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Green your Mailbox, Save a Tree

If you haven't already signed up for Canada Post's innovative (and free!) epost service at www.epost.ca, maybe it's time you considered it. By using epost, you can reduce the volume of paper bills coming into your home and do your part for the environment as well. The epost service is a free electronic bill presentment service that allows Canadians to receive, view, pay and store regular household bills and other important financial documents in one secure online location.

The epost service was launched in 1999, and was the world's first electronic post office. The conveniences and benefits are many. In addition to providing one secure online location for your bills and financial statements, epost will send you email reminders so you can avoid late charges. And if you are worried about storing your bills for future reference – there is free online storage for 7 years. For more details and to get answers to your questions about the service, you can check out the website and have a look at the FAQs. Registering is easy – just go to www.epost.ca. And you can also access epost directly from the online banking websites of most major Canadian financial institutions and credit unions. There are more than 200 types of bills and other financial documents that are currently available to receive by epost.

Why is paperless billing an environmentally friendly choice and a great way to reduce your household's carbon footprint? A paper bill contains at least two pieces of paper (including the envelope). If you receive an average of five bills per month this amounts to 120 sheets of paper a year. So far epost has over four million registered users, which means potential savings of 480 million pieces of paper. So let's put this in relative terms - if each piece of paper was letter sized, they would line up end-to-end to stretch across the Trans-Canada Highway's 8030km route from Victoria to St. John's 17 times!

Let's go further than this. If all of Canada's 12 million households were registered epost users and added five bills each to the online service, that number would increase 50 times. And assuming the average bill weighs 35 grams and one tonne of paper is equivalent to about 19 trees; then with 4 million current users, epost could save nearly 160,000 trees. But with all 12 million Canadian households as users, that number goes up to nearly 500,000 trees saved!

Trees renew our air supply by producing oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide – that's why they are known as a 'carbon sink'. An acre of trees produces the amount of oxygen consumed by 18 people annually, and removes up to 2.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. To put this in perspective, it takes about 500 full-sized trees to absorb the carbon dioxide produced by a typical car driven 20,000 km per year. So saving 500,000 trees a year equates to taking 1000 cars off the road.

When it comes to climate change, a pound of CO₂ generated or removed here in Fredericton is exactly the same as a pound of CO₂ generated or removed in Katmandu – greenhouse gases don't play favorites.

So don't doubt that a small environmentally-minded change in your household matters – maybe in this case, that change is epost and saving some trees. Then tell a neighbour, email a friend, pass on the tip, and so it grows.

Sonya Hull is project manager for Fredericton's Green Matters greenhouse gas reduction campaign. She is signing up for epost to make it 4 million and 1 registered users, will you make it 4 million and 2?