

Elizabeth Bishop Festival



Susan Kerstake paints an impressive spiderman on the face of Jasper Poltzer at the Elizabeth Bishop Festival on August 8th. (Harrington Photo)



A literary arts panel conversation was held in the afternoon of the Elizabeth Bishop Festival. Left to right: Moderator- Sandra Barry, Writers- Carole Langille, John Barnstead, Binnie Brennan and Harry Thurston. (Harrington Photo)



Mark Hamilton, says he is a huge Elizabeth Bishop fan and enjoyed the opportunity to paint on site at the Festival on Aug. 8th. (Harrington Photo)

A Biologically Friendly and Renewable Resource

Submitted.

A growing number of people in central Nova Scotia are working to develop a major renewable resource which has multiple use potential... Recycled Coffee Grounds... or R.C.G.'s, as they call it for short.

Grapell Bioenergy Ltd. was formed in June, 2009 and has worked quietly with dozens of individuals, other companies and university research and development agencies, primarily centred at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, now known as Dalhousie Agricultural College.

Yes, coffee grounds have been in use for a very long time. And spent coffee grounds have been used by home owners to mix in the soil for many decades. So what's new?

The story goes back considerably before Grapell Bioenergy was incorporated. A loose association of friends, Jim Higgins in Middle Musquodoboit, Gus Swanson, a long time successful inventor living in Pictou, and Orv Pulsifer, a would-be farmer living in Truro, had been working for many months in hopes to use Nova Scotia's 2,000 or more run-down farms and particularly their run-down hay fields to make fuel pellets replacing imported fossil fuels. It seemed to make such good common sense. And it still does.

But public and government approval largely ignored their initiative. After all, governments make huge revenue from fossil fuel taxes. Why would they change?

And there were other challenges too. Hay, of whatever quality, contains silica. Glass is made from silica. And hay pellets produced considerable glass 'klinkers' which would gradually extinguish a fire. So folks seeking to use hay pellets for fuel would have to use a combustion system capable of continually grinding up the klinkers. This was a formidable and expensive challenge, indeed.

But Grapell Bioenergy and its owners, Orv

Pulsifer and Martin Trainor of Truro, were convinced that spent coffee grounds were different. Very little smoke. No klinkers. And higher heat per pound.

Furthermore, Trainor had developed an abiding interest in R.C.G.s as a soil amendment. It was biologically friendly and renewable. It wasn't chemical as with most fertilizers and it wasn't mined from deposits in the ground that take thousands of years to develop, like peat moss.

And speaking of chemicals, some day, way in the future, potash may become scarce. It's non-renewable. But not spent grounds of coffee, as long as mankind continues to favour the beverage produced from these beans! In fact, coffee is big business!

The commercial coffee brewing industry in

Canada is reported to have a total sector value of \$3.5 to \$4 billion, employs around 200,000 people in full and part time basis in cafes and food service with a market share of 18% of the non-alcoholic beverage market by volume.

The US market is reported to have 20,000 coffee shops with a combined annual revenue of almost \$10 billion in 2012. It is estimated, that an average performing coffee shop produces 750lbs of R.C.G.s per week with associated tipping and transportation charges of around \$30 per store per week.

If one considers only the 168 Tim Horton's stores in Nova Scotia, this results in approximately 3000 tons of material going to landfill with an annual disposal cost of about \$265,000. Although

R.C.G.s are not considered a problematic material when compared to construction and demolition material, there is potential to reduce the cost of disposal and to add value to this organic by-product. Grapell and its owners are working steadily to develop value added products, to create employment, and to further their entrepreneurial interests.

Trainor and Pulsifer note that R.C.G.s are 'green', renewable, can replace imported fossil fuels, can improve soil porosity and tilth, have absorbent qualities to soak up toxic spills, and can even be an excellent raw material from which to produce activated carbon. In fact, many people use recycled coffee grounds to repel slugs in gardens and even cats which use flower beds as their outdoor 'bathroom'.



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