

Show me the (green) money!

I'm not a fanatical environmentalist, but I do care about our planet.

I recycle, sorting the cans, bottles and newspapers, as well as watching what I take to the dump when I load up the F150.

I try to re-use things at home when I can, and never put inappropriate materials in the green container.

I've replaced most of the bulbs in the house with compact fluorescent lamps (CFL), but haven't changed them in the barn because they simply don't give me enough light in the middle of a cold winter night.

The barn lights are only turned on for a short time, so I'm not wasting much.

But there is one recent aspect about living a 'green' lifestyle that has me questioning 'environmental motives'.

It's those plastic shopping bags you get at grocery and department stores.

A couple years ago, we were told they were the scourge of the Earth, filling up landfill sites faster than anything else.

Millions of them were being thrown out, polluting the environment.

So the multi-million dollar chain stores started promoting purchasing a 'reusable' shopping bag, usually for a buck or two.

And, being the environmentally conscious shoppers that we are, we purchased the shopping bags, adopting the same practice as many European shoppers, who take their shopping bag along with them to the market.

And, since the chains were promoting a 'green' campaign to save the landfills, they suddenly started tacking a five cent charge on the plastic shopping bags—you know, the ones which used to be free.

Now, since we Canadian shoppers haven't been raised like our European counterparts, often we forget to take along the re-usable shopping bags and are forced to purchase the plastic ones from the cashier—at a nickel a pop.

Sometime earlier this year, I heard a news item about how much money the super chains have raised by selling those 'evil' plastic bags that were clogging up our landfill sites.



Ted Brown

I can't find the exact figures, but in the GTA, I recall the figure being in the millions of dollars— just from selling those five-cent plastic bags.

Okay, it's a 'green' initiative, so that's okay, right?

Well, maybe... or maybe not.

You see, I have a question: where has the money from the sales of those plastic bags gone?

Is it funding some green project, making this planet a better place to live?

Or is the money simply lining the pockets of the huge retail chains, in the name of being environmentalists?

For me, the most frustrating thing is that not one person can give me an answer.

I've asked a couple of the managers at local retail outlets where the proceeds from the sale of plastic bags has gone—and no one can give me an answer.

And millions of bags are still ending up in the landfill sites— but now the retailers are making money off them.

If the retail chains are really committed to 'saving the environment' from plastic bags in landfill, then they might want to put their money where their mouth is, and donate all the proceeds from the sale of those plastic bags to a prominent green initiative.

Perhaps they are already doing that, but I still haven't seen any evidence that is the case.

So enlighten me people, if you know of a program that is directly funded by the sale of plastic shopping bags— let me know.

If there is such a program, I'll report back here, when, or if, I have an answer.

In the meantime, I ain't holding my breath.

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