

SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

Nova Scotia missing the mark on plastic recycling

BY LINDSAY COLE

How many of you know where your plastic bottles and drink containers go after they are picked up by the recycling trucks every week?

Unfortunately for Nova Scotians most of these valuable materials are sent out of province to Ontario, or even to the United States for processing.

Why should Nova Scotians be concerned about something like this? After all it is waste, diverted from the landfills, which is the primary concern. But recycling is also part of a growing industry that demands used plastic products for its survival — and we're sending most of ours out of province.

Allan Little, of Allard Design and Manufacturing in Musquodoboit Harbour, is trying to

keep some of this raw material in the province. Some of the plastic drink containers taken into bottle depots for refunds eventually make their way to him. Presently, however, he is only able to process a very small amount this plastic because of monetary constraints.

The Department of the Environment established a goal of 50 per cent solid waste diversion by the year 2000 in the Environment Act of 1995. Since then more and more communities across Canada have been expanding and improving their recycling programs. But plastics, which make up approximately 20 per cent of municipal solid waste by volume (Environment and Plastics Institute of Canada, 1994), are still largely bypassed in Nova Scotia's recycling process.

Why is such a large amount of

recyclable material being ignored? There are two main obstacles contributing to this. More expensive machinery is required for reprocessing plastics than other recyclable materials, and a stable and economically feasible market for recycled plastic products has not yet been created.

It is also not yet widely understood and accepted that most types of plastics can be recycled with a much smaller energy and resource demand than creating new plastic.

Little believes government encouragement is required to solve this dilemma.

"Government grants are only being given to minority groups, women, young people. As a middle

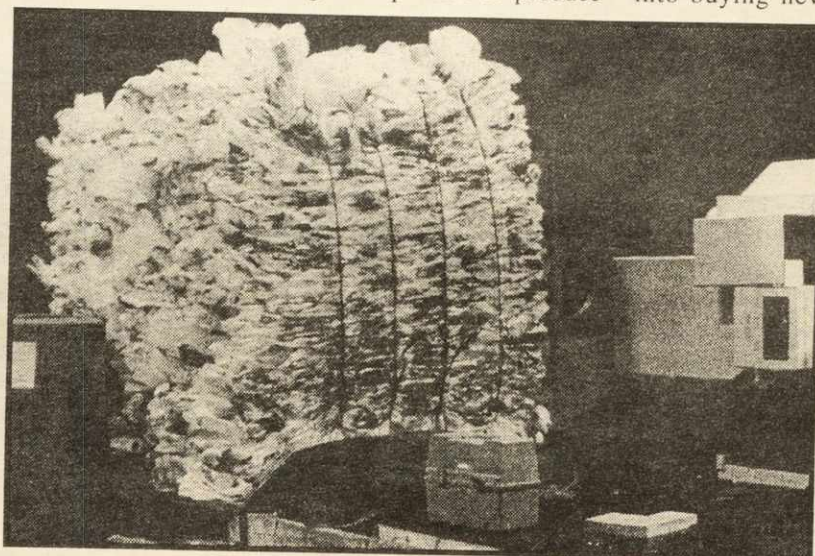
aged white man I have no chance at getting one, and God knows I've tried."

Little began toying with the idea of using used plastics to produce

is being funded entirely by his other two business ventures.

"I'm just breaking even all the time. Any spare money I get goes into buying new tools for more [research and development]. It's very frustrating, a very slow process. But it's fun."

New methods of recycling otherwise unusable waste products that employ Nova Scotians is a win-win situation in this time of high unemployment and



Loads of plastic waiting to be recycled. (Photo by Lindsay Cole)

various recycled products about two years ago. He has been experimenting with various methods of making plastic lumber for construction as well as fencing, furniture, and shipping pallets. So far this research and development

environmental concern. Little has no doubt that he will succeed. He believes that eventually he will develop something marketable and sensible that people will support through their purchasing power.

THE SEXTANT, DAL TECH'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER NEEDS YOUR HELP!

DSU Elections take place March 11th, 12th and 13th.

During the election, vote YES to the Sextant's referendum question.

You will be supporting your own right to know what is going on within your university as well as the right to voice your ideas and opinions.



REMEMBER: A vote for the Sextant is a VOTE FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.