

A Letter of Concern About a Local Issue **Level 2, Sample 1****A**

Thursday, May 24, 2001

Dear Mayor,

I am writing this letter to inform you of an important issue in my community. A few years ago, we created a plastic recycling depot. The number of people that used the depot have increased; therefore, we had a permanent plastic recycling depot. Now, years later, our town council wants to close this depot and have a hazardous waste depot. This issue is a concern both for me and for my community because we know that plastics do not decompose. As a result, the environment will become more polluted.

Every Saturday local citizens from our community visit the plastic recycle depot to drop off the plastics that should not be disposed of through the regular garbage. There has been an increase in the number of people that use the depot as many people become more aware of the effects that plastics can have on our environment. There are many points of view on this issue on whether or not the depot should be closed in favour of the hazardous waste depot. Many believe that the depot should remain open so that we can dispose of our plastics instead of putting plastics that will not decompose into our earth. The town council has proposed that the hazardous waste depot be in use once a week. On the other hand, it costs money to run these depots and the price that recycling companies pay to get the plastics from the depot is too low. It is very expensive to collect from the depot. Most of the companies that recycle plastic use clean, plastic waste from industries. The plastic that comes from homes is not clean and so everything has to be separated and cleaned. Contractors have looked at the cost to collect the plastic which could total \$15,000 per ton per year. I feel that the recycling depot should stay open due to the larger numbers of people using the depot and also because it is helping our environment. I can understand that money is a concern to the council, but our world is a concern to us. People can hold

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on to their hazardous waste until the annual hazardous waste disposal. Currently, there is no demand to have one every week, but there is a need for the plastics depot.

Several solutions have been proposed by members of our community. Some feel that we should dispose of our plastics once a month instead of every week; and therefore, save tax dollars. As well, it has been proposed that the hazardous waste depot happen once a month along with the plastic recycling depot. People have asked the council to look at their decision again and to look at the problems that will occur if the plastic depot is closed. In letters that have been sent to the local newspaper, some citizens have suggested that the council members should come out on a Saturday morning to see how many people really use the depot. I hope that you will be able to help in this matter and make sure that the plastics recycling depot remains open. Remember, the more plastics that we keep out of dump sites, the better off our environment is.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen

Bibliography

www.rco.on.ca

Teacher's Notes

Knowledge/Understanding

- The student demonstrates some understanding of the civic issue, mentioning several key components of concern to the community (e.g., the environmental problem associated with the disposal of plastic, the increasing use of the recycling depot by members of the community, the expense of operating the depot) but providing insufficient detail about these considerations.

Thinking/Inquiry

- The student demonstrates some ability to conduct critical analysis of two different perspectives, as illustrated by the following:
 - The student defends the need to keep the recycling depot open, but does not adequately evaluate the suggestion that the frequency with which the depot operates be reduced to accommodate a weekly hazardous waste depot (e.g., asserts that “People can hold on to their hazardous waste until the annual hazardous waste disposal”, but provides no evidence to support this statement).
 - Although the student acknowledges the town council’s financial concerns (e.g., notes that “it costs money to run these depots” and that “the cost to collect the plastic ... could total \$15,000 per ton per year”), his or her analysis of this issue is confusing (e.g., “the price that recycling companies pay to get the plastics from the depot is too low. It is very expensive to collect from the depot.”).
- The student uses inquiry skills with some effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - The student identifies the problem (e.g., “our town council wants to close this depot and have a hazardous waste depot”) and clarifies the issue somewhat by demonstrating the continuing need for the recycling depot (e.g., “plastics do not decompose”, “There has been an increase in the number of people that use the depot”), but does not clarify the issue more fully by discussing the reasons for council’s decision to open the hazardous waste depot.

- The student lists several possible solutions that have been proposed by the community (e.g., monthly, rather than weekly, recycling of plastics; operating the hazardous waste depot and the recycling depot at the same time), but does not evaluate these solutions or identify which, if any, he or she advocates.

Communication

- The student uses language and tone with some effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - Although some of the letter is clearly written and the vocabulary is appropriate to the topic (e.g., “hazardous waste”, “decompose”, “recycling depot”), grammatical errors and abrupt transitions reduce the letter’s overall coherence (e.g., “The number of people that used the depot have increased; therefore, we had a permanent plastic recycling depot.”; “council has proposed that the ... depot be in use once a week. On the other hand, it costs money to run these depots ...”).
 - Although the student adopts a somewhat persuasive tone (e.g., closes the letter by reiterating that “the more plastics that we keep out of dump sites, the better off our environment is”), the lack of focus in the closing paragraph detracts from the letter’s overall persuasiveness.

Application

- The student makes connections with some effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - Having discussed the expense to the municipality of recycling household plastics, the student refers to a proposal that may save money (i.e., “Some feel that we should dispose of our plastics once a month instead of every week; and therefore, save tax dollars.”). However, the student does not indicate how much money such a solution would save or whether monthly recycling is feasible at the existing depot.
 - Although the student lists some reasonable ways of keeping the recycling depot open, these are presented as solutions proposed by the community, not by the student (e.g., “Some feel that ...”, “it has been proposed that ...”, “some citizens have suggested ...”).

Comments/Next Steps

- The student’s argument on the need to maintain the recycling depot would be bolstered by the addition of statistics on the number of people using the facility and the amount of plastic being recycled.
- The student should provide background on why council decided to close the recycling depot and open a hazardous waste depot.
- The student needs to practise stating his or her thoughts in a more organized manner.

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May 29, 2001

Dear Town Councillor

I am writing this letter of concern to you because I am concerned about my community's current rate of garbage use in my township. At our current rate of garbage use, all of our garbage sites will be full within 19 years. There are already five sites in this area, but one has closed do the amount of work that needs to be done to it. I am concerned about this issue because I want our environment to stay clean and healthy.

I am writing to you because I am hoping that you can do something about this issue. The waste disposal issue has been an issue for some time now and not much has been done about it. Some of the local garbage sites do recycle, but not all of what they could. The sites do not recycle plastic bags and that is a major waste disposal item. Every store gives plastic bags and most people throw them out. Two other sites are now even charging \$1.25 per bag of garbage and that can add up for some people. My understanding of this problem is that our local garbage sites do not recycle as much material as they could. However, I understand that there are multiple perspectives on this issue, such as to leave our local sites the same as they are now. Other citizens might not be as concerned about this issue and might want to deal with whatever happens when the time comes. I believe though, that action must be taken now.

My suggestion to this problem is the recycling and composting of more material. These recyclables can be sold to many different manufactures to make various products, for instance, juice boxes can be used for paper towel and tissue production and even old telephone books can be made into egg cartons. Composting alone can reduce waste by up to 25 % and it is easier to do than recycle. Lots of little easy little wastes such as apple peelings are good composting materials. Composting is also very good for gardens and flowers and it is very easy and simple to do. Also it would not take much money to start composting. We can significantly reduce the amount of garbage we create if we recycle all that we can. I would like to please request action on this issue.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Citizen.

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Bibliography:

What happens to these recyclables?

http://www.city.██████.on.ca/gc/fag_en.shtml

May 25, 2001

Waste Management

In class discussion

May 24, 2001

Composting

<http://www.city.██████.on.ca/gc/composting-en.shtml>

May 25, 2001

Teacher’s Notes**Knowledge/Understanding**

- The student demonstrates some understanding of the civic issue (e.g., cites statistical projections for the time when the current sites will be full, and acknowledges the connection between an over-reliance on garbage dumps and the threat to a “clean and healthy” environment).

Thinking/Inquiry

- The student demonstrates some ability to conduct critical analysis, as illustrated by the following:
 - He or she includes a reference to the disadvantages of one initiative to reduce the amount of garbage sent to dumps (e.g., “Two other sites are now even charging \$1.25 per bag of garbage and that can add up for some people.”), but does not provide enough detail.
 - The analysis of the opposing perspective is limited (e.g., the claim that some people want “to leave our local sites the same as they are now” is not explained or supported by any evidence).
- The student uses inquiry skills with some effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - Some statistical data are presented to help identify and clarify the issue (e.g., “all of our garbage sites will be full within 19 years”), but the detail is limited.
 - The student includes specific information to support the argument for recycling and composting (e.g., “juice boxes can be used for paper towel and tissue production”; “Composting alone can reduce waste by up to 25 %”), but does not clarify how this solution would be implemented.

Communication

- The student uses language and tone with some effectiveness, adopting a somewhat persuasive tone (e.g., “I am writing to you because I am hoping that you can do something about this issue.”), but sometimes using vague and ineffective language (e.g., “one has closed do the amount of work that needs to be done to it”; “Other citizens ... might want to deal with whatever happens when the time comes.”).

Application

- The student makes connections with some effectiveness, in that he or she proposes a solution that is somewhat realistic and reasonable, referring to the general advantages of recycling and composting (e.g., “recyclables can be sold to many different manufactures”, “Composting is also very good ... very easy ... it would not take much money”), but does not outline its effects on the community.

Comments/Next Steps

- The student’s explanation of why the issue is important to the city approaches a level 3, but more detail about the effects on the community is needed in the discussion of both the problem and the solution.
- The student needs to practise stating his or her ideas more precisely and in greater detail.
- The student needs to develop a wider range of vocabulary in order to avoid repeating the same words (e.g., “concern”, “concerned”, “current”).