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Green Steps – One at a Time

We will continue to experience many bumps in the road as all levels of government journey towards a critical juncture – the commitment to environmental sustainability in all policies and actions. This journey is the same as our own individual journey as we attempt to shrink our environmental footprint; by using our car less, turning our heat down, buying less ‘stuff’, and so on. Each day we are faced with choices, and as we now know, often the convenient and popular choice is not always the most environmental choice.

Even in this era of heightened awareness of the impacts of climate change and the fall-out of environmental disregard, there is still often a disconnect between what we philosophically believe and are committed to, and how we act. This is true for individual citizens, corporate citizens, and governments.

That is why it is important to celebrate when beliefs and commitment turn into action. Recycle NB (www.recyclenb.com), launched one year ago this month, is an organization created by the Government of New Brunswick to manage waste reduction programs in the province. The vision of Recycle NB is that all waste materials are managed in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way. The organization began by assuming responsibility for the Tire Stewardship Program and now a new Paint Stewardship Program is being implemented. Eventually, Recycle NB may oversee other industry-managed stewardship programs for waste products such as oil, electronic components (e-waste), batteries, mercury-containing devices, and pharmaceuticals. This is real progress!

In particular, the new waste paint recycling program is very exciting for our province! This program is called an EPR or Extended Producer Responsibility program, which represents a major change in the balance of responsibilities between the manufacturers and distributors of consumer goods, consumers, and governments, with respect to how the waste from specific products are managed. EPR programs shift end-of-life costs to the producers and/or others in the product chain rather than having costs borne by municipalities and general taxpayers. These programs ensure that manufacturers and distributors assume environmental responsibility for their products even after they’ve been consumed (both the product itself and the packaging).

All of this points to the fact that producers now have both the incentive and opportunity to redesign their product to minimize these end-of-life costs. It also creates incentives for producers to remove toxic substances from products and develop greener designs in the future.

The Product Care Association, on behalf of Paint Brand Owners, developed a “Made in New Brunswick” plan for leftover paint. Even the paint can is recyclable. The paint industry will be actively promoting the recycling of paint purchased throughout the province with the goal of decreasing the amount of waste that would otherwise end up in our landfills.

Paint consumers can now recycle their waste paint through a network over 40 drop-off locations now in place, and the number of depots will continue to grow to provide easy access to the program. Just bring

in your paint to a drop-off depot nearest you and they do the rest! Recycle NB will monitor the program and ensure that 70 percent of all paint received is made into new paint. A list of drop-off locations and types of paint accepted for recycling can be found at www.recyclenb.com. Currently in the Fredericton area, Topmar Building Supplies on Fredericton's north side, and Roblynn Home Hardware in Oromocto are the drop-off depots.

Recycle NB and its progressive future plans look good on our Province. So now that it's spring-cleaning time, support the program and fulfill your environmental duty by not letting your old paint end up in the landfill!

Sonya Hull is a local consultant and Project Manager for Fredericton's Green Matters campaign. If you have topics you would like the Green Matters writers to cover in this column, please e-mail us at greenmatters@fredericton.ca. To read past columns go to www.greenmattersfredericton.ca and click on the 'Green Matters in the Gleaner' button.