

SUPERIOR WASTE & RECYCLING SOLUTIONS

SUTERA SEMI-INGROUND WASTE AND RECYCLE CONTAINERS ARE DISRUPTING DISPOSAL COLLECTION ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

Waterloo Region is known as a place that embraces innovation. So when a waste disposal technology relatively new to North America began to catch on here, Bernie Melloul was not surprised. But he was also not entirely impressed.

The innovation is called “semi-inground waste containers” – a method of collecting waste that has been common in Europe for three decades. Semi-inground waste containers are waste containers set into the ground, replacing above-ground, metal waste bins. There are plenty of advantages to the idea, including rodent control, optimal use of space, odor and leeching control, aesthetic improvement, fire containment, security against vandals or even terrorists, and more.

And the idea was catching on – especially in Waterloo Region. Melloul’s well-known Waterloo company, Melloul-Blamey Construction, was doing an increasing number of builds where semi-inground waste containers were specified.

The problem was, while the products then available brought some of the solutions, when compared to above-ground waste bins, Melloul concluded they simply weren’t perfect.

He wanted perfect. So Melloul founded Sutera, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Melloul-Blamey, to develop and build the perfect semi-inground waste container.

Today, Melloul – and Sutera’s Vice President Steven Cseresnyesi, and Director of Business Development Bill Higgins – believe Sutera has accomplished just that. And they are convinced that they are not only providing the best semi-inground waste containers, they are also collaborating with stakeholders

to develop other innovative solutions – products ranging from normal-sized street-side waste containers that sit atop a much larger, in-ground well, to a uniquely-designed dog waste collection container that solves a problem almost no one knew existed.

In the beginning was... concrete

But back to the beginning. Bernie Melloul knew that semi-inground waste containers solve a lot of problems. They cut down on the space needed for pick-up by front-end loading trucks (the waste container is lifted from the in-ground well by a crane-equipped truck, which increases accessibility and decreases the need for space, often increasing parking lot capacity). They eliminate problems with insects and with rodents. They even save money on construction and taxes, because in many municipalities, above-ground bins have to be housed. Cseresnyesi points out that in some situations, the entire cost of purchase and installation can largely be offset by the savings on unneeded bin enclosure construction and taxes.

However, the available semi-inground waste systems were all constructed of plastic, and that meant trouble. The units were susceptible to fire, usually caused by vandalism. They also were easily damaged by frost or by impact with vehicles. And they are vulnerable to hydrostatic pressure – they are so light that in-ground water pressure can lift them out of the ground.

Melloul knew “we don’t build buildings out of plastic for a good reason.” So the development and engineering teams at Melloul-Blamey were tasked to “build a better mousetrap.”

They did. Sutera’s 6-yard, semi-inground waste containers are made of con-



Sutera’s Vice President Steven Cseresnyesi, Brad Knowles Design and Development, Director of Business Development Bill Higgins and Sutera’s President and founder Bernie Melloul



A completely in-ground solution waste container increase bins capacity saving municipality resources

crete. They're a simple, man-hole style design, which can be replicated by any concrete company – which Cseresnyesi and Higgins point out cuts down on transportation costs, and also creates employment in the local area where the installation is happening.

So Sutera's system has all the advantages of previous semi-inground waste containers, while eliminating any fire hazard and hydrostatic displacement, and being much more durable.

And, surprisingly, Sutera units can easily be moved to another location, while plastic units – which have concrete footings – have to be destroyed if the site is no longer suitable.

Enthusiastic leadership

Higgins and Cseresnyesi are huge fans of their product. Higgins has been with Sutera for two years; Cseresnyesi came to the company just a few weeks ago, bringing with him 10-plus years of experience with a major company in the waste management field.

They see their job as primarily educational. There is no doubt in their minds that when architects, contractors and construction companies see the advantages of the Sutera system, they will come knocking.

In fact, that's already happening, says Higgins. Sutera, only founded in 2013, with a relatively slow start-up that actually began in the South Carolina market, now sees many repeat clients, as the specs for new projects include the Sutera semi-inground waste system. "People quickly see the advantages and recognize the benefits of a superior product," says Cseresnyesi.

The name "Sutera", by the way, was suggested by Melloul's 11-year-old grandson Luke. "Sutera" is close to the French "sous terre" which means "underground". In Italian it means "inground", and a Spanish phrase that translates, "your earth."

Innovation

Cseresnyesi notes that, while "innovation" may not be the first word that comes to mind when you think "waste disposal", it is, in fact, a crucial element of any waste and recycle disposal endeavor. These are not the old days of "out of sight, out of mind," he says. Waste management, recycling, and all things green are now top of mind – and rightly so.

So innovation is key. So too, he says, is collaboration, with customers, with suppliers, and with the entire waste disposal industry.

That kind of attitude has led to some intriguing recent developments at Sutera.

Higgins tells a story of a collaboration that has led to innovation – all sparked by a problem few people know exists. It's a tale of doggie poo.

Municipal parks and conservation areas are plagued by a specific, unique problem: dog owners who do follow "poop and scoop" protocols, collect the waste, bag it, and then place it in a waste container – often, a recycling container. And therein lies the problem – the minute dog waste is in recycling, nothing can in fact be recycled – it's all off to the landfill. Many municipalities

are removing recycling programs altogether from their parklands, because of this frankly enormous problem.

Higgins learned of this from a parks official, and Sutera went to work. They have adapted their in-ground well system, adding a dog waste disposal unit to the top, this creating a separate unit for this troublesome waste product.

Going high tech with rewards

Cseresnyesi adds that this innovation gets even better – "we've developed an app" so the disposal units will have a QR codes. Dog owners who use it can scan the code with their smart phones, and can then get a discount at a participating pet store, as a reward for using the system. The pet stores will pay an advertising fee to the municipality – which will help pay for the installations. "Win, win, win!" says Cseresnyesi.

This is just one of the innovations in development at Sutera. A similar product will combine an attractive, on-street garbage can with a fully in-ground well, to geometrically increase capacity, solving the twin problems of constant collection and often-overflowing garbage cans.

The company is also developing even more secure metal tops for the semi-inground waste containers – initially inspired because private owners discovered many neighbours were filling their containers, but which will also serve purposes ranging from preventing raids by bears in parks with such beasts, to eliminating vandalism and terrorism, to allowing effective tracking of individual use of a community unit.

There's more to come. Also under development is a semi-inground container specifically designed for the restaurant industry – a unit that would include equipment that reduces the food waste to a slurry, which is vacuumed from the well, and delivered to companies that recycle slurry. It's another multiple win, says Cseresnyesi: this solution deals with all the issues typical of above-ground food waste containment (rodents, odor, leakage, and general mess), and also diverts the waste from landfill.

To make this work, he said, "We look at existing scenarios from a different perspective – we examine what's best for the consumer and the environment itself, while working in conjunction with various traditional and non-traditional hauling options."

With its environment that welcomes innovation and collaboration, Waterloo was the right place to launch the Sutera solutions, which Higgins calls "a home-grown Waterloo Region product," but for Bernie Melloul and his team, the continent is now the limit, with the company active both in Canada and the United States.

And in Cseresnyesi's phrase, Sutera is no longer "a one-trick pony", no matter how good that trick may still be. The Sutera team are firmly convinced that when it comes to all of the challenges of waste containment, they are building an entire suite of "better mousetraps". Except, of course, that with their particular products, mice can't actually get in.



SUTERA in-ground waste containment

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