

**Senate Natural Resources hearing  
Act 148 – Universal Recycling  
April 26, 2017**

Senator Bray, Committee members:

Grow Compost has been in business for 9 years. In 2012, when Act 148 passed and the Universal Recycling Law came into effect, our business began a comprehensive feasibility study to determine our businesses' viability in this new emerging market. Using this piece of legislation as our market assumptions, we shifted our business projections and began to invest our time and resource towards meeting the goals of Act 148.

We chose to move forward and invest in our business for the following primary reasons:

- The environmental benefits of removing organics from landfilling show an overwhelming positive outcome.
  - The 2013 Waste study done by DEC show the organic composition of Vermont's waste stream to be 28%
  - The USEPA sites landfills at the third largest emitters of GHG, 50%~ methane — a gas that is 28 to 36 times more damaging than CO2.. <https://www.epa.gov/land/basic-information-about-landfill-gas> Keeping organics out of the landfill is one of the few things all Americans can do to mitigate near term impact of climate change. It's the reason USEPA is expending significant resources to advance organics waste reduction, food recovery, and composting. <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-living/inf-food-recovery-hierarchy>
- The benefits to our agricultural sector
  - Increase in food donations (41% increase in Vermont since the implementation of this law)
  - Food for animals
  - Compost production
  - Energy from anaerobic digestion
- Increase in work force development
  - Organic reclamation offers 3x the number of jobs created in the waste industry. Grow Compost shows evidence of this trend.

Over the past 5 years, Grow Compost has invested over a half a million dollars to expand our business to meet the needs of the Universal Recycling Law with the help of the Vermont Economic Development Agency (VEDA), the Vermont Agricultural Corporation (VACC), the Flexible Capital Fund and the Vermont Community Loan Fund (VCLF). We have spent capital on equipment (we now have 5 trucks hauling organic material from businesses, resorts, schools and residents); on employees (our workforce has gone from 3 employees in 2009 to 12 employees presently); on education (to help businesses and schools understand the importance of complying with this law)

In addition, we partner with **6 farmers** whose chickens feed depends upon on the food we deliver; **3 composters** who use food scraps as feedstock to make organic soils and **5 anaerobic digesters** where this material is used to create energy. This includes the digester at **Vermont Technical College** - an investment made that depends upon these local food scraps; and 4 on-farm digesters - who supplement their income by utilizing on-farm digesters to create energy.

We also have a customer base of over 25 Vermont organic farmers who create healthy local food for Vermonters. These farmers require this soil amendment to keep their organic standards and to continue to build their soils so that they can produce organic crops.

We have recently begun the process of building a new compost facility in North Hartland where we will duplicate the work being done in Moretown and keep food scraps local in the Connecticut River Valley. This facility will increase the capacity in the state, create 2-4 new Grow Compost jobs, offer a place for haulers to bring organic material for processing, and create compost for organic farmers in this region.

Grow Compost is fully prepared for the next phase of this law that goes into effect in only two months from now - July 1, 2017. Our organic hauling customers include over 126 resorts, businesses, institutions and schools. Many of these existing businesses are large and are already required by law to divert their organic waste; however, it is the smaller businesses (required to begin organic diversion this July 1) that make up the majority of the organic waste in this state. We have a list of over 100 of these small businesses who are prepared to start their organic diversion programs beginning in July. Our hauling efficiencies depend upon these businesses to create route density.

The diversion of this material from our single remaining landfill, the capture of these resources for our agricultural system and energy grid and the continued growing awareness of waste by Vermonters is at the heart of this law. The benefits of the Universal Recycling Law are to our environment, the economy and the food cycle in Vermont.

For the benefit of all Vermonters, please continue to uphold the complete timeline of this law.

Respectfully Submitted,

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