

Dumping that old TV

Posted By CATHY DOBSON, THE OBSERVER

Sarnia has its first collection site for electronic waste under a new provincial program that pledges to divert 160,000 tonnes of garbage over the next five years.

Residents can now take old televisions, computers, mice, keyboards, monitors, printers and fax machines to Staples on London Road, which has been approved by the Ontario Electronics Stewardship (OES) program.

The program started April 1 and some residents have already brought in their electronic garbage for disposal at Staples' warehouse depot, says manager Lynn Faubert.

All items, regardless of where they were purchased, are accepted free-of-charge, Faubert said. For a small fee, however, customers can ask the store to wipe their drives to ensure personal information is erased.

"We're already getting a fair amount and the program just started," said Faubert.

Approved collection sites like Staples receive funding from the OES to package and transport electronic waste to recyclers, that are also pre-approved and regularly audited.

Meanwhile, a new stewardship fee is now charged by companies that sell electronic products.

Anyone in Ontario buying a television, for instance, pays a fee of \$10.76 at time of purchase. The fee is set at 32 cents for a mouse or a keyboard; \$12.37 for a complete computer system; and \$2.14 for a laptop.

"We've had no complaints at all," said Mat Fisher, a floor manager at Future Shop on Exmouth Street. "People understand it's better than throwing this stuff into the landfill."

"Ninety-nine per cent of the people say it's long overdue," said Faubert. "They say it's about time we're recycling and reusing."

Joe Black, owner of Digital Friends in Sarnia, has been accepting and refurbishing old electronic equipment for years.

He's hoping the OES will approve his store as a collection site, too.

Digital Friends currently has to pay to package and ship electronic waste to a middleman, who then ships it for recycling.

"Being part of the program would address a lot of shortcomings," Black said. "It's very worthwhile."

He's glad to see the province on board with a serious plan to divert electronic waste.

The new fees will pay 100 per cent of the cost of collection, transportation, processing, research and development as well as public education programs.

A second phase is expected to include cell phones and cameras.

Environment Minister John Gerretsen says the program will also ensure that products aren't sent overseas where environmental standards may be lower.

For more information, log onto www.ontarioelectronicsstewardship.ca or www.dowhatyoucan.ca.