



6 November 2017

City Council
City Hall
397 Queen Street
Fredericton, NB E3B 1B5

Dear City Council,

When it comes to recycling in the City of Fredericton, two programs are offered to residents: "a curbside pickup program for houses, and three recycling depots for residents of condominiums and apartments with more than four units."¹

1. It's Time for Implementation

In 2016, consulting firm GHD conducted a review of the City's garbage and recycling program, and presented a draft report to Council. One of the recommendations found in this report states that the City should "Phase out drop off recycle depots and replace with a curbside recycling program at multi-unit residential buildings... ensuring all residents have access to the City's recycling programs."² In addition to this, on July 25, 2016, the City's Public Safety & Environment Committee approved a set of priority initiatives, which included multi-unit building recycling. The objectives of multi-unit building recycling are listed as: "to facilitate and improve opportunities for residents of multi-unit residential buildings to recycle eligible materials" and "to increase the diversion of recyclable materials in Fredericton."³ Over a year has passed since this announcement was made and there has yet to be an update regarding a timeline for implementation of any program relating to this priority initiative.

¹ Fredericton, "Recycling," <http://www.fredericton.ca/en/waste-recycling/recycling>.

² Fredericton, "City Receives Draft Garbage and Recycling Program Review," (2016), <http://www.fredericton.ca/en/news/city-hall/city-receives-draft-garbage-and-recycling-program-review>.

³ Fredericton, "Public Safety & Environment Committee Approves Priority Initiatives," http://www.fredericton.ca/sites/default/files/public_safety_environment_committee_approves_priority_initiatives_w eb.pdf.

2. Why Current Recycling Model is Inaccessible

According to the City of Fredericton's own admission, an effective recycling system can divert 30-40% of household waste,⁴ but Fredericton only has a waste diversion rate of 19%. Results of a survey conducted in 2016 stated that 96% of respondents said that the diversion rate was very important or somewhat important to the city being green. In comparison to other Maritime cities such as Halifax and Charlottetown, which mandate recycling participation for all residences (single or multi) and businesses, Fredericton is falling behind.

As noted in the Garbage and Recycling Program Review, "approximately 18,000 residences" are serviced by its curbside garbage and recycling collection service.⁵ When this number is compared to the 28,776 total private dwellings recorded for Fredericton in the 2016 census,⁶ it is apparent that over 10,000 residences in the city are not offered the service of curbside collection of recycling, and that the burden to recycle is therefore placed on the residents of these dwellings. This is problematic for a number of reasons, including the large student population of the city, the accessibility of the recycling depots offered, the ability of larger capital cities to offer better recycling regulations and services, and the impact that the disposal of large quantities of recyclable materials in landfills has on the environment and on human rights.

Fredericton has a large student population with three campuses located on College Hill. This means an influx of students move to the city in September; many of whom reside in apartment buildings not serviced by curbside recycling collection. This increase in population, when paired with the absence of an effective recycling system, creates a higher volume of waste being improperly disposed of.

Accessibility to the recycling depots is another major concern for those living in apartment buildings. The City lists three locations where such residents can recycle: the Capital Winter Club, Willie O'Ree Place, and the Brookside Mall Parking Lot.⁷ There are no recycling depots provided by the City that are located uptown, near College Hill, or in the downtown core, close to the public transit hub. Without depots located in these key areas, many people not offered the curbside recycling service by the City cannot utilize the depot program to properly

⁴ Supra, note 1.

⁵ Fredericton, "Garbage and Recycling Program Review," <http://www.fredericton.ca/en/waste-recycling/garbage-and-recycling-program-review>.

⁶ Statistics Canada, *Fredericton [Population Centre] New Brunswick and New Brunswick [Province]* (table), (2017), <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

⁷ Fredericton, "Recycling," <http://www.fredericton.ca/en/waste-recycling/recycling>.

dispose of their recyclable materials without access to a vehicle. It is unreasonable to expect someone to take the bus carrying all of their recycling or walk 45 minutes to a recycling depot each week, magnified by physical and weather related limitations.

For those with vehicles, driving to a recycling depot weekly negates the purpose of recycling. If residents from each multi-unit apartment building drove to the recycling depot every week, that would be 420,160 trips per year. As noted in the attached petition, transportation accounts for almost half of toxic air pollution, more than a third of greenhouse gas emissions, and almost 20% of toxic water pollution.⁸

3. Impact of Recycling on Environment and Human Rights

The impacts of this lack of recycling on the environment are staggering. Recycling has many environmental benefits, including reducing landfill waste, the conservation of natural resources, such as water, wood, metal and fossil fuels, preserving habitats through less resource exploitation, reducing the energy consumption required to produce new materials, and decreasing pollution.⁹ Furthermore, non-biodegradable materials, such as plastics, “can remain in landfill sites for centuries, often emitting gases that could be harmful to the environment.”¹⁰ It is clear that there are many severe environmental effects related to the disposal of recyclable materials in landfills which could be avoided with higher rates of recycling and better programs. This is inconsistent with the right to the highest attainable standard of health under the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Article 12 calls for “the improvement of all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene,”¹¹ which is the primary human rights concern stemming from the lack of recycling.

The City of Fredericton’s unequal approach toward the provision of recycling collection is not only inconsistent with international human rights standards, it is also inconsistent with provincial legislation and may amount to discrimination. Under section 2.1(o) of the *New Brunswick Human Rights Act*, social condition is a prohibited ground for discrimination. Why is it that wealthier home owners receive access to recycling collection, whereas less wealthy multi-unit residential dwellers are excluded? This is difficult to justify, considering how easy it would

⁸ David Suzuki Foundation, “Drive Smarter for a Better Planet,” 2014, <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/reduce-your-carbon-footprint/drive-smarter-for-a-better-planet/>

⁹ Vijayalaxmi Kinhal, “What Impact Does Recycling Have on the Environment?,” *Love to Know* (2011), http://greenliving.lovetoknow.com/How_Does_Recycling_Affect_the_Environment.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

be for pick-up trucks to stop at multi-unit residential complexes during their already established routes. Deflecting blame onto landlords and failing to assume any responsibility for unequal access based on socioeconomic status is a poor way to represent constituents.

4. What Our Campaign Is Asking

In Halifax, “recyclable and compostable materials are banned from landfill disposal. Apartment buildings in the Halifax region are required to provide tenants with access to commercial containers for separation of organics, blue bag recyclables, paper recyclables, corrugated cardboard and garbage.”¹² When considering the efficacy of access for apartment-dwellers in Halifax, note that Nova Scotia boasted the lowest rate of waste disposed per capita among Canadian provinces in 2014.¹³ Comparatively, Statistics Canada recorded that 674 kilograms of waste was disposed per capita in New Brunswick in 2014, alongside a rate of only 180 kilograms of diverted materials per capita, well below the Canadian average of 253 kilograms.¹⁴ These numbers demonstrate that there is less waste being diverted from landfills in New Brunswick than in other provinces. To help divert recyclable materials from landfills, the City of Toronto offers curbside collection of garbage, recyclable materials, and compostable organics to multi-residential dwellings (nine or more units), which is incentivized by residents having to pay extra fees for garbage collection exceeding the imposed limits.¹⁵ Toronto’s model of allowing unlimited collection of recyclable materials should be replicated at all dwellings in Fredericton in order to truly “help residents maximize waste diversion and minimize their environmental impact,” as the City’s website states.¹⁶ We are respectfully asking Fredericton City Council to follow through on the Public Safety and Environment Committee’s 2016 commitment to make multi-unit building recycling a priority. We request that the City provide a viable timeline to the residents of Fredericton for the implementation of a curbside recycling collection system for multi-unit residential buildings.

5. Our Forward-looking Vision

The Fredericton Region Solid Waste website reminds us that “recycling is one of the most important things people can do to keep the earth healthy and clean.” Promoting eco-

¹² Halifax, “Apartment Sorting Guide,” <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/home-property/garbage-recycling-green-cart/Apartment%20Sorting%20Guide%20English.pdf>.

¹³ Statistics Canada, “Disposal and diversion of waste, by province and territory (Waste disposal per capita),” <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/envir32b-eng.htm>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Toronto, “Garbage & Recycling – Apartments & Condos,” <https://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=e54c433112b02410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>.

¹⁶ Fredericton, “Recycling,” <http://www.fredericton.ca/en/waste-recycling/recycling>.

friendly and conscious practices is meaningless without corresponding action. We call on the City of Fredericton to bring forth a commitment on its part to make recycling accessible to every resident of the city. Taking into consideration the devastating impacts that the careless disposal of waste can have in the overall well-being of residents, it is incumbent on the city to make sure its waste disposal strategies reflect its dedication to insure a sustainable and healthy environment for the people of Fredericton.

The enjoyment of a good quality of life resides in the accessibility to a sustainable environment. In contemporary society, the quality of the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, and the food that we eat, is determined by the way we dispose of our waste in the environment.

Sincerely,



Dr. Christina Szurlej on behalf of the Capstone Seminar in Human Rights
Director, Atlantic Human Rights Centre
Assistant Professor, Human Rights Department
St. Thomas University

- c. Premier Brian Gallant
Attorney General Serge Rousselle, Minister of Environment and Local Government
David Coon, MLA, Fredericton South, Green Party Leader
Stephen Horseman, MLA, Fredericton North
Jody Carr, MLA, Oromocto-Lincoln-Fredericton
Brian MacDonald, MLA, Fredericton West-Hanwell
Public Safety and Environment Committee, City of Fredericton
Steve Lee, Executive Director, Foundation for Environmental Stewardship
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