



GREENWORKS



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR CARBON TAX A GOOD IDEA, BUT...



Tar Sands Photo: Washington Post

The Federal Liberals and the Green Party are proposing a carbon tax that will penalize polluters and shift this revenue to low and middle-income families. It is about time we had a tax on carbon. There has been a reduction in pollution and carbon footprint in the European countries that have already implemented these measures.

While the Green Shift states it will create tax incentives to reinvest in green technologies and research

and development, it does not include plans to use revenues for conservation efforts. There should be funds also allocated through the carbon tax for conservation in such areas as the boreal forests and protecting our water resources, quality, extraction, and export. Federal packaging laws need to be changed to mandate a reduction in superfluous packaging. Styrofoam and bubble wrap should be banned. There is a large carbon footprint for packaging, and producers have to pay up.

We strongly support incentives for low carbon farms and these incentives should also extend to farmers who change to sustainable, organic farming practices. A sustainable Green Shift in ethanol production would mean using manure and agricultural discard to create fuel rather than growing corn.

Most important of all, we at YREA feel that to make a green tax shift really work, the operation of the tar sands needs to be stopped. At the very least, the billion-dollar subsidy needs to be removed and a moratorium placed on this senseless project until independently funded scientific research is conducted to find ways to reduce its environmental impact. Any carbon tax is hypocritical in asking constituents to take responsibility for their carbon consumption by taxing them while allowing the world's biggest and dirtiest oil production project to carry on totally exempt from environmental regulations. This is a climate-change nightmare. Any steps Canada takes in the direction of climate change and eco-footprint reduction (e.g. by encouraging lifestyle changes) are rendered trivial in the face of our flagrantly irresponsible operation of the tar sands.

To read about a carbon tax shift go to:

www.thegreenshift.ca/pdfs/green_shift_book_en.pdf and www.greenparty.ca/en/policy/carbontaxplan?origin=redirect.

To read about the tar sands go to the report *Canada's Toxic Tar Sands: The Most Destructive Project on Earth* -

www.environmentaldefence.ca

Gloria Marsh

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TRASH CANS & GREEN BINS

Know of a worthy recipient for a trash can or green bin award? Send it to membership@yrea.org.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACT brought forward by retiring Liberal MP John Godfrey and supported by all federal parties will finally require the government to create and implement a nation-wide sustainable development strategy. It will also require the government to regularly evaluate the environmental consequences of its actions. And about time too.



YORK REGION for sending 1/3 of its organics for incineration. Granted, there are kinks to iron out of new endeavours such as this and everyone wants recycling and composting initiatives to work. Contingency planning would have helped. As it is, incineration is a helpless last resort.



GEORGINA TOWN COUNCIL for amending their official plan to include 'environmentally sound generation of electricity' as a guiding principle.



YORK REGION MUNICIPALITIES that allow their vehicles to idle while doing their rounds. If enough of us call their town offices when these bad practices are noted, perhaps we could influence policy changes.



CHAPTERS INDIGO for implementing a progressive environmental paper policy which will steadily increase the use of post-consumer recycled paper and FSC paper in the products they sell and paper they use in their operations.



TRCA and PARTNERS for purchasing a 20 hectare parcel of land on Swan Lake in Richmond Hill. The property includes forest, wetland and bog as well as the kettle lake. It is part of the Jefferson Forest environmentally sensitive area (ESA) and is considered a provincial area of natural and scientific interest (ANSI).



AURORA

SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING

By Alison Collins-Mrakas, Councillor, Town of Aurora

As we reach the end of one of the region's wettest summers on record and everywhere we see green, green, green – it may be hard to visualize bone dry, brown vegetation evident everywhere last summer when we spent the better part of 4 months in phase 2 water restrictions and subsequent drought-like conditions. But what if it didn't matter if it was rainy or dry? What if we could have lovely vegetation that doesn't require much if any water, fertilizers, pesticides or greenhouse gas emitting maintenance activities? What if we could ensure the preservation rather than requiring the rehabilitation of our environment? What if we could take a proactive instead of reactive step towards ensuring a sustainable natural landscape?



Well, we can! And the Town of Aurora has taken the first steps towards putting the principles of sustainability into practice by recommending, through a unanimous resolution of Council, the consideration of requiring provisions for sustainable landscaping - and in particular xeriscaping - on all future developments and subdivision agreements; further that Town will consider applying those same provisions on Town owned properties - in particular the

boulevards. What this means, is that in the future, resource efficient vegetation will be planted – say clover instead of turf, drought tolerant species instead of resource intensive ornamentals. It will enable us to reduce our carbon footprint, reduce and even eliminate the need for pesticides and fertilizers and greatly improve the quality of our environment both now and for future generations. Aurora's resolution has already garnered the support and commendation of the President of the Forest Stewardship Council of Canada as he stated in a letter of support: "It is not often that a town council gets to show environmental leadership by reducing both water consumption and public operating costs all at the same time."

This initiative builds upon the great work of York Region's Water for Tomorrow which provides a wealth of information on voluntary residential sustainable landscaping options. With this recommendation in place, the Town of Aurora will be a one of, if not the first, municipality in the province to have an enforceable green building standard as it pertains to the natural environment – and that is welcome news indeed!



TERMINATOR AND OUR FOOD

by Dwight Lyons, Geneaction

The multinational seed/agrochemical industry - Monsanto being the best known - want to own all the commercially viable seeds in the world. Seed can be owned only if it can be patented. The only way is to genetically engineer (GE) it. Of all the possible negative impacts of GE on human health, soil and wild animals, which can result in the creation of allergens, superbugs, superweeds, pollen drift and antibiotic resistance, the industry has focused solely on removing pollen drift using Terminator technology.

In Terminator technology, seeds are still genetically engineered, only now they are supposed to be rendered sterile at harvest. Monsanto sued farmer Percy Schmeiser for stealing their patented seeds which had drifted onto his farm. The case went to the Supreme Court where Monsanto argued that Schmeiser pay a royalty and surrender the seeds to the corporation that owns the seed patent, regardless of how the seeds ended up on his farm. Luckily, the Supreme Court agreed with Percy Schmeiser ruling that he didn't have to pay Monsanto anything. Unfortunately, other farmers have not been so lucky.

Terminator Technology is supposed to end pollen drift but it hasn't. It can contaminate organic farmland and infiltrate fields of indigenous crops. Since 2000 there has been an international moratorium on Terminator. However, the Canadian Government, in 2005 tried to have the moratorium lifted at a UN meeting on biodiversity. African countries, Austria, Switzerland, Peru and the Philippines strongly objected to Canada's proposal, and were successful in keeping the moratorium in place. However, there is still pressure to bring back the use of Terminator seed.

Seeds are living organisms. They will figure a way to get loose. When Terminator gets loose, biodiversity, indigenous crops, small-scale farming and global food security will be lost to a few corporations. Join the campaign to ban this technology. For more information go to Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, <http://www.banterminator.org/canada>

Geneaction is an NGO, located in Toronto. We campaign for mandatory labelling of genetically engineered foods and the banning of Terminator technology.

To contact Dwight Lyons, email geneaction4@yahoo.ca



Editor's note:

At the World Food Crisis Summit in Rome this past June, the issues of corporate control and speculation, which are leading causes of recent spikes in food prices, were not even discussed by the government delegations and international agencies meeting to debate solutions to the crisis. The ranks of the hungry increase as the corporations that control the global food system are making record profits. Monsanto prominently positioned itself at this Summit as a 'saviour' while announcing recently that it is raising the cost of corn seed by 35%. Monsanto now controls 20% of the global seed market and a near monopoly of its key crops.

Why is this so worrisome? Monsanto announced that the company would inject millions of dollars into research on wheat and rice, and pledged to double yields on soy and cotton over the next 20 years. Monsanto is using the food crisis to stack our food system on an increasingly genetically narrow and physiologically fragile set of genes. Remember the Irish potato famine?

Genetic diversity keeps our food system resistant to disease. Not only is Monsanto leeching the first real profit in years from small farmers, but planting our food system in ever-more shaky ground. Not only that, maize, genetically engineered to produce *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) is making villagers sick, causing respiratory, intestinal and skin reactions. Soy allergies skyrocketed 50% after Monsanto introduced GE soy into the U.K. Time to boycott all non-organic food, especially corn. Time to lobby harder for labelling of GE foods.

Documentary films on this subject include *The Future of Food* and *King Corn* www.kingcorn.net.

Planet in Focus film festival theme this year is food and is being held in late October in Toronto www.planetinfocus.org/festival

Partly sourced from:
<http://www.foodfirst.org/en/node/2177>



READING THE LABEL (AND IN-BETWEEN THE LINES)

by Rae Bowie, YREA Director, East Gwilimbury

Many consumers are concerned about the quality of their food, where the food originated, and how it was processed. Concern peaked last year with reports of contaminated pet food, ingredients in toothpaste, medications and seafood from China. A poll by Can West News Services last year found that two-thirds of Canadians are worried about the safety of their food. Most indicated they were willing to pay higher prices to ensure foods are screened more diligently. It is difficult for consumers to get the information they require to make knowledgeable food choices.

Food labeling in Canada for the most part is misleading. Currently foods labeled Product of Canada must meet two conditions:

- The substantial transformation of the goods must have occurred in Canada
- At least 51% of the total direct costs of producing or manufacturing the goods are Canadian

These two conditions are confusing and have made it impossible for consumers to have any idea where the food originated.

However, change is on the way:

New Canada Food Labeling Guidelines come into effect December 31, 2008. Unfortunately, the new rules will be voluntary.

- Product of Canada will be restricted to products where virtually all major ingredients, processing and labor used to produce a food are Canadian with the exception of minor additives or spices that are not found in Canada.
- Made in Canada labels will signify that a food product is manufactured or processed in Canada. Before a Made in Canada label could be used on a food product, the last substantial transformation of the product must have occurred in Canada and the claim would be modified with either Made in Canada from domestic ingredients or Made in Canada from imported Ingredients.

“This is very important information that would help consumers evaluate not only the food quality but also such things as labor conditions, pesticide use and environmental land use practices.”

Although this is all good news, it is disappointing that the rules will be voluntary. As consumers, we need to support the companies that properly label their products, thereby exerting pressure on companies that do not. There is sure to be confusion between the similar labeling designations and consumer education will be of paramount importance. Also, there are no requirements in the new guidelines to identify an imported ingredient by country of origin. This is very important information that would help consumers evaluate not only the food quality but also such things as labor conditions, pesticide use and environmental land use practices.

Demands to label genetically engineered (GE) or genetically modified organisms (GMO) have so far fallen on deaf Federal ears due to the huge lobbying campaigns from the producers of these products. They know full well that if most of us saw a food had been GE or GMO we wouldn't buy it. However, many producers of items made from crops that could be GE, such as soybeans, are voluntarily labeling them 'not made from GMO'.



Also scheduled for release in December, 2008 will be the new biologique Canada organic label. According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) the purpose of a federal regulatory system for organic products is threefold - to provide protection for the consumer from deceptive or misleading marketing, to support domestic market development enabling more growers to adopt organic, sustainable practices and to facilitate international market access, in particular, the European Union.



Newmarket

Newmarket Environmental Advisory Committee (NEAC) News

Submitted by Crystal Rank, NEAC Member

The Newmarket Environmental Advisory Committee is a small group of ordinary citizens participating as an advisory committee to our Town Council. We provide environmental support and advice to Town planning & operations and strive to maintain, restore and enhance the environment. We have been active on a number of recent initiatives:



NEAC Volunteers

ECO-HOUSING: Newmarket is the first community in York Region, and one of only a few in Canada, with a LEED-Platinum housing development, the highest level in a rating system for building efficiency in water, energy and resource use. NEAC assisted with research and encouraged Council's ultimate decision to approve the project.

ANTI-IDLING BY-LAW

To discourage people from leaving the engine on while their car is parked. NEAC assisted with research and encouraged Council's ultimate decision to approve the by-law, and partnered with YREA in educating fellow residents about the by-law.

WINDFALL ECOLOGY FESTIVAL

NEAC has participated for several years in this three-day, outdoor celebration of all things green, held in historic Downtown Newmarket. This year, NEAC encouraged people to re-use and recycle goods by holding a community garage sale at the Festival.

COSMETIC PESTICIDE USE BY-LAW

This prohibition on the use of pesticides in Newmarket, to protect human health and the health of our ecosystems, was fought hard by a coalition of economic interests, many from outside the municipality. Currently, NEAC is working with the Town to produce "pesticide free" lawn signs and is hosting organic lawn care workshops for residents.

PROJECT PORCHLIGHT

NEAC helped bring this project to Newmarket. Local volunteers delivered a compact fluorescent light bulb door to door in their areas to encourage residents to think about their energy consumption and start on the path to conservation. A simple step but an important first one to make.

EARTH HOUR

NEAC encouraged the municipality to participate in this campaign to raise awareness by turning lights out for one hour one evening this spring, reminding us all not to take our access to energy for granted. Now this will be an annual event in Newmarket with plans already underway for next year!

We go where the people are! Never shy about being out in the community, NEAC holds a regular educational Green Series, and joins the annual Newmarket Home Show to help residents learn about their options for living more sustainably, from eco-friendly lawn care to solar heating. You can also find us at the Farmers' Market in downtown Newmarket where local food is always available. We're also out at community tree planting events and high schools, constantly in touch with our fellow residents.

NEAC is always looking for volunteers. Join us! It's fun; you get to meet great people and have an opportunity to give back to your community. If you live outside Newmarket, your municipality likely has an Environmental Advisory Committee too, that would also like to hear from you. It's easy being green!

To volunteer, contact NEAC at: neac@newmarket.ca, or call the Town of Newmarket at 905-895-5193.



King

PEAKER POWER PLANT - "NO" IS NOT NECESSARILY SO

By Jeff Laidlaw, Councillor Ward 2

7:30 A.M. is a great time for practice. In this case it is water skiers competing in the upcoming National Championships. Yet this wonderful lake's future is uncertain. It is one of the two proposed sites in King Township for the location of a 350 megawatt gas fired single cycle peaking power station. The planning process, under the Provincial Planning Act, has placed King Township (and likely all four of the municipalities who voted against this project) in the unenviable position of having to continue to process the applications submitted by the proponents.



Photo: Jeff Laidlaw

The Environmental Screening process doesn't answer or

require answers related to the Holland Marsh where both proposed sites in King Township are located; questions such as:

- What will be the effect of a super-heated plume (900°F) on the micro-climate within the Holland Marsh? How will this heat affect both the short and long term outlook for productivity? How will this affect the drainage basin and consequently Lake Simcoe?
- What is the short and long term cumulative impact of the noxious emissions within a closed drainage basin system. What is the impact on marsh soils and productivity, and on water quality and supply in the Holland Marsh and Lake Simcoe watershed?

Emissions, based on the proposed 60 foot high smokestacks, will almost exclusively fall and accumulate within the Holland Marsh Drainage Basin. The Holland Marsh covers approximately 7,500 acres. Draining into Lake Simcoe, the marsh is responsible for the production of about 40% of North America's carrot crop, and 50% of Ontario's fresh produce annually.

While King Township has said 'no' to a peaker power plant, while the productivity of the Holland Marsh may be threatened, and the water quality of Lake Simcoe further threatened, legislation still requires King Township to process the application as if we are willing to allow this development, without getting answers to important questions which affect the entire population of Southern Ontario. There are countless other questions arising from the peaker proposal. Should King Township process the applications? Not without a lot more answers. But we are.

For more info go to <http://www.cleanairalliance.org/nyr> and <http://www.megawhat.ca/>



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WIND TURBINES MAY NOT GET A CHANCE TO SPIN

By Zach Pedersen, Communications Coordinator,
Windfall Ecology Centre

Marlene Stiles has been looking forward to the changes coming to her community. She and her neighbours have been hoping to transform the island they call home into a renewable energy power source for Ontario. By constructing ten wind turbines, they will create enough power for more than 7,500 homes in energy starved York Region. The project will displace 15,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases annually.

Marlene is the Economic Development Officer with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, located just off the southeast shore of Lake Simcoe. "I think about this being a great economic venture for our First Nation," she says. "It will create employment for members and open doors for new opportunities in areas that we never had before."

Since 2003, the Chippewas have been working with Windfall Ecology Centre to make the Pukwis Wind Park a reality. Windfall is an Aurora-based non-profit environmental organization that focuses on energy and water. It was Windfall Executive Director Brent Kopperson who first approached the Chippewas with the possibility that they become renewable energy providers.



Photo courtesy of Derrick Hood www.derrickhood.com

Brent spoke to the Chief at the time, who eagerly accepted Brent's suggestion. At that time, though, government regulation did not provide opportunities that would allow community based renewable energy producers to sell their electricity through Ontario's publicly owned grid system.

"We needed a program to enable the creation of a distributed electricity network in Ontario," says Brent. "We were eventually hired by the

Ministry of Energy to design a new policy." This policy would become Ontario Power Authority's (OPA) Renewable Energy Standard Offer Program (RESOP) and it offered renewable wind energy generators a fixed price of 11¢/kilowatt-hour for electricity put on the grid. As things evolved, organizations began combining small projects that totaled more than 10MW. Because building a project less than 10MW at OPA's fixed rate was economically unviable, Pukwis followed suit and expanded to 20MW.

Recently, though, OPA has proposed new changes to RESOP. Changes that would mean the death of the Pukwis project. In May 2008, OPA proposed to

limit community-sized projects to 10MW. The intention is to provide opportunity to a greater number of community projects. To the Pukwis project, it simply means lost investment. To date, over \$750,000 has been invested in Pukwis. Ironically, \$450,000 came from provincial government sources (Ontario Trillium Foundation and Community Power Fund).

"By limiting community projects to 10 MW, OPA will effectively kill the community power sector for wind," says Brent, "all the while trumpeting the need for new fossil-fuel powered Peaker Plants."

"OPA is adamantly pursuing the construction of a Peaker Plant in York Region."

OPA is adamantly pursuing the construction of a Peaker Plant in York Region. It's a project that has been rejected by nearly all area municipalities. York Region's energy problem already has a solution—and a much safer one at that: Non-polluting wind parks like Pukwis. Before the announced changes to RESOP, the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association recommended revisions to make the program more successful. None were implemented. OPA needs to follow the policy advice presented in the review and not put a cap on community-based renewable energy projects. There are no such caps for fossil fuel projects. In the meantime, the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation and Windfall Ecology Centre have remained hopeful. "I think it would be quite devastating to the First Nation if this ended," Marlene says. "We have invested a lot in the project and we're looking forward to seeing it completed."

Marlene still welcomes change. She now needs change that will let the turbines on Georgina Island turn for their very first time - and to their full potential.

To review OSEA's recommended changes to RESOP, visit www.windfallcentre.ca.