

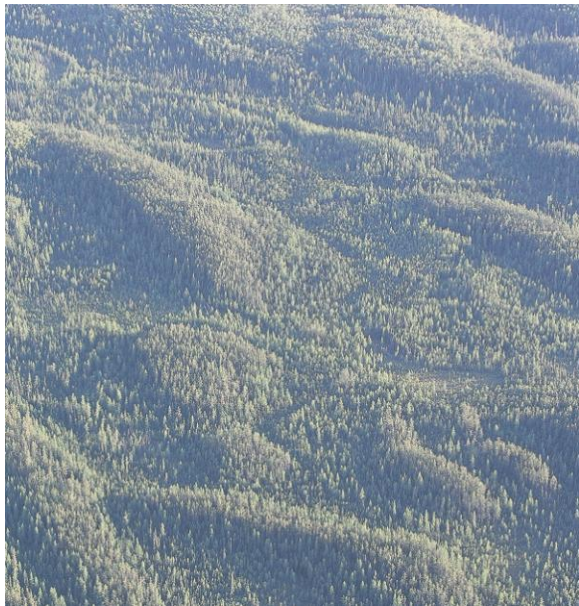
# The Gazette

Little changes mean a lot

By Monique Beaudin

January 17, 2011

Greenpeace estimates that if every Canadian household replaced a single roll of toilet paper with one made from recycled fibres, more than 47,000 trees would be saved



Canada's boreal forest produces oxygen and sequesters carbon, which helps mitigate the effects of global warming. Greenpeace Canada's report ranks 23 companies by how their practices affect Canada's boreal forest. Photograph by: TED RHODES POSTMEDIA NEWS FILE PHOTO, The Gazette

If you're looking for an easy environmental change to make, look no farther than your bathroom. Or that box of tissues you reach for when you have a cold. Switching from

conventional paper products -paper towels, napkins, tissues and toilet paper -to a brand made with recycled fibres can have a big impact on preserving Canadian forests while reducing air and water pollution. The environmental group Greenpeace estimates that if every Canadian household replaced a single roll of toilet paper with one made from recycled fibres, more than 47,000 trees would be saved.

Several companies now offer paper products made with recycled fibres. Although older paper products made of recycled fibres weren't always the softest around, the quality of newer recycled-paper products is so good that few people can tell the difference between them and conventionally made products.

People who want to have an even bigger environmental impact can replace disposable paper products with reusable handkerchiefs, napkins and dish towels. Keeners can even forgo toilet paper and use a bidet and towels in the bathroom.

But for people who aren't quite ready to take those steps, switching to recycled paper products is a good move.

Last December, Greenpeace Canada released a report ranking 23 companies and the way their business practices affect

Canada's boreal forest, the vast swath of forested land that runs across the country from Yukon Territory to Newfoundland and Labrador. It takes up 35 per cent of the total land mass of Canada, and produces oxygen while sequestering carbon, which helps mitigate the effects of global warming. It is also home to more than 80 species of animals, including the threatened woodland caribou, grizzly and black bears, moose and more than 300 species of birds.

In its report, Greenpeace praised several companies, including Indigo Books, Rona and Office Depot, for taking steps to protect the boreal forest through their business practices. One of the leaders on the green tissue and toilet paper front is the Quebec company Cascades, said Melissa Filion, who for the past five years has worked as Greenpeace's forest campaigner.

In 2009, nearly three-quarters of the fibres and pulp Cascades used was recycled material. It produces several lines of products made entirely of recycled paper. It takes the paper products we toss into our recycling bins -such as newspapers, magazines and computer paper - and uses them instead of wood pulp to make its paper products. Several of its paper products have been certified as an environment-friendly choice by the EcoLogo green-certification program.

In 2009, Greenpeace Canada ended a five-year boycott and awareness campaign it had waged against Kimberly-Clark, the world's largest tissue-product manufacturer, when the company agreed to start using recycled fibres in its paper products and use wood that has been sustainably harvested. By the end of 2009, 44 per cent of the pulp it used in its North American tissues was either recycled or certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

"It's very important to us that the commitment they made has been reached, and we will continue to follow closely the other promises that they made," Filion said.

Perusing the shelves in five pharmacies and grocery stores in Montreal last week, I was able to find at least one paper product made with recycled fibre at each place. But you'll have to do some close label-reading. Watch out for labels that display a recycling symbol and say that the packaging is made of recycled paperboard or cardboard. That doesn't always mean the contents are made of recycled fibres.

Just to confuse consumers even more, some companies that actually make paper products with recycled fibres don't say so on their labels, Filion said.

"In the past, these companies said certain customers didn't want products made of recycled fibres, so it wasn't a marketing tool; but in fact, we've seen in the past few years that Canadian consumers are in favour of those products," she said.

In order to help consumers wade through the paper-products options, Greenpeace has published a guide to help them make more sustainable choices. Researchers verified the recycled content in each product with the companies that produce them and then came up with a green list of companies to support and a red list of companies to avoid. "Green" products include those made by Cascades, White Swan and certain private-label products including Loblaws' PC Green brand and Metro's Selection Eco. Red brands included Kirkland, Royale and Charmin.