

# **Trash to Treasure**

## **IMPLEMENTING A WASTE-DIVERSION PROGRAM FOR MOVE-OUT TIME AT THE RISLEY HALL RESIDENCE ~DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY~**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

This report investigates the problem of re-useable materials being sent unnecessarily from Dalhousie's residence buildings to landfills. This problem is investigated with the use of qualitative and quantitative methods, which confirm the need and feasibility of a waste diversion program that would divert re-useable materials from landfills towards alternate uses.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

On Dalhousie University's Studley Campus, student residences serve as living arrangements for approximately 1500 students. While these residences are fully functional and are pre-furnished with necessary furniture, many students opt to individually customize their dorm rooms with extra items, ranging from electronics, such as stereos and mini-fridges, to decorations, such as posters. As Dalhousie's Studley Campus has bus access to Halifax's shopping sectors, consumer goods can be acquired with ease, allowing residents to stylize their dorm rooms according to their own tastes and desires.

At the end of the winter term, however, residents have 24 hours to vacate residence upon completion of their final exam. This short timeframe means that residents are often hurried out of residence, and in many cases, must leave behind many material items they have accumulated over the semester that they cannot take away with them.

These items range from decorative objects to furniture to electronics, and they often have nothing in common with each other besides being items that residents were unable to take away with them.

Materials left behind by residents are normally relegated to the garbage room and, from there, they are discarded to landfills. Some of these items being thrown out, however, are reusable, and need not be wasted. Facilities management staff estimates the amount of reusable items being discarded vary from 33% to over 50% per year -which indicates that a substantial amount of items are being sent to landfills. These re-useable items, which residents do not take away with them, can be collected and directed towards secondhand users rather than being sent to landfills. Many of these items could be put to another use in the community, either via charity or through a garage sale.

With so many reusable items being discarded, our group decided to investigate the feasibility of a waste-diversion project in Dalhousie's newest residence, Risley Hall. Similar waste diversion projects have been undertaken in Dalhousie's other residences in the past, but as the current school year is the first year Risley Hall has been operational, there has been no opportunity to establish a similar project there, and thus we chose that residence as the location in which to carry out our project. Furthermore, our group did not have the resources required to survey all of the residences on Studley campus, and thus choosing Risley Hall served to focus and delimit our study.

We conducted research for this project on the consumption and disposal habits of Risley Hall's residents in early March. We chose this time because it was early enough to avoid the end-of-term "time crunch", but late enough to prevent people from forgetting about the project at checkout time. Our research confirmed the existence of reusable materials that would be discarded by residence students during checkout time in April, and also confirmed that Risley Hall residents and staff were willing to take part in our waste-diversion plan. Thus, our study assessed the need for a waste-diversion program, the feasibility of student and staff participation in the program, and provided useful information about the consumption and disposal habits of residents that could aid us in designing the waste-diversion program. This report will show the methods we used to go about this, as well as the findings we obtained from our research, and conclusions we have reached at this point in the project. This study is worth exploring because it is in

concordance with principles of the Greening the Campus movement, and contributes to the overall sustainability of Dalhousie University. Furthermore, this project involves student participation and incorporates the local community as well as Dalhousie-affiliated organizations, such as the Society for Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility, hereafter referred to as CESR.

## **Review of Literature:**

The past theory and research upon which this project is based comes from other university groups and organizations who have conducted similar projects.

One local Halifax group, CESR, initiates annual end-of-term waste-diversion projects called “Dump and Run”. Dump and Run is similar to our project, in that it takes donations at the end of term from students moving out of university dormitories, sell these items, and donate the proceeds to charitable foundations. The CESR website:

<http://societyforcorporateenvironmentalandsocialresponsibility.dsu.dal.ca/index.htm>

linked us to Michael Stricker, a representative of the “Dump and Run” group, who collaborated with us on the donation sale, and provided useful information about what kinds of items are acceptable (see Appendix).

We also researched a feasibility study for a waste diversion project at Waterloo University:

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infowast/watgreen/projects/library/w04wastereductioneducation.pdf>

This study analyzed and confirmed the need for and feasibility of a waste-diversion project by handing out questionnaires to returning-residence students, conducting interviews with staff and administrators associated with Waterloo’s residence buildings and Environmental Science Department, and performing their own literature review. This project was well written, and served as a guideline for our research into the need and feasibility of a waste-diversion project at Dalhousie.

We also researched a waste diversion project from Harvard University, which salvaged mainly electronic items, such as computers, that were destined for landfills (<http://www.nwf.org/campusEcology/dspGreeningProjects.cfm?iID=11>). The organizers of this project gathered wasted electronic materials from residences and other places on

campus at the end of the year, and opened a campus electronics shop to sell affordable parts and computers to students at the beginning of the Fall term. This project demonstrated a more entrepreneurial approach to a waste-diversion program, and a way to promote environmental awareness to students with regards to consumerism.

## **METHODS:**

### **Design of study:**

The research project was designed to assess the need for and plausibility of a waste disposal program for Dalhousie Residences at the end of term. In order to do so, we formulated a plan to research the experiences and opinions of Dalhousie's residence students, staff and administrators, and any relevant Dalhousie environmental groups, regarding waste management at checkout time. In particular, we investigated (1) whether the residence professionals felt there was a true need for such a project, (2) what kinds of re-useable items (if any) were most often thrown away by residents, (3) the interest of students in donating their unwanted re-useable items, and (4) the manner in which other university groups had undertaken waste-diversion projects previously. Our research participants (and the data they provided us) were represented by different data gathering tools, which will be described and legitimated in the following section.

### **Instrumentation (tools):**

Our data gathering tools included a self-administered questionnaire, in-depth interviews with several individuals, and a review of several waste-diversion project reports done at various universities in previous years.

#### **(a) Questionnaire: (See appendix for questionnaire)**

The questionnaire was designed to be completed in approximately five minutes by each participating resident, and was made available to a large number of first year and returning residents. The questions asked included whether or not residents would have any unwanted, but re-useable items left over at the end of term, what kinds of items they purchase throughout the year, whether or not they would be willing to donate their unwanted re-useable items at the end of term. For returning students, we also asked what

kinds of re-useable items (if any) were left behind in previous checkout periods, and in what comparative quantities.

(b) Interviews: (See appendix for interview questions)

The interview questions were designed for Risley Hall's custodial staff, facilities manager, and residence life manager, and a representative from Dalhousie's CESR group. These individuals had important and specialized experience regarding checkout times at Dalhousie or other university residences. We asked for their observations on (1) the amounts of re-useable items commonly left behind by residents during checkout time, (2) the ways in which these items are dealt with, i.e. thrown in the garbage, sold... etc, and (3) in light of their experiences, whether or not a waste-diversion project was viable/would be useful for residences at checkout time.

(c) Literature Review:

Please see the "Literature Review" section in our introduction for information on the reports we analyzed, and used as guidelines for our project.

**Justification of tools:**

The questionnaire, interviews and literature review are legitimate as appropriate tools for gathering data from the different sources that were available. Regarding interviews, we chose each subject based on his/her expertise on the subject of waste-disposal in residence. Each subject affiliated with Risley Hall had a good deal of knowledge and experience accumulated over years of working in residences during move out times, therefore it was worth spending a good deal of time to interview them in depth. All of the information from these subjects gave us a picture of a "typical" move-out period in residence, and gave us a guideline of steps to take in our project. Also, several of these participants acted as useful connections for our group; -for example in reserving a room for residents to place their unwanted items towards the end of term, and in planning for the date and location of the sale event.

While it would have been very informative to interview a large sample of Risley Hall students in as much detail as we did the staff and managers, it would have taken more time than was available considering the schedules of our group members. In light of this, questionnaires proved to be a useful tool, because they allowed us to sample 15% of the Risley Hall resident population in a short period of time. Also, the questionnaires indicated which re-useable items have most commonly been thrown away at the end of term, and projected an approximate level of participation that we could expect from the residents as we carried out our project.

### **Sampling:**

The research we conducted with the questionnaire and interviews involved both probabilistic and non probabilistic sampling. In order to acquire a probabilistic sample of answers from our population (the approx. 490 residents of Risley Hall), we sampled using the simple-random technique. We did so by setting up a table in the most common area of the Hall (outside the cafeteria) and asking people to fill out the questionnaire as they walked out of the cafeteria.

The non-probabilistic sampling method we used was the purposive method, which we used for interviewing people with expert knowledge on waste diversion projects, and waste disposal in residence. We interviewed four of Risley Hall's custodial staff (Diane McIssaac, Faye Holms, Carol-Ann Foley, and Tammy Wells), Risley Hall's residence life and facilities managers (Joe Laforge and Diane Courier), and Michael Stricker a representative from the "Dump and Run" group of CESR. These people were intentionally sought out because they met important and relevant criteria to include in our study. Each of these people had lots of experience working in residence buildings during past move-out times, and therefore had a lot of useful knowledge about waste disposal in residences.

### **Issues of reliability vs. validity (& catalytic validity)**

Standard simple random sampling technique usually uses a sampling frame with a list of every possible participant, and picks names off the list randomly. With this

technique, the likelihood of picking any individual from the sample population is known or knowable. Our method of simple random sampling was not exactly the same, because, rather than selecting names from a complete list, we set up a booth before the cafeteria opened at lunchtime, and left after it closed. While it is likely that some students, for a variety of reasons, did not eat in the cafeteria that day, we feel it can be assumed that the majority of students did, and thus that our sample was reliable and representative of the population. This method ensured a minimal possibility of sampling errors. In this manner, assuming the majority of Risley Hall residents eat lunch, we received samples from those who went for lunch early, late and in between (a heterogeneous sample). Also, we only asked people to fill out the questionnaire as they were exiting the cafeteria, in order to minimize any inaccuracies that might have come from people rushing through the questionnaire because they were hungry. We feel that these considerations made our samples more representative of the Risley Hall population.

The interview samples were designed to gather descriptive data. These samples can be considered reliable because the people that we interviewed had experienced many checkout periods in Dalhousie and other residences previously. Furthermore, upon analyzing the data (see results section) we found that the qualitative interview data complemented the quantitative answers given by the questionnaire respondents, and the data gathered by researching similar projects in the literature review. The complementary nature of our triangulated data collection indicated to us that our data was valid and reliable, and helped us to plan for the collection and selling of the re-useable items.

In terms of catalytic validity, our questionnaire prompted residents to reflect on their consumption habits, and whether or not they felt their consumption was excessive, or of any detriment to the environment. Furthermore, we hope that the enactment of our project at the end of April will cause residents to reconsider the way they consume, and be more cautious the next time they make a purchase. Also, our research project increases the sustainability of Dalhousie University's Studley Campus by reducing the amount of unnecessary waste that is often destined for landfills at the end of the year. Lastly, our project contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the subject of waste-diversion planning, as a part of the "Greening the Campus" movement.

## **Procedures:**

### **(a) Interviews:**

The interviews with Joe LaForge, Diane Courrier, and the four custodians were conducted in person. We arranged convenient times to meet with these people, and asked each question in order, writing down their answers, insights and stories as they spoke. They gave their impressions of wastefulness in residence, and their experiences during checkout times. Joe and Diane gave us permission to hand out our questionnaires, and helped us to secure a location on the first floor for residents to drop off their unwanted re-useable items. Furthermore, Joe and Diane are allowing our group to keep the items in the lounge an extra two days after all students have checked out. Our interviews with the residence staff and faculty provided us with useful information and connections for our project.

Our interview with Michael Stricker from 'Dump and Run' was conducted similarly to the residence staff interviews. Michael provided us with useful information about how previous waste diversion programs have been carried out at Dalhousie. Furthermore, he allowed us to collaborate with this year's "Dump and Run" project, thus adding our group's items to those intended for sale/donation at the Dump and Run garage sale at the end of April.

### **(b) Questionnaires:**

The questionnaires were conducted between 10:30AM and 1:30PM outside the Risley Hall cafeteria. Our group set up a booth, and asked students at random if they would be willing to take 5-10 minutes to fill out our questionnaire. We took some time, before they filled out the questionnaire, to inform the residents about who we were, the purpose of the questionnaire, and how it would assist us in our project. Students then filled out the questionnaire, which took between 5-10 minutes to complete, depending on whether or not the person filling it out was a returning resident student. After they handed in their completed questionnaires, we thanked them for participating in our project.



### (c) Project Planning:

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, our group will move the bags of collected items from Risley Hall to the Studley gym and, with the “Dump and Run” group, arrange and price the items for the upcoming garage sale. In the event that we receive more donations that our group can realistically carry to the Studley gym, we have organized with “Dump and Run” to pick up the goods in their truck on the 29<sup>th</sup>, after it has made its rounds to other residences. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April our group will meet with the “Dump and Run” members at 7:00AM in the Studley gym. The sale will begin at 8:00 AM, and will finish at approximately 5:00 PM. The money earned from the sale will cover the expenses of the project, and the remainder of the money and items will be donated to selected charities.

For promotion of the project, we designed posters for Risley Hall that state the location where students can drop off their unwanted goods, the date residents can start donating their items, and a list of items that are appropriate to donate. We will put these posters up in visible places before exams begin so that students are made well aware of the project. Also, we wrote a public service announcement that will be aired on the campus radio station (CKDU 97.5 FM) between April 1<sup>st</sup> and April 27<sup>th</sup> (the last day students are allowed to stay in residence). Lastly, we have informed all of Risley Hall’s Residence Assistants (RAs) about the project, and they have agreed to remind students on their floors about where to donate their goods. We hope that these measures will ensure a large degree of participation from Risley Hall residents.

### **Limitations:**

In terms of research, our project was limited because there was not enough time to survey the nearly 500 residents living at Risley Hall, let alone to conduct longer and denser interviews with them. Despite this limitation, we believe that the information gathered from our sample was representative of the Risley population, and adequate for the purposes of our project.

Despite the overwhelming majority of students indicating (in the questionnaires) that they would participate, there is no way to be certain if residents will, in fact, make

the effort to donate the re-useable items that they do not want at the end of the year. Information from our surveys suggested that some students in previous years were willing to participate, but were unaware of the existing waste diversion projects. Thus, we have taken measures to ensure that Risley Hall's residents know about the project, and are aware of where they can drop off their donations.

This project is limited in that it provides merely a symptomatic solution to the problem of over consumption on campus. This project aims to divert waste from landfills, but does not stop excessive consumption at its source.

This project is also temporally limited, because we will be carrying out the steps to divert waste after this report is due and the course is finished. We anticipate that our project will work out; however, we will not be able to put our results and reflections of the actual event in this report. To compensate, we could potentially write up a summary of the events and our reflections, and submit next year it as an extra component of our project. Such reflections would be useful to a future waste-diversion group using our project as a guideline.

Lastly, this project is limited by the fact that, for several reasons, we have no quantifiable way to measure the success of our project, or compare results from previous years. For instance, we could not find any quantitative information to indicate (perhaps by a count, or by weight) how much waste has gone to landfills from residences in previous years, and therefore we have no way to compare how much more waste will have been diverted when our project is done. One way in which we can gather some information would be to ask Risley Hall's custodians and faculty if they have noticed that there was less wastage of re-useable materials. Another way could be to ask Michael Stricker if our group gathered a large amount of items in comparison to previous years. These measures would, however, be mostly qualitative, and would not provide any measurements that would indicate precisely how much more waste has been diverted in comparison to previous waste-diversion projects, and years where no waste-diversion project was in effect. On a positive note, however, while we have no benchmark or figure to compare our project to, we are, in effect, setting an initial benchmark against which future waste-diversion groups can measure their success.

## Delimitations:

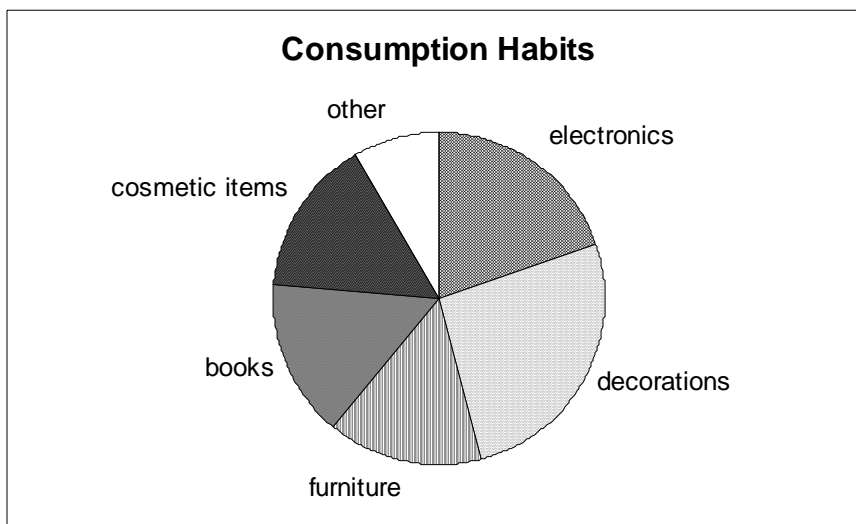
This project is limited in scope. We initially considered attempting this project at several Residence Halls on the Dalhousie Campus, but decided to focus on Risley, one very large residence hall. This decision was made with the knowledge that none of our group members had attempted an environmental research project before. Thus, to simplify matters, we narrowed the geographical scope of the project.

We had also initially wanted to encompass another dimension to the project that would attempt to target over consumption in Risley Hall. However, as we researched it became evident that such a goal would actually work better as an entire project in itself. A set of effective strategies for curbing consumption would serve as an excellent project for another Environmental Problem Solving class, and provide a more fundamental solution to the problem of over consumption on campus.

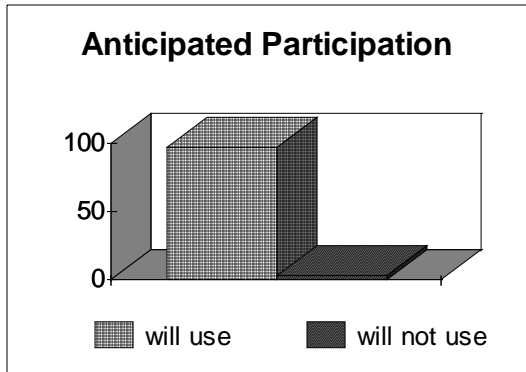
## RESULTS:

### Questionnaires

The following figures illustrate the results of the quantitative research method used, which consisted of self-administered questionnaires.



**Figure 1:** A representation of comparable percentages regarding material items purchased by resident students this year. From the sample size of 60 resident students, 92.3% have bought items to decorate and/or furnish their room, while 7.7 % indicated that they did not buy such items.



**Figure 2:** From the sample size, 97 % of the students indicated that they would use a service that accepted re-useable items at the end of the year. Only 3 % indicated that they would not use such a service.

From the sample size of 22 returning students who randomly participated in the questionnaire, 64 % of those students indicated that at checkout time last year, they had items that they did not want to take away with them when they left residence. Comparatively, 36 % of the sample size indicated that they did not find themselves in this position.

**Table 1:** The results of the questionnaire questions have been compiled in this table as a comparable format of attitudes towards consumer waste and over-consumption, as well as the feasibility of the waste-diversion project.

<i>QUESTIONS</i>	<i>ANSWERS</i>	
	<i>First year resident</i>	<i>Returning resident</i>
<b>1.</b> Are you a first year resident or a returning resident?	38	22
	<i>Yes</i>	<b>No</b>
<b>2.</b> Did you find that once you got to residence this year, you wanted to buy new materials to decorate and/or furnish your room? If so, what kinds of items did you buy?	<i>Electronics</i> <b>26</b> <i>Decorations</i> 34 <i>Furniture</i> 20 <i>Books</i> 20 <i>Cosmetic items</i> 20 <i>Other</i> 11	11
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>3.</b> Would you consider yourself an impulse shopper / window shopper?	25	35
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>

4. While living in residence this year, did you buy any items that you won't want to take away with you when you move out? If yes, how do you plan to deal with it all at the end of the year?	16 <b>comments:</b> give/sell them to returning students; storage; don't know yet; I have no idea; move it home; recycle posters; don't know yet; donate to charity; return items to stores; give away; sell to friends; donate.	44								
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>								
5. Are you familiar with the term "over consumption"?	56	4								
	<i>Scale</i>									
6. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your consumption of the following items, where 1 stands for "minimalist consumption" and 10 stands for "excessive consumption".	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Clothing</b>	2	2	5	4	7	6	15	10	6	3
<b>Entertainment (CDs, books, DVDs, videogames)</b>	4	11	10	6	4	7	7	5	4	2
<b>Electronics</b>	8	11	8	5	13	7	3	0	4	1
<b>Decorations</b>	6	10	8	11	10	7	3	2	1	2
<b>Furniture</b>	13	12	11	10	5	4	1	3	0	1
<b>Cosmetic items</b>	13	8	3	3	8	8	8	6	1	2
	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>							
7. Do you consider yourself to be environmentally aware / conscientious?	52					8				
	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>							
8. If a service existed that accepted reusable items at the end of the year, would you use this service?	58					2				
	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>							
9. In residence, do you recycle?	51					9				

	(extremely)	(very)	(somewhat)	(not very)	(not at all)
<b>10.</b> How vigilant a recycler are you?	9	16	26	8	1
	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>		
<b>11.</b> At checkout time last year, did you find you had things you did not want to take away with you?	14			8	
<b>12.</b> If yes, what sort of items were they?	<i>Furniture</i>	7			
	<b>Clothes</b>	9			
	<b>Decorations</b>	9			
	<b>Electronics</b>	1			
	<b>Books</b>	7			
	<b>Cosmetic items</b>	2			
	<b>Other</b>	4	<b>(specified as appliances)</b>		
	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>	<i>I don't know</i>	
<b>13.</b> Did other students discard reuseable materials?	13		2	7	
	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>		
<b>14.</b> At checkout time last year, were there barriers to recycling / donating unwanted items? If yes, please specify.	9	<b>comments:</b> trash cans; two days to get out and where would you put it all?; hard to find a venue that would take unwanted items; would like an exchange program; no where to donate close by.		13	
	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>	<i>I don't know</i>	
<b>15.</b> Was any sort of program available to which residents could donate unwanted reusable / recyclable items?	12		5	5	

The results of the questionnaires indicate that there is a need for a waste-diversion program during the checkout period. For a further look at the questionnaire and the consent form, please refer to the Appendix.

## **Interviews:**

Face-to-face interviews conducted with residence staff of Risley Hall, were informative on the level of greater observation of waste accumulation during the checkout period. The overall attitude towards a checkout program such as the one proposed by this project was positive. Observations of previous checkout periods indicated that there is a need for such a program. In past experience, staff members have noted that the amount of reusable materials left behind in residence during checkout was unmanageable. Due to the lack of time allotted for organization these items were temporarily held in a residence common area for waste collection. For a further look at the interview questions, please refer to the Appendix.

## **Literature Review:**

A review of similar projects, previously undertaken at the Universities of Waterloo and Harvard, has indicated that the waste-diversion project is feasible and that there is a need for such a project. The actions of these universities further support that the problem of re-useable materials being sent to landfills does exist at most universities and within similar settings. These reviews also indicated that the types of reusable materials sent to landfills are often the same, such as furniture and electronics. Added to the literature review was an analysis of a local organization, CESR, which tackles the collection and reallocation of reusable materials. This organization diverts these materials from the local landfill and often uses them in charity fundraising events, such as large 'garage sales'. Therefore, their success has also supported the feasibility of a waste-diversion project on a local scale.

## **DISCUSSION:**

This solution of a waste diversion program at checkout time has been recognized as symptomatic to the problem statement. Although, due to the time allotted for this winter term project, the ability to address the fundamental aspect of the problem statement was limited. From this early realization, the focus of the project became spreading awareness regarding landfill waste diversion in the form of defining re-useable

materials rather than targeting material consumption reduction itself. The importance of this project is the direct involvement of students with issues surrounding consumption habits and their environmental impacts. Our project provides Risley Hall residents with an option to dispose of their items in an alternative and environmentally friendly manner, which may ease their checkout experience. With this option to participate in donating reusable materials, they are able to recognize the greater worth of such materials and also the benefits to the environment. The donated materials will be collected at a time exceeding the submission of this project report. The reception of this currently ongoing project is a highly positive one, and therefore participation by the majority of Risley Hall residents is anticipated. The donations will be used to organize a 'garage sale' at the Studley Gym on Dalhousie Campus after the final day of the exam and checkout period. This 'garage sale' will be organized by CESR, in cooperation with the members of this project. All proceeds of the sale will be allocated to cover expenses used to organize the sale, while the remaining items will be distributed as donations to appropriate local charities. Previous sale events held by 'Dump and Run' have generated fundraising within the range of thousands of dollars. This inclusion of the community in which Dalhousie University resides, illustrates that finding solutions to environmental issues surrounding the university is not limited by the boundaries of the university itself.

The project status is currently in the process of taking action in preparation for the end of the checkout period. As a method to facilitate awareness of the project and the upcoming 'garage sale', public service announcements will be heard on CBC radio as well as the campus station CKDU. A variety of posters have been created regarding the promotion to donate unwanted re-useable materials, and the upcoming 'garage sale'. We hope that through participation in this project, students will have increased their awareness on environmental issues regarding waste and consumer habits. Direct action is a major component of this project.

## **CONCLUSION:**

As mentioned in the previous section, this project addresses a symptomatic solution to the problem statement. In the beginning stages of the project, there were two



aspects of a checkout program that were to be targeted. The first aspect was the action and awareness of waste-diversion during the checkout period. The second aspect was tackling a fundamental solution of material consumption reduction. The plan to combine both of these aspects in the project had to be aborted since it was recognized that the second aspect was a larger component than anticipated. The major limitation was the time frame allotted in conjunction with the waste-diversion aspect of the project.

### **Recommendations for further research:**

As a more fundamental and preventative solution to the problem of over consumption by all Dalhousie students, we feel that a “consumption reduction strategy” should be initiated by a group in next year’s Environmental Problem Solving (ENVS 2502) class. Such a project would likely involve awareness campaigns and participatory activities for resident students or any other section of Dalhousie’s student population. Such a project would complement waste diversion projects such as ours. A useful website for ideas on such a project is: <http://www.use-less-stuff.com/>. This site is a newsletter-style publishing that targets individuals and families to consume less by making small and easy changes to their lifestyles. And, while this site targets typical “households” its strategies could be applied to students as well.

### **REFERENCES:**

Palys, Ted. Research Decisions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives. Nelson Canada Ltd, 2003.

<http://www.use-less-stuff.com/>

Waterloo University Waste Diversion Projects:

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infowast/watgreen/projects/library/w04wastereductioneducation.pdf>

Society for Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility:

<http://societyforcorporateenvironmentalandsocialresponsibility.dsu.dal.ca/index.htm>

Harvard University Waste Diversion Project:

<http://www.nwf.org/campusEcology/dspGreeningProjects.cfm?iID=11>)

## APPENDIX: Questionnaire, Interview questions, and consent form

### **Questions for Facilities Manager Diane Courrier- Interview Questions**

- How many checkout times have you experienced at Dalhousie University (or at another University)?
- Have you noticed residents throwing out an excessive amount of items at the end of the year?
- If yes, around how much 'trash' was obviously reusable/recyclable? (Around half, less than half, etc)
- What sort of reusable stuff? (Clothes, decorative items, furniture, books, electronics)
- Does any pre-disposal sorting occur?
- Would a waste-diversion service be useful in reducing the number of reusable items being thrown away?
- What room can we use to store unwanted items donated by residents?
- How would you describe checkout time, garbage-wise? (i.e. are things sorted and recycled, or is everything thrown out?)
- Do you feel a waste-diversion program would be useful for waste-reduction in Risley Hall?

Additional comments

## **Interview Questions for Residence Life Manager/Facilities Manager**

- How many checkout times have you experienced at Dalhousie University (or at another University)?
- Have you noticed residents throwing out an excessive amount of items at the end of the year?
- If yes, around how much 'trash' was obviously reusable/recyclable? (Around half, less than half, etc)
- What sort of reusable stuff? (Clothes, decorative items, furniture, books, electronics)
- Does any pre-disposal sorting occur?
- Would a waste-diversion service be useful in reducing the number of reusable items being thrown away?
- What room can we use to store unwanted items donated by residents? (We will be using it from the beginning of exam week until the final checkout day)
- How would you describe checkout time, garbage-wise? (i.e. are things sorted and recycled, or is everything thrown out?).
- Do you feel a waste-diversion program would be useful for waste-reduction in Risley Hall?

## Interview Questions for Staff

How many checkout times have you experienced at Dalhousie University?

- Have you noticed residents throwing out an excessive amount of items at the end of the year?
- If yes, around how much 'trash' was obviously reusable/recyclable? (Around half, less than half, etc)
- What sort of reusable stuff? (Clothes, decorative items, furniture, books, electronics)
- Does any pre-disposal sorting occur?
- Would a waste-diversion service be useful in reducing the number of reusable items being thrown away?

## **Interview Questions for Michael Stricker:**

1. How many “Dump and Run” events have you been involved with at Dalhousie?
2. Who organizes them?
3. What is the process of organizing the event?
4. What items are acceptable?
5. When is “dump and run” organized for this year?
6. Do you have sub-committees in charge of particular streets or residence buildings?
7. Is there any other advice you can give for my group who is doing this for the first time?

## Risley Hall Resident Questionnaire:

1. Circle one: Are you a **first year resident** or a **returning resident**?
2. Did you find that once you got to residence this year, you wanted to buy new materials to decorate and/or furnish your room? Yes No

-If so, what kinds of items did you buy? Circle all that apply (electronics, decorations, furniture, books, cosmetic items, other\_\_\_\_\_)

3. Would you consider yourself an impulse shopper/window shopper? Yes No
4. While living in residence this year, did you buy any items that you won't want to take away with you when you move out? Yes No

If yes, how do you plan to deal with it all at the end of exams?

5. Are you familiar with the term "overconsumption?" Yes No
6. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your consumption of the following items, where 1 stands for "minimalist consumption" and 10 stands for "excessive consumption"

Clothing: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Entertainment (CDs, books, DVDs, videogames): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Electronics: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Decorative items: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Furniture: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Cosmetic Items: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Do you consider yourself to be environmentally aware/conscientious?
8. If a service existed that accepted reusable items at the end of the year, would you use this service? Yes No
9. In residence, do you recycle? Yes No

10. How vigilant a recycler are you? Circle one below:

Extremely Very Somewhat Not Very Not at All

### **Bonus Questions for Returning Residents**

11. At checkout time last year, did you find you had things you did not want to take away with you?      Yes    No
12. If yes, what sort of items were they? Furniture, Clothes, Decorations, Electronics, Books, Cosmetics, or Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Did other students discard reusable materials?    Yes    No    I don't know
14. At checkout time last year, were there barriers to recycling/donating unwanted items?    Yes (please specify)    No
15. Was any sort of program available to which residents could donate unwanted reusable/ recyclable items?    Yes    No    I don't know

### **Resident Questionnaire Consent Form:**

Hi! We are students from ENV5 3502- Environmental Problem Solving II. We are planning a project aimed at diverting reusable items from garbage to charities (Dump and Run) around the end of the April Examination period. In order to be prepared for this project, we would like to ask you a few questions to help us determine the scope and feasibility of such a program. Our survey questions are anonymous, and we will not ask you any personal information; we are interested only in information regarding consumption and waste disposal in residence. If, upon completion of the survey, you would prefer your answers not be used, we will discard them.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please contact Tarah Wright ([tarah.wright@dal.ca](mailto:tarah.wright@dal.ca)), Environmental Science Program Coordinator.

Thank you for participating in our questionnaire!

I consent to having my answers used as data for this project      Yes    No  
(If neither answer is circled we will assume the answer is No)