

# Purchasing Habits

Almost everyone has pushed a shopping cart through aisles of groceries. Week after week, millions of Canadians complete the ritual of filling their cupboards, refrigerators and freezers. Most of us routinely grab the same basic food items without even thinking.

Every few months fashion-conscious individuals buy "this season's hottest look" in an attempt to be socially accepted; this process is better known as "looking cool". Most of these purchases replace dated clothes but end up becoming dated themselves. The result is a closet full of garments that have not exceeded their life span but are no longer worn.

The same is true for automobiles, home audio/video equipment and nearly any product available. Television, radio, print and all other forms of advertising along with social influences constantly push the public to buy more and more. Newer is always better while "used" is a dirty word. Careful re-evaluation of a person's purchasing habits will not only reduce the amount of waste produced, it can cause changes in the manufacturing and packaging of goods, slow the use and polluting of *nonrenewable* or *renewable resources* and even save money. There are many simple ways in which we can reduce our waste.

The first step is to stop thinking about what you want and concentrate on what you need. Ask yourself "is it absolutely necessary". If the answer is a genuine yes then start comparison shopping. Rather than costs, consider the environmental impacts. Which brand, make or model will last the longest? Can it be repaired or does it have a short life span? Has the manufacturer enclosed the item in unnecessary packaging? Can it be recycled and if it can does your recycler process it? Is it grown or produced in an organic or environmentally friendly manner? These are just a few questions that should be addressed before money is spent.

To illustrate, let us investigate ways to reduce while shopping for groceries. Start by making an accurate list of items that you need. Now, plan to make only one trip per week. Organize your excursion so you are not travelling unnecessarily.

