

Local

Out of sight garbage pail; Mount Forest firm shakes up the waste industry with Finnish invention

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Mount Forest -- "There's got to be a better way," he mused.

"Why not dig a hole in the ground and put a bag in there," his wife suggested.

Salli, a mechanical engineer, figured he knew better.

But then he figured some more and decided his wife's idea was nothing short of brilliant.

By 1991, he had perfected and patented his **Molok** garbage receptacle which, like an iceberg, only reveals its tip. The bottom two-thirds rests underground.

Bottomless pit

In Finland "**molok**" is an expression meaning "bottomless pit."

Today, there are thousands of big and little Moloks in Finland and the rest of Europe.

They come in sizes from 300 to 5,000 litres.

In 1997, Salli's daughter, Marja Loshkov, brought her father's invention to North America.

She settled in Mount Forest, where **Molok** North America Ltd. is now headquartered.

Loshkov, of course, would like nothing better than to see Moloks from sea to shining sea, neatly tucked behind restaurants, lining residential streets or snoozing in sunny municipal parks.

They are already doing that in a number of Ontario cities, including London and Markham.

They have also found their way into Kitchener city parks and the Westmount Golf Club.

The underground well of the **Molok** is manufactured in Waterloo by RTS Plastics. The other components are imported from Finland.

Jim Higgs, area supervisor of parks for Markham, where there are about 20 Moloks, said the container works best in high traffic locations.

The regular 45-gallon barrels found in most parks are not big enough to keep up with the volume of garbage, he said.

"The cans just fill up too fast and it's impossible to keep them empty," he said.

"We only empty the Moloks once or twice a year, saving us both time and money."

Emptied by boom truck

The **Molok**'s well is fitted with a reusable lifting bag which is removed and emptied from the bottom by a

boom truck.

The boom truck has the advantage of being able to stretch over fences, shrubs or cars to reach the garbage container.

You've got to hold on as you rocket from today's green garbage bags or metal pails forward to the **Molok**.

You don't pick up a **Molok** and walk it to the curb. They are solidly anchored in the ground. The smallest models can be emptied by hand, but most require a hand winch or boom truck.

No more big compactor truck with the forks on the front.

They are most likely to show up behind restaurants, in parks or at apartment buildings.

Big is beautiful as far as the **Molok** is concerned.

Reduces odours

Part of its charm is that in a park, for instance, it doesn't have to be emptied nearly as often as regular garbage cans.

And, because it stays cool underground, the garbage tends not to create smells or attract animals.

Its size also means that it compacts itself under its own weight. In the glass recycling model, the drop to the bottom of the receptacle breaks most of the bottles, further helping to compact the material.

Golfers like them because they don't attract bees, Loshkov said.

With zeal she lists the many benefits of the **Molok**: watertight, simple installation, improved aesthetics, less wasted space, clean, long lasting.

Most of all, she says, it's cheaper than regular garbage handling.

She estimates the **Molok** system can save 50 per cent on the cost of garbage collection and handling with the initial capital outlay amortized over 10 years. After that, the savings go up.

Loshkov figures the **Molok** will last 30 years or more.

They have been particularly popular in Portugal, where warm temperatures mean smells are a problem, she says. That country now has about 1,000 of the nearly 16,000 units across Europe.

Cities are often the hardest sell, Loshkov said. Small communities such as Mount Forest are more flexible and more readily able to change.

If you had a **Molok** on your street it would mean no more trips to the curb with pails or bags on garbage day.

Instead, as you filled a bag, you would take it to the nearest **Molok** depot, which could be as close as your super mail box, or behind your apartment building.

Gone would be the days of storing trash in the garage or back porch.

And, for the garbage and recycling truck, it would mean one stop at the depot instead of a stop at each house.

No more stops to pick up a blue box that's half full. And no more wet newspapers, which often can't be recycled and wind up in the landfill.

One depot would serve about 100 people, or 40 households.

Loshkov is planning to put one near the road of her rural home in the former Egremont Township.

"I'll find a spot. It could be next to the mail box," she said.

"I can even plant flowers around it."

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Colour Photo: Philip Walker, Record staff | Marja Loshkov shows off the **Molok** waste management system which features several container sizes that can be buried and partially hidden in the ground.

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