



# York Region Environmental Alliance

*raising awareness of environmental issues*

## 2010 Annual Report



# YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

## LIVING CONSCIOUSLY

Staying conscious of the interconnection between all things can help us think of our choices in terms of their impact on the environment and our natural resources. We need to ask ourselves these questions: Where is my food grown? Is it grown locally, using sustainable agriculture? Is it organic? What materials are my clothes made of? Were these clothes made by people receiving fair wages? Is the car I drive burning fossil fuels efficiently? Am I carpooling whenever possible or using the bus or a bike? Have I taken measures to retrofit my home so it is more energy efficient? What can I do to lead a more sustainable lifestyle? **YREA explored these and many more questions during 2010.**

## WHO WE ARE

The York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA) is a not-for-profit, registered charitable organization #84559 0553 RR0001. We are dedicated to educating and increasing the public's understanding of the environment and its importance by offering seminars, conferences and meetings and by collecting and disseminating information on related issues.

Through our mandate we strive to:

- Identify and raise awareness of environmental concerns which impact York Region and beyond
- Inspire and initiate ecologically sound and sustainable solutions to common community concerns that protect and improve the quality of the environment of York Region
- Promote healthy and environmentally sustainable personal lifestyle choices
- Effectively influence public policy and community behavioural changes

The York Region Environmental Alliance is governed by a volunteer board of directors and is administered by three part-time staff.

## 2010 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jeffery Laidlaw, Chairperson

James Carver, Treasurer

Sharon Bradley, Secretary

Sylvia Bowman

Rosemary Park

Susan Sigrist

Lynda Sutherland

## STAFF

Gloria Marsh, Executive Director

Fiona Wood, Communications and  
Community Outreach Coordinator

Anita Komorowski, IT, Webmaster



# 2010 YEAR IN REVIEW

## PROGRAMS

### ORGANIZE TO WIN

January 2010 saw YREA partner with the Town of Aurora and the Aurora Environmental Advisory Committee to present *Organize to Win*, a half-day workshop facilitated by Liz Benneian, President of Oakville Green. Through this excellent seminar, Liz showed participants how to organize, develop strategies, understand political and bureaucratic systems, become effective advocates, and how to keep their organizations strong. A broad cross section of groups were represented from a number of regions in the GTA.

### SHOP LIKE THE PLANET'S WATCHING

**SHOP**  
**LIKE THE PLANET'S WATCHING**

An interactive workshop on how to "green" your shopping habits and become an eco-friendly shopper

Learn how you can do your part to help address:

- ✦ Climate Change
- ✦ Waste Reduction
- ✦ Energy Conservation
- ✦ Sustainability

Thursday, October 28, 7pm  
Dufferin Clark Library 1441 Clark Ave West, Vaughan  
Call 905-653-7323 to register

Presented by York Region Environmental Alliance

**YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE**  
**York Region**

Within the third year of our Ontario Trillium Foundation capacity building grant, we formed incredibly supportive collaborations with York Region municipalities. Along with a TD Friends of the Environment grant and municipal funding, YREA launched **SHOP LIKE THE PLANET'S WATCHING** during Earth Week. This educational campaign shows members of our communities how they can personally do their part to address

- SUSTAINABILITY
- CLIMATE CHANGE
- GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS
- WASTE REDUCTION
- ENERGY CONSERVATION

by greening their shopping habits. Through our seminars and publication, we plan on reaching 30,000 people in this multi-year project.

YREA has a group of dedicated, trained volunteers who have made **SHOP** presentations at schools, community centres and libraries. YREA staff have also done a number of lunch and learn presentations for municipal workers.

Our travelling **SHOP** exhibit reached employees at their workplaces and residents at numerous community events. All these activities will continue into 2011 and 2012.

## PARTNERSHIPS

### COMMUNICATIONS – We talk to each other

As part of YREA's mandate, we continue to build partnerships, collaborations and become members of like-minded groups while at the same time giving them a voice through our various communication portals which include our quarterly GREENWORKS newsletter and periodic e-bulletins; on our website through the environmental directory, current events, calendar, news/blog and partnership pages.

### SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SUDA) <http://www.suda.ca>

YREA is eagerly collaborating with SUDA to advocate for truly sustainable development. The first in a series of articles on sustainable development appeared in Greenworks this winter and two YREA principals have joined SUDA's board.

### TRANSITION YORK REGION (TYR) <http://transitionyorkregion.ning.com/>

Citizens of York Region and beyond are working together to ease the transition from the era of cheap oil to a post-carbon world. In partnership with TYR, YREA co-hosted a Planning for Action day, sponsored a TYR brochure and display and is active in one of the TYR groups – *reduce gas lawn equipment use* with people powered products. Mow-a-thon coming soon!

### SEEDS FOR CHANGE

Funding has been secured for a Seeds for Change school and community pilot project garden. Seeds for Change project team activities are well underway with early spring 2011 garden installations planned and partnerships flourishing with plans for fire hall gardens.

### GREEN CONNECTIONS <http://www.green-connections.com/>

YREA is a member of Green Connections, a group which meets monthly to explore and share environmentally-friendly business ideas, practices and products with a goal to encourage all businesses to Go Green.

### ONTARIO NATURE (ON) <http://www.ontarionature.org/>

YREA has become a member of Ontario Nature In support of the great work this organization undertakes. Our Director, Sylvia Bowman, reports on ON issues to the board and in our GREENWORKS newsletter, generating lively discussions on our blog.

### DON WATERSHED REGENERATION COUNCIL

Two YREA members regularly attend Don Council meetings as part of the '905 crew'.



# CONTINUING EDUCATION

GREENWORKS newsletters are emailed quarterly to over 1400 subscribers and posted on our website for public access [www.yrea.org](http://www.yrea.org)



## GREENWORKS

Spring 2010 Volume 4, Issue 2



### MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PEAK OIL & THE LOCAVORE MOVEMENT

If you believe in the concept of peak oil (and gas) you understand that supplies of these non-renewable natural resources are about to diminish. Towns around the world are preparing for a time when these resources will no longer be available to us in boundless quantities. Quoting from the U.S. Department of Energy commissioned study known as The Hirsch Report 'as peaking is approached, liquid fuel prices and price volatility will increase dramatically, and without timely mitigation, the economic, social, and political costs will be unprecedented. Viable mitigation options exist on both the supply and demand sides, but to have substantial impact, they must be initiated more than a decade in advance of peaking.'

Transitions Towns, as they are known, are doing just that. In readiness, they are developing strategies and acquiring the tools to mitigate climate change and their reliance on oil, gas and other non-renewable resources. Realizing they must learn to live with less energy, community-based schemes include limiting car travel by cycling, walking, taking public transit; shopping locally and supporting local, sustainable agriculture.

With over 275 Transition Towns worldwide facing the reality of diminishing energy sources head on, the recent paper 'Will buying food locally save the planet?' by Pierre Desrochers, refuting the 100 mile diet, takes the narrowest of perspectives by not even factoring in energy depletion and peak oil as he lauds distance transport. Desrochers contends that the most energy-intensive segments of agriculture are related to the production chain - (petrochemical) fertilizers and pesticides, irrigation, powering of machinery, etc.

Flashback to Cuba, 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. Fuel, fertilizers and pesticides dried up overnight. In dealing with the initial hardships, Cubans realized that they needed to drastically reduce demands on energy from transportation, refrigeration and storage by relocating agricultural production closer to cities. They replaced monocultural production with intercropping, often integrating crops, livestock and even aquaculture and plowing fields with animals rather than machinery. Through their highly skilled agronomists, they developed natural and biological pest controls, resulting in a dramatic increase in organic and sustainable farming.

Enter Local Food Plus (LFP), a non-profit organization based in Toronto that nurtures in regional food economies by certifying farmers and processors for local, sustainable food production. Those certified, reduce or eliminate pesticide use, treat their animals well, conserve soil and water, protect wildlife habitat, provide safe and fair working conditions, reduce energy use, and sell locally wherever possible.

So to answer Pierre Desrochers question 'Will buying food locally save the planet?' my reply is yes. If local food is produced sustainably it will have less of a petrochemical dependency and will withstand peak oil challenges. Cuba, LFP and the principles of Transition Towns are all examples of what can be done to live and farm sustainably. As we weep for Markham and a lost foodbelt, let us seize other opportunities while we prepare for the future. Sources and further reading:  
<http://transitiontowns.org/Peterborough-ON-Canada/Peterborough-ON-Canada>  
<http://forum.a.uik.edu/Archives/Summer2001/cuba.pdf>  
<http://localfoodplus.ca/>

Sustainably yours,  
*Gloria Marsh*  
Gloria Marsh

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## GREENWORKS

Fall 2010 Volume 4, Issue 3



### MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ELECTION RUMINATIONS - QUESTIONS TO ALL CANDIDATES

Around election time, we tend to think about all the problems we face and ruminate on issues that bother us. I, for one, have become truly fed up with the antiquated, inefficient methods being employed to deal with such things as our waste and to provide us with energy. Some people got in a snit about Ontario buying wind turbines by Samsung of Korea. But have we developed a green technology policy and invested billions of dollars in it? <http://www.tem.furfilee/2527/Green-Technology-in-Korea.pdf>. Just like the big three auto makers, when we lag behind, we hamper our economic resilience. The status quo of urban sprawl at the expense of the environment is another problem. Debbie Schaefer's article in our last newsletter on a clean air bylaw is also worth a question, as is Jeff Laidlaw's article in this issue on page 3 making a case for collective age replacement of trees. Now wouldn't it be a near perfect world if every candidate answered 'YES' to the questions below, and then walked the talk?

**CLEANER AIR**  
With the prospect of a 34% efficiency gas-fired peaker plant to be built in York Region while the air quality remains consistently poorer than industrial centres such as Hamilton and Oshawa, if elected to council would you endorse a clean air bylaw which would protect the health and safety of your constituents from air pollution by monitoring and putting in place measures to reduce toxic air emissions?

**TREES - COLLECTIVE AGE REPLACEMENT**  
In order to meet our tree cover targets in York Region, and realizing the vital role that trees play in mitigating the effects of climate change, if elected to council would you endorse a collective age replacement tree planting strategy whereby the age of trees removed for any purpose would be replaced by the same cumulative age? As an example, 10, 5-year old saplings would replace a 50-year old tree.

**INVESTING IN GREEN TECHNOLOGY**  
In light of the inefficiency of many of the technologies that are currently in place, such as large scale composting and gas-fired peaker plants, if elected to council would you endorse municipal and regional investment in up to date green technology, green research and local green jobs?

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**  
Urban sprawl in the form of single-family dwellings and automobile focused suburban design continues to be the predominant mode of development. If elected to council, would you endorse and support a more compact built form for all new communities where development is planned which would include integrating smaller, affordable units into the housing mix that would appeal to a broader demographic and which would encompass application of a checklist of sustainability features, among them:  
• Close proximity to public transit  
• LEED certification  
• Geothermal heating and cooling  
• Tankless or solar water heater  
• Triple pane argon filled windows  
• Energy Star appliances  
• 3+ high efficiency flush toilets  
• LED lighting  
• Rain water harvest or grey water capture and recycling  
• Mixed uses, including shopping, amenities and employment  
• One foot of top soil replaced on property  
• Permeable paving

Our grandchildren are depending on us,  
*Gloria Marsh*

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## GREENWORKS

Spring 2010 Volume 4, Issue 1



### Message from the Executive Director WHERE WE'VE COME FROM (RECENTLY), WHERE WE ARE GOING

The second year of YREA's capacity-building project funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation has been a busy one. Our increased civic engagement has forged alliances beyond the borders of York Region.

We thank the Town of Aurora and the Aurora EAC who partnered with YREA to present a most useful seminar by Liz Bennelan of Oakville Green. Sharing of experiences and information on the dos and don'ts of dealing with policy and responding effectively to issues was a highlight of Liz's talk. Excellent concerns go beyond our boundaries - air pollution, peaker plants, the Oak Ridges Moraine, the Greenbelt. The exchange of knowledge and ideas was mutually beneficial to individuals and groups involved in the environmental sector. We anticipate future collaborations with folks in Halton.

Pat Prevost, a YREA volunteer attended a Good Green Jobs for All conference and has posted a report on YREA's blog <http://yrea.org/blog/?p=green-jobs>. If any of our readers are interested in participating in a working group on this topic, please let Fiona Wood know [Fiona@yrea.org](mailto:Fiona@yrea.org). A link to a recent conference gives an inkling of topics addressed <http://goodjobsforall.ca/?p=973#more-973>. Growing a local green economy would mean multi-stakeholder partnerships, perhaps with York Small Business Enterprise Centre and Green Connections (see Green Connections article in this issue).

The York Region Environmental Alliance has joined the TRCA's Don Watershed Regeneration Council for a two-year term. We look forward to making a meaningful contribution through the lenses of YREA's unique perspective.

A working group on waste that evolved from our Planning for Action (PFA) meetings focused on how we could support municipal and regional waste reduction initiatives without replicating their efforts. SHOP LIKE THE PLANET'S WATCHING was born and has expanded exponentially to become a major campaign geared to showing the public how to green their shopping habits. In so doing, climate change, energy conservation and sustainability are being addressed.

We are extremely grateful to the municipalities who are supporting SHOP. Our launch date to the general public is on April 20th at the Aurora Library followed by workshops in Whitby and Scarsville on April 29th and Newmarket on May 26th. Check our website for workshop details, links to registration, dates and locations and come and learn how to SHOP LIKE THE PLANET'S WATCHING at [www.yrea.org](http://www.yrea.org).

Sincerely,  
*Gloria Marsh*  
Gloria Marsh

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## GREENWORKS

Winter 2010 Volume 4, Issue 4



### MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER...

We might start at a given point that ultimately leads us in a direction not even anticipated. This happens in life decisions, in problem solving and as we work on solutions to our everyday needs.

When YREA researched its SHOP LIKE THE PLANET'S WATCHING campaign, it spurred many questions about the sustainability of textiles made from cotton, polyester, wool and bamboo. I have some items of clothing made from hemp and organic cotton, but still produced and transported from China, more than 12,000 kms away.

A natural progression for me when thinking about how we could make clothing locally in the context of peak oil, climate change and local economic stimulation was to consider the possibility of industrial hemp production in York Region. Chris Olivier of Ontario Energy Matrix is already working on a pilot project near London Ontario to use hemp fibre technology as a sustainable, local, carbon neutral building material. Purity Hemp in Peterborough grows hemp for seed, oil and feed for horses.

The myriad uses for hemp include food - seeds, oil, flour; toiletries - soap, shampoo, lotion; textiles - clothing, towels, bedding, canvas; household products - carpet, detergent, paint, toys; industrial products - rope, paper, concrete, insulation, fuel, car parts.

There are some very exciting economic possibilities with huge benefits to York Region in establishing hemp growing and manufacturing here. It will take many partners and some time to make it happen, but discussions have already begun and action will be taken in the coming year to get closer to making this vision a reality. Anyone interested can contact me [gloria@yrea.org](mailto:gloria@yrea.org).

SHOP like the planet's watching also addresses the issues of garbage. By popular demand, we again submit waste-free seasonal shopping list ideas.

**STUFFLESS GIFTS**

- Vouchers for services - such as lessons for dance, rock climbing, cooking, scuba diving, therapeutic massage, chiropractic, acupuncture, hair styling, auto tune up; weekend getaways;
- Restaurants;
- Consumables - such as grocery vouchers; Ontario wine, cheese & other goodies; handmade soap & candles; phone cards;
- Tickets - to the zoo, plays, concerts, art galleries, museums, movies, playing paintball or sporting events.
- Homemade tickets for swimming, skating, sleepovers, staying up past bedtime.
- Save a tree at Ontario Nature.
- Adopt an animal at the zoo, or through WWF.
- Donate to a worthy organization such as YREA on behalf of recipient - <http://www.yrea.org/>.

There will be much less garbage at the curb eventually and you will be supporting our Ontario economy.

Best Wishes from all of us at YREA,  
*Gloria Marsh*  
Gloria Marsh

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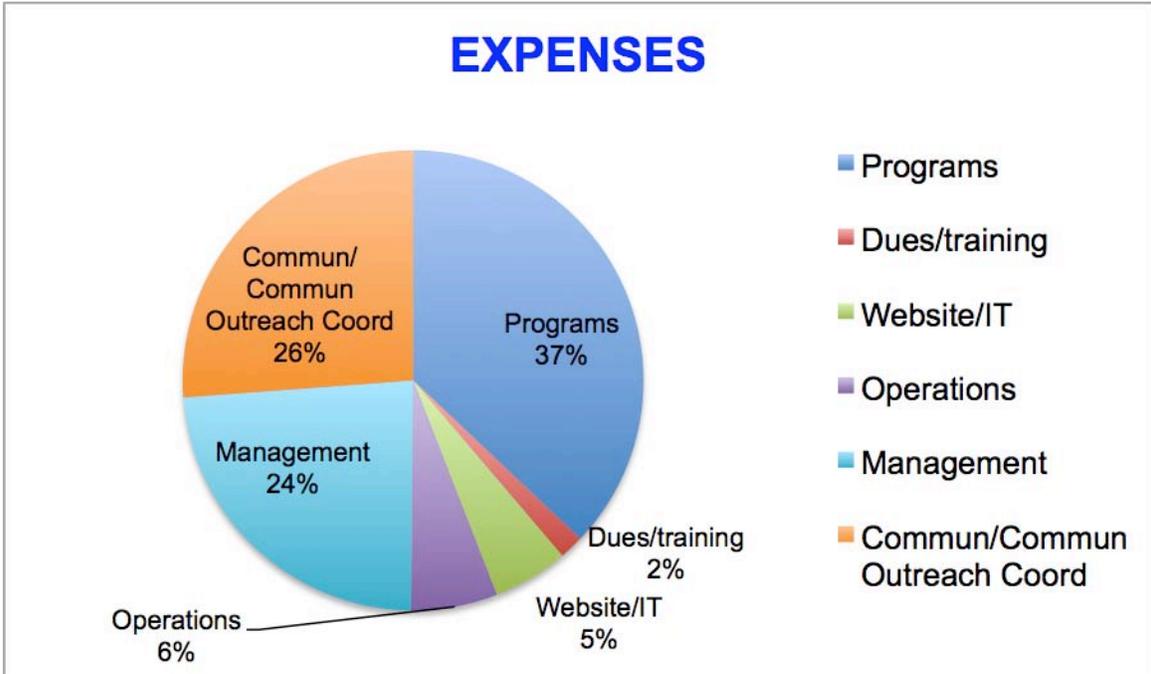
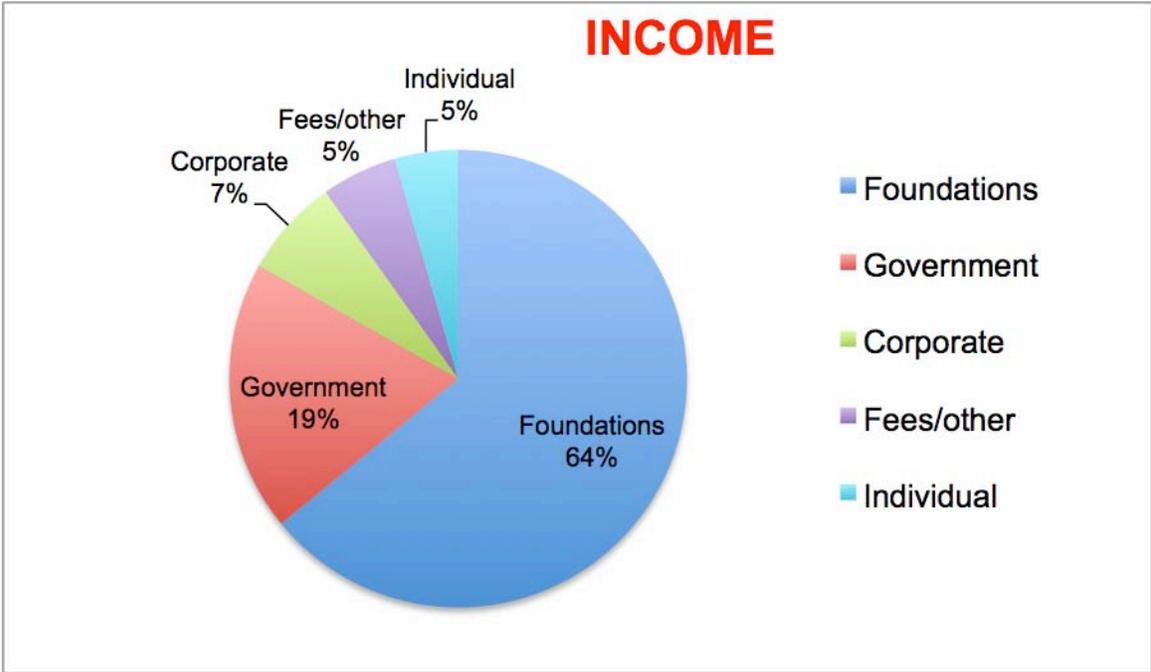
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2010 YEAR END



Income was secured from more diverse sources than in previous years. A large portion of our expenses shifted from management to program development and delivery.

## SINCERE THANKS TO ALL OUR 2010 FUNDERS

THE ONTARIO  
TRILLIUM  
FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION  
TRILLIUM  
DE L'ONTARIO

We are extremely grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation who supported us with a three-year capacity building grant. This grant enabled YREA to flourish - by allowing us to increase our activities and

presence in communities; forge partnerships, thereby taking advantage of new funding sources and putting in place, organizational mechanisms which will provide a solid base and help sustain us in the years to come.

We wish to acknowledge the corporate support and a fruitful year partnering with PowerStream to get the energy conservation message out.



## SHOP LIKE THE PLANET'S WATCHING

Year 1 of our campaign was made possible because of support from TD Friends of the Environment, the following municipalities and the Ontario Trillium Foundation:



## SEEDS FOR CHANGE PILOT PROJECT

YREA gratefully recognizes these funders for our school and community gardens - Seeds for Change Pilot Project:

### Community Environment Fund



SHELL ENVIRONMENTAL FUND

## MORE THANKS

We also rely on individual memberships and donations - as every little bit helps. Thank you to all who supported us in 2010 with a contribution. Many of the donors listed below have generously sustained YREA with yearly donations. We are truly heartened by your constancy.

Leslie Atkinson

Ron Alfrey

Nadexhada Bayrami-Hassanit

Sharon & Jim Bradley

James Carver

Martin Chen

Stephen Cockle

Cassandra Dass-Pearce

Mary Dubé

Patty Ella

Marilyn Isaac-Stewart

Sylvia and Ken Halligan

Diane Keating

Todd Kyle

J. Spencer Lanthier

Caterina Libertore

Gloria Marsh

Sara Mathew

Jean-Paul Morson

North American Native Plant Society

Elsie Petch & Michael White

Katia Picada

Billinda Pits

Debbie Schaefer

Sue Sherban

William Shore

Susan Sigrist

Lynda Sutherland

Judith Tenenbaum

Klaus Wehrenberg

Volunteers have aided YREA in numerous ways – helping at our booths during community events, doing research for our programs and issues we cover, scanning the news of the day for environmental information we post on our website, assisting with administrative tasks and training to deliver our **SHOP** seminars. We value and thank these fine people who helped YREA achieve its goals in 2010:

[Emily Barton](#), [Graham Batchelor](#), [Jim Bradley](#), [Carol Brown](#), [Carol Cooper](#), [Stephen Cockle](#), [Sheila Cording](#), [Liz Couture](#), [Angie Dawson](#), [Candy Fan](#), [Sylvia Halligan](#), [Anne Hobbs](#), [Damian Khan](#), [Terry Knight](#), [Dustin Lai](#), [Tanya Marsh](#), [Sara Mathew](#), [Jon Mills](#), [Suzanne Perdeaux](#), [Pat Prevost](#), [Kelly Pritchard](#), [Susan Sang](#), [Stephanie Seto](#), [Mohammad Sharifi](#), [Susan Sheard](#), [Glenn Shukster](#), [Melloney Syrotiuk](#), [Constance Tsang](#).

Our tireless volunteer Board members lent YREA their expertise on committees and in these areas:

Jeff Laidlaw, Chair, fundraising, policies & procedures (P&P); James Carver, Treasurer, P&P, SUDA board; Sharon Bradley, Secretary, fundraising; Sylvia Bowman, P&P, ON rep; Susan Sigrist, Don Council, community gardens, reduce gas lawn equipment use/TYR; Lynda Sutherland, fundraising, reduce gas lawn equipment use /TYR.

We invite you to join us as we work towards a vibrant, greener 2011. Besides our ongoing **SHOP** campaign, our new projects will include industrial hemp for York Region, people powered lawn equipment (which we will include in our organic lawn care program), and what we, as residents, can do to keep our water clean.

Jeffery Laidlaw, Chairman

Gloria Marsh, Executive Director

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