

# Waste Diversion Update Winter 2024



## FEATURED IN THIS EDITION:

*Recycling in B.C., Who is Responsible?*

*2024 ReTHINK Waste Grant Recipients*

### RECYCLING?

#### WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Recycling is much more than an environmental initiative; it is a substantial part of the economy that supports consumption and involves complex networks to collect, process and distribute recovered materials back into the economy. **In B.C., producers of products and packaging (manufacturers, distributors and retailers) are responsible for the lifecycle of a wide range of products they produce and sell;** this **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** includes the collection and recycling of these products. This responsibility is mandated through B.C. Recycling Regulation which applies to products such as: appliances, batteries, beverage containers, electronics, lightbulbs, medications, motor oil, packaging and paper products, paint and tires. To meet the extensive challenges and requirements of this regulation, businesses come together to form agencies that operate EPR programs on their behalf. EPR agencies, which provide programs such as the Encorp Return-It and Recycle BC are listed at: [www.bcrecycles.ca](http://www.bcrecycles.ca).

**Consumers ultimately pay for recycling upfront when purchasing products regulated under the B.C. Recycling Regulation.** Consumers sometimes pay for recycling directly on products like batteries or lightbulbs, where an environmental handling fee is charged at the time of purchase. Alternatively, fees are sometimes internalized into the costs of products as is the case with residential packaging materials. Fees collected under the EPR system go to the individual EPR agencies that have the legislated responsibility (under the B.C. Recycling Regulation) to provide: “reasonable and free consumer access to collection facilities or collection services”.



*BC EPR programs collectively generate an estimated \$500 million annually to operate recycling and beverage container return programs (Advancing Recycling in BC report).*

EPR agencies do not typically provide collection facilities or services directly, instead they work with depot owners, collection contractors, retailers or local governments who provide these services on their behalf. Examples include privately owned and operated bottle depots which provide multiple EPR programs and collection contractors who provide curbside collection services for Recycle BC.

EPR programs operated successfully by the private sector is crucial. It provides assurance that producers are adequately funding and supporting their recycling programs and that collection sites are adequately compensated for the services provided. The RDNO has had limited involvement with EPR programs with the intent being to avoid a duplication of service and unwanted competition between the public and private sectors. Depots receive financial incentives based on the volume of products collected. When local governments operate certain EPR programs there can be substantial uncompensated costs and even fines for contamination, which can result in substantial costs for local governments and taxpayers.

Increased recycling options in communities reduces waste disposal. Locations of private sector EPR participants (depots and retailers) tend to be in commercial centres where most residents live and or shop. These central locations provide convenient access for residents to combine a trip to a local recycling depot or participating retailer on their next shopping trip.

EPR is vitally important for the economic and environmental sustainability of recycling programs. The Recycle BC program collects over 4 million kilograms of packaging of paper products in the North Okanagan each year. Total Recycle BC program costs (province wide in 2022) were over \$134 Million which equates to 66 cents per kilogram of material collected. Without EPR programs paying the cost of collection and recycling, there would be a substantial cost to local governments and taxpayers. With Recycle BC administering this program in the North Okanagan, there are no costs incurred by RDNO, local municipalities or residents for curbside and depot collection of material in the Recycle BC program. Also, Recycle BC's established post-collection network facilitates transportation, processing, marketing and reporting of all materials collected by the program. This includes validation that materials are being responsibly managed after they have been collected and processed.

In recent years many jurisdictions around the world experienced struggles with increased restrictions on the export of recyclables and access to global recycling markets. Meanwhile BC has continued to be a leader in North America in the development of EPR which has encouraged the development of collection and processing technologies to turn the materials collected into high quality in-demand commodities right in BC for end markets across North America. By making producers accountable for the full lifecycle of their products, EPR incentivizes producers to design products that are more durable and easier to recycle in order to reduce costs. As more jurisdictions across North America adopt EPR policies, there is potential for larger scale impacts and standardization for businesses to take full responsibility for the products they produce in a growing circular economy.



For information on the agencies responsible for the products you purchase or need to recycle go to: [www.bcrecycles.ca](http://www.bcrecycles.ca). There are direct links to EPR program websites which provide detailed information about all the products the programs accept as well as program plans and performance reports.

## 2024 RETHINK WASTE GRANT RECIPIENTS

### PROJECTS THAT GO FAR BEYOND WASTE REDUCTION

The three projects awarded grants from the 2024 ReTHINK Waste grant program cover a diverse range of topics. All share a common feature of providing additional benefits to our communities beyond simply keeping materials out of our local landfills. From recovering surplus food for our communities, to keeping reusable household and building materials in circulation for as long as possible for new homes, to coexisting with wildlife, these projects look to make big impacts in the North Okanagan in 2024.

**FoodMesh** is working to build a comprehensive food recovery system in the region by connecting organizations looking for alternatives to disposing of their unsalable or surplus food with a network of local charities and farmers. Quality surplus food can support charitable organizations like food banks, and leftover food that is no longer suitable for people to eat can go to farmers for animal feed.

Join a growing community of organizations committed to  
reducing food waste in our community

# NORTH OKANAGAN FOOD RECOVERY NETWORK

The diagram illustrates the network of stakeholders involved in food recovery, centered around a recycling symbol. The stakeholders include:

- Hobby farmers
- Food service
- Charities
- Composters
- Upcyclers
- Industrial reworkers
- Processors
- Wholesalers & distributors
- Retailers
- Growers

FoodMesh started the North Okanagan Food Recovery Network in April 2023 and to date has diverted over 156,000 kilograms of food from disposal. This food recovery has provided over 193,000 meals and has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by over 400 tonnes. Funding in 2024 is to support growth and maintenance of the North Okanagan Food Recovery Network.



The image shows the exterior of a Habitat for Humanity ReStore. The building features a central section with dark brown brickwork and two side wings with tan-colored walls. The central brick section has the Habitat for Humanity logo and the word "ReStore" in large white letters. Below the signage is a glass entrance door. The tan wings each have a large window displaying various items. The ground in front of the building is a mix of dirt and snow.

**Play Forever Bear**

Everything we use comes from nature.  
 From the bear to the smallest fly,  
 all animals need a space to live.

Play Forever Bear  
 reminds us to look at things in new ways  
 to reuse, repurpose & conserve materials  
 so we can leave precious habitat  
 for wildlife.



If you have an idea for an innovative project that would benefit our region, or want to get tips on how to reduce waste, visit [www.rdno.ca/rethink](http://www.rdno.ca/rethink). Now is a great time to start planning ahead for 2025 projects as the grant program is expected to open for applications in Fall 2024.