

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

DON'T DUMP YOUR OLD COMPUTER

If you want to buy a new computer but your old computer is still useable, why not give it a new life? Electronic waste is banned from the garbage in Metro Vancouver, because a consumer-funded Return-It Electronics Program is now in place in B.C. and computers, televisions and some other kinds of electronics can be recycled.

But businesses and residents who have relatively-new computers that still function can go one step further by donating their second-hand computers to non-profits which will give the computer a new home and extend its useful life. Reuse is one of the ways that Metro Vancouver intends to minimize waste generation and maximize reuse, recycling and energy and resources recovery. The region's Zero Waste Challenge goal: divert 70 per cent of the region's solid waste from landfills and the region's waste-to-energy facility by 2015. Currently, about half of the region's waste is recycled.

"Reuse is better than recycling," said Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, the vice-chair of Metro Vancouver's Waste Management Committee and the Mayor of West Vancouver.

"Energy and resources have already been used to develop, manufacture, transport and sell that product. When we reuse something that's already made, we reduce our impact on our environment."

Computers for Schools, co-founded in 1993 by Industry Canada and the Telecom Pioneers, refurbishes computers and related equipment donated by government and businesses. These computers are distributed across Canada to schools, libraries and registered not-for-profit learning organizations.

The B.C. branch of the organization recently moved to a larger home. The new facility, in a business park in Burnaby, has more work and storage space. Retired telecommunications industry employees and young computer techies wipe out a computer's memory and make sure each component works before shipping off pallet loads of shrink-wrapped computers. The computers are sent near and far in B.C. – everywhere from a school in Burnaby to an aboriginal community in northwest B.C. No other non-profit distributes so many re-use computers to so many B.C. communities.

And now Computers for Schools needs more computers to distribute – especially laptop computers, which are always in high demand.

"We can double the life-span of corporate computers with a school and other learning environments," said Computers for Schools Executive Director Mary-Em Waddington. "Let's make sure the useful life of a computer has actually ended before it's recycled."

.../2



Last year, the B.C. government enacted a regulation which made the computer and television manufacturing industries responsible for recycling B.C.-generated electronic waste – computers that contain toxic metals such as mercury, lead and cadmium. Tonnes of electronic waste ended up in landfills, or garbage dumps, where the metals might escape and contaminate a river or an aquifer.

Media contact:

Glenn Bohn

Corporate Communications and Media Relations

Metro Vancouver

Office: 604-451-6697

Cell: 604-314-5964

Backgrounder:

Please visit www.metrovancouver.org to learn more about Metro Vancouver's Zero Waste Challenge.

Information about the Return-It Electronics Program is posted at www.electronicrecyclingbc.ca

A list of a non-profits in Metro Vancouver which currently accept some or all used computers follows:

1/ Computers for Schools, 604-294-6886, www.cfsbc.ca
Suite 206, 6741 Cariboo Road, Burnaby, B.C. V3N 4A3

2/ Free Geek Vancouver, 604-879-GEEK (4335), www.freegeekvancouver.org
1820 Pandora Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5L 1M5

3/ Reboot Vancouver, 604-687-2777, www.rebootvancouver.ca
825 East Hastings Street, Vancouver B.C. V6A 1R8

4/ Vancouver Computer Literacy Society, 604-522-3755, www.vcls.ca
209-669 Ridley Place, Delta. B.C. V3M 6Y9

The Recycling Council of B.C. keeps an updated list of non-profit organizations and companies that reuse or recycle computers. Call the recycling hotline, at 604-RECYCLE or 604-732-9253, to get the most current list for your community.

Recycling information about many types of materials is posted on the Recycling Council of B.C. website, www.rcbc.bc.ca The Recycling Council also has free and "for sale" websites: www.vancouver.reuses.com and www.surreyreuses.com

The British Columbia Electronics Materials Exchange, BC-EMEX, lets you sell, give away or trade things you don't want with people who do, like an online garage sale. Visit www.bcemex.ca