

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Got garbage? Check it out

A report about the amount and types of garbage Minnesotans are throwing away should, like a state official says, serve as a wake-up call to consider how it could be better used to benefit the economy and the environment.

A report released Monday by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency shows some alarming results. From 2000 to 2012, the amount of organic material, primarily food, Minnesotans throw away has grown to 31 percent of the waste stream — a 21-percent increase.

The report also shows that the amount of plastic Minnesotans toss in the trash has increased in those 12 years from 11 percent of the waste stream to 18 percent.

Minnesotans are throwing away about \$217 million of material that could be recycled — representing a loss for the environment as well as the economy.

Even harder to stomach is the report's estimate that Minnesotans are throwing away more food at a time when food shelves and those who use them are showing a need. An MPCA official said in a news report Minnesotan buying habits may be playing a role. More people appear to be eating meals outside their homes and portions offered at eating establishments have grown in recent years.

The MPCA is expected to offer for public comment

draft regulations aimed at expanding curbside collection of compostable food waste across the metro area and other parts of the state.

Sounds like this report could support Koochiching County's proposed Renewable Energy Clean Air Project, also known as RECAP. A public presentation on the proposed waste-to-energy project is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Dec. 12 at the AmericInn.

Increasing the amount Minnesotans recycle benefits the environment by decreasing the amount of garbage we place in the ground, while at the same time creating jobs in the recycling market.

Clearly, our opportunities in Borderland to recycle are more limited than in more populated areas. But take a look at what you're throwing away. Are there several plastic water and pop bottles in your garbage? Are you throwing away food because you've prepared or purchased more than you can eat before it goes bad? Are the plastic bags that contain your groceries being returned to the bins at the local grocery stores?

Is there an opportunity to capture some of this organic waste to be gasified at a facility proposed for the area that would in turn create energy?

Being aware of what we toss in our trash and making a few simple changes can make a difference in our environment and our economy.

How to contact your lawmakers

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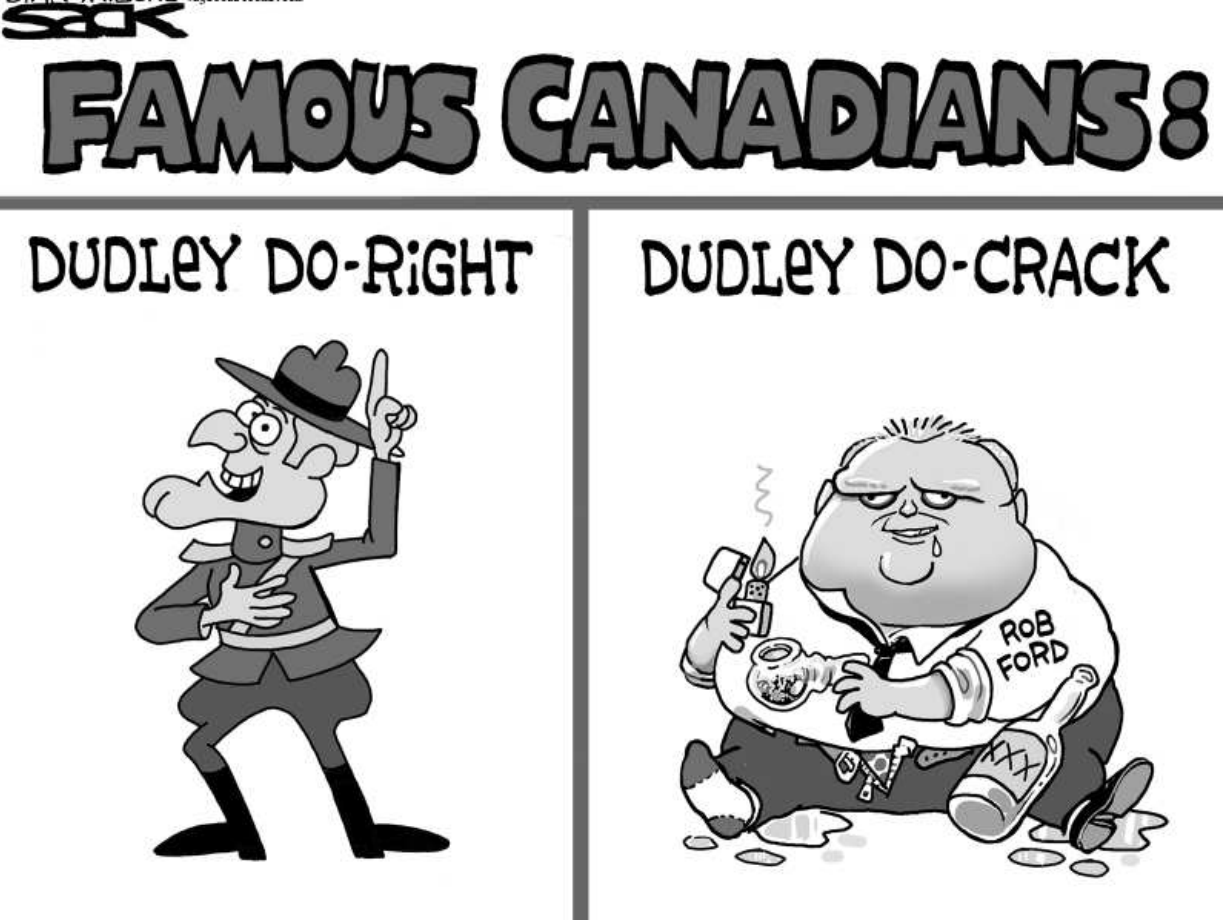
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Who could screw up health care worse than the feds?

To the editor,
Minnesota, it turns out, screwed up healthcare worse than the feds; and by a considerable margin. Governor Mark Dayton described the number of people likely to be negatively impacted by MNsure as “staggering.” About 140,000 Minnesotans have received letters from insurance companies telling them their plans could be “substantially changed.” That means “priced out of their insurance policy.” About one Minnesotan in twenty will have a major personal negative life impact.

Older people are being forced to pay for maternity coverage and lactation therapy. Stable people in full control of their lives are being forced to pay for mental health and substance abuse treatment coverage. Dayton said forcing people to pay for aspects of coverage they don't need “defies common sense.” Perhaps the governor and the DFL legislators should have read the bill before passing it. It gets much worse. With the DFL controlling both the legislature and the governorship in Minnesota, there was nothing to stop liberal ideologues like Rep. (David) Dill and Sen. (Tom) Bakk from establishing a whole

new bloated state bureaucracy around the MNsure website. Counting interagency agreements, there are 180 new bureaucrats on the payroll with 23 of them making over \$100,000. The annual cost to maintain the new website and support bureaucracy is \$76 million or \$14.07 per year per Minnesotan.

The famous dysfunctional Obamacare website cost \$500 million or \$1.59 per American. The big spending DFL legislators spent \$160 million on the MNsure website or an unbelievable \$29.63 per Minnesotan—18 times more than the wasteful incompetent federal government.

Stunningly, in spite of spending 1,800 percent more than the feds for a website, not a single Minnesotan has completed enrollment in any health insurance plan on the MNsure website. The website cannot presently link the customer to the insurance company to finalize enrollment.

Just when you think the bungling could not be worse, we find more alarm in who is trying to sign up under MNsure. Of the 10,940 enrollments in progress, only 1,774 are actually individual

policy purchasers. All the rest are welfare enrollees looking for free or subsidized coverage under MinnesotaCare or Medical Assistance. Basically, what we have are five Minnesotans riding in the cart and one person pulling it while the DFL cheers them on. What could possibly go wrong?

Even strong supporters of DFL progressive ideas have to recognize when excesses have occurred. Excesses born of unfettered access to the public pocketbook have created unsustainable and economically crippling programs and tax structure. In this area, we've lost 28 percent of our population since 1960 and median household income is 30 percent below state average. All twelve elected officials representing us at state and federal levels are Democrats. We need to insist that our representatives pay some attention to solutions to our problems and dedicate themselves less to voting for new taxes (14 of them), fiascos and more bloated bureaucracy. We need to think smart, act smart and vote smart. Next November, we need to make our DFL candidates smart.

Terry Stone
International Falls, MN

More new jobs could be found

We sympathize with the bad news of the huge Boise layoff. We have been struggling for years to reduce Minnesota's continuing unemployment rolls of over 150,000 (about 600 times the Boise layoff), but the legislature (and the media) have been unresponsive. We need more outrages (Boise could be expanding).

We could produce enough jobs for most all of our jobless citizens if we would stop employers from claiming unwanted employee inventions and then crushing them (to

keep their creative workers focused on assigned tasks only). These many destroyed inventions are then not available to produce new jobs. Surprised? This widespread, destructive practice has been going on for years.

We have introduced a “use or return” reform bill (Senate File 21) into the Minnesota Legislature to start converting this wasteful policy into a permanent source of new products, new business, new jobs and new tax revenue — all at no cost to Minnesota

taxpayers. So you don't feel creative? Well, only one unwanted invention that was released has spawned a huge \$50 billion entirely new xerographic industry (the Xerox copier) creating 500,000 new jobs. (Wall Street Journal, May 23,1989)

We urge all readers to contact their state legislators this week urging them to co-author and champion this no-cost measure (SF 21) during the upcoming 2014 session.

Robert Nepper
St. Paul, MN

The Journal welcomes letters from readers

Letters should be limited to 500 words or less. Longer letters may be edited. Letters must be signed and include the telephone number and address of the letter writer. Only the author's city address will be published.

Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifallsjournal.com.

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