

Repairing vs. Tossing: Why Repairing Often Makes More Sense

We live in a world of **fast fashion, disposable electronics, and single-use everything**. Too often, when something breaks or loses its gloss, we toss it and treat replacement as inevitable. But what if—just what if—we paused long enough to ask: **Can it be repaired?**

Repairing isn't just nostalgia or frugality. It's climate action. It's community building. It's resisting a throw-away culture. And for many of us in Ontario, it's a choice that's increasingly supported by local networks and policies.

In Barrie, as in many Ontario municipalities, the City is promoting a circular economy—where repairing, reusing, refurbishing, and sharing are just as valued as recycling. [City of Barrie-Circular Economy](#) As landfill capacity becomes a real constraint (Barrie's Sandy Hollow landfill is expected to reach full capacity in coming decades) [Sandy_Hollow_landfill](#), every item we keep in use is one less item competing for space.

Let's explore **why repairing matters, how to repair more, barriers to repair in Ontario, and practical tips you can use today.**

Why Repairing Beats Tossing

1. Environmental and carbon savings

Every product has a carbon footprint before it lands in your home: mining, manufacturing, transport, packaging. When we toss it prematurely, all of that embodied energy—and emissions—is wasted. Repair stretches the useful life of what already exists.

2. Save money

Often, repairing costs less than replacing (especially when you factor in time, waste, and hidden costs). Even small fixes (a zipper, a hinge, a cracked screen) can postpone or avoid full replacement.

3. Build skills and agency

Repairing empowers us. Every time we fix something, we learn, gain confidence, and share knowledge. It counters the feeling that we're helpless in a world of complex devices.

- Email us at info@livinggreeninfo to learn how to share skills and become a repairer at the Repair Cafe!

4. Strengthen local economy and communities

Instead of sending money to big-box chains, repair keeps economic value local—supporting independent repair shops, makers, and community initiatives.

5. Resist planned obsolescence & promote consumer rights

Many manufacturers design for limited lifespans, discourage repairs via software locks, or

restrict access to parts and repair manuals. The **Right to Repair** movement is fighting those barriers. [The Right To Repair & Why We Need It](#)

In Canada, the federal government has launched a **public consultation** on a potential national right-to-repair or repairability policy. [Canada.ca](#) In Ontario, Bill 187 has been introduced to extend “right to repair” provisions for electronics, household appliances, vehicles, and farm equipment. [McMillan LLP](#)

So, when you repair instead of toss, you're also making a vote—for a world where reuse and durability are honoured.

Common Barriers to Repair (and How to Overcome Them)

Barrier	Why It Happens	What You Can Do
Parts or manuals unavailable	Manufacturers may withhold spare parts or technical documentation.	Advocate for Right to Repair; seek aftermarket parts; search online forums (iFixit, repair communities)
High labour or “repair vs replace” ratio	Sometimes repair costs approach or exceed replacement, especially for small, cheap items.	Use cost thresholds (e.g. if repair \leq 30% of replacement), learn basic repairs yourself, shop local repair shops
Complexity of modern devices/software locks	Modern devices often include software locks, proprietary parts, or "sealed" designs.	Use open-source tools, support brands with repair-friendly policies, push for legislation
Fear, lack of confidence, or lack of knowledge	Many feel intimidated to open appliances or devices.	Start with easy repairs (replace buttons, screws, belts), attend repair cafés or workshops
Disposal convenience	It's often easier to buy new than to find a repair shop.	Create a repair habit, bookmark local resources, support repair networks

Tips & Ideas: Repair More, Toss Less

Here are practical strategies you (or your readers) can adopt right now:

1. Dare to diagnose

When something breaks, don't immediately trash it. Try to identify what's wrong—a loose wire, a snapped hinge, worn seal, frayed cord. A Google search like “broken blender switch repair” often yields helpful tutorials or videos.

2. Start with small fixes

- Reinforce seams, patch minor holes, replace missing buttons
- Tighten screws, oil hinges
- Replace a broken knob or switch
- Swap out belts, fuses, filters, gaskets

These are often cheap, straightforward, and high-impact.

3. Use repair apps and resources

- [iFixit](#): great database of teardown guides and repair manuals
YouTube tutorials: step-by-step video help
Local Facebook groups or Reddit subforums for specific devices
- Online marketplaces for spare parts
- Take your item to the [Repair Cafe!](#) at the Library and **TAG US** on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook!](#)

4. Leverage local repair shops and makerspaces

Seek out local repair businesses—electronics, small appliances, shoes, furniture. Also check for makerspaces or community workshops where you can use tools and get help.

In Barrie and Ontario, municipalities promoting reuse and repair are gaining momentum through the circular economy plans. [See our list of local repairers](#)

5. Attend or host repair cafés / “mend & friend” events

During **Waste Reduction Week**, Barrie hosts a variety of events in October around repair, like “Learn to Mend by Hand” workshops at the library. [Waste Reduction Week](#), These are fantastic ways to share skills and create community. You might volunteer or start a local repair gathering.

6. Use a “repair fund” or “repair box”

Set aside a small budget or box for spare parts, screws, glues, cables, tools. Having those basic items on hand removes friction.

7. Document your repairs

Keep a photo log or simple journal: what broke, how you fixed it, which parts you used. Over time you'll build know-how—and maybe mentor others.

8. Know when to let go—responsibly

If something truly can't be fixed, ensure you recycle or reuse parts. Join Living Green and our partners for our **Earth Day E-waste disposal event!**

Spotlight: Repair & Circular Economy in Barrie & Ontario

- Barrie's "**Rethink Waste**" program emphasizes shifting from linear waste systems to a circular model—encouraging repair, reuse, and sharing. [City of Barrie](#)
- The City's **Circular Economy** strategy explicitly names "repair, upgrade, reuse initiatives" as a key pillar. [City of Barrie](#)
- Barrie celebrates **Circular Economy Month** (October) and organizes events like "Learn How to Mend by Hand" in libraries. [Barrie 360](#)
- Ontario's **Strategy for a Waste-Free Ontario** highlights resource recovery, reuse, and reintegration into the economy. [Ontario](#)
- At the federal level, the Government of Canada is consulting on right-to-repair policies for electronics, aiming to give consumers more access to repair options. [Canada.ca](#)

A Call to Action

Let's repair a culture of repair.

1. **This week**, pick one broken or declining item you've been tempted to toss. Try to diagnose and repair it.
2. **Connect with local repair resources**—find a shop, a makerspace, a library workshop, or a repair café in Barrie or your area.
3. **Share your story**—post before/after photos, encourage a friend to join, or host a small repair gathering.
4. **Support repair-friendly policies**—when Ontario or federal governments ask for input (e.g. on right to repair), submit feedback saying you want more access to parts, tools, and manuals.

5. **Teach or mentor**—once you've tried some repairs, pass along what you learn to someone else.

Every time we choose to fix rather than discard, we send a signal: **durable, repairable, sustainable things matter**. As more of us make that choice, we shift markets, policies, and culture.

Repairing isn't just an individual act—it's a hopeful act. Let's keep things working, empower our communities, and push back against the throwaway temptation—one hinge, one screw, one circuit at a time.