

FoodCycler initiative aims to take pressure off local landfills



By Nate Smelle

At the Valentine's Day meeting of Bancroft council, Councillor Wayne Wiggins clearly had his sights set on another holiday ? Earth Day ? when put forth a draft resolution directing town staff to allocate \$10,000 in the 2024 budget to go towards ?green initiatives.? During their recent meeting on April 10, council discussed using some of these funds for its FoodCycler composting initiative, as well as the benefits of the program for Bancroft residents, the town, and the planet. For those who are unfamiliar with the FoodCycler, it is essentially an electric countertop composting machine. About the size of a toaster, the FoodCycler holds up to two litres of food waste per cycle. Each cycle can take anywhere from four to nine hours to process the waste. When it is finished, there is a nutrient-rich compost that can be used to give your plants and gardens a boost of natural fertilizer. According to the FoodCycler website, it can process: most fruit and vegetable scraps; meat, shellfish, and poultry scraps; cheese; beans, seeds, and legumes; chicken and fish bones/shells; coffee grounds, filters, and tea bags; and, eggs and eggshells. By reducing up to 90 per cent of one's food waste volume the FoodCycler also lowers a household's garbage output by up to 50 per cent. Having used a FoodCycler since the last time the municipality offered them to the public in September 2021, Wiggins shared his enthusiasm for the composting machine. ?I would say it's over 50 per cent,? Wiggins told his fellow council members. ?It's amazing how little garbage there is if you recycle properly and you do your composting properly. This is just one way to compost, and I think it goes hand in hand with the backyard composters. Anything we can keep out of the landfill, it helps with [reducing greenhouse gases], and not filling up our landfill. It has so many outside benefits.? Bancroft's Mayor Paul Jenkins, who also uses a FoodCycler he purchased during the pilot project in 2021, attested to how it has significantly cut down the amount of food waste his household produces. Like Wiggins, he said it has cut his household's garbage output in half since he began using it. Considering food waste is responsible for up to 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and that 47 per cent of this organic waste comes from households, the FoodCycler is a great way for people to reduce the size of one's ecological footprint. ?The number one worst thing for landfills is not solids, it's organics because of the leachate that occurs from it, and the methane gas that is produced,? explained Jenkins. During the meeting, Jenkins also addressed some of the public's concerns about the initiative from the town's Facebook page. Highlighting how the FoodCycler is a great option for anyone who are afraid of attracting animals to an outdoor compost pile, he said it is also convenient for those who don't want to venture out in the cold to compost their food waste during winter. Acknowledging the new apartment buildings currently under construction in Bancroft, he said it is perfect for people that live in such places as well. Noting how the FoodCycler will alleviate pressure on local landfills and prevent them from filling up too quickly, Wiggins said initiative will deliver many benefits to the community. Reflecting on the potential for the FoodCycler initiative to grow and become more beneficial to the community in the future, he said it could even make a difference in terms food security. ?This here I think has great potentials if we could get into it on a larger scale,? said Wiggins. ?I would think farmers would love to have this for their fields. They're paying huge money for fertilizer, and what better source is there than organic? It takes a whole lot to make it happen at this stage but that's where I'm seeing this? I see this is down the road being a huge savings for the town and for our planet.? There are two types of FoodCyclers available; the smaller unit costs \$150, and the larger one \$300. The town has ordered 50 units, so anyone interested in getting a FoodCycler is advised to contact program lead, Jennifer Peplinski at: jpeplinski@bancroft.ca. For more information about

the FoodCycler visit: www.foodcycler.com/