

Monfitello Hawkesbury-made food tubes tested for fridge and Blue Box

By André Dumont
HAWKESBURY – Remember that you read it here first. A Hawkesbury firm plans to revolutionize the way you put ketchup and relish on your hot dog to make it more fun and absolutely environmentally friendly.

Monfitello, the food division of Hawkesbury manufacturer Montebello Packaging, is currently developing aluminum tubes for condiments and other food products like garlic and tomato paste.

Using those tubes will be a lot like putting toothpaste on your toothbrush, only with longer squeezing fun.

The company is also involved with the town of Hawkesbury to find out how these tubes could be recycled.

"Aluminum is very valuable," says Montebello plant manager Betty Pilon. "But right now, it is just going to the landfill site."

Most recycling companies in Ontario don't recycle aluminum at the moment. This means that products like Montebello's tubes for pharmaceutical and personal care products get thrown away, along with regular garbage.

In Europe, aluminum food tubes are very common. In countries like Germany, consumers are obliged to recycle them.

According to Pilon, Monfitello has invested significant amounts of money to develop and promote aluminum food tubes for the North American market.

"We did a whole market research on this product," Pilon said. "We have set up a special sales force to promote these new tubes coming out."

Back in February, the company received a \$50,000 grant from the National Research Council of Canada to test the product's shelf life, stability and labeling options for future clients.

Research and develop-

ment is currently underway at the Guelph Food Technology Center.

The new food tubes are expected to be manufactured in Hawkesbury. "This is a good investment for our region," Hawkesbury Mayor Jeanne Charlebois said.

A first new job has been created with a grant from the Prescott-Russell Community Development Corporation for a pilot project.

The Town of Hawkesbury will hire a project coordinator for a six-month period to work with the RARE recycling facility in Alexandria and to eventually educate school children on how to properly recycle aluminum packages.

"We want to make sure that our aluminum tubes can be put through the Blue Box system," Pilon said.

With the price of aluminum having doubled in the past two years, recycling would certainly be a profitable venture, according to Pilon.

Montebello's Hawkesbury plant manager also believes aluminum is worth so much it could end up paying for the recycling of less valuable items like paper or plastic.

However, Montebello has no intention of recycling its own aluminum tubes. "The people who run the recycling programs could sell it to a secondary manufacturer of aluminum who would reprocess it," Pilon said.

Aluminum has the advantage of being 100 percent recyclable, unlike other products used for packaging. "You can only recycle plastic so many times," Charlebois said.

According to Pilon, recycling aluminum tubes would require consumers to flatten them, as opposed to crushing or rolling them up. The greater the surface, the easier it will be to separate them from items made of steel.