

Heritage Wilmot *Awards*

ENVIRONMENTAL

Think Plastics, New Hamburg

Innovative business recycles bale wrap to produce plastic lumber

"Our mission is to produce a quality product while helping to alleviate a growing environmental problem."

That's the mandate of a New Hamburg company which was this year's recipient of Heritage Wilmot's Environmental Award.

Think Plastics Inc., located on Victoria Street South, collects scrap white agricultural bale wrap and greenhouse film, recycles them, and manufactures a solid plastic lumber called Baleboard. So far the company has diverted 400-tons of scrap plastic from landfill sites and burn barrels across the province.

"In 2000 alone, more than 3-million pounds of white plastic bale wrap was sold in Ontario," says Think Plastics' President Chuck Sparks. "That quantity has grown steadily every year and there has never been a long-term recycling option available to farmers. Until now."

The white "marshmallows" litter the countryside. Bale wrap is used to protect hay from the elements. It also ferments the hay, providing a more nutritious feed for livestock.

Think Plastics has established 31 collection sites

within a 200-mile radius of its New Hamburg plant, including the Crosshill Transfer Station. All sites have waived tipping fees for farmers.

"There has never been a long-term recycling option available to farmers."

Chuck Sparks
Think Plastics president

Once the sites collect 10,000 pounds, Think Plastics picks up the material with a modified garbage truck. Since the Crosshill Transfer Station began accepting bale wrap in July 2006, local farmers have dropped off more than 8-tons of scrap plastic.

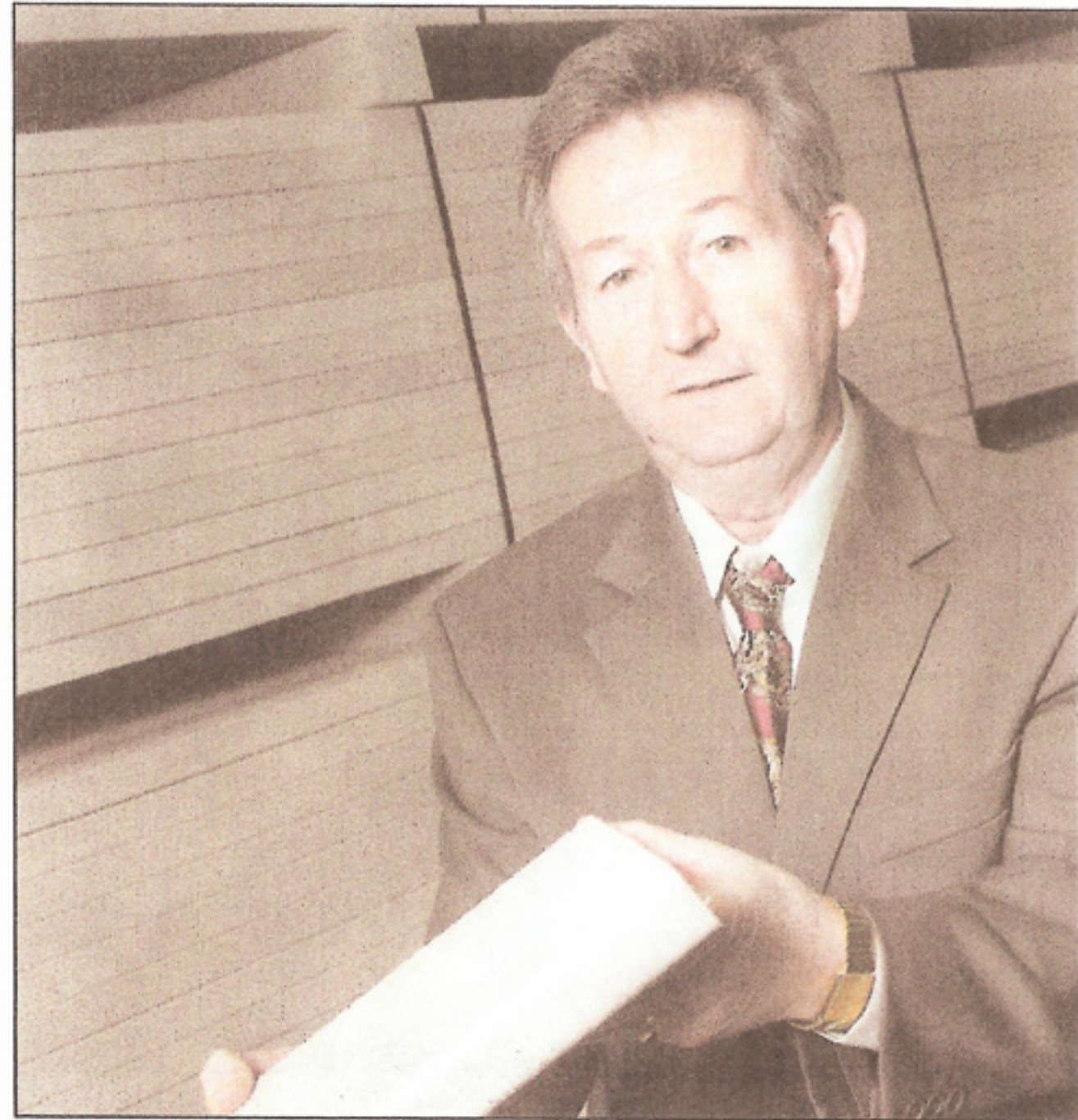
The scrap is returned to the New Hamburg facility, chopped into small pieces, and melted in an extrusion process to produce Baleboard. Baleboard is unique in that it is solid 100% polyethylene. It is available in five sizes. The boards can be used in any non-structural application where current wood products and composites are used today, including outdoor furniture

skids, docks, bleachers, flower boxes, fences, horse stalls and pig barns. Herner Wood Products in Baden is one of 13 distributors carrying the product.

Sparks says Baleboard is becoming popular in the agricultural, commercial and residential sectors because of its attractive look, its strength and its durability. "It's exciting to watch the market grow," he says. "The fact that Baleboard is made from garbage is remarkable. The fact that it is being used to replace wood, thereby saving trees, is further icing on the cake."

Being named this year's recipient of the Heritage Committee's Environmental Award came as a complete surprise. Sparks says, "From day one, the people of Wilmot Township have been extremely supportive of our recycling and manufacturing operation. This award is an honour – not only for me, but for the entire staff of Think Plastics, and for every member of the local farming community that is committed to cleaning up the environment."

For more information about Think Plastics Inc., visit www.thinkplastics.ca or www.baleboard.ca.



Think Plastics president Chuck Sparks displays one of the plastic boards his company manufactures.

TIM MURPHY, INDEPENDENT STAFF