We’re Number One! Canadians produce 777 kilograms of garbage each year. That’s more than the citizens of any other country. Let’s beat that number down – at least to the average of 578 kg each.

Potato chip bags, clingwrap, plastic sushi trays, milk cartons, foil-lined coffee packets and tea-bag wrappers...all this and more is recyclable on the main floor of the Business and Economics Building. Paper cups and towels make up 17 per cent (yes, almost one fifth) of UVic’s landfill contribution – and every single one could be composted instead.

Finance, investment, ethics

“We recognize the economic significance of the resource,” says a group of 49 funds with investments in Alberta’s oilsands. “But (we) are concerned that the current approach to development, particularly the management of the environmental and social impacts, threatens the long-term viability of the oilsands as an investment.”

Together, the group controls $2 trillion.

Read the article here.

International, business engagement, social change

Compared to five per cent in the US, businesses make two-thirds of charitable donations in China where, according to Anke Schrader in CSRwire, “opportunities exist for genuine corporate engagement; a growing number of examples exist that showcase successful corporate-NGO partnerships.”

For classroom discussion: here are a couple of case studies developed by BSR’s China philanthropy incubator initiative CiYuan.

Life cycle analysis, technology

Stonyfield Farm has calculated the carbon footprint for 150 of its 200 products; it’s the only US company to take such a big step. Its parent company, French food giant Danone Group, is doing the same for 35,000 products.

Using SAP software, the firms can cover the entire life cycle of every product, from raw material extraction to disposal at the end of its life, according to GreenBiz.com.

Social norms

By 2020, people won’t describe companies as “green” or “ethical,” say a group of UK Tory modernizers in this BusinessGreen article. Thanks to a new business paradigm, companies will instead be specifically described as fossil fuel companies. They’ll be regarded as archaic, their financial returns will be riskier in a widely fluctuating global market, and their values will be seen as unethical.

For classroom discussion or assignment: what are some strategies that could create such a shift in social perception and corporate behaviour? Which should come first: social norm or corporate action?

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