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Fortunate in Fredericton

For the next three months I am living in beautiful British Columbia, a trip I have been planning for some time now. Because I'm accustomed to buying most of my groceries at the Boyce Farmers' Market, as part of my planning process before leaving Fredericton, I went online to find out locations of the local markets in the area I am staying. I presumed that with such a long growing season, and being the birthplace of the 100-mile diet, it would be easy. Not so.

I discovered on our drive across the country that unlike our local market in Fredericton, most farm markets only operate from May through October. It is true that the actual growing season doesn't last much longer than October anywhere in Canada, but even on the last day I attended the Boyce Market before leaving Fredericton in December, I could still find local apples, squash, potatoes, eggs, carrots and maple syrup. There is also a very good variety of local meat, cheese, bread and fish all year round.

While in Alberta over the Christmas holidays, we found a local farmer who carried free range, organically raised beef and lamb but the prices were so inflated that it made the buying decision a little more difficult – a 12-pound turkey cost nearly double what it cost at the Fredericton market.

Having arrived in BC now and staying in a similarly populated area as Fredericton we have discovered a variety of specialty shops and grocery stores that offer organic foods and local organic meat. Though I am happy to know these options exist just a short drive away, it is still not the same as our market. And though I didn't expect to be within walking distance of everything, it would be nice to have the one central location for one-stop shopping that our Boyce Market provides us. They do have an annual farmers' market but only May through October.

And there is more than just local food to be thankful for here in Fredericton. I first found out about recycling as a young girl visiting my aunt in Mississauga, Ontario, so who would have thought that thirty years later many communities across Canada would still not offer this important service? When visiting my friend in a small, but fast-growing, community in Alberta I noticed that they did have lots of large recycling bins conveniently located around town, however, she told me that plastics are only picked up once every six months. This must deter many people from recycling – I know that in my small house I would not have enough storage space to keep all our plastics for six months.

And finally, I noted as we traveled across the country that many larger cities are still sprawling out, rather than growing up. Expansive developments of large single-family homes are taking over once rich farm land and beautiful mountainsides that were once home to an unreserved network of wildlife and ecosystems. It is definitely astounding and discouraging to see the vast amount of land across the country that is being used up with such sprawl.

I know we're not perfect in Fredericton, but we are fortunate to live in a city that does place significant value on principles of environmental stewardship and support of the local economy. Yes, we still have a long way to go, but certainly not as far as many communities across the country that I've seen on my journey!

Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian on a temporary living adventure in Vancouver, where she will continue to challenge herself to keep to her environmentally sensitive habits. Check out www.greenmattersfredericton.com if you want to start some good green habits of your own!