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University of Lethbridge first in Canada to recycle Styrofoam on its campus

The University of Lethbridge is lessening its environmental footprint through the introduction of a new recycling initiative, becoming the first Canadian university to recycle Styrofoam on its own campus.

Since June 2017, Styrofoam at the U of L has been recycled through the Calgary-based StyroGo service. A special mobile recycling truck comes to campus on a regular basis, shredding and melting the Styrofoam into highly-condensed blocks of material that are then re-sold to companies that use the recycled products to make a variety of after-products, including toys and architectural molding.

“We’re constantly looking at our waste operations and trying to recycle as much material as possible,” says Judy Jaeger, manager of Facilities-Caretaking. “Styrofoam is a particularly troublesome product because it does not break down very well and takes up considerable space in the landfill. This process of recycling is highly efficient, reducing large quantities of Styrofoam into small boxes of reusable material.”

The recycling process is more expensive than disposal but Jaeger says the University is committed to its sustainability efforts and she is already seeing the benefits of the program outweighing added costs.

“Since first starting our program in June 2017, we have recycled 490 pounds of Styrofoam, which is roughly equivalent to the volume of 4,000 basketballs,” she says. “As a result, the U of L has reduced its greenhouse gas production by an estimated 1.69 Tonnes. And as disposal fees for Styrofoam at the landfill increase over time and the technology for recycling continues to improve, we anticipate the financial incentive to recycle Styrofoam will only increase.”

The University is also working to reduce the amount of Styrofoam coming to campus by ensuring that its Request for Proposals limit the packaging that vendors are permitted to send to the U of L. Members of the University community are encouraged to recycle Styrofoam by leaving clean waste at central recycling areas for collection.

“We’re proud to add this product to our recycling stream and continue our commitment to lessening the amount of waste we send to the landfill and to reducing our environmental footprint,” says Jaeger.

To view online: <http://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/university-sets-standard-styrofoam-recycling>

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