

The Eco-Efficiency Centre in Burnside

Advancing environmental change in a community of businesses

BY PEGGY CRAWFORD KELLOCK

It's too expensive. We don't have enough employees to implement it. We're really busy now. Maybe next year.

Sound familiar? We've all heard them and many of us have repeated them; reasons for not making the right environmental choices nor adopting efficient resource use in a business. These often repeated ideas seem to stem from unfortunate rumors that circle the business world, that implementing good environmental practices costs, both in terms of money and time. In reality, if you talk with business owners and managers who have environmental policies and practices in place, they will undoubtedly tell you that implementing pollution prevention and waste minimization measures just makes good business sense. There are generally attitude changes required, but improving your environmental performance is simply improving your business. 'Green companies' are reaping benefits like reduced operating costs, safer workplaces, improved or enhanced relations with regulatory and financial agencies, and improved image from a public relations point of view. They are enjoying these benefits while lessening the impact of their business on the environment.

But, for businesses to start

travelling along the 'green road,' they still require access to the appropriate information on how to implement an effective environmental plan for their business, including how to get positive publicity. And, for most small and medium sized businesses, there are financial and time constraints to obtaining this information.

Back in 1992, a survey was conducted of approximately one quarter of the businesses in Burnside Industrial Park, one of the largest mixed use industrial/business parks in Canada. The survey results showed that there was a strong willingness within businesses to change practices and make a commitment to the environment. But, they did need help. Over 90 percent of these businesses wanted more information on wastes minimization mechanisms and efficiency, and they wanted that information in a direct and easily accessible manner.

In September of 1998, that information service for Burnside businesses was realized with the establishment of the Eco-Efficiency Centre in Burnside. The centre is trying to bring an important message to companies; there can be both ecological and economical advantages to waste reduction, pollution prevention and energy and resource conservation choices for their businesses. The centre wants to assist companies to improve the efficiency

of their individual businesses, while also encouraging an ecosystemic perspective in the park as a whole, by supporting cooperation between businesses. The non-profit centre is a partnership between Dalhousie University and Nova Scotia Power Inc., with support from the Halifax Regional Municipality, the Government of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada. This team of public and private partners shares a commitment to improve the ecological effectiveness and economic efficiency of businesses in Burnside and throughout Nova Scotia.

The centre provides information on pollution prevention, source reduction, resource conservation and economic efficiency. The staff works cooperatively with businesses in a hands-on fashion, with emphasis on providing businesses with the information they want and in the manner they want it. This may be through a variety of methods including workshops, seminars, fact sheets, phone calls, and library searches, amongst others. An active field program is underway which includes touring, talking, listening to owners, managers and employees, conducting preliminary environmental reviews, and providing feedback to the company on their specific concerns and opportunities. While the centre is focused primarily on Burnside, it is able to assist businesses located outside the park, as resources allow.

And, most important to those with an eye to the bottom line, the services of the Eco-Efficiency Centre are currently free.

Over the summer, the centre launched a new initiative, the Eco-Business Program, which will take Burnside and its businesses further along the 'green road.' This voluntary program urges businesses to be forward thinking and commit to implementing waste minimization and efficient resource use as part of their daily operations. The components include an environmental code, educational and promotional activities for employees, commitments by businesses to achieve specific reduction and conservation goals, and an award scheme for outstanding businesses. The Eco-Business Program will allow an exchange of the best ideas and advance innovation, as the enrolled companies demonstrate their commitment to the Burnside environment. It will see Burnside on the

leading edge in environmental management, and it is anticipated that the model of Burnside will be of interest to other business communities throughout Canada.

As Nova Scotia businesses prepare for the challenges in the new millennium, we will all be listening carefully. What will we hear? The same old rumors, or the sounds of companies leading the way in making good environmental choices?

Yes, we do have environmental policies in our company. A green business is really a quality business. Our employees have formed an environmental committee. Yes, we are an eco-business.

For more information, contact The Eco-Efficiency Centre in Burnside, 2 Vidito Drive in Dartmouth. (902) 461-6704 (phone) (902) 461-6703 (fax). Visit their website at <http://www.dal.ca/eco-burnside>.



DID YOU KNOW?

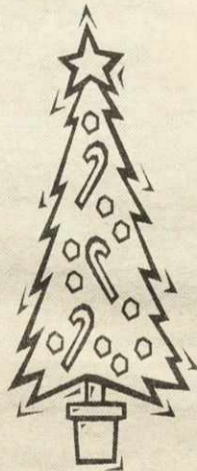
Here are some great green Christmas tips.

Now that Christmas is quickly approaching, some of you may be wandering out to your local tree lot and pick up a Christmas tree. Before you become a slave of habit, take a minute to consider this idea. Why not buy an artificial tree? Yes, it may be more expensive initially but in the long run it will save you money. And there would be no messy cleanup to worry about.

Most importantly and the reason for this article; think of all the trees you would save over your lifetime. If you cut down a tree every Christmas, in your average life span of roughly seventy years, you will consequently see about seventy trees used for decorative purposes. Think about seventy trees. Then think about all the animals that live in these trees. Yes, some animals do live in Christmas tree farms. Do your fellow animals a favor and allow them to keep their home for Christmas.

Another quick earth saving tip. Wrap your Christmas gifts in newspaper. It not only looks cool and saves trees, but it also saves you money. You can even use the comic section for additional color. Just remember to recycle the newspaper after the gifts are unwrapped!

Thanks to Barb Scott for sharing some green thoughts!



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HOLIDAY**

Stop by and see
us next year!

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