

FOR WHALES' SAKE

By Jackie Hilderling



We in the western world have come to live lives highly influenced by electronic devices both for work and play. From MP3-players to computers, the technological revolution is proceeding at an astounding rate and, both due to planned obsolescence and the

legitimate invention of new technologies, we no longer look at our electronic goods in the same way we did but a generation ago.

We now accept that our lap-tops may have a three-year life expectancy; that a "cooler" cell-phone will soon be on the market; that our digital cameras may soon be obsolete; and that it is acceptable that buying a new printer is cheaper than buying printer cartridges for the old model.

Stop! Think! What happens when we move on to the newer model and don't recycle? It ends up in the landfill so that any problem chemicals will eventually leach into the groundwater, end up in

our marine environment, enter the food chain and cycle right back . . . into us. Consider that in just one average desk-top computer, there are 1.7 kg of lead! Among the many other chemicals, there are the heavy metals cadmium and mercury and the bio-accumulative fire retardants, the PBDEs! When you consider the size of our current electronic waste stream and the toxic substances within, this is a problem of enormous magnitude but there is good news on the way!



What can you do?

- Use your consumer power and research the ethics of electronics companies; demand durability; avoid electronics with toxic chemicals and insist upon stewardship where companies are responsible for their products from cradle to grave.

Electronic Waste - Wait till June 1st!

- Recognize the difference between electronics that will enhance your life and those that are mere frivolous gadgets.

- Use your vote to support sounder environmental policies.

- Recycle. Currently there are private companies that do accept e-waste but often for a fee. Be sure to ask what happens to the materials once you deposit them as there is great concern about the practices of some companies. It has been exposed that there is a growing global trade in shipping such waste to developing countries, leaving them with our burden of toxics.

- **Hold on to your electronic waste until after June 1st!** This is the good news. There should then be a provincial stewardship programme in place (through ENCORP) to allow environmentally sound recycling of electronics – free of charge! Watch this column for updates.

Further information www.econauts.org; see "Helping the Whales" and Nanaimo's Recycling Exchange www.recycling.bc.ca

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