

Environment

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Circular economy (October, 2023, Informer)



WHAT IS THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY?

October is "Circular Economy" month, but what exactly is it? Rather than the Linear Economy in which things are produced, used and then disposed of, the Circular Economy seeks to prolong the use of our goods, reducing the need to produce and dispose of them. In this version of the economy, far fewer resources are required and far less waste is generated, making it a more sustainable model. Here are a few examples.

Electronics

In 2020 the world dumped a record 53.6 million tons of e-waste – equivalent to the weight of 350 cruise ships. Meaning \$57 billion worth of gold, silver, copper, platinum were mostly dumped or burned rather than being collected for reuse.

The Circular Economy solutions? Re-home your usable electronics or toss your broken electronics in our e-bin (*Electrobac*) located at the Community Centre.

Textiles

On average, Canadians purchase 70 new articles of clothing a year and, in total, contribute 12 million tons a year of textile waste to landfills.

The Circular Economy solutions? Sell or donate your used clothing. Shift your shopping sprees to thrift stores. Host a clothing swap or join the Environmental Action Committee's swap this spring.

Food

A whopping 58 per cent of all food produced in Canada – 35.5 million tons – is lost or wasted, according to a Second Harvest report. Avoidable food loss and waste in Canada costs \$1,766 per household!

The Circular Economy solutions? Shop selectively with a list. (That box of 10 avocados seemed like a bargain until I found the last 6 rotting in back of the fridge.) Don't use "Best Before" dates to determine whether a product

is still "good" – except for highly perishable animal products like meat, fish and milk. "Best Before" refers only to flavour not health. It literally only means that it's best before that date – not that it's bad afterwards. And with the food you absolutely need to throw away PLEASE compost it. That is the single most effective way to reduce your contribution to the landfill (and the world's methane emissions).

During Circular Economy month, please give some extra thought about how we might prolong or shift the usable life of the things we depend on.

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Garbage regulations. (April, 2024, Informer)



MORE ON THE NEW GARBAGE REGULATIONS

On May 1, new garbage regulations will come into force that will restrict the size and number of garbage bins you can put out. This change only applies to garbage bins – not recycling or compost bins. Have a look at the website for details. In the meantime, I'd like to answer a few common questions.

I only have a small bin. Can I keep using it?

Absolutely! The maximum size bin you'll be allowed is a 240 litre one, but you can certainly use a smaller one.

How big is a 240 litre bin?

For most households, your recycle bin is 240 litres, for instance. A 240L bin can hold about 3.5 garbage bags.

I have a non-compliant 360 litre bin. What am I supposed to do with it?

You may keep it for other purposes or sell it, but if you want to have it recycled, you can take it to the ecocentre in Lasalle or purchase your new bin through USD Global by downloading

and filling in the form on www.loubac.ca. When they deliver your new bin, they'll take away and recycle your old one for a fee of \$30.

How can I assess my current bin size?

Measure the lid. A non-compliant 360L bin has a depth of 34 inches from front to back. A 240L bin has a depth of 27 inches. Check on the top of the lid or have a look at the sample bins displayed outside the Community Centre. We've put a 240L and a 360L side by side for comparison.

How much will this change cost me?

The vast majority of households do not need to downsize their garbage

bins, so the cost will be zero. But if you have to replace your 360L bin, a new 240L bin costs about \$120. However, as stated above, you can also purchase a smaller bin for less. The typical 20 gallon metal or plastic garbage bin costs as little as \$30. And for those who must replace their 360L bin, the Town is offering up to a \$50 rebate. Details are on the website.

For more info and FAQs check out the Town's website, and keep an eye out for the e-bulletin and Facebook page.

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(December, 2022, Informer)



NEW GARBAGE BY-LAW 2023

Did you know that Canadians send more garbage to landfill per capita than any other country in the world? We may be environmentally friendly on certain clean energy metrics but when it comes to waste reduction, we're failing big-time. And at the municipal level we need to take more responsibility for the trash we send to the dump. So, like many municipalities across the Island, Montreal West will be instituting a new waste management protocol.

Why worry so much about garbage?

As garbage decomposes in a landfill, it releases methane into the atmosphere greatly contributing to the climate crisis. This is especially true of organic matter. When we send organic materials to be composted they emit a fraction of those harmful gasses. So it's extremely important to divert kitchen scraps and green waste to compost rather than tossing it in the garbage.

So, what are the new regulations?

Starting January 1, 2023 each single family household will be permitted to put out one 240 litre bin (maximum). Duplexes and triplexes will be allowed two 240 litre bins and apartments of 4 to 8 units three 240 liter bins. Businesses will be allowed three 360 litre bins. No additional garbage bags, boxes or loose items may be set out for pick up. All items must fit into the bins. Of

course, you can have a smaller bin if you like, just nothing exceeding the sizes listed.

How will these new restrictions impact me?

If your family currently recycles and composts, the new protocol won't likely affect you at all. And, for everyone, there are many other options to divert your waste such as: hazardous waste collection, the new "electrobac" at the arena for disposal of electronics, and the bulk pick up service Public Works offers by appointment. In addition, there are countless locations for disposing of non-recyclable, non-compostable items. The Ecocentre is the key waste diversion destination. They take everything from old appliances to hazardous waste to construction material and more. The closest one to us is on St. Patrick in Lasalle. And of

course there are also a multitude of private businesses that will take our cast offs such as Renaissance, Reno Depot, Home Depot, etc. MoWest also has a thriving *Buy Nothing* Facebook group that "re-homes" unwanted items of all descriptions.

To be frank, it will mean more recycling, composting and regular visits to the Ecocentre. It may mean reducing, reusing, rethinking and even refusing some of the items we've become accustomed to purchasing. It will be a challenge, but by no means an insurmountable one. In the age of this existential climate crisis, we've no other choice. We'll provide more details on this new protocol in the coming days.

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Garbage regulations continued on next page

Garbage regulations, continued (March, 2024, Informer)



On May 1 new provisions of our garbage regulations will come into force that will restrict the size and number of garbage bins you can put out. With some exceptions, each single-family home will be allowed **a maximum of one 240L bin** (smaller sizes also acceptable). And plastic garbage bags placed at the curb outside the bin or on their own will no longer be permitted. You may put out over-sized items for collection if they won't fit in the bin (furniture, etc.), but all other items must fit into your bin. These are the regulations for each type of dwelling.

Dwelling	Acceptable containers
Single Family Home	1 acceptable container of 240 litres or less
Duplex	2 acceptable containers of 240 litres or less or 1 acceptable container of 360 litres.
Building with 3 – 8 dwelling units	1 acceptable container of 240 litres or less per dwelling unit, or 1 acceptable container of 360 litres per 3 dwelling units
Building with 9 or more dwelling units	1 or more (up to a maximum of 0.3 m ³ per dwelling unit) closed waterproof containers made of steel of a maximum capacity of 6.12 m ³ and de-signed to be mechanically emptied by the back loader of a garbage truck, or 1 acceptable con-tainer of 360 litres per 3 dwelling units

Why can't you use plastic garbage bags alone?

Plastic garbage bags outside of bins are easy fodder for critters who scatter the unsanitary contents. They also get torn open and caught up in snow clearing equipment.

What's the size of your current bin?

Check on the top of the lid for details or measure your bin. A 360L bin tends to be closer to 34 inches in length while a 240L bin is around 27 inches in length. In the coming weeks, the Town will be displaying different sized sample bins around Town so you can compare your bin size to those.

What can you do with your non-compliant 360L bin?

You may keep it for other purposes or sell it, but if you want to have it recycled, the Town will make information available about bin suppliers who will recycle your old bin when you purchase a new bin through them.

Take advantage of the new bin rebate

For those who must replace their 360L bin with a smaller one, the Town is offering a \$50 rebate to help with the transition. Proof of residence and bin purchase will be required. Details, conditions, and the application form will be on the website.

Why these new restrictions?

Like most municipalities across Canada, MoWest has the ambition to reduce the waste we send to landfill. And the more we divert our waste via composting and recycling the more we get in provincial government rebates. Last year, for instance, we received over \$70K based on our diversion rate. But the pressure is on to improve this result. To achieve this, Council had a few options. 1) Reduce garbage pick ups to once every two weeks. 2) "Pay as You Throw": measuring the amount of garbage each address produces and billing the address accordingly—a fair but extremely expensive system, and 3) The protocol described above. By selecting option #3 MoWest is joining several other municipalities (i.e. CSL, Senneville, L'ile-Perrot, St-Lazare, Winnipeg, etc) that have limited bin size to help motivate waste diversion towards recycling and composting.

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Garbage regulations continued on next page

Garbage regulations, continued (February, 2024, Informer)



NEW GARBAGE BY-LAW 2024

It sounds impossible, but Canadians actually send more garbage to landfill per capita than any other country in the world. Not a stat I'm happy to lead with, but there it is. When it comes to waste reduction, we really need to clean up our act. So, MoWest will be joining most other municipalities across the Island and instituting a new waste management protocol. Ours will come into force April 30.

What's the trouble with trash?

As trash (specifically organic matter) decomposes in a landfill it releases methane - a hugely potent greenhouse gas. This greatly contributes to atmospheric warming. So it's extremely important to divert kitchen scraps and green waste to compost rather than tossing it in the garbage. Also, recycling, when done properly, can increase the sustainability of our economy ultimately using less energy and natural resources to produce the goods we need.

So, what's this new protocol?

Starting April 30, 2024 each single family home will be allowed to put out a maximum of one 240L bin (smaller sizes are also acceptable). Duplexes, triplexes, apartment buildings, and commercial establishments may be allowed more. Specifics can be found on the website.

You may also put out extra large items for collection if they won't fit in the bin (furniture, etc.). But no additional garbage bags, boxes or loose small items may be set out for pick up. Other than over-sized pieces, all items must fit into your bin(s).

What do I do with my old 360L bin?

You may keep your 360L bin for other purposes if you like (storage, autumn green waste), or sell it in the secondary market if it's in good condition, or give it to a duplex/triplex or business owner who's permitted to use them. If you just want to get rid of it, the Town is currently looking for a contractor who will collect them to be recycled for a modest fee. Specific info on this arrangement will be made available shortly.

Not sure of your bin size? It should be indicated on top of the lid. Most people have 240L and under.

What's this going to cost me?

The vast majority of MoWesters are currently using accept-

about \$120. But those who must replace a 360L bin with a 240L or smaller will be eligible for a \$50 rebate on the purchase of a new bin. Proof of purchase required. One rebate per address. Details will be available on the website.

What other impacts will this change have?

If you currently recycle and compost, the new protocol won't likely affect you at all. There are many other options to divert waste such as: the hazardous waste collection, the "electro-bac" at the community centre for small electronics and the bulk pick up service Public Works offers by appointment. The Ecocentre is also a great place to take old appliances, hazardous waste, construction material and more. The closest one to us is on St. Patrick in Lasalle. And of course there's Renaissance for clothes and household items. MoWest also has a thriving Buy Nothing Facebook group that "re-homes" unwanted items of all descriptions.

Why choose this particular new protocol?

Council had a few options. 1) Reduced garbage pick ups to once every two weeks. We felt this would be too drastic a change for now but may be considered in future. 2) A Pay as You Throw: A system that measures the amount of garbage each address puts out and bills the address accordingly. This would require all new uniform bins with trackers for each address. An extremely expensive plan, with very few companies able to bid on the collection contract (hence \$\$\$). 3) The protocol described above. Moderately disruptive for some but much less costly. A good first step to encourage garbage diversion where possible.

For more info on this new protocol keep an eye out for the bulletin, the Town's website & Facebook page

Elizabeth Ulin, *Councillor*
Public Works, Environment and Communication

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Trees

What's your tree doing for you?



WHAT'S YOUR TREE DOING FOR YOU?

I recently received a wonderful short video from Public Works, Tree of All Trades, made by the Halifax Regional Municipality. You can view it at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyXDjOamDj8>. It explains all the amazing benefits one tree provides us, let alone the incredible benefits afforded by thousand of trees that form our urban forest.

For instance, among their many "trades" is their amazing role as air purifiers. Trees sequester and store carbon dioxide and trap air pollutants. They are also excellent coolers and have been proven to reduce the urban heat island effect by providing shade through evapotranspiration. This occurs when the sun hits the leaves of a tree causing water to evaporate, thus cooling down the air. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, a combination of shading and evapotranspiration can reduce air temperature by 1 to 5 degrees. And we certainly needed that this summer! Trees are also great allies when it comes to storm water management. Their roots absorb runoff water and, in the process, filter it. By limiting runoff water, the roots help stabilize the ground where the tree is planted. And trees also reduce street and sidewalk maintenance, as shade can slow down pavement deterioration.

Other benefits they provide you personally include: adding aesthetic value to your property, enhancing your health and well-being, increasing the value of your home, reducing stress, noise pollution, road rage and even crime rates!

In Montreal West, every year during the spring and fall, the Town plants between 60 and 80 trees on the public right of way in front of private properties. First, Public Works and the Environment Department identify available spaces. These are spaces without trees or where there is a considerable gap between trees. Then the selection of "the right tree for the right spot" begins. This selection takes into account many factors such as the lot size, surrounding infrastructure (Hydro lines and poles, gas or water pipes, private infrastructure, etc.), the suitable tree species (diversity is of utmost importance), the size of the tree at maturity, etc. Residents are then given the opportunity to choose from among three appropriate tree species.

When your turn comes, you will receive a letter from Public Works notifying you that a tree will be planted in the front of your property. Please choose one of the three being offered, and let them know your preference as soon as possible. A few weeks later the tree will be planted.

We hope that you will appreciate the wide range of economic, health and environmental benefits that trees have to offer. And planting them now ensures that the next generation of Montreal Westers enjoy the same quality of urban environment we are so fortunate to have today.

Maria Torres, *Councillor*
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Hedges, planting on medians [See Bylaws: Sidewalk obstructions](#)

Inventory (December 2023, Informer)



YOUR STREET TREE HAS A PROFILE

Public Works regularly gets requests for public tree inspections and maintenance (primarily from concerned homeowners). But sometimes there are misconceptions about how the department prioritizes this work. So I'd like to provide a bit of context.

In 2010 the Town undertook a comprehensive evaluation of all our public trees (the first in over 25 years). What do I mean by "comprehensive"? A profile of each individual tree was created noting its species, size, age, and structural health (including its trunk and crown). Then a prescription was provided for work needed, if any. Using best industry practices, another full inventory was done in 2020, once again evaluating all the public trees with a certified arborist. So each of our mature public trees has been evaluated by an external arborist at least twice in the last 13 years. And our regular tree maintenance program is primarily designed around that inventory data. Public Works also keeps track of all in-

coming requests from residents who may be concerned about a public tree. Once a call or message comes in, a foreman or other qualified staff member will go and inspect the tree. Our staff have been given training by a certified arborist to identify key issues. Based on these field inspections and the info from the tree inventories, Public Works will have a clear idea of what needs to be done, if anything (e.g. pruning, safety trim) and what priority to give the work. If a case is more complex, an outside arborist can be called in. And any new data collected is then added to that tree's profile.

Residents are encouraged to call Public Works if they have concerns about a public tree, but please understand that

the department already has a valuable set of data on that tree. For instance, you may notice a crack in the bark, but PW data may show it's been there since 2010 and not getting bigger. That's the advantage to having these extensive profiles. So, please don't hesitate to contact the department, but know that Public Work's assessment of your tree issue will be based on a lot of pertinent information that you may not have on hand.

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Inventory continued on next page

Inventory (April-May, 2021, Informer)



The Town of Montreal West is committed to maintaining the integrity of our tree canopy so that it can continue to provide us with its innumerable economic, health, environmental and aesthetic benefits. Here are some updates on our ongoing tree initiatives.

Tree inventory results

Last summer, a full inventory of all public trees in Town was carried out, which entailed the collection of size, health and condition information for each tree by a certified arborist. Prior to this exercise, the most recent inventory had taken place in 2011 at which time we were warned of a severe deficit of young trees to replace the larger trees expected to naturally senesce (die). Despite this predicament and the removal of trees due to the emerald ash borer and Turcot construction, we are proud to report that the Town's tree canopy has increased and its resilience has improved thanks to aggressive tree-planting efforts over the past ten years. For example, the Town's tree cover percentage has increased from 28.75% in 2011 to 30.03% in 2019 and species distribution has become more diverse resulting in a canopy less susceptible to insects and diseases.

That being said, we still have plenty of work to do: though the proportion of small trees has improved from 15% to 28% it still falls short of the ideal of 40%. In addition, overall tree health has seen a slight decline. The Public Tree Planting Program as well as an ambitious tree maintenance program are two initiatives that are in place to respond to these concerns.

Public planting program

Every year, the Town plants public trees in available spaces throughout its territory, i.e., the easement between the sidewalk and property line. This year, the council has set a goal of planting 100 new trees. At the time of this article's printing, the spring session of the annual tree planting program will be well underway. If a location adjacent to your home has been selected for the planting of a public tree you will receive (or have already received) a letter from the Public Works department asking you to select your species preference from a list of options chosen specifically for suitability in the available space. If you did not receive a letter but wish to have a public tree planted adjacent to your

property, you may contact Public Works at any time and we will evaluate the suggested location for planting in the fall of 2021.

Maintenance

The recent tree inventory has provided us with a detailed picture of the maintenance requirements to keep our public trees in safe and healthy condition. As over half of public trees have been recommended for some type of intervention within the next five years (typically involving trimming or pruning) you may notice an elevated level of tree activity particularly during the summer months. Tree maintenance is an ongoing process and security issues are usually prioritized over aesthetic issues.

As a last resort, some trees unfortunately need to be removed – if this is the case for a tree adjacent to your home, you will receive a notice from the Public Works department in advance of the tree's removal.

Private tree giveaway

The eighth annual tree giveaway, where Montreal West residents can order a tree for 10\$ to plant on their own property, is taking place again this year. Though by the time of this article's publishing tree reservations will have closed, we expect to deliver all orders during the week of May 17.

We thank all residents for their participation and for their contribution to a greener community.

*Article written by Dezso Lovicsek,
GIS Analyst
Montreal Public Works department
on behalf of
Maria Torres, Councillor for Public Works,
Public Buildings and the Environment*

Maintenance (June 2024, Informer)



A LITTLE OFF THE TOP PLEASE

Spring has sprung and that means trees, hedges and shrubs are in full bloom. This also means that by-laws are in effect to ensure that branches on your property do not impede streets or sidewalks.

Nuisance bylaw 456, article 4.2 prohibits the growth of branches over a street or sidewalk. To read the by-law, visit the Town website: *Resident Services>Administrative Services>Municipal By-laws* (under the *Public Security* heading).

Regular maintenance of branches is required as they can become hazardous to pedestrians including seniors and people who are visually impaired or who have low vision.

If you are thinking of planting a hedge this season or already have one, please

consult the zoning bylaw 2020-002, which contains two provisions to take into consideration:

1) Article 4.6.3, stipulates that hedges cannot exceed 6 feet.

2) Article 4.7.1, **for corner lots only**, stipulates that hedges cannot exceed 2 feet within the visibility triangle located within 3m of each side of the corner.

To consult the by-law visit the Town website: *Resident Services>Administrative Services>Municipal By-laws* (under the *Urban Planning* heading).

Montreal West boasts some beautiful trees, plants, flowers and gardens. If you see a species that you like, take a photo using your smart phone, click on the photo then the "i" symbol and click "look up plant." Now you know!

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions regarding other by-laws in the Town.

Lauren Small-Pennefather, *Councillor Public Security*
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Protecting trees during construction (June, 2024 Informer)



PROTECTING YOUR TREES DURING CONSTRUCTION OR LANDSCAPING WORK

If you have a construction or renovation project coming up, you need to learn about by-law 2016-001 and article 4.8.4 (page 65) of the Town's Zoning By-laws.

These by-laws stipulate some measures you must follow to protect trees on your property as well as those on adjoining properties during construction work. The by-law applies to works such as building extensions, adding or renovating sheds and garages, installing French drains and swimming pools, etc.; as well as landscape work such as extensions of driveways and walkways. Some of the measures included in the by-laws state that, in order to provide

protection to the trees, you must have a fence installed and maintained, during the construction period, on the perimeter surrounding the tree. Construction debris, construction and backfill materials, as well as the area designated for circulation of heavy machinery and people must be done outside of the perimeter of the fence.

Furthermore, the bylaw stipulates that in some cases, tree trunks must be protected against physical damage by

covering them with wood planks attached to the trunk of the tree.

For further information about all the measures you must take to protect your trees during construction work, please contact the Urban Planning department or consult the aforementioned bylaws.

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Removing trees (April, 2024 Informer)

Note the need for marking the location of the tree on your certificate of location.



FELLING AND REPLACING A TREE ON A PRIVATE DOMAIN.

By now, we are all well aware of the importance of trees and their impact on our quality of life, the environment, our health and the economy. Unfortunately, sometimes we are faced with the difficult task of having to have a tree or more, felled.

Felling of trees is only permitted under specific circumstances, such as trees being diseased, dead, or of irreversible decay; located in an intended building site or one with a structural defect affecting its solidity, thus, posing a safety issue.

To protect the Town's urban forest, Montreal West's tree by-laws require that a Certificate of Authorization from the Urban Planning Department is acquired, before cutting down a tree.

To apply for a Certificate of Authorization, the property owner will need to present a Certificate of Location showing the location of the tree, a com-

pleted permit request form (including cost of work), a certified report from an authorized arborist and photos of the tree. Felling a tree without a permit is punishable by a fine plus court fees. In addition, the property owner will be asked to replace the tree.

The Town's by-laws list all other cases when a property owner will be asked to replace a felled tree, such as in the case of felling a tree to construct an accessory building or a parking space.

When selecting a new tree to plant on your property, please note that the following tree species are prohibited: alders, silver maple, Manitoba maple,

poplars, willows, and Norway maples. Also, to ensure that the tree, once it reaches maturity, will not interfere with structural installations, such as sewers, fire hydrants, electrical cables, etc., the selection of the site on your property is of utmost importance.

For further information, please consult the town's Zoning by-laws, Chapter 4 (Pages 64-65) titled *Provisions Relating to the Protection of Trees* or contact the Urban Planning Department.

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Tree planting program, mandatory planting (May, 2022, Informer)



TREE PLANTING SEASON

The month of May marks the beginning of tree planting in MoWest. Those of you who've ordered trees through the \$10 Tree program will receive them, and about 80 locations have also been selected to plant Town trees alongside residential streets.

Sadly, we had to remove 92 public trees in 2021 – mostly ash trees infested with the emerald ash borer. Last year we managed to plant 80 trees, but that still put us behind. And we already had some catching up to do. Our deficit of young trees has been well documented in our recent tree inventory which catalogues all our public trees (by species, age, location, maintenance and health status). It's really quite amazing how much we know about all our public trees!

So this year we will be planting 80 trees (half in spring and half in fall) to help make up for this deficit and ensure MoWesters continue to enjoy the benefits of a healthy green canopy: shading pedestrians, mitigating storm water damage, purifying the air and raising property values, to name a few.

Each of the 80 planting locations has been pre-selected by a certified arborist and the precise positioning will be confirmed by the Public Works department prior to planting – to avoid any conflicts between the new tree and private or public infrastructure. Residents are given a choice of three tree species deemed ideal for their specific location. Some residents, on learning they are scheduled to have a tree planted on the public domain in front of their home ask, "Why here? There are already plenty of trees on my street." But of course it's imperative to recognize that in 50 years most of the trees we see now will be dead. If we don't continue to plant new trees every year, we'll be leaving a barren landscape to future generations.

Of course the aesthetics of your front yard are largely up to you, but the public domain in front every home is used for the installation of public infrastructure like lamp posts, hydro poles, fire hydrants, traffic signs and, yes, street trees.

There are also many MoWesters who request a tree planting in front of their homes. To get on the list, just give Public Works a call or fill out the online form. Someone will evaluate your property and be in touch.

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Water testing & water filter program. (November, 2022, Informer)



WATER FILTER REBATE PROGRAM

We MoWesters are proud of our beautiful heritage homes. They're part of our Town aesthetic along with tree-lined streets. But the downside of these older homes is that they sometimes contain outdated public and private infrastructure which can cause health and safety concerns. Lead pipes are one such hazard.

As the Town renews its infrastructure, we are systematically removing the lead pipes under the streets. But this is a gradual process and will take many more years to complete. In the meantime, residents can mitigate the possible effects of lead by filtering their water. And that's where the Town's new rebate program comes in.

Who's eligible & for what?

The Town will grant a one-time rebate of \$50 towards the purchase of a water filter system to every residential property at risk of having lead water service lines on the public side. This in-

cludes buildings with fewer than eight units, built before 1970. Eligible owners can purchase a filter unit (stand alone or built into the sink), provide proof of purchase, and receive a rebate. Check out the website for more details.

Which homes are ineligible?

The purpose of the rebate is to reduce the presence of lead originating from the **public** water mains – not from lead pipes inside your home – that is the homeowner's sole responsibility. So, if your home was built after 1970 or has had the street infrastructure redone since 1990, you do **not** have lead

water mains on the public side and are ineligible for the rebate. Also, if your water has been tested by the Town and been found to be within the recommended limit established by Health Canada, there's no need for a filter (happily) and you are not eligible for the program.

What about lead in your own pipes?

Of course it's possible – even if you've had your street redone recently – you have lead pipes inside your own home. If you're concerned about this, especially if you have young children or are pregnant, please contact a water testing company to have an analysis done.

Other mitigation measures include: using cold water to cook, running the tap for a minute in the morning before drinking (until the water runs cold), and keeping any water filters clean.

If you're unsure of whether you qualify for the rebate, you can contact Public Works.

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The autumn charm of Montreal West. October 2022. @Julia Ross



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Where does our recycling go? (September, 2023, Informer)



WHERE DOES OUR RECYCLING GO?

At the beginning of the summer, the Environmental Action Committee (EAC) took a field trip to the sorting centre in Lachine, Société VIA, which handles MoWest's recycling. And some of what we saw was shocking.

Our tour began at the pre-sort station where employees, lined up on either side of a conveyor belt, do a manual sorting of items removing 10-15% of the material that cannot be recycled. We saw loads of items that had no business being in the recycle bin: vacuums, laptops, hoses, suitcases, Styrofoam packaging. Some of these items are downright dangerous. Long, thin items like hoses, straps, lengths of wire and electrical cords can get jammed up in the machinery, stretching until they snap, badly injuring or maiming employees. We were told this happens every year.

The conveyor moves quickly and it is clear that a lot of the remaining material is still not recyclable. Employees must be careful of broken glass and other sharp items. The decibel level is extremely high, the smell sharply pungent. Masses of flies are everywhere. There is a reason we are asked to clean our food containers before tossing them in the bin. Week-old milk cartons, tins of canned fish, greasy take-out containers may all be technically recyclable, but when thrown in the bin unwashed create an unhealthy (frankly intolerable) environment for the workers. And it's worth noting that Société VIA

hires employees with various mental and physical disabilities as part of its mandate. This is laudable, of course, but as "suppliers" to this facility, we have a responsibility contribute items in sanitary condition.

After the pre-sort, the remaining items go past a series of sorting machinery. An optical scanner removes plastic items with blasted air. An electromagnetic machine removes metal using a magnetic field (allowing them to achieve 97% metal purity). A "shakeout machine" is usually used for glass sorting, but during our visit that machine was broken. In the meantime, they must manually sort the glass, but can achieve only 80% purity. This lower-grade material is repurposed as sandblasting material and in pool filtration systems. None of it can be recycled back into glass. The coming Provincial bottle consignment program (2025) will allow glass to be properly recycled. At the end of the line, a "quality control" station bales up the paper and cardboard (30% of all recyclables), and all non-conforming materials are sent to landfill.

When we asked what MoWesters could do to help make the system work better these are the tips we got:

1) When in doubt, throw it out! You're better off tossing an item in the garbage if you're not sure it's recyclable. Contamination is a big problem in our current system. Textiles, shoes, diapers, long items (hoses, cords, straps), and lithium batteries are especially problematic. (Lithium batteries cause many accidents and fires. The Saguenay sorting centre has 17 battery fires per month!)

2) Think of the human beings that have to sort through your stuff. Clean food containers, especially dairy, meat and fish.

3) Do the stretch test for plastics bags. If they're stretchable they're recyclable. And put them all together in one bag.

4) Tetra boxes can be recycled. Leave the covers on or they will get lost in the glass.

5) Number 6 plastic and Styrofoam is not recyclable except at the Lasalle Ecocentre. Bring it there in bulk.

The EAC is looking into organizing another field trip to the recycle centre for the public so you can see for yourself how it all works. Keep an eye out for details.

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Recycling continues on next page

(September, 2024 Informer)

Recycling is complicated!

A visit to *Société VIA*

“Recycling is complicated!” This was a comment received from one of 16 MoWest residents after a trip to the local recycling sorting facility in Lachine, on June 7. The trip was organized by the *Environmental Action Committee* to help raise awareness about our local recycling ecosystem.

“Where are we?” asked **Maxime Moisan**, our guide and the plant manager, in the sunny and quiet staff break room. After some guesses from the group, he confirmed that we were not at a recycling centre, but rather a sorting centre for recycled materials. The role of the centre is to triage and sort everything that gets dropped off by recycling trucks and get it ready for sale to those who recycle these materials. The centre is operated by *Société VIA*, which operates five recycling centres around Quebec and has a mission to foster social inclusion of people living with functional limitations and providing them with work opportunities.

Once we left the break room, we were led to a loud space overlooking a large open floor where recycling trucks unload and front-end loaders de-compress materials to improve sorting. Items then go to a “pre-triage” area, where anything that could be dangerous or interfere with the sorting machines is removed. Then, the mass of items moves along a dizzying array of conveyer belts to be machine sorted based on parameters such as size, weight, colour, light reflection and magnetic properties.

Materials end up in different areas according to their material type (paper/cardboard, plastic, etc.), and staff then do quality control on the conveyer belts. It’s a fast-paced job, with the conveyors moving many items by the workers, who have to quickly identify and pull out items that don’t belong

on the belt. As noted by one of the survey respondents: “After seeing people working at the facility, I want to help them with their work... their job is already difficult.”

What happens next?

Sorted materials are then bailed by material type and sold to various companies. *Société VIA* prioritizes selling to as many local and/or Quebec-based buyers as possible. For some plastics, there is not yet a market/purchaser to sell to, but plant manager Moisan says people should continue to put them in their recycling bins: “recycling is an evolving process,” he concedes, but they want citizens to develop the habit of putting plastic bags, for example, in recycling. He noted that *Société VIA* has only been operating the plant for the past year and a half, and it will take time and investment to get their processes maximized.

Recycling responsibly

Back in the quiet of the break room, Moisan was asked about his main advice for citizens who want to ensure they are recycling responsibly. Think before putting certain items in the blue bin – items to be recycled are containers, wrappings and printed materials. Items such as lithium batteries cause dangerous fires at the plant several times a year, and large items that are not meant to be recycled (e.g. hoses, very large metal sheets or pieces of plastic) can block the conveyors, thus disrupting the sorting process for materials from all over Montreal.

Moisan also emphasized one piece of clear advice in what can be an overwhelmingly complex system, especially when it comes to plastics and mixed materials: con-

sider what you purchase and reduce consumption at source. Also, educate yourself – use the “Ça va où” app to find out where to put your items.

Visiting a sorting centre is another way to educate yourself about the complexities of recycling. *The Environmental Action Committee* hopes to organize another visit in the coming year.

As noted by one participant: “I feel as an individual and as a society we can do much better.” Another noted: “The more I see and understand, the more I am willing to participate.” Educating citizens about our recycling systems – and the importance of reducing our reliance on packaging – is a key component of improving our waste recovery stream.

from Joanna Duy
Environmental Action Committee



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