

Consuming Society

Problem Statement: We are currently using and consuming resources on the earth faster than they can be replenished. This is a problem with severe consequences for all life on the planet, including humans. Our project will focus on responsible waste management as well as responsible food distribution with the goal in mind being responsible consumption.

Research Questions:

1. What kind of practices have been put into place at Douglas College that reflect consideration and understanding of waste management and food and energy usage?
2. How does irresponsible consumption of resources lead to increased inequalities?
3. How do food distribution methods contribute to some getting more than they need and others not even having enough to survive?

UNSDGS:

1. #2 Zero Hunger: Consuming less than we currently do in global North countries would be a good start. Consuming less meat and not throwing out food (i.e. only cooking what you'll eat) would be a great way to reduce waste and feed more people.
2. #10 Reduced Inequalities: Getting visible minorities involved in campaigns for promoting responsible consumption and reducing waste. Donate food to charities that are specifically helping the most vulnerable populations abroad and at home.
3. #12 Responsible Consumption and Production: Perhaps the most critical UNSDG pertaining to my project. Production methods need to be restructured to ensure optimal resource use and minimal waste. Buying as much food and beverages that are locally sourced would also be helpful.

Findings:

1. Douglas college has a sustainability policy that shows how reducing waste has been implemented on campus.
2. In Canada, over half of our annual food supply is discarded. This is equivalent to 35.5 million tonnes, and costs the economy an estimated \$49.5 billion annually. This food waste contributes to food price inflation and food price volatility, which would be felt more acutely by low-income individuals or communities, such as students.
3. Food waste reflects inefficiencies in resource distribution. Unequal access to resources such as land, water, and agricultural inputs is disproportionately allocated to wealthier individuals or large corporations, leaving smaller producers and marginalized communities with limited access.

Douglas College Policies:

1. In regards to food: Douglas College joined the Feed BC program, which promotes the use of locally grown food and food products.
2. In regards to waste: Four-stream recycling since 2016, e-recycling, air hand dryers and all take-out containers are either recyclable or compostable.

Conclusions: Douglas College should aim to become a Zero Waste campus and include...

1. Paper towel collection in washrooms.
2. Provide smaller portion sizes of food to reduce excess waste.
3. Donate excess food to local charities.
4. Remove wasteful corporate sponsors and provide healthy and sustainable food alternatives

Literature Review:

Holland, Kerri, Strengthening Canada's Food System by Reducing Food waste (September 28, 2021). The School of Public Policy Publications 2021, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3932621>
Batool, F., Kurniawan, T. A., Mohyuddin, A., Othman, M. H., Aziz, F., Al-Hazmi, H. E., Goh, H. H., & Anouzla, A. (2024). Environmental impacts of food waste management technologies: A critical review of life cycle assessment (LCA) studies. *Trends in Food Science and Technology*, 143, 104287. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2023.104287>
Edwards, J., Othman, M., Crossin, E., & Burn, S. (2018). Life cycle assessment to compare the environmental impact of seven Contemporary Food Waste Management Systems. *Bioresource Technology*, 248, 156–173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biortech.2017.06.070>