

AUDIO SCRIPT

[Passage 1 – M1: Professor; M2: Male Student; F1/F2: Female Students]

M1: Good afternoon, class. Today's lecture mainly focuses on the fact that the recycling process itself causes a lot of pollution. Don't buy it, you say? Look here ...

There are over 500 waste collection vehicles on the road per day—that's both recycling and garbage collection. The subsequent exhaust from each one of those vehicles contains over forty airborne toxins. And the thing is, trucks are trucks, whether they're garbage trucks or recycling trucks. They both run on fossil fuels. Likewise, they both produce exhaust fumes that contain carbon dioxide. By adding more trucks to the roads, no matter what their purpose, we're increasing air pollution.

And that's not even considering the recycling facilities. One recycling plant in Washington State produces more toxic emissions than any other factory in the region. And the next three biggest polluters in the area? They're also recycling plants.

Research suggests that some recycling may actually be bad for the environment. Take paper, for instance. When paper is recycled, it's all mixed together into a pulp. That pulp is washed, cleaned, and then pressed into new paper sheets. During that process, the waste is filtered out into a bulk substance known as "paper sludge." The sludge is subsequently burned or sent to a landfill, where it can leach a toxic formula of chemicals and heavy metals into groundwater.

M2: But Professor, aren't there regulations against that?

M1: There are. Nonetheless, there's a loophole: When you mix something with the paper sludge, such as sand, you turn it from waste into a product. And while perhaps not ethical, it is not illegal to dump tens of thousands of tons of your own product into a landfill.

F1: What about other recycling? You know, plastics, bottles, and cans?

M1: Well, there are about seven types of plastic that you'll find in everyday life. How many do you think are actually recyclable?

F1: I'd say five or six?

M1: Only *two* of them are recyclable. Anything else placed in a recycling bin will be collected, processed, and sorted, and then thrown straight into a landfill. In all honesty, we have no idea what to do with it all. Take plastic shopping bags, for example: It's estimated that fewer than one percent are recycled, and that might be

simply because it's so expensive. It costs \$4,000 to recycle one ton of plastic bags, but a ton of recycled bags only sells for \$32! As a result, about 300,000 tons of plastic bags end up in landfills every year.

F2: But there is a big demand for metal. All those cans can be utilized to make other things, right?

M1: Ah, let's talk about demand. In the case of aluminum, demand grows around ten percent every year. However, recycled aluminum isn't suitable for certain things. For example, recycled soda cans can't give you the quality you need to build, say, an airplane, or even electronics. So, we're still going to mine for new aluminum.

Furthermore, there's glass, which comes from sand, and there's plenty of sand, right? But consider this: The process for recycling glass has more negative effects on the environment than the process for creating new glass!

But, the biggest reason recycling hurts the environment doesn't have anything to do with the technical process—it's the *mindset* it gives people. It's the way we think. The notion is that by dropping waste into the recycling bin, by buying products made from recycled material, we convince ourselves we're saving the environment. But how effective is that when the U.S. alone still produces 250 million tons of trash every year?

F2: So, what's the point? Why don't we just throw everything in the trash?

M1: Well, now, wait. You don't want to jump the gun and just give up. I'm arguing that recycling's main impact is to convince us that it's okay to be wasteful in some areas of our lives, because we make up for it through recycling. What I'm saying is, recycling sustains *consumption*, rather than sustaining the *environment*. That's really the crux of the matter. Here's a revolution: Accumulate less! The way to consume ethically is to reduce consumption overall. Now, consider this in light of the upcoming debate ...

[Passage 2 – F1: Female Moderator; M1: Male Debater; F2: Female Debater]

F1: Good afternoon. I'm Nancy Osborne. I'll be the moderator of today's debate.

The numbers show that the population of the Greater Toronto Area, or the GTA, has outpaced the national growth rate over the last five years. The question is: Where should these new residents live? Today we're going to hear from both sides of a hotly debated discussion: Should Toronto, the capital of the state of Ontario, adopt an urban plan that focuses on densification, similar to Vancouver's? Or should the GTA continue with its current development, where 86 percent of the city's million new residents go into subdivisions on new land?

With us today is Brigitte Sasson with the Urban Planning Commission of Toronto and Chris Maddox with the Citizens for a Smaller Toronto. Welcome to you both. We'll begin with Chris, who is for implementing the Vancouver model.

M1: Thanks, Nancy. First, let me say that the plan we're proposing has seen great success in Vancouver. The city has succeeded in saving significant areas of land from development. Furthermore, the city has kept its older neighborhoods populated. Most of its new residents have been encouraged to move into existing older suburbs and central neighborhoods in the city. We propose this for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it's a good use of schools and other existing facilities.

F1: That seems logical. Pretty simple, actually.

M1: Getting the community on board hasn't been easy. But with a lot of effort, we believe we can renew urban centers and keep the populations there. On the one hand, the city center is seeing some revitalizing, but on the other hand, many of the older areas on the outskirts of Toronto are losing residents. Vancouver, through planned transportation and other initiatives, is keeping the growth in cities denser, keeping and encouraging residents to settle there—it's something the GTA could learn from.

F1: Okay. Let's hear what Brigitte has to say to that.

F2: Thank you, Nancy. According to Mr. Maddox, Vancouver is a model for good development that Toronto should follow. One example he gives is that by reinforcing urban growth, existing facilities can be used. But his hypothesis is flawed. This abstract idea is not applicable to Toronto. A formula that works in one city, doesn't necessarily work in another. Toronto is a much older city than Vancouver. As Vancouver's population grows, facilities have to be built as the need emerges. The older facilities in Toronto can't accommodate new residents. The notion that we can sustain growth of a city without using more space is illogical. Eventually, even Vancouver will have to use the land outside the city. That said, I'd like to point out that Toronto isn't just sprawling, willy-nilly. Urban planners and architects are well aware of the significance of this issue. In the past five years, there's been virtually a condo boom in downtown Toronto. You can't say the city is only growing outwards.

M1: If I may interrupt, contrary to Ms. Sasson's view, even though there are some signs of more compact development on the edges of the city, Toronto is still largely accommodating new residents by sprawling ever further. In Vancouver, on the other hand, 350,000 of the half million new residents in the last decade have moved into the region's existing urban neighbourhoods. That's almost 90 percent.

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F2: Look, there are some good things happening in Ontario too, such as the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. This plan encourages towns and cities to grow upwards through densification rather than outwards through car-dependent urban sprawl. Ontario has also established a two-million-acre greenbelt of protected farmland and green space, which wraps around the Greater Golden Horseshoe's major towns and cities, including Toronto, Hamilton, Markham and Burlington. Don't just assume that because the plan isn't exactly like Vancouver's, that it's not innovative.

F1: Chris? Would you care to respond?

M1: I would. I understand Ms. Sasson's point about growth of facilities with population growth. However, as Toronto's older central neighborhoods are also losing residents, its infrastructure—sewers, water lines, roads, community facilities—is underused in those areas. At the same time, the city is spending money to build more of the same for the suburbs popping up on the edge. To sum it up, Vancouver has absorbed population by adding people into existing urban areas, whereas almost 90 percent of new development in Toronto happens on the edges of the city.

F1: Chris, we'll give you the last word.

M1: Thanks, Nancy. To sum it up, it comes down to economics. Basically, as long as affordable housing remains out of reach for residents whose livelihood is in Toronto, or Vancouver for that matter, residents will have no other choice but to live outside of the city.

F1: Thanks to you both.