Real·life solutions to the some of the toughest environmental problems

BY DAVID WIMBERLY

Finally, the Halifax Regional Municipality is poised to take action to provide meaningful access to composting in the supercity.

Unless they unexpectedly abandon their commitment to the regional waste strategy, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Council will soon be authorizing two significant steps forward that together will form the very foundation of sustainably transforming our trash into resources.

tral composting facilities are before council and are expected to be approved this month. Both will save money as well as save the environment. They will allow us to keep compostable organic waste and birds reside. As well, these out of landfills and transform it for beneficial use.

Just as the Citizens' Strategy (a publicly developed guideline) mandated, more than one compost facility is to be used. Both will have an equal share of the residential municipal materials and equal opportunity to serve the industrial, commercial and institutional producers. They use two different technologies that have both been proven to work. Both sites are appropriate based on strict regulatory and municipal criteria, and both will be run by Canadian firms are experienced and skilled.

The approval of the composting plan will be the culmination of a public process that has taken nearly a decade. Citizens' groups have been asking for a composting plan for years.

Advisory Committee for this region tabled a report in 1989 recommending central composting and source-separated collection. Citizens fought the now-defunct garbage incinerator to support composting. The recently municimunity Stakeholders Committee, developed an Integrated Solid Waste/Resource Management Strategy that mandates even more composting — to the point where absolutely NO compostable materials are to be allowed into any landfill. This was done, not only to conserve resources and save money, but also to be able to make a solemn and enforceable covenant to any community that hosts a new landfill.

Province-wide consultation was done by the Clean Nova Scotia Foundation on behalf of the Nova Scotia Department of Environment in developing a Nova Scotian approach. In response to overwhelming citizen requests, the department has announced province-wide bans on the landfill of recyclable and compostable mate-

Composting at last

This compostables ban specifies and rats. "all compostable materials" which and even unrecycled papers. All of these produce clean, high quality compost suitable for general use.

cleaned up through legislation; the been taken out of the inks and papers, thus protecting printers, readers, recyclers and compost. They are completely safe to compost. Even though food, grass and

other organic wastes can be composted without significant problem, when these materials go to the landfill they cause significant problems. When composted, the organics are turned and aerated so that the microorganisms that cause odours don't grow. But in a landfill, there is little oxygen uct. Contracts for both a cart-based and no turning, therefore the collection system and for two cen- odorous microorganisms grow in profusion. Thus landfills always stink. Well-managed compost sites,

> however, are pleasant smelling. When composted, foods are never exposed to areas where rats

> > BY CATHERINE WATTERS

The last thing you expect to

see when you walk into a gro-

cery store is a pamphlet telling

you about over-packaging, en-

vironmental alternatives and

consumer choice. But then, Kent

Co-op in New Minas, Nova Sco-

tia, is not your average super-

the community," says Burt

Coleman, General Manager.

That's why his store, along with

other co-ops throughout Atlan-

tic Canada, has phased in pro-

grams to make environmental

practices part of the normal

"We have a duty to our mem-

Kent Co-op educates its mem-

tips in the in-store fliers, mak-

able and using "Eco-Choice"

shelf tags to indicate which

products are less polluting or

wasteful. These shelf tags iden-

tify safe alternatives to harsh

cleaning products and point out

products that can be reused,

composting and garbage reduc-

luting than other products.

"We have a responsibility to

When composted, food, grass, includes foods, leaf & yard waste unrecyclable papers, and other organic materials are biologically transformed into humus, the crumbly material that "makes" Today's papers have been topsoil when combined with sand and clay. Nutrients are recycled metals, chorines and VOCs have back into compost to enrich the finished product.

environmental supplement

Quite the opposite happens in landfills, where harmful leachate is formed that dissolves toxins in other waste and flows out of the landfill. Unless caught and treated, leachate contaminates ground and

Comprehensive composting of all organics is the solution to keeping organics from causing landfill problems, and it saves money while producing a beneficial prod-

Dalhousie University has long had plans to begin diverting all compostable materials just as soon as a facility opens. This will save money for the University that can better be used for education.

Unless council stumbles at the last moment and loses confidence, animals are not the usual pests at the composting project will open compost sites. However, landfills by July 1st. It is about time, so call are notorious for attracting gulls and give your support to Council.

take the store's food waste. Any

meat byproducts that would

normally be thrown away are

ground up and fed to the minks,

while the vegetables are either

fed to farm animals or

composted, depending on the

steps this Co-op has taken in

waste reduction is to reclaim

the waste heat coming off com-

pressors from their freezers,

which they then use to heat the

store. Not only have they suc-

ceeded in turning a waste into

a resource, they are saving

money on their heating bills

and helping prevent air pollu-

To help members participate

reusable, washable cotton bag.

The other is a collapsible plastic

it stands a mere 2-3 inches high.

in-store, can also be used to

carry groceries. These cardboard

boxes can be reused or recycled

sponsible doesn't stop at the

door. Many people are chemi-

from scented products like per-

sitive people sick, from a mere

Being environmentally re-

by the co-op member.

One of the more innovative

quality of the food waste.

Grocery store goes green

bers to do that, and to educate in waste reduction, Kent Co-op

them and help them [be more sells alternatives to plastic gro-

environmentally aware]," said cery bags. One alternative is a

bers through a program that in- container which fits easily into

cludes placing environmental a car's trunk. When collapsed,

ing educational pamphlets avail- Cardboard boxes, available

have refillable containers, use re- cally sensitive and have to deal

cycled materials or are less pol- with indoor pollution resultant

Some of the other pamphlets fume, hair spray and aftershave.

Kent Co-op offers explain These products often make sen-

tion through reusing, reducing, headache to severe nausea.

and recycling. Putting these Kent Co-op encourages a

ideas into practice, the store has scent-free workplace and offers

made arrangements with local scent-free, environmentally

farmers and mink ranchers to friendly product lines.

THE STORY OF KME Kate has just returned She shows it to her friends and the keeper one week later, Kate gets a proud new keeper

Keeping the Keeper a secret

BY TANIA TREPANIER

Can you imagine an alternative to mainstream sanitary products that doesn't damage the environment, doesn't pose a risk to womeasy to use? It exists, and it's called the Keeper.

thrown away.

dangerous garbage. Bleached tant- just one Keeper. These distribupons and pads pose a major prob- tors have such faith in their prodlem for sewage treatment facilities uct that they offer a three-month because of the chlorine-based tox- money-back guarantee. ins contained within them. When chlorine and paper products mix, often discouraged from talking organochlorines are formed. The about their health, particularly dangerous toxins are a threat to their menstrual health. We are the environment and to wildlife.

shock syndrome.

safe. They have much at stake in in their lives. keeping alternative products like the Keeper a secret.

as disposable sanitary products were promoted as more conven- house plants could benefit greatly ient and hygienic, products like the from a nutritious mixture of men-Keeper became hard to find. The strual blood and water. Keeper is a 100% soft natural rubber bell-shaped cup which is in- ing a Keeper or would like more serted in the vagina where it information, please contact collects menstrual blood. It was Danette Steele at 823-2202. There

factured under its current name since 1988.

If the environmental, health and comfort factors are not en's health, saves money and is enough to convince women to switch to the Keeper, perhaps the economic factors will. Eco One woman throws away about Logique, an Ottawa-based dis-10,000 pads or tampons in her tributor of the Keeper, claim that lifetime. Every year in North the Keeper pays for itself in about America about 12 billion pads and 5 or 6 months. One Keeper can almost as many tampons are last at least 10 years, and a woman can save from \$800 to That's a lot of garbage. And, it's \$1000 dollars over the lifetime of

In our society, women are all taught that menstrual blood They are also a threat to wom- is unclean and that women en's bodies. Exposure to should use chlorine-bleached organochlorines are believed to "whiter than white" products weaken immune systems and lead and pretend that we don't really to cancer. Also, every time a bleed. It's time to take responsiwoman uses a tampon, tiny cuts bility for our health and our enform due to its drying action in vironment. It's time for us to the vagina. Furthermore, tampons understand that bleeding once a absorb vaginal mucus which can month is not something to hide, lead to vaginal ulcers and toxic but something to talk about with others, to find ways of making it Yet the billion dollar sanitary less taboo. It's time for men to products industry would have us ask questions in an attempt to unbelieve that bleached tampons and derstand what menstruating is pads are viable, convenient and like and how it affects the women

If you are a woman, buy yourmenstrual sponges, cloth pads and self a Keeper. If you are a man, buy a Keeper for your sisters, your The Keeper is an alternative daughters, your lovers, your menstrual product which has been friends. These small actions are the around since the 1940s. However, stuff that revolutions are made of. And at the very least, your

If you are interested in purchas-

originally known as the Tassette is also an e-mail address (little cup), but has been manu- (keeper@magi.com) and a toll-free number (1-800-680-9739) for further information.

however, and Park Lane Mall is where it is at. Crocker, and

choices that are good for the earth. Not all of the products sold in P'lovers. Sound familiar? Per-

Enviro adventure in Park Lane

P'lovers are unusual. In fact, many haps you have noticed their recycled shoes and clothing line. If you of the items sold in P'lovers are have bothered to venture into the products that one could find at any other store in the mall. Need a Park Lane store, you may have noticed the toilet or the bag? There is a luggage store next composting worms. What about Body Shop? Paper? Kinko's is down their twig pencils, paper made There are very few stores com-

mitted to selling products that won't harm the earth. Even fewer stores are committed to supporting the local economy. P'lovers, on the other hand, is dedicated to both of these objectives. By choosing the products sold in P'lovers over the products sold in other stores the consumer is purchasing an environmentally friendly product and investing in the local community.

Purchasing products at P'lovers can hurt the pocket book, though, as the products are more expensive than those found in other Liz Crocker, one of the store's stores. For example, a 60z container of toothpaste sells for edge the irony of having an envi- \$7.95 — a seemingly outrageous ronmental store in a mall. Stores price when you juxtapose it with must go where the business is, the \$2.69 cost for the same container at Lawton's.

The difference between the two. co-owner Ann Caverzan, agree however, is that the toothpaste sold that by bringing the best available in P'lovers is biodegradable, sold "green" products together in one in recycled containers and is not

place they can help people make tested on animals. It is also much denser so a person can use less at each brushing. Furthermore, toothpaste and other hygiene products have a direct impact on the environment. They contain materials which cannot be broken down naturally. The result: store. Soap? Why not go to the contaminated sewer systems and waterways. If one chooses to invest in the "safe" toothpaste rather than the conventional brand they will be helping the environment directly.

Crocker laments the high prices of her products, but says she hopes that "in time the prices will come down." The more people buy the goods, the more likely it is that the prices will come down.

University students make up a large majority of P'lovers' clientele. This can be attributed to the fact that youth and university students are buying goods based on principles and not price.

Apart from embracing a different philosophy compared with other stores, P'lovers also distinguishes itself from other stores by the unique products it sells. Some items are hard to come by in other stores. The Deja shoe line is one of P'lovers's newest and most impressive products. These shoes are made from 100% recycled material. The most expensive pair sells for \$79.95 — not bad compared to the price of other shoes in Halifax. The least expensive pair is listed at \$39.95.

The store strives to provide leading edge products. When products become familiar in other stores, P'lovers moves on to another up and coming brand or item. It was one of the first stores to carry hemp clothing, pop-bottle fleece and items made from tires.

P'lovers has also contributed to environmental awareness in the community. The owners and staff give classes in various educational institutions, and have also appeared on ATV's Breakfast Television. The store also tends to act as a referral and reference centre for people interested in pursuing environmental issues. Crocker's position on the Board of the National Round Table of the Economy and the Environment has helped to make international organizations more accessible to customers.

P'lovers has also supported community projects whenever possible by dedicating their window or by giving financial support. The display case is also used to promote new products and covey messages and movements to the community. Should you pass P'lovers on

your next trip to Park Lane Mall,

treat yourself to an adventure and

enter in. Undoubtedly you will find

a product of interest, be it the toi-

let, the composting worms or even a bag of popcorn. There is plenty to see, investigate and learn about.

Changing the pesticide landscape have not been tested for effects Many people in our community now dread the coming of

summer when people begin

spraying their lawns with

chemicals. For some people, the

use of pesticides frequently

drives them to their beds with

headaches, asthma attacks,

vascular spasms or flu-like

symptoms. Pesticides in the air

REAL ALTERNATIVES TO TOXINS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Councillors for the Halifax Regional Municipality are currently drafting a by-law which would effectively place a selective moratorium on the use of landscape pesticides (insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, etc.) in the densely populated metropolitan area.

If this bylaw is passed, our neighbours's pesticides will no longer drift into our homes, or onto our laundry, toys, pools and furniture. No longer will synergistic effects from the mixmay encounter while walking to

istered by our government." -No. they are not safe. While duction.

the government can assure us neighbour.

short periods of time. Pesticides and Feed".

on children, women or people whose health is already compromised with things like asthma or chemical sensitivities. Neither have the chemicals been tested for chronic effects. The mixing of these pesticides has not been considered when pesticides are licensed, but studies show that these chemicals are many times more toxic in combination. Sometimes their toxicity increases as they break down in reaction with the environment

BY KATIE ROOK

from mushrooms or binders made

P'lovers is awaiting your discovery.

four years ago and has maintained

its title as one of Halifax's only

environmental stores. The store is

committed to selling environmen-

tally friendly products and promot-

ing healthy environmental

philosophy among consumers.

Selling products while trying to

promote such a philosophy may

seem contradictory, but it is both

the store's paradox and virtue:

P'lovers's long term goal is to make

co-owners, is the first to acknowl-

the store unnecessary.

No? Well, then Park Lane Mall's

P'lovers was opened just over

from old computer parts?

The use of pesticides has been linked to cancer in humans, spontaneous abortion, genetic damage, liver and pancreatic our children be getting damage, neuropathy, asthma and allergies, chemical sensitivities and will become proud of our ture of chemicals that they now vascular spasms. Aside from healthy, natural-looking lawns. posing dangers to humans, pestischool on a bright spring day cides pose a serious threat to when rows of our lawns are wildlife. Birds often die after eatvolatizing toxic pesticides and ing granular pesticides. After ex- merous medical leaders and organic solvents from their posure to pesticides, many birds suffer from cancers, abnormal You may ask, "Aren't pesti- thyroid function, demasculinizacides safe? After all, they are reg-tion and feminization of males, and decreased fertility and repro-

that the pesticide that we buy the so-called "inert ingredients", letter could make a difference will kill the target organism, are often more toxic than those in your child's health as well they cannot guarantee that it listed. They include chemicals like as the health of our future genwill not destroy the health of DDT and benzene, a known hu-erations. your child, your pet or your man carcinogen. The presence of these ingredients is kept secret your councillor's name and According to Agriculture from both the consumer and the address. For more information Canada, only three and a half lawn spray companies. Some toxic contact Real Alternatives to per cent of the pesticides on the pesticides, like 2,4-d (which was a Toxins in the Environment at: market today have been component of Agent Orange), are P.O. Box 25188, Halifax, NS, completely assessed, and these disguised from the consumer with B3M 4H4. Visit our homepage few tests were on adult men for safe sounding names like "Weed (http://chebucto.ns.ca/Envi-

are impossible to keep out of the air we all share. If the proposed by-law goes into effect, Halifax would join other communities who have similar regulations. Safer ecological methods of pest-control will replace the overdependence on toxic chemicals that now threaten us all. Our region

Help stop the chemical warfare that is going on in our neighbourhoods. Join our nuwrite to your councillor to show your concern for our environment as well as our children, infants and future generations. Your immediate letter supporting this by-law Unlisted pesticide ingredients, could make it a reality. Your

ronment/RATE/).



