



Media Release

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The Holidays Are No Time To Waste

Canadians are a generous bunch. According to Stats Canada, we spend more than \$16 billion on gifts each year. This year retailers are expecting even higher sales. But that generosity has a price that doesn't show up on our month-end statements.

The annual waste generated in Canada from gift-wrapping and shopping bags equals about 545,000 tonnes. If every Canadian family reduced its weekly waste during the holidays by just one kilogram, we could eliminate 34,000 tonnes of garbage.

If everyone in Canada wrapped just three gifts in reused paper or gift bags, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 hockey rinks. So if you really want to put your waste on ice, here are a few tips for the holiday season.

When it's time to hit the mall, take a cloth shopping bag. If you forget your bag, put as many things as possible in the first plastic bag you are given. Buy items with less packaging. Say 'no thanks' to extra tissue paper or boxes. Buy a gift for its contents, not the fancy packaging. The cost of packaging a luxury item, such as perfume, can represent up to 66 per cent of the total price.

When it comes time play Santa, make the wrapping part of the gift. Use a scarf, tea towel, basket, fancy tin or handkerchief as wrap. Make cloth gift bags from scraps of fabric. Use the comics section of the newspaper as wrap. It can be recycled when you're finished. Choose gifts that do not need wrapping. Save any wrapping paper you receive for reuse later.

A large portion of the packaging you give and receive during the holiday season may be recyclable. Cardboard and boxboard are accepted in most recycling programs in BC. If you have too much material to put out for curbside collection one week, don't throw it away. Store it somewhere dry and put it out the following week or take it to a recycling centre when you go to return beverage containers. Non-plasticized wrapping paper is accepted in some curbside programs and at some depots. Please check to make sure it is acceptable before you include it. Bubble wrap, plastic wrap and blister pack plastic are not acceptable in curbside programs or at depots. You can save it for packing gifts

next year or dispose of it in your garbage. Call the Recycling Council of BC Recycling Hotline at 604 732-9253 (RECYCLE) in the Lower Mainland or 1-800-667-4321 in the rest of B.C. for more information about recycling in your area.

The Recycling Council of British Columbia is a multi-sectoral non-profit organization promoting the principles of Zero Waste through information services, the exchange of ideas, and research. Businesses, governments, non-profit-organizations and concerned citizens from across B.C. make up our diverse membership.

Founded in 1974, RCBC is Canada's longest-serving recycling council and has earned the reputation of being one of the most widely respected multi-sectoral environmental organizations in the province today. RCBC has played a major role in the establishment of the many groundbreaking product stewardship programs in the province, which are emulated around the world. Further information can be accessed at www.rcbc.bc.ca or by calling the RCBC Recycling Hotline at 604RECYCLE or 1-800-667-4321.