

# Small Steps to a Greener Union

revised June 2025



Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation  
Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario



### Did you know?

OSSTF/FEESO offers funding for Climate Change and Environmental Initiatives through account #2065.

This resource may provide your bargaining unit with many environmentally friendly ideas that you can implement. Please ensure that your #2065 application meets all eligibility requirements.

See OSSTF/FEESO Financial Handbook for additional information available via: [www.OSSTF.on.ca](http://www.OSSTF.on.ca)

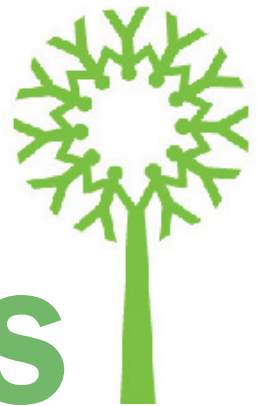
### Do you know an environmental champion?

The OSSTF/FEESO Environmental Award celebrates the achievements of a member, District, or Bargaining Unit for their dedication to environmental activism within the federation and/or community.

The award is presented annually to the District, Bargaining Unit, or individual member who shows environmental activism in some, or all, of the following areas:

- Promoting awareness of environmental issues within their district/bargaining unit
- Promoting awareness of environmental issues in education
- Initiating and implementing measures to reduce the ecological footprint of their district/bargaining unit
- Motivating others in OSSTF/FEESO to reduce the environmental impact of their union activities.

Additional information available at [www.OSSTF.on.ca](http://www.OSSTF.on.ca)



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# Small Steps to a Greener Union

The initial version of this document, created in 2010, required evidence or “proof” of climate change. In 2025 we have moved past the “proof” stage as there is no longer the need to convince people that climate change is real. Extreme weather events occur weekly, both within Canada and across the planet. Our planet and our very existence depends on what we do today. OSSTF/FEESO members continue to call upon their union to do its part to protect the environment.

Since the publication of the initial 2010 “Small Steps” document, OSSTF/FEESO has created an Environmental Advisory Work Group, which reports to and advises the Provincial Executive on environmental matters. The Work Group is made up of one Provincial Executive member, one Provincial Office staff member, and members from the field. The Work Group has continued its initial mandate to gather information and discuss best practices to share with the Federation to help make OSSTF/FEESO a more sustainable organization.

This Small Steps to a Greener Union report typically gets updated every 2 years. Over the past years, new ideas, initiatives and technologies have been developed in the area of environmentally responsible practices. Therefore, the Work Group is presenting a revised version of the original report that contains some new resources, new ideas and new ways for OSSTF/FEESO leaders and members to better protect the environment in how we operate every day.

The Work Group recognizes that each District and Bargaining Unit faces unique challenges and barriers when it comes to making their operations more environmentally sustainable. The purpose of this report is to provide encouragement and support for future endeavours; and not to suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach would work for everyone. Districts and Bargaining Units are encouraged to select those initiatives that would best serve their individual needs.

The Work Group will continue to provide support materials, options and ideas to the Provincial Executive and to the members of OSSTF/FEESO, with the goal of confronting the environmental challenges before us and making our future sustainable. It only takes a few small steps to make a difference.

We hope that this updated report will give you some tools to do this.



## Remember the 6Rs:

Reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse, rethink, repair.

<https://practicalaction.org/learning/waste/the-6-rs/>

Chris CHANDLER • District 12  
Brian GRANDY • District 19  
Lisa JEFFERY • District 9  
Jenny McGREGOR • District 18  
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Susan ROMEO • District 16  
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# PAPER USE

**A**n organization the size of OSSTF/FEESO uses an incredible amount of paper daily. When you consider the significant number of trees and water needed to produce this paper, and the cost-effective and accessible recycled options, it becomes clear that this is an area where our organization could easily make a measurable impact. In our efforts to create paperless workplaces, please consider implementing as many of the following items into your Bargaining Units, schools or personal life.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Recycle all of your paper waste.
- ☐ Double side all of your copies and save one-sided sheets for re-use whenever possible.
- ☐ Source all your paper needs from 100% post consumer sources and from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) approved suppliers. This would ensure that a minimum number of trees are harvested for our use. A list of products and suppliers is available at <https://ca.fsc.org/ca-en>
- ☐ To avoid the use of paper, provide executive members with electronic documents which can be accessed on their personal devices.
- ☐ Avoid handouts. E-mail materials for meetings in advance.
- ☐ Update websites on a regular basis and train members to use websites and social media more appropriately and effectively.
- ☐ Scan and store files digitally with document scanners. These can be easily shared and accessed electronically.
- ☐ Consider taking digital notes.
- ☐ Change the default settings on your word processor, spreadsheet, etc., to get the most out of your paper and ink. Narrow the margins, reduce the font size and select an eco-sensitive font.
- ☐ Switch to Spranq Eco Sans font for printed correspondence. This font will save up to 20% of your ink and will help make your cartridges last longer, with little noticeable difference in print quality. ([www.ecofont.com/](http://www.ecofont.com/))
- ☐ Choose paperless billing.

## RESOURCES

FSC products—[www.ca.fsc.org](http://www.ca.fsc.org)

Ecofont download—[www.ecofont.com](http://www.ecofont.com)

### Did you know?

Recycling 54 kg of newspaper will save one tree. (Source: Government of Canada, Digital Collection)

Paper and paper products account for more than 1/3 of all Canada's waste. (Source: Environment Canada)

Canada uses six million tonnes of paper and paperboard annually. Only 1/4 of Canada's waste paper and paper board is recycled. (Source: Environment Canada)



# ENERGY USE

**T**he idea behind an environmentally friendly energy policy is centred on using as few resources as possible. The benefit of such an approach is two-fold, with a reduction in consumption being planet-friendly as well as saving the organization money. In the end, when we have exhausted all attempts to curb our usage, we should be choosing environmentally responsible means to supply the power we need to function.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Switch to renewable energy from companies such as Bullfrog Power or Northland Power Inc. This simple change would ensure that you are using only sustainable and minimally-polluting sources such as wind, solar and hydroelectric. Cost increase is minimal (a dollar a day for houses, less for an office) and can be easily offset through conservation.
- ☐ Install programmable thermostats. They can bring significant savings by altering temperatures when the building or rooms are not in use.
- ☐ Kill the Phantom. Completely power down computers and electronic equipment at night to eliminate the phantom load that many appliances use when turned off. This is easy if you plug them into power bars and turn the power bars off as you leave.
- ☐ Minimize lighting. Turning off lights and considering the use of motion sensor light switches, especially in the evening, not only saves energy but a significant number of birds that die every year from striking illuminated windows.
- ☐ Get an energy audit. There are organizations that provide this service, often at minimal cost, that could suggest significant changes to your building. Often government rebates exist to help with costs.
- ☐ Consider a solar hot water system, the most cost-effective use of solar energy. A solar hot water heater can pay for itself in as little as 5 years. Often government rebates exist to help with costs.
- ☐ If you own a building, invest in an energy retrofit. Details and suggestions for financing can be found at [www.cmhc.ca](http://www.cmhc.ca)
- ☐ Consider avoiding use of AI when conducting research or generating emails, correspondence materials, documents, etc. to reduce energy consumption.

## RESOURCES

Renewable Energy Options—<https://builtintoronto.com/companies/>

Minimize lighting— [www.flap.org](http://www.flap.org)

Building retrofit—[www.cmhc.ca](http://www.cmhc.ca)

## Did you know?

LED light bulbs are considerably more energy efficient than compact fluorescent bulbs: a 16.5-watt LED bulb will produce around 1100 lumens, but uses significantly less energy. While a 75 watt incandescent bulb, to produce 1000 lumens, consumes 75 watts of power, its LED equivalent uses between 7.5 and 12 watts. LED bulbs will also last up to 15 times longer than regular bulbs. Please remember to properly recycle/dispose of LEDs and CFLs (locations vary by region) to ensure they do not end up in landfills as some CFLs contain mercury.

According to a Cornell University study, we are using the equivalent of seven electrical generating plants just to supply standby energy to electronics that are turned “off.” (Source: Environment Canada)



# FOOD

**F**ood sustains life, but in many parts of the world it is a scarce commodity. Considering the significant environmental and economic costs of producing and transporting food, and disposing of packaging and wasting food, this is an area where our organization could make a measurable impact.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Buy locally-produced foods whenever possible. If you hire a caterer or book a conference, ask whether they source their food locally.
- ☐ Buy organic products whenever possible. If you hire a caterer or book a conference, ask whether they use organic food.
- ☐ Introduce meat-free options at meetings and events to cut down on energy and water use.
- ☐ Avoid the use of disposable containers from restaurants when ordering food for union events. Ask whether restaurants carry reusable or recyclable containers and choose from restaurants that do.
- ☐ Avoid the use of disposable items such as plastic cutlery and glasses that are often not recyclable, in favour of traditional tableware that can be washed and reused.
- ☐ Avoid the use of single-serve items such as individual creamers and sugars.
- ☐ Consider using coffee machines that avoid the use of single-use pods.
- ☐ When possible, avoid the use of individually wrapped food items.
- ☐ Minimize food wastage by informing food preparers of the exact number of participants. If you can re-evaluate the quantity needed as the event is ongoing, this may help minimize waste and cost.
- ☐ Encourage participants to bring reusable containers to take home excess food, or donate surplus usable food to charities where possible and permitted by local health regulations.
- ☐ Compost any excess food (see Composting section for ideas).
- ☐ Make responsible choices when ordering fish. ([https://livingoceans.org/sites/default/files/sustainable-seafood\\_reports\\_SushiGuide.pdf](https://livingoceans.org/sites/default/files/sustainable-seafood_reports_SushiGuide.pdf))
- ☐ Cities and municipalities all over the world are accepting beekeeping as a necessary practice in their cities to increase food security and environmental stability. Bees have been shown to actually thrive in urban settings even above that of the rural bees. Consider hosting a bee hive at your site. (<https://www.ontariobee.com/>)

## RESOURCES

[www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)

[www.davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/food-and-our-planet](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/food-and-our-planet)

<https://www.osstf.on.ca/resource-centre/curricular-materials-and-classroom-resources/common-threads/projects/hungry-for-change.aspx>

## Did you know?

It takes, on average, 28 calories of fossil fuel energy to produce 1 calorie of meat protein for human consumption. It takes only 3.3 calories of fossil fuel energy to produce 1 calorie of protein from grain for human consumption.

(Source: David Pimentel, Cornell University)

Twenty-seven percent of the food produced for human consumption in the U.S. is thrown out as waste. Food waste decays in landfills and produces methane, a greenhouse gas that is 23 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

(Source: Stanford University)

If we all stop wasting food that could have been eaten, the CO<sub>2</sub> impact would be the equivalent of taking 1 in every 5 cars off the road. (Source: Love Food Hate Waste)

Canadians eat more than twice as much meat as the global average and three times the amount recommended by the World Cancer Research Fund.

Approximately 85% of all flowering plants on the earth need help from pollinators. Pollinators provide pollination services to over 180,000 different plant species and more than 1200 crops.

That means that 1/3 of the food we eat is there because of pollinators.

(Source: Pollinator Partnership Canada)





# WATER

**W**ater is humanity's most valuable resource and is commonly taken for granted in Canada. There is an increasing trend toward commercialization of water in Ontario with bottled-water companies mining our aquifers. When you consider the significant environmental cost, water conservation in an area where we could make significant improvements.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Install water-saving dual-flush toilets
- ☐ Place water-saving devices, or Toilet Tank Bank, in older toilets
- ☐ Find and fix leaks, running toilets, dripping faucets and shower heads.
- ☐ Install a water filtration system to eliminate single-use bottles and the delivery of large water cooler-sized bottles.
- ☐ Consider gifting reusable water bottles to replace plastic disposable bottles.
- ☐ Encourage attendees of meetings to bring their own reusable coffee mugs and containers.
- ☐ Provide drinking glasses and water in jugs for meetings.
- ☐ Install rain barrels to collect rainwater for watering plants and gardens.
- ☐ Reduce the number of dishwasher loads each day. Use the eco- mode and encourage staff to reuse glasses and mugs.
- ☐ If you have green space outside, use mulch to prevent the soil from drying out to protect plants during the summer.
- ☐ Consider avoiding use of AI when conducting research or generating emails, correspondence materials, documents, etc. to reduce consumption of water resources .

## RESOURCES

<https://bit.ly/tapped-out-the-world-water-crisis>

[www.insidethebottle.org](http://www.insidethebottle.org)

<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/agricultural-production/weather/canadian-drought-monitor>

## Did you know?

According to the Canadian Drought Monitor, portions of BC, AB and SK are currently experiencing “exceptional drought” which represents conditions that historically appear less than two years in one hundred (Source: Agriculture Canada)

Water use in the 20th century increased more than six fold, and is increasing at double the rate that the human population is increasing. (Source: Food and Water Watch)

By giving your bathroom a water makeover with water efficient toilets and faucets, you could save more than 45,000 liters annually. (Source: US Environmental Protection Agency)

Toronto uses 100 million plastic bottles a year, of which 35% are not recycled. (Source: CBC News)



# MEETINGS & CONFERENCES

**M**eetings and conferences are essential to the work of OSSTF/FEESO. To support our environmental goals, we must take proactive steps to reduce food waste and discourage the use of disposable giveaway items. The impact of transportation, water, food, and paper use - already a concern for Bargaining Units - is amplified at larger events due to the greater number of participants and the involvement of external agencies. However, these events also present a valuable opportunity for OSSTF/FEESO, at Provincial and District levels, to influence suppliers to adopt more sustainable practices.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Publicize the fact that your meetings are green and be prepared to share your expectations.
- ☐ Consider scheduling virtual meetings whenever possible. You could start with designating one meeting a year virtually. With unpredictable winter conditions in Canada, this would be appreciated by members.
- ☐ Prepare a set of questions to ask hotels, caterers, restaurants, etc. to determine the extent to which they are able to service your meetings in a way that meets your green objectives.
- ☐ Plan meetings in a central location or near public transportation.
- ☐ Reuse or recycle name tags, binders and other materials at each meeting.
- ☐ Ensure that gifts or handouts are environmentally sustainable and useful.
- ☐ Insist that vendors provide only environmentally-friendly swag items.
- ☐ Provide reports electronically and encourage the use of personal devices.
- ☐ Only print what is necessary for the meeting. Share documents electronically and make handouts available online. Use an LCD projector when possible.
- ☐ Ensure that food served includes non-meat options and that fish is sustainably sourced.
- ☐ Add 'green' responsibility statements to your constitution's executive duties or create an executive position for this purpose.
- ☐ Many of the checklist items in the other sections of this report can easily be "recycled" to relate to greening meetings and conferences.

## RESOURCES

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/ecc/files/publications-green-meetings-events-planning-guide.pdf>

<https://www.smartmeetings.com/meeting-planning/87613/6-bright-ideas-for-green-meetings>

<https://www.escribemeetings.com/blog/7-ways-to-make-a-meeting-green-friendly/>

<https://environmentjournal.ca/the-cost-of-plastic-pollution-how-economic-instruments-can-address-material-recovery/>

## Did you know?

Transitioning from in-person to virtual meetings can substantially reduce the carbon footprint by 94% and energy use by 90%. Carefully selected hubs for hybrid conferences have the potential to slash carbon footprint and energy use by two-thirds (Source: Nature.com)





# TRANSPORTATION

**O**ntario is a huge province and many of our Districts cover a significant geographic area. This makes our transportation choices one of the most important things to consider when trying to minimize our environmental impact (and reduce costs). The good news is, with improved access to online meeting platforms, rideshare apps, transit, and an increasing number of eco-conscious choices in the auto industry, the options have never been better.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ At Federation-owned offices, provide secure bike racks in well-lit areas and premium parking spots to those who carpool or drive electric/hybrid vehicles to incentivize making positive environmental choices.
- ☐ Reimburse transit and bike share costs.
- ☐ Install EV charging stations when possible.
- ☐ When looking for an office space, consider locating near public transit.
- ☐ Prioritize virtual meetings.
- ☐ Longer trips should continue to be planned in conjunction with other events in order to minimize travel time and fuel consumption.
- ☐ Travel by rail is preferable to air travel, when possible. A domestic flight generates approximately 7 times the emissions compared to rail. If air travel is required, direct flights produce fewer emissions than those with multiple stops. (Source: Our World in Data)
- ☐ When renting a vehicle is required, consider choosing an electric or hybrid vehicle. If this is not possible, choose a vehicle with low fuel consumption and emissions. This updated information is available at <https://fcr-ccc.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/en>
- ☐ For shorter distances, active transportation and transit should be prioritized. When this isn't possible, seek opportunities to share travel with other members and choose low-emission transportation options provided by those within a labour organization.
- ☐ Encourage members to use one of the many ride share programs. One such organization is <https://rideoncanada.ca/>
- ☐ When offering events in urban areas, free transit tickets, tokens or passes could be provided upon request to attendees. Giving week-long transit passes would encourage travel to meals or social functions without the use of vehicles, and would provide an opportunity to explore the city.
- ☐ Provide a mass transit option (bus or van) to take a number of participants from a central location to a meeting or event. The savings in mileage costs will more than offset the cost of the rental, and the environmental impact will be significantly reduced.

## Did you know?

According to **Environment and Climate Change Canada (2024)** the transportation sector is Canada's second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and accounts for 22% of national emissions. Despite the increased availability of low emissions vehicles, between 1990 and 2021, emissions from the transportation sector grew by 27%..



## RESOURCES

Auto share—[www.carpool.ca](http://www.carpool.ca)  
Low Carbon & Electric Vehicles—  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/low-carbon-vehicles-and-electric-vehicles>  
Energy efficient vehicles—  
[www.greenchoices.org](http://www.greenchoices.org)

# GREEN CLEANING SUPPLIES

**O**ur offices and homes often have a collection of toxic substances that can have a detrimental effect on our health and well-being. Ironically, our quest to make our workplace clean can often pollute our environment and compromise our health. Fortunately, we can meet most of our cleaning needs with simple and natural products.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Consider using homemade, natural cleaning products. This will save you money, while also exposing you to fewer toxins and reduce the amount of harmful chemicals released into the environment.
- ☐ If you purchase cleaning products, only buy those that are certified ecologically friendly or that minimize the release of phosphate. These products are widely available. Please consider the biodegradability of the cleaner you choose and check its environmental designation.
- ☐ Never underestimate the power of elbow grease. Sweat is not toxic. Consider putting extra effort into cleaning tough messes instead of opting for a harmful or toxic solution to get the job done.
- ☐ Try to buy concentrated cleaning products that come in reusable or recyclable containers. If possible, consider using local refill stores or buying in bulk to reduce plastic waste.
- ☐ If you must use a chemical product, make sure that you have proper ventilation and personal protection; dispose of effluent in a safe way and not simply down drains. Remember that waste water eventually finds a path to our lakes and rivers.
- ☐ If you use a cleaning service, ask about their environmental practices.
- ☐ If needed, encourage better practices, and be prepared to find a new service.
- ☐ Look for third-party certifications ensuring environmental standards have been met. For example, EcoLogo, Leaping Bunny, Green Seal, EcoCert.

## Did you know?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found the levels of air pollution inside the home can be two to five times higher (and sometimes even 100 times higher) than outdoor levels.

An EPA study concluded that the toxic chemicals in household cleaners are three times more likely to cause cancer than outdoor air.

Cleaning substances are the 3rd most common reason for exposure to poison in adults. 51% of the human exposures to poison in 2006 involved children under 6 years old. (Source: AAPCC, 2007)

Green cleaning products are typically made with biodegradable ingredients that break down more easily in the environment, reducing the risk of water pollution and harming aquatic life.

## RESOURCES

David Suzuki Foundation—<https://davidsuzuki.org/living-green/>

Green cleaning Products—<https://davidsuzuki.org/living-green/how-to-shop-for-green-cleaners/>



# ELECTRONIC DEVICES

**O**n October 18, 2023, the House of Commons unanimously passed Bill C-244, “Right to Repair” legislation designed to require that products be more durable and fixable. Implementation of Right to Repair policies began in 2024 and manufacturers were required to comply. This legislation should reduce the amount of e-waste generated in Canada. Disposing of electronic or e-waste is a complex matter with environmental and social consequences. When chemicals from electronics and batteries are dumped into landfills, they are very easily released into the environment. To prevent this, batteries and e-waste must be disposed of properly. There are many companies that recycle e-waste by refurbishing or reusing it, or by recovering materials such as steel, glass, gold, aluminum, zinc, and plastic.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Research and purchase electronic items with high ratings for durability and ease of repair. Prioritize products that will last as long as possible and that the manufacturer or vendor will repair if necessary.
- ☐ Repair before replacing whenever possible.
- ☐ Donate old equipment – Search for a local organization that could use your equipment or contact the Computers for Schools Program, with locations in Ontario. (Source: <https://rcto.ca/computers-for-schools/>)
- ☐ Refill ink cartridges and/or use re-manufactured toner cartridges.
- ☐ Some electronics companies offer credit for used electronic devices (laptops and phones) which can be applied to the purchase of a new item.
- ☐ Recycle Your Electronics, Terracycle and most Staples stores accept e-waste items, including printer cartridges and electronics.

**The following items are a few examples of e-waste that can and should be recycled:**

- ☐ IT equipment: computer drives, keyboards, mouse, photocopiers, monitors, small servers, computers, printers, printer cartridges, scanners, calculators, tablets.
- ☐ Telecommunications equipment: Fax machines, modems, pagers, telephones, routers.
- ☐ Audio visual equipment: Projectors, receivers, amplifiers, CD players, cameras, webcams, radios, VCR/DVD players.
- ☐ Small household appliances (also common in small offices): blenders, can openers, clocks, coffee makers.
- ☐ Batteries: alkaline batteries, car batteries, laptop, cell phone batteries.
- ☐ Fluorescent lamps: including compact fluorescents (CFLs), LED bulbs
- ☐ Cell phones - there are often discounts on new purchases when old devices are returned for refurbishing. Ensure personal data is removed in advance. Contact your local municipality for additional information on electronics recycling. Check local municipal websites for suggestions: search by keywords “e-waste”, “electronics recycling”, “electronic waste.”  
*Contact your local municipality for additional information on electronics recycling. Check local municipal websites for suggestions: search by keywords “e-waste”, “electronics recycling”, “electronic waste”.*

## Did you know?

E-waste is the fastest-growing solid waste stream in the world, yet less than 25% is collected and recycled properly. (Source: WHO, 2024)

E-waste contain hazardous materials such as lead, mercury and cadmium. These elements cause significant negative health impacts. (Source: Lancet, 2021)

Alkaline batteries contain potassium hydroxide, which is corrosive if placed in the garbage, they can catch fire and leach into the soil. For proper battery disposal, see <https://recycleyourbatteries.ca>

Cobalt used in cellphones has been directly linked to financing civil wars in Africa. (Source: CNBC, 2023)



## RESOURCES

Battery, electronics and cellphone recycling contacts: [www.call2recycle.ca](http://www.call2recycle.ca)  
<https://www.staples.com/stores/recycling>  
<https://www.terracycle.com/en-CA>

# PLANTS IN YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

**G**reen, healthy environments are basic to all human life. As a large organization, OSSTF/FEESO owns and operates many buildings throughout the province. We need to improve our workplaces, both indoors and outdoors, in ways that reduce our environmental footprint and enhance both our health and our productivity. Several easy steps can be taken.

## CHECKLIST

### Outdoor plants

- ☐ Consider replacing lawns with a variety of native species to provide both beauty and habitat (Grass provides no habitat and takes up a large amount of resources).
- ☐ Plant gardens with indigenous and drought-resistant plants. This will decrease the resources required to maintain the naturalized area and improve the habitat at the same time.
- ☐ Optimally water plants early morning or late evening/night.
- ☐ Use rain barrels to decrease water consumption, especially when watering lawns and gardens.
- ☐ Do not use pesticides or herbicides, as the pesticides will affect the health of workers, animals and the local ecosystem, including the nearest water source.

### Indoor plants

- ☐ Indoor plants beautify and clean the air in any space. Introduce a few plants at a time. One of the easiest to start with is a spider plant. *(Please consider allergies and sensitivities of other occupants before adding plants to the workspace).*
- ☐ If there are no windows, choose plants that tolerate low and artificial light.
- ☐ Put in a living wall if you have dry air in your workplace. A living wall helps with carbon dioxide/oxygen change and improve air quality by absorbing particulate matter and some toxins.
- ☐ Proper maintenance of indoor plants is necessary to improve their effectiveness.

## RESOURCES

[www.eco-lawn.com](http://www.eco-lawn.com)

<https://www.evergreen.ca/stories/explore-with-us-native-plants-at-evergreen-brick-works/>

[www.greenroofs.com](http://www.greenroofs.com)

[www.bioroof.com](http://www.bioroof.com)

<http://thelivingwall.net/>

<https://plantsome.ca/blogs/blog/why-you-should-have-plants-in-your-office-a-green-boost-for-productivity-and-well-being?>

## Did you know?

Plants produce oxygen, absorb indoor pollutants and reduce dust. (Source: Environmental Earth Angels)

Plants have been linked to lower stress levels. Plants into the workplace can lead to a 37% drop in anxiety, a 58% decrease in feelings of depression, and a 44% reduction in anger among employees. This calming effect helps create a more relaxed and productive work environment. (Source: University of Technology, Sydney)

Workplaces with plants can boost productivity by approximately 15%. Employees report higher satisfaction and improved focus when surrounded by greenery. The aesthetic appeal of plants also contributes to a more enjoyable workspace, encouraging longer periods of engagement. (Source: University of Exeter Study)





# ORGANICS COLLECTION & COMPOSTING

**D**iverting kitchen and yard waste from District or Bargaining Unit functions saves landfill space, reduces energy costs of transporting waste, and creates a product which will help your garden. All organic diversion methods will require OSSTF/FEESO members to sort their waste. Green bins would be needed for the office. Pick the method which works best for you.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Decide whether you should set up a compost or start organics collection. Each municipality has different requirements.
- ☐ If you are composting, determine which of the following three methods works best at your work-site (details follow). You may decide to use a combination of the three.
  - ✓ Create and maintain your own compost heap
  - ✓ Use indoor vermicomposting
  - ✓ Use municipal composting
- ☐ Work with any property-care or food services you use to have them support your composting objectives.
- ☐ The resulting compost can simply be spread over an existing lawn or garden.
- ☐ Create and maintain your own compost heap.

## ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ Composting in the workplace can positively impact morale by creating a culture of sustainability.
- ☐ Composting also demonstrates corporate social responsibility with shared environmental values.
- ☐ Composting may result in increased motivation and productivity.
- ☐ Office organics collection program can simultaneously address environmental concerns, improve workplace culture, and position ourselves as forward-thinking, responsible organizations.

## RESOURCES

[www.cathyscomposters.com](http://www.cathyscomposters.com)

<https://www.roadrunnerwm.com/blog/a-guide-to-workplace-composting>

<https://www.officecomposting.ca/blog/>



## Did you know?

Composting is nature's way to recycle!

Up to 50% of Canada's waste stream can be composted. (Source: Composting Council of Canada)

Organics do NOT decompose in regular landfills because they lack the necessary oxygen and microbes.



# CARBON CREDITS

**T**o buy or not to buy - carbon credits, that is. Carbon credits, also known as carbon offsets, are a way to compensate for greenhouse gases that cannot yet be eliminated. The concept is straightforward: we calculate the amount of unavoidable emissions we produce, then pay another organization to take actions that absorb or prevent the release of an equivalent amount of greenhouse gases.

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Use an online calculator to estimate your District or Bargaining Unit's carbon footprint. See resources below.
- ☐ Begin to change practices, using techniques suggested in this Report and elsewhere, to reduce the overall carbon footprint.
- ☐ Establish a budget line to purchase carbon credits to offset the rest.

### Different standards of carbon credits

There is considerable discussion about carbon credits and the environmental community is quite divided on this practice. Carbon credits/offsets can be confusing to navigate and difficult to validate. If you choose to purchase carbon credits/offsets, please research your provider thoroughly.

There are several recognized standards you should look for, including:

- ✓ VCS (Voluntary Carbon Standard), Green-e, and the Gold Standard.
- ✓ There are also various provincial standards.
- ✓ Some carbon credit retailers support projects meeting several of these standards; others adhere to only one.
- ✓ Money paid to purchase carbon credits can be directed to socially active projects.
- ✓ There are online calculators to help you calculate your carbon emissions and buy credits.

## RESOURCES

Guide to Buy Carbon Offsets—<https://climatecarbon.com/a-complete-guide-how-to-buy-carbon-offsets-that-genuinely-help/>  
CarbonZero —[www.carbonzero.ca](http://www.carbonzero.ca)

## Did you know?

The UN concluded in 2023 that we had already experienced a 1.1 degrees Celsius rise in average global temperatures since the beginning of the industrial era. Millennial scale changes to our climate, whether those are rising sea levels, extreme weather events or rapidly disappearing sea ice, are occurring in every region of the world. Scientific consensus is that we likely passed the 1.5 degrees threshold set by the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement in 2024.

Antarctic ice core studies show that there is now more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than there has been in 800,000 years. The peer-reviewed scientific consensus is that human activities are responsible for the increase. The same studies, and others, show a parallel rise in global temperatures.

As of 2023, carbon dioxide moved permanently to 420 ppm in the atmosphere, and records show its concentration had risen 11% in only 20 years. (Source: UN World Meteorological Organization)

