



# York Region Environmental Alliance

*Seeking solutions for community wellbeing & sustainability*

## 2016 Annual Report



# YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

## WHO WE ARE

Formed in 2002 to initially campaign against the cosmetic use of pesticides, the York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA), a non-profit, registered charitable organization, has continually expanded its mandate to address ecological issues that impact our health and the health of our environment. We reach thousands of people annually in York Region, the GTA and beyond, through community outreach events, workshops, YREA's popular News & Views [e-news](#), our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

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

## 2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Susan Sigrist, President/Chair**  
**Sylvia Bowman, Secretary & ON rep**  
**Sylvia Halligan**  
**Mike O'Hara**  
**Lee Wei Li**

**Gloria Marsh, E.D. & Biochar Field Trial Coordinator**  
**Patty Ella, Accountant, PME Management Solutions**



## BIOCHAR UPDATE

In partnership with York Region Forestry and the City of Vaughan, our biochar urban tree field trials have been successfully completed after three years of observation and soil analysis. One of the very important outcomes was the ability of biochar amended soils to retain up to 30% more moisture than compost and control soils. Water bags and fungal injections did not provide significant benefit to trees in comparison to biochar soil treatment.



With increasing higher temperatures and summer droughts, using biochar as a soil amendment will not only be of benefit to urban trees (as 2016 photos below taken in Vaughan will attest) but also useful in tree farms and organic urban agriculture.



*Ornamental Pear with biochar*



*Ornamental Pear without biochar*

Our biochar/Garlic Mustard forest trials will continue into 2017. The less diverse fungal populations in the GM patch supports established widespread understanding that garlic mustard suppresses beneficial fungi. In comparison, the control plot without GM had a higher variety of microbes. It will be of interest to see if fungal diversity reestablishes in the GM patch and if biochar continues to suppress the reemergence of this weed into 2017.

Tom Ross has joined YREA to help with our biochar social enterprise development, and is undertaking International Biochar Initiative (IBI) biochar certification training.

## 2016 ISSUES

### TOXICITY OF FABRIC SOFTENERS & DRYER SHEETS

With the advent of more compact communities, air pollution from the deadly chemicals contained in fabric softeners and drier sheets are adding to our already contaminated environment. YREA is bringing public attention to this health issue at community outreach events and through our [e-news](#).



YREA pointed out that eating a diverse variety of beans & lentils is highly nutritious and economical. By making the organic choice, consumers would be fostering sustainable agriculture and promoting biodiversity. Our link to [recipes](#) had a record number of clicks, indicating an interest in eating well.

### MEETING WITH KING/VAUGHAN MP DEB SCHULTE

The many issues we discussed included strengthening energy efficiency in building standards, a ban on deforestation, a ban on Styrofoam food containers, stopping incineration in favour of zero waste and proper labeling of foods, including GMOs. YREA's Autumn [News & Views](#) provided more details.

We continue to advocate on these and many other matters at the community level and through joint submissions with like-minded NGOs. We are a member and/or supporter of:

Alberta Biochar Initiative  
Green Connections Network  
International Biochar Initiative  
Land Over Landings  
Ontario Clean Air Alliance  
Ontario Greenbelt Alliance

Ontario Headwaters Institute  
Ontario Nature  
Ontario Urban Forest Council  
Ontario Zero Waste Coalition  
Organic Growers of Ontario

### COMMUNITY EVENTS IN WHICH WE PARTICIPATE:



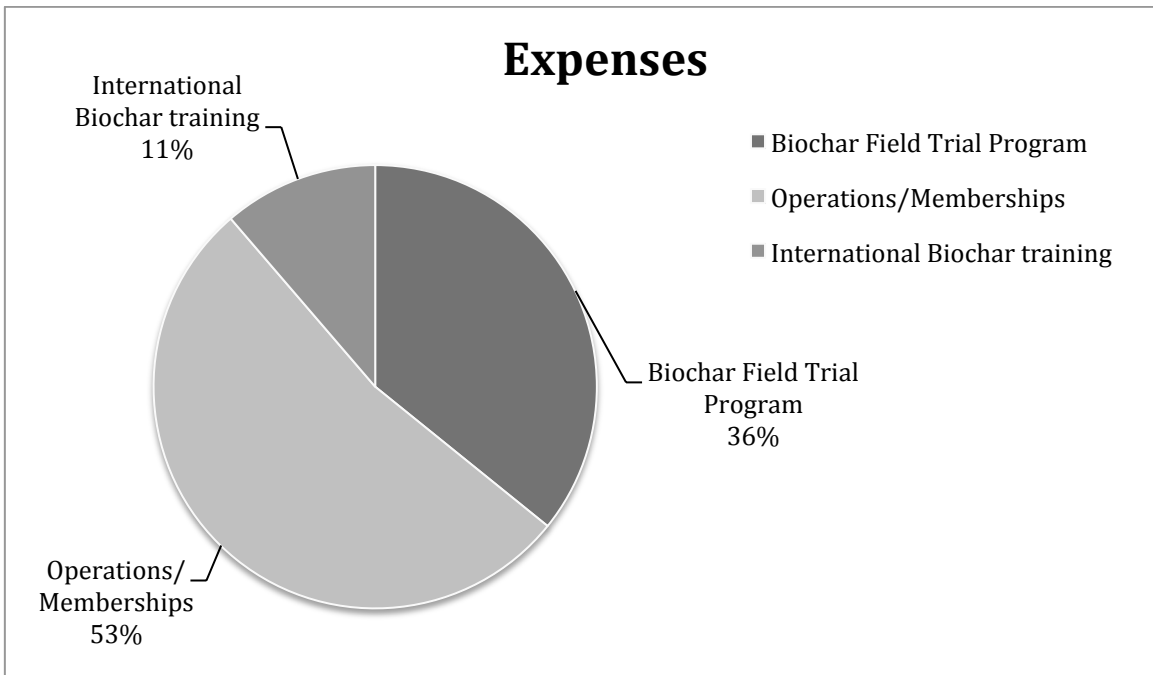
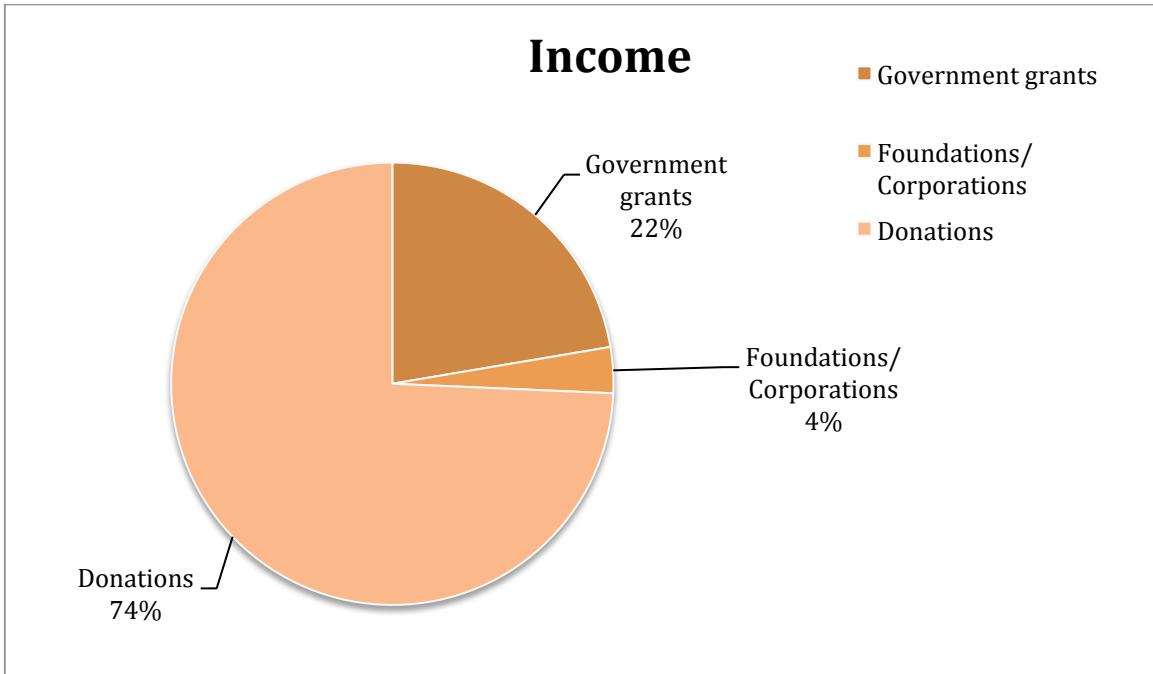
Aurora Eco Festival  
Oak Ridges Clean Up  
Richmond Hill Healthy Yards  
Vaughan Earth Hour  
Schomberg Agricultural Fair

2017 will also see our participation in Earth Week Clean-Up Green-Up Festival, East Gwillumbury.

← [Vaughan Earth Hour Event 2016](#)

# YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

## 2016 FINANCIAL YEAR END



## SINCERE GRATITUDE TO OUR PARTNERS & FUNDERS



A heartfelt thank you to all our individual donors, and to those who have sustained YREA with annual donations.

We especially wish to acknowledge Marilyn Isaac-Stewart, a dear friend of YREA, who has so generously supported us over the years.

### GUARDIAN \$2000 & UP

Marilyn Isaac-Stewart  
Gloria Marsh

### PROTECTOR \$1000 - \$1999

### CUSTODIAN \$500 - \$999

### STEWARD \$200 - \$499

Diane Keating  
Susan Sigrist & Mark Hubbard

### KEEPER \$100 - \$199

Sylvia Bowman  
Sharon & Jim Bradley  
Terry Knight  
Deb Schulte

### FRIEND \$20 - \$99

Martha Bell  
Stephen Cockle  
Lee Wei Li  
Lorrie Mackness  
Catherine Marshall  
Clint Mix  
Mike O'Hara  
Donna Pearson  
Tom Ross  
Gabrielle Untermann  
Patricia Watson  
Natasha Wright  
Anonymous

We thank the following volunteers who have helped us with our activities or represented YREA at meetings and community events:

Sylvia Bowman, Sharon Bradley, Jim Bradley, Sylvia Halligan, Gloria Marsh, Tanya Marsh, Mike O'Hara, Lee Wei Li, Tom Ross, Glenn Shukster, Susan Sigrist



# HOW YREA CAN CONTRIBUTE TO AND IMPROVE ANIMAL WELFARE AND HUMAN HEALTH



## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017 & HARKING BACK TO OUR ROOTS

This will be a very busy year in which we actively engage stakeholders and seek funding to get our biochar social enterprise venture up and running.

A great deal of knowledge was acquired during our biochar research years and based on some of these findings, our area of focus and promotion will be biochar as a soil amendment and the exploration of biochar in animal husbandry. We discovered that a large part of the biochar produced in Europe is used in farming to improve the health of livestock and feel we can make a very positive contribution to sustainable agriculture through the development of biochar for this use.

YREA is particularly interested in the ability of biochar to absorb glyphosate (round-up) so that it cannot adversely impact the health of animals and humans. With the threat of GMO (round-up ready) grass on the horizon, we will be returning to our origins when we formed to raise awareness of the health hazards of lawn chemicals and successfully undertook a lengthy process to advocate for the ban of the cosmetic use of pesticides. We hope that we do not have to start this again, but will continue GMO information sharing and lobbying for GMO labeling.

**SUSAN SIGRIST**  
**PRESIDENT/CHAIR**



**YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE**

**GLORIA MARSH**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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