

Residents still unclear about compost rules

Waste paper and some food scraps still going to landfill, study finds

We're hoping this campaign really strikes a chord in getting people moving paper into the recycling bin.

Metro Vancouver residents are adding more leftover meats and fish bones to their kitchen compost pails, but many are still tossing their soiled napkins and paper towels into the trash.

A waste monitoring study conducted by the regional district suggests the proportion of organics in the waste stream in 2015 was 28 per cent, which amounts to about 257,000 tonnes of compost. But while 68 per cent of residents reportedly dump fruits, vegetables and leftover plate scraps into green bins, only between 30 and 40 per cent are composting soiled paper products.

As a result, these products make up 40 per cent of the 157,000 tonnes of paper products that are still being tossed into the garbage each year, said Marcel Pitre, senior project engineer at Metro's waste division. This amounts to about 27.9 kilograms of waste per person "that could just be going in the green bin," he said.

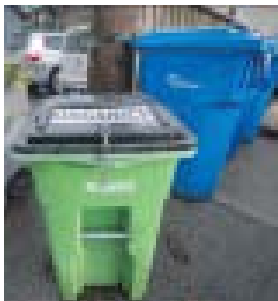
The situation has prompted Metro Vancouver to highlight soiled papers and napkins in its ongoing composting campaigns in a bid to boost its recycling rates across the region.

The move comes as Metro considers whether to increase the threshold for the amount of kitchen scraps allowed in a load of garbage taken to a transfer station.

At the moment, garbage haulers — usually those collecting trash from large restaurants or grocery stores — will be penalized if a garbage load is more than 25-per-cent compost, but Metro has said it will gradually reduce that threshold to 10 or five per cent as the kitchen scraps program becomes more efficient.

Since the kitchen scraps program came into full effect last year, Metro said there has been a noticeable drop in the amount of organics being dumped in the landfill, with an estimated reduction of 66,000 tonnes since 2014. More than half of Metro Vancouver residents are also putting shellfish, dairy products and coffee filters into the green bin, the study noted, compared with about 33 per cent of residents who are throwing paper plates into the compost.

"They don't think it's food waste typical to what's in the green bin," Pitre said.



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