



# Living Green Newsletter – May 2010

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**Seven Habits of  
Ecologically Conscious  
Manitobans**  
*Practical Ways to Help Yourself,  
Your Community and the  
Environment*

1. Travel car-light.	5. Shop smart.
2. Save energy and money.	6. Choose clean living.
3. Buy local.	7. Get together with others.
4. Be garbage-free.	

And finally...pick one to start.

## Message from the Editor

Dear Friends and Supporters,

The transformation from Resource Conservation Manitoba to Green Action Centre is now in full swing. Most of the legalities are out of the way. New logos are being designed and a fresh look for our website is being created to make it easier for our supporters to connect with us and to improve our visibility within the community. We will keep you posted about when we officially launch our new identity.

Spring has been a busy time in other ways. The Compost Action Project was busy with Compost Awareness Week earlier this month. As well, Resource Conservation Manitoba has been working with the City on a number of programs including the Compost Bin Sale and Giveaway Weekend, both this weekend. Other upcoming events include, the Commuter Challenge May 30-June 5 (see below, p.7) and Clean Air Day, June 2. Don't forget as well, International Clothesline Week starts June 5. Hang your clothes out to dry, instead of using electricity or gas.

If you are a member of Resource Conservation Manitoba, and want to be involved, come to our Annual General Meeting. Special topic for discussion will be: "Are citizens at risk of losing their voice in environmental protection?"

Thanks so much for your continued support!

Josh Brandon,  
Living Green Coordinator

**EVENT - RCM's Annual General Meeting**

**DATE - Wednesday June 9, 2010**

**TIME - 7:00 pm**

**PLACE - EcoCentre Boardroom, 3rd Floor, 303 Portage Avenue**

**GUEST SPEAKER - To be confirmed**

**TOPIC - "Are citizens at risk of losing their voice in environmental protection?"**

Groups across the country, including RCM, are gearing up to save Canada's environmental laws. What are their concerns? Why should Canadians be paying attention? Come and find out more.

Election of directors

Refreshments

Come and celebrate a great year of environmental education and action

## Confused about recycling changes

The way we pay for their recycling programs made a big shift in Manitoba last month. Among other changes, starting April 1, the 2-cent recycling fee disappeared from beverage containers, and a wide range of industry groups began chipping in their share to the pay for blue boxes. So Resource Conservation Manitoba was surprised and confused when cash register receipts continued to show the two cent levy on drinks at many retail outlets. Especially since the Minister of Conservation had promised that visible fees would not be part of the new system.



Now a new organization of brand owners - the Canadian Beverage Container Recycling Association - has popped up and announced it is going to keep charging customers the levy. Their plan is to increase the number of recycling boxes at outdoor events and in public locations to address Manitoba's low rates of beverage container recycling. The levy collected 9 million dollars in 2008, so that could potentially be a lot of recycling bins.

On the other hand, Mayor Sam Katz announced that he favoured the Province establishing bottle depots. Depending on how this alternative is implemented, it could improve beverage container recycling considerably. Other provinces with financial incentives to recycle have return rates more than double Manitoba's. The Executive Policy Committee voted in support of the idea, despite opposition from the Beverage Container Association. Much is still up in the air, and we are waiting to see how this turns out.

Meanwhile, RCM has provided a brief on its views of how Extended Producer Responsibility is supposed to work.

## **Brief: RCM Views on Extended Producer Responsibility**

Manitoba, like many other jurisdictions, is implementing a shift in waste reduction responsibilities from taxpayers to producers. The new regulated, industry-led programs are examples of Extended Producer Responsibility or EPR. Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM) supports this shift and makes the following recommendations regarding best practices.

### ***Clear Objectives***

In our view, the primary ideal goals of a waste minimization and management program should be “Zero Waste, Zero Harm.” Zero waste means both conservation of resources and minimization or elimination of residual waste requiring disposal. Zero harm means minimization or elimination of products and wastes toxic to workers, users, waste handlers, the public, and the environment and the minimization or elimination of harmful emissions, effluents, and residual wastes. Life-cycle and footprint analyses and effects monitoring of products and processes are important tools for assessing levels of waste and harm.

Of course other dimensions of sustainability and a variety of other social principles also apply, such as justice, fairness, optimizing social wellbeing, cost-effectiveness, innovation and economic development. RCM believes that such goals and principles should guide program construction and evaluation, assist in the choice between alternate models and guide research into the identification of best practices.

Although industry may be required to assume responsibility for operating programs to fulfill these requirements, government is ultimately responsible for seeing that the job gets done one way or another and assessing whether that is happening.

### ***Cost Internalization***

Extended producer responsibility means that responsibility, including cost responsibility, shifts from the taxpayer to the producers, as they become stewards of the waste their products generate. Managing packaging and end-of-life disposal becomes a cost of doing business in addition to the costs of resources, labour, advertising, transportation, etc. The totality of producer and distributor costs plus mark-ups are rolled into a single cost or price to the consumer.

One of the intentions of Extended Producer Responsibility regulation is to encourage producers to reduce the impact their products have at the end-of-life by making their products more readily reusable, repairable or recyclable. By requiring producers to incorporate end-of-life management into the cost of their products, producers will develop ways to improve the product design and production processes in order to reduce these costs. However, when such costs are not incorporated into the cost of the product and producers are permitted to charge a levy directly to consumers, there is no incentive for producers to improve product design and manufacturing decisions. Furthermore, levies charged at the till may be misunderstood by consumers to be a government tax rather than a responsibility shirked by producers and may cause frustration if consumers are unable to easily anticipate the final cost of their purchases because a variety of the products they have selected have such levies.

### ***Consumer Education & Awareness***

RCM recognizes that responsibility for waste and harm reduction and prevention is not solely that of producers. While producers have the greatest control over the types of products available on the market, consumers also play an essential role through their choice, use and disposal of products. Hence it is important that consumers are well-informed of the rationale, responsibilities and opportunities of stewardship and the role they play. They also need specific and comparative product information regarding personal and environmental hazards, efficient use, and safe and efficient disposal. Product-specific information should be available at point of sale through sales representatives, videos, posters, labels, brochures, etc.

### ***Consumer Incentives***

Consumers do not always have stewardship considerations top-of-mind even when they are informed and they are subject to competing motives, including personal convenience and personal costs and rewards. Successful stewardship programs cannot rely merely on conscientious behaviour by industry and consumers. Regulation, enforcement, collection systems and incentives that make it easier and more rewarding to do the right thing and harder and less rewarding to do the wrong are also important as a complement to informed conscience and principle. The optimal application of education, social marketing, enforcement and incentives is a matter for behavioural research and experimentation. We can learn from other jurisdictions in this regard, but there is no reason why we should not be experimental leaders as well.

RCM supports consumer incentives where they can be proven successful in moving society closer to the ideal goals of zero waste and zero harm. The successful examples have visible costs that are avoidable, or rewards that are obtainable, by adopting the preferred course of consumer behaviour. We have previously noted, for example, the Irish success in reducing disposable plastic bag use by 90% through a modest levy and we look with envy at Alberta's recovery rates for drink containers from their deposit/return system

(<http://www.bottlebill.org/legislation/canada/alberta.htm>).

Discounted coffee to customers who bring their own mug illustrates rewarded behaviour. Levies on tobacco products are an example of "sin taxes" aimed at reducing harmful behaviour, which might provide a model for taxing products whose waste is hazardous to the environment and human health.

### ***Targets and Tracking***

It is vital that stewards establish targets to guide the development and measurement of their programs. We strongly recommend requiring stewards to work with stakeholders to develop reasonable, yet challenging targets and suitable means to track and measure performance. In addition, we believe that targets and performances should be appraised with the overall stewardship objectives in mind. This means, for example, that the greatest social and environmental value lies in the highest recovery rates for the most toxic and harmful materials, the most valuable resources, and those whose diversion has the greatest favourable impact on energy and water conservation and GHG reduction.

### ***Meaningful Public Consultation***

Successful waste reduction and recycling programs require public cooperation and acceptance. A variety of consultation methods should be employed to reach a variety of constituencies. Informed public dialogue can help to shape a program responsive to public concerns and ideals. A waste reduction advisory committee of informed, concerned citizens can provide regular feedback and new ideas. EPR steward programs should ensure that they have an effective consultation program in place.

## Commuter Challenge: Keeping First Place in Winnipeg



Transportation is responsible for over 36% of Manitobans greenhouse gas emissions. Greening your daily commute can be a big part of reducing your contribution to climate

change. It can also be fun, healthy and help build a better community. The Commuter challenge is a national event held every year to help get you started on the right track. This year it runs from May 30 to June 6.

Participants and workplaces in Manitoba can register on the Resource Conservation Manitoba website to record how they get to work. If you walk, bike carpool or take the bus, your greenhouse gas reductions will be calculated and added to your community workplace totals. Prizes are given for the workplaces that have the highest rates of participation. Last year, Winnipeg had the highest participation of communities in its population category. Sign up today and get green!

More information at: <http://www.resourceconservation.mb.ca/gci/CC/>

### Giveaway weekend contest

Who doesn't like free stuff, especially when it is for the good of the environment. Get even more free stuff when you participate in the Living Green Giveaway Weekend Contest.

This Friday - Saturday (May14-15) is Giveaway Weekend in Winnipeg. The City of Winnipeg is encouraging households to put their unwanted junk out for others to take away. It will divert some things from the landfill, and provide new homes for those treasures. Get ready to scour the lanes and front lawns of your neighbourhood for excellent scores. How could anyone have ever wanted rid of that guitar shaped toilet seat, or that UFO-Cow lamp? Someone has no taste.





Giveaway Weekend is always lots of fun, but use your common sense. Don't put out dangerous items that contravene health regulations. Only take things marked Free.

Also, keep in mind that Giveaway Weekend is meant to help the environment. If you are out hunting, stay close to home, take a wagon or cart and try not using so much fossil fuel. Take the opportunity to meet your neighbours and build community. While we are building community, Living Green, Living Well has a contest. Send us a picture of Your Best Find and your treasure will be featured in the Living Green, Living Well Ecoblog next week. Prizes will be handed out also. Send photos to: [livinggreen@resourceconservation.mb.ca](mailto:livinggreen@resourceconservation.mb.ca)

**Living Green, Living Well** is a project of **Resource Conservation Manitoba**. If you support the work we do, please join us! You may also consider making a donation.

**Joining Resource Conservation Manitoba**

Membership in RCM is free for individuals. You will receive updates on our activities and our Living Green, Living Well Newsletter. Most importantly, you will be putting your voice together with hundreds of other Manitobans speaking out for an environmentally sustainable, socially just future.

Send us a note with your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Please indicate your support of the principles of RCM: [www.resourceconservation.mb.ca/about/mission.html](http://www.resourceconservation.mb.ca/about/mission.html)

- I have read and support the principles of Resource Conservation Manitoba and wish to join as a member.

Please also consider **donating** to Resource Conservation Manitoba. We have been a non-profit, non-governmental, registered charity since 1989.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to support the work of Resource Conservation Manitoba with a gift of

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- \$500
- \$100
- \$50
- \$\_\_\_\_\_

Tele: \_\_\_\_\_

All gifts over \$10 will receive a tax receipt. Thank you for your generous support!

- I also wish to receive e-mail updates:

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_



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