

The Daily Gleaner

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By Alycia Morehouse

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Recycling is now such a routine part of our lives that we often forget that there are two other more important “R’s” in the waste disposal hierarchy: reduce and reuse. For many of us, these terms have been engrained in us as the most basic of learned environmentally-conscious habits. However, the hierarchy isn’t always practiced in the way it should be which would translate into minimal actual waste, while getting the most out of what we have.

The first ‘R’ is reduce – it’s simply about buying and consuming less - quality over quantity. In today’s very materialistic Western culture, when something breaks, we can just buy a new one. But is that how we should really be thinking?

After reduce comes reuse; this means repairing, repurposing, and regifting or passing on for someone else to use. I think my grandfather is one of the best examples of reusing – I don’t think anything ever left his house. He would darn his socks, use old wrapping paper Christmas after Christmas, egg cartons to hold golf ball, and old jam containers for screws and other workshop items.

Lastly, if you have maximized all opportunities to reduce and reuse, recycling is the way to go. Recycling is turning old product materials into new ones. Upcycling (converting less valuable materials into more desirable items) and downcycling (turning high-value items into low value raw materials) are two relatively new terms in recycling.

Here in Fredericton we have had a public recycling program for quite some time now, offering residential curbside paper and plastic pick-up, as well as public depots for recycling drop-off. Those depots are located on the Southside at the Fredericton Exhibition Grounds and at the Bishop Drive Irving; and on the Northside, at Brookside Mall, and WalMart at Two Nations Crossing. Accepted items include:

- Corrugated cardboard and boxboard
- Office paper
- Magazines and catalogues
- Plastic containers (#1-9)
- Plastic bags
- Refundable plastic beverage containers
- Milk cartons
- Metal cans

Remember, no glass bottles, but you can take them to a redemption centre for a refund. There are three redemption centres in Fredericton: 213 McFarlane Street, North; 70 Timothy Drive (off Hanwell Road), and Best Metals on Wilsey Road on the Southside.

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In recent years, the City has added downtown recycling bins in addition to regular trash cans. And in a unique partnership with the John Howard Society, those bins are monitored and emptied on a regular basis. These receptacles are clearly labelled as to what can be put in them, and if other items get tossed in these units, for example glass, or other garbage, it contaminates the recyclables and could create injury for those responsible for emptying them. As well, all recyclables sent to the Fredericton Region Solid Waste Commission (FRSWC) are manually sorted, so contamination of recycle streams (e.g. glass) can be dangerous to those handling the items.

In 2010, residents of Fredericton helped to divert approximately 11% of waste away from the landfill and into recycling streams. Last year alone, recyclables amounted to an average of 87 pounds per capita, which is approximately 33% of the total waste tonnage processed by the FRSWC. This is a slight improvement over 2009, but we can do much better! It all starts with education and then changing our habits to get comfortable to less 'stuff' in our lives.

Alycia Morehouse is the City of Fredericton's Climate Change Coordinator. To contact her, or other members of the Green Matters Team, email greenmatters@fredericton.ca.