



SaskWatch

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Made in Canada

It used to be that we didn't think twice about the long-term effects our shopping habits had on the communities we live in. We became addicted to low-cost products made abroad and got hooked on accumulating quantity over quality. Products that used to be built to last are now built to be disposed of, making them seem "cheaper" at first glance. This is known as *planned obsolescence* (learn more: storyofstuff.com).

Then, something worrisome started to happen: Canadian manufacturing jobs were disappearing at an alarming rate. Between 2003 and 2008 for example, Canada lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs. And sadly, things have not improved since then. But the silver lining is that our country has seen the emergence of a grassroots movement towards buying more locally-made products.

Reasons to Buy Canadian

The Economy: When we buy Canadian, we directly impact our economy in positive ways. Every dollar we spend in Canada has a ripple effect that far exceeds that of simple profit.

Health & Safety: When we buy Canadian, we know that the products have met this country's health and safety standards. These safety measures sometimes mean an increase in the retail price, but it's a small price to pay for peace of mind.

The Environment: When we buy Canadian, we're reducing our carbon footprint, since products made closer to home require much less transportation. For example, a piece of clothing designed, manufactured and sold in Montreal requires 25 times less transportation than a similar product made in the Far East.

Labour Standards: When we buy Canadian, we can rest assured that the people who make the products are treated fairly, and working in safe, sanitary conditions. We've all

heard horror stories of sweatshops in foreign countries using children and adults as disposable labour. Many consumers are now deciding to not support those practices and demonstrate their principles by not buying products made in the countries that have such track records.

Community: When we buy Canadian, we are contributing to the enrichment of our communities. Our purchases can contribute to the survival of our local, provincial and Canadian businesses.

Patriotism: We have every reason to be proud of our country, including the wonderful products we make here. Some consumers buy Canadian over foreign-made as a matter of principle alone. We see a "Made in Canada" label as a badge of honour - one we're proud to contribute to and want others to know about.

Used with permission of Buy Canadian First

**Read labels
BUY CANADIAN
Support Canadian jobs**

Buy Canadian First's website (buycanadianfirst.ca) includes a 'Made-in-Canada Catalogue' which lists thousands of Canadian-made items from clothing to cars, toys to tools, wine to watches, food to furniture, coffee to canoes, houses to health care, and so much more.

Isabelle Remy, Founder of **Buy Canadian First**, says "we wanted a name that conveyed the concept of buying Canadian first, not buying Canadian only. The idea is not to go backwards or hide behind protectionism, but simply to *educate consumers* on the availability of products made in Canada.

Everything we buy or do affects someone else - even their jobs. Before making purchases, read the labels to find out where they're made. Gardening supplies, toothpaste, chocolate bars, lights bulbs, whatever - are they made in China, Mexico, Indonesia, or are they made right here in Canada? Start looking - start checking labels - start letting shops know that you want products *Made in Canada*.

We can all start buying Canadian - one light bulb at a time!

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Consumer Association of Saskatchewan, active since 1947, is a non-profit, volunteer-driven association committed to fairness in the marketplace and improving the quality of life for consumers. Through information and education, CASK assists consumers make wise use of personal resources and represents the consumer interest in marketplace issues with business and governments.

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2010-2011**

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President's Message

Hello everyone. Thanks so much for your comments and interest in our last issue of *SaskWatch*. To the new subscribers - welcome aboard. Please feel free to share your ideas and concerns and let us know what articles you'd like to see in upcoming editions.

It was great seeing so many of you at *Spotlight on Seniors* in October. Meeting with people and listening to their insights and comments is always of value to our organization. The winner of our draw (a one-year subscription to *SaskWatch*) was Dorothy Lawton of Saskatoon.

Soon the holiday season will be upon us. In this edition we have a feature article on *Buying Canadian* - about reading labels and supporting our country. There's a timely article on *Excessive Consumerism* about exercising conscientious consumption while supporting the environment, our pocket books and local people. We also have articles on *Tips to Save Power*, *Shopping/Shipping Across the Border*, *Shopping Online Safely*, a *Visa and Mastercard Scam*, *Facts About Canada*, *SaskEnergy Rate Decrease*, *Handbags Can Make You Sick*, and much more.

We've made some exciting changes ... we have a new name and a new logo! We're now the *Consumer Association of Saskatchewan (CASK)* changed from *The Consumers' Association of*

Canada (Saskatchewan Branch). And check out our new logo on the front cover.

We have another big change coming in the New Year - we're launching our new website which will feature news and articles as well as new links. As the site evolves, we're looking forward to connecting consumers throughout the province with blogs and other interactive media. Our goal is to provide Saskatchewan consumers with as much access as possible to information and agencies dealing with consumer issues. We're excited about our new website and invite you to share your ideas and thoughts with us - make this network work for you so that we may expand our services throughout Saskatchewan!

On behalf of the Board of Directors I hope everyone enjoys the coming holiday season and that the New Year brings peace and happiness to all.

Audrey Findlay, President



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SaskWatch is available online at: www.consumersask.com

Excessive Consumerism

Christmas is known as a time for excesses ... too much food, too much drink, too much spending, and too much waste. The holiday season produces an extra three million tons of waste each year, and this doesn't have to be the case. It only takes a bit of creative thinking to come up with alternatives to excessive consumerism.

Buy locally: from a friend that knits, from the farmers' market, from a massage therapist, from a local shop that sells green, sustainable, fair-trade items. Every dollar you spend locally is multiplied five fold as it passes through your community.

Handmade gifts are personal, appreciated and save money and the environment.

Create coupons for your services, like babysitting, cleaning, cooking, etc. If you're skilled in a particular area, offer lessons.

Give second hand items from garage sales and thrift shops or consider re-gifting.

Give a gift that contributes to a green cause or a charity. Many environmental and social justice organizations, from national groups to your local food co-op, offer gift memberships - or you can donate to a charity on their behalf.



Sponsor a child overseas or **provide a goat or chickens** for a micro-enterprise which brings hope of economic independence, especially for women and children. Info at: www.plancanada.ca.

Ten Thousand Villages provides vital, fair income to Third World artisans by marketing their handicrafts and telling their stories in North America.

Buy Nothing Christmas encourages people to give to charities, make gifts themselves, or simply spend nothing at all. The goal is "a rejuvenation of Christmas as a time of peace and solidarity," says Aiden Enns, an editor at Adbusters and the central organizer for *Buy Nothing Christmas*.

and the central organizer for *Buy Nothing Christmas*.

Buy less ... buy consciously

(info: wikiHow.com; livinggreen.com; buynothing-christmas.org/alternatives)

SaskEnergy Rate Decrease

On October 26th, the Government of Saskatchewan approved a 12.7 per cent decrease to SaskEnergy's natural gas commodity rate, effective November 1, 2010. Following the public review process, the Saskatchewan Rate Review Panel recommended the government accept SaskEnergy's application to lower its commodity rate from \$5.21/GJ to \$4.55/GJ. The average residential customer's bill will decline by 7 percent or \$66 annually.

The Panel's full report is available at: saskratereview.ca/index.php.

The Consumer Association of Saskatchewan sent comments to the Saskatchewan Rate Review Panel (SRRP) when it was considering the rate decrease. We pointed out that consumers over the past several months have been paying more than they should have on their gas bills and that this has a real impact on low-income customers who, in order to pay utility bills, may have to eat less!

One of the recommendations made by the SRRP to the Government was "that SaskEnergy initiate

efforts to **increase customer awareness** of the following:

- the structure of its rate and billing systems including customer options such as the equalized monthly payment program;
- the limitations on efforts to provide relatively stable rates and avoid rate shock within the context of potential natural gas price volatility; and
- the long-term benefits to customers of adopting energy conservation practices, regardless of the relative level of the commodity price of natural gas at any given time."



Visa/Mastercard Scam

Both Visa and MasterCard state that a scam is being worked by fraud agents trying to get you to give them the 3-digit number off the back of your credit card. If someone claiming to be from Visa or Mastercard calls and asks you to confirm the security numbers on the back of the card, you should **hang up immediately, report it** by calling the number for lost or stolen cards on the back of your card, and **file a fraud report** with the police. **Never** give out these security numbers because once the scammers have them they can make all kinds of purchases on your credit card. Visa or Mastercard will never ask for any numbers since they issued your card and already have the numbers.

Story of Stuff (storyofstuff.com)

Watch the Story of Stuff before gearing up for all your Christmas shopping. It's a 20-minute, fast-paced, fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns. The Story of Stuff exposes the connections between a huge number of environmental and social issues, and calls us together to create a more sustainable and just world. It'll teach you something, it'll make you laugh, and it just may change the way you look at all the stuff in your life.

Vitaminwater

A U.S. federal judge ruled that coca-cola's *Vitaminwater* doesn't offer the health benefits its label promises because it's nothing more than a sugary snack food disguised as a sports drink and violates Federal Drug Administration regulations. The ruling rejected Coca-Cola's motion to dismiss a class-action suit brought by the Centre for Science in the Public Interest, meaning the case can proceed to trial.

(from *The Consumerist*)

Energize Fast Without Caffeine

In the midst of a midday slump? Take a stroll by the coffee machine. Believe it or not, simply inhaling the rich scent of coffee (the beans or brewed) will revitalize you as much as actually drinking a cup. That's due to the *Pavlovian Conditioning Response*, which occurs when the body learns to respond to a stimulus in a predictable (and, in this case, invigorating) way.

ePassports on the Way

Ottawa will issue electronic passports starting in 2012. The ePassport looks like a traditional passport, but contains an electronic chip encoded with the holder's name, gender, date and place of birth, and a digital photo. Passport Canada says the only biometric data contained in the new documents will be the holder's face, and will not include information like fingerprints or iris scans, due to privacy concerns. The new passport will increase security, provide greater protection against tampering and reduce the risk of fraud. It will cost more but doesn't expire for ten years - twice the lifespan of current passports.

Sask's Green Directory Expanding

Saskatchewan's Green Directory - a consumers' guide to green products and services available in Saskatchewan - has been revamping its website. It is being expanded and updated to truly be Saskatchewan's *one-stop shop* for all your *green needs*. A project of the Saskatchewan Eco-network, the Green Directory represents companies that can help you make your home or business more energy efficient. Many new features and categories are being added. Check it out at: saskatchewangreendirectory.org.

Pee-Powered Cars !?

Hybrid cars were designed to cut greenhouse emissions because they run on hydrogen - not fossil fuels. While hydrogen is prolific, *hydrogen gas* has to be extracted from water, methane and other fossil fuels and this process uses a lot of energy, rendering the whole exercise a bit pointless. Gerri Botte, a professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering at the University of Ohio, has invented an electrode that can create large amounts of cheap hydrogen from urine. "One cow, for example, would be able to provide enough energy to supply hot water for 19 houses," she said. John Stickney, a chemist at the University of Georgia said that applications using urine won't be available to consumers for quite some time, but it's definitely worth developing. He added, "It's not a solution for all our cars, but it's the kind of process that will find many applications and make for a greener world." (from discovery.com & radio.netherlands.worldwide)



PIECES

Bits & Pieces

Make One Person Happy Each Day

and in 40 years you'll have made 14,600 human beings happy - for a little while at least.

Plastic Ocean

National Geographic has cited that the U.S. public goes through 50 *billion* water bottles every year, and most of those are never recycled! No wonder large portions of our oceans are essentially turning into plastic.

Climate Denial Crock of the Week

Climate Denial *Crock of the Week* has lots of short Youtube videos which take the denialist case apart and educate on current understandings of climate change. Check it out at: <http://climatecrocks.com/>.

Scents Don't Make Sense!

Fabric softeners are some of the most toxic products made. They contain chemicals (like chloroform, benzyl acetate and pentane) that are known to *cause cancer, birth defects and damage to lungs, brain, and nerves*. These chemicals are even more dangerous when heated in clothes dryers. Most fabric softeners also have fragrance added to them, which makes them even more toxic. These fumes then go into neighborhood air and everyone for blocks around is forced to breathe these poisons.

Some symptoms caused by fabric softener fumes are: tiredness, difficulty breathing, nervousness for no known reason, difficulty concentrating and remembering, dizziness, headaches, sick stomach, feeling faint, rashes and/or difficulty controlling body movements. Babies, children, older people, and people who are already sick are especially hurt by these chemicals. Damage can be permanent, causing lifelong illness. If you can't smell how strong these chemicals are then your natural ability to smell has already been deadened from these poisons. The good news is that your smell can return if you avoid these chemicals.

Some countries have banned these chemical products. Be kind to yourself, your family, your pets and your neighbours. Be kind to the environment and the earth. Use unscented and chemical-free products.

Gift Certificates/Cards

Before purchasing gift certificates there are several things to keep in mind. About 27% of them don't get used because, as recipients in a survey said: they don't have time to shop; they can't find anything they want; they forget about them; they lose them; or they've expired. Even though gift cards in Saskatchewan no longer have expiry dates, consumers have to worry about the possibility that retailers could go out of business before the cards can be redeemed. And since gift-card holders are unsecured creditors, the chance of getting your money back are slim. To be on the safe side, redeem your gift certificates as soon as possible.

Highway Hotline

Weather conditions can change rapidly in Saskatchewan. Always check for current driving conditions or construction activities before you head out (www.highways.gov.sk.ca/road-conditions) or call the **Highway Hotline**:

Saskatoon and area: 1-306-933-833

Regina and area: 1-306-787-7623

SaskTel cell network: *ROAD

Toll-free across Canada: 1-888-335-7623

Facts About Canada ...

- Canada became a country on July 1, 1867, when the British North America Act was passed by the British Parliament.
- Canada did not have a national flag until February 15, 1965, when the maple leaf flag was adopted by parliament. Before that, the red ensign, a British maritime flag, was in general use.
- At 3,855,103 square miles, Canada is the second largest country in the world, behind Russia.
- Canada has the longest coastline of any country in the world at 151,600 miles.
- With a population density of 8.6 people per square mile, Canada is the ninth-most sparsely populated nation in the world.
- Minus 81.4 degrees Fahrenheit (-63 C) is North America's lowest recorded temperature at Snag, Yukon Territory, on February 3, 1947.
- The average life expectancy for a Canadian is 81.16 years, the eighth highest in the world; the U.S. ranks 46th at 78.14 years.

Power Saving Tips

Power-saving changes are easy! SaskPower has put together a list of tips to help you save power, save money, and help protect the environment.

- Unplug your secondary fridge and save over \$100 a year.
- Dry a full load of laundry. Compared with drying only half loads you could save \$44 a year. Even better, if your area permits it, hang your clothes outside to dry.
- Use a programmable thermostat. Set it to automatically turn down the temperature when you're not at home and when you go to sleep.
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room. The average Saskatchewan home uses forty light bulbs. Turn lights off for four hours a day and save hundreds of dollars a year.
- Use motion sensors or photocells on your outdoor lights and save over \$50 a year.
- Shut down your desktop computer and monitor when you're not using them. Just by turning them off at night you can save over \$50 a year.



- 40 per cent of all electricity used to power your home electronics is consumed while they are turned off. Reduce standby power by unplugging your chargers when not in use and putting your electronics on a power strip so you can easily turn them off.
- Thinking of buying a new TV? Consider an ENERGY STAR® LCD TV instead of an ENERGY STAR plasma TV. LCD TVs use approximately two-thirds of the electricity of plasma TVs.
- Look for the ENERGY STAR® symbol when buying new appliances and reduce your annual energy costs by up to 30 per cent.

- Windows are a significant heat loss area. Closing windows and curtains around sunset keeps in warmth that has built up during the day. Curtains should be bigger than the window frame and close-fitting with no gaps for warm air to escape. Use thermal or close-woven materials and linings.

Your Handbag Can Make You Sick

Do you know where your handbag has been? Right now it's probably sitting innocently on your desk, on a counter top, or on the floor next to you ... but do you know *where else it has been* during the last 24 hours or the last week? Most people have handbags that have been sitting on some pretty nasty surfaces - where people walk, sit, cough, sneeze, pee, and defecate - and after that they often end up on table tops where you eat, kitchen counters where you prepare food, and desks where you've got your hands on everything all day.

Nelson Laboratories in Salt Lake tested handbags to find out if they were harboring a lot of bacteria. It turns out the handbags were so surprisingly dirty even the lab was shocked. Microbiologist Amy Karen,

of Nelson Labs, said nearly all of the handbags tested were not only high in bacteria, but high in all kinds of *harmful* bacteria. The tests showed that 4 out of 5 handbags had more than "normal" dirt, grime and germs on the outside; they had surprisingly large amounts of very dangerous bacteria and substances like staphylococcus aureus, e. coli, salmonella, fecal matter, and even vomit.



YUCK! So what to do? Think about your handbag the same way you'd think about your shoes. Would you keep your shoes on the table next to your sandwich and fries? Your handbag has the potential to make you very sick, so use hooks to keep it off the floor in restaurants and restrooms and do your best not to set it down on tabletops, counter tops, and other surfaces like your desk. The microbiologists at Nelson said washing cloth handbags and using leather cleaner on the bottom of leather ones can help get rid of harmful substances.

You should also pay attention to where you're putting your computers, briefcases, shopping bags, backpacks, and anything else that has the potential to go from someplace icky to your table, counter or desk.

Shopping Online Safely

When it comes to shopping, the Internet is a powerful and exciting tool. With the click of a mouse you can book a flight, buy tickets to a show, or send a gift to someone on the other side of the globe. The web offers you good deals, convenience and choice. You don't have to leave your home, purchases are delivered right to your door, and it's open 24 hours a day.

Saskatchewan Justice, Consumer Protection Branch, has suggestions to keep your Internet shopping experience as safe and secure as possible:

- Shop with companies you know. Almost anyone can establish a website. Contact information should be clearly posted on the site. If you're not familiar with a merchant, do some research or ask to be mailed a product catalogue.
- Determine a company's refund and return policies. These should be posted on its website.
- Calculate all costs. Check whether



shipping and handling charges seem reasonable, and whether taxes, customs duties, and brokerage fees apply.

- Print and keep a copy of your purchase order and confirmation number.
- Check the merchant's privacy policy; it should be posted on the website. Pay attention to what information the company gathers, how it's used and with whom it is shared.
- Be careful when you choose a pass-

word, and keep it private. Don't use something that's easy to figure out like your birthday, telephone number or address.

- Make sure that your computer, and the merchant you're dealing with, can provide a secure transaction. Before you enter your credit card number, or other sensitive data, look for a website address that starts with <https://> (the **s** indicates a secure connection), and a closed padlock or unbroken key icon on your screen. If you don't see them (or if you see an open padlock or broken key icon), your transaction is not being transmitted securely.
- In the off-line world, you wouldn't give sensitive information to someone you know nothing about. Apply the same discretion online. With a few simple precautions, you can shop online with confidence. More information: 1.888.374-4636 (toll-free for Saskatchewan residents) or 306.787-5550.

Vehicles in Winter

When it drops below -15°C it's best to plug your car in. A cold car runs less efficiently and sends more pollutants out the exhaust pipe. However, excessive use of a block heater wastes electricity. Your car needs to be plugged in for a **maximum of 2 hours** before driving.

What about warming that vehicle up? Contrary to popular belief, idling is not an effective way to warm up a vehicle, even in cold weather. Idling can be hard on your engine because it encourages fuel residue to condense on cylinder walls, contaminate oil, foul spark plugs, etc. The best way to warm up the engine is to drive the vehicle. Today's electronically controlled engines allow you to drive away after only **30 seconds of**



idling, even on the coldest winter days. **More than 3 minutes is excessive.**

As an individual, you can be instrumental in reducing environmental impacts. If every driver avoided idling by only three minutes a day, over the year we would save 630 million litres of fuel, \$630 million in fuel costs

(assuming fuel costs are \$1.00/litre) and prevent over 1.4 million tonnes of CO_2 from entering the atmosphere.

Clearly, the better option would be to walk or bus regardless of the season. However, if you do need your vehicle, remember to plug it in for a maximum of 2 hours and to idle it for less than 3 minutes before you drive. (www.environmentalsociety.ca)

Shopping & Shipping Across the Canadian Border



If you're thinking of shopping on U.S. websites, hidden costs may catch you by surprise. There are things you should always check **before** you give out your credit card number.

First, check that the site offers shipping to Canada. There is nothing more irritating than filling your shopping cart and then discovering that the vendor does not ship outside the continental United States.

Good sites will list their shipping policies and procedures up front. Read the details carefully. Don't forget to factor in the exchange rate for the shipping charges and the merchandise. Your credit card company may also add a charge for currency conversion.

For goods coming across the border, you should also be aware of *Canada Customs Duties, Taxes, and Customs Brokerage Fees*.

Canada Customs Duties

Canadians don't have to pay duty on most American and Mexican manufactured items, but if the item was imported into the U.S. first, you may be charged duty when it comes into Canada. Check before you buy and, if possible, get something in writing from the e-store in case the Canada Customs people decide to be particular.

Canadian Taxes

Just about everything people import into Canada is subject to 5% GST. You will also have to pay the applicable Canadian Provincial Sales Tax or Quebec Sales Tax which varies from province to province.

Customs Brokers Fees are the charges that can really catch you by surprise. Courier companies and postal services use customs brokers to get packages processed through Canada Customs at the Canadian border, and fees for that service will be passed along to you. Canada Post automatically applies a \$5.00 processing fee (\$8.00 for Priority Post) for each package. Courier companies' fees vary, but are usually a good deal higher than the Canada Post fee.

Info: canadaonline.about.com/cs/customs/a/shopshipcanada

Membership / Subscription

- I'd like a one-year CASK membership (includes a one-year subscription to *SaskWatch*) \$ 25.00
 - I'd like a one-year subscription to *SaskWatch* (4 issues) \$ 10.00
 - I'd like to make a donation of \$ _____ \$ _____
- Total enclosed: (**make cheques payable to Consumer Association of Saskatchewan**) \$ _____

I would like to become a CASK volunteer. I am interested in volunteering in the following areas:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street: _____ City: _____ Code: _____

Email: _____

Renewal Notice:

Your membership expiry date is on the top of your address label. We hope you will renew your membership.

Making a donation to CASK will help us continue to lobby for fairness in the marketplace and improve the quality of life for consumers.