 page or check the RDN website at [www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca). For RDN collection program information call toll free from anywhere in the district at 1-866 999-8227 .