



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS PARTNERSHIPS PAY

Most of us have become aware that we can destroy our environment and ourselves by our actions. Conversely, we also know that by working to raise collective awareness, we have the ability to affect change for the better. One of the best ways of achieving success is by forming partnerships. There really IS strength in numbers.

From my own experience over the last decade, I recall working with the amazing number of groups and individuals who came together to fight for the preservation of the Oak Ridges Moraine, to form a Land Trust and to advocate for a pesticide ban. Continuing into the present are all the groups and individuals who make up the DDO defenders, Lake Simcoe conservationists, anti-incineration and anti-peaker plant advocates, to name just a few.

Working collaboratively on issues of mutual concern not only contributes momentum and power to a cause, but also has the added benefit of expanded creative problem solving and fundraising capabilities.

Not only does YREA want to build our own effectiveness and relevance, we also want to empower other groups to seek like-minded partners to further their objectives. To this end, we are in the midst of compiling an e-library as a resource for individuals and organizations working in all aspects of environmental protection in York Region and beyond. The e-library will identify areas of focus of each association listed. A group or individual will be able to access the e-library for environmental information, find a match with others working on the same issue or a likely partner for a new project and perhaps collaborate for funding, lend support or pool resources for more effective action.

See details of our next Planning for Action meeting below. Big or small, we invite you to add your organization's information to our e-library by contacting Anita, our Webmaster at anita@yrea.org. To register for our Planning for Action meeting, contact Fiona, our Communications Coordinator at fiona@yrea.org. At the same time, tell her about your area of concern so we can include this in our breakout discussions.

Gloria Marsh

PLANNING FOR ACTION MEETING

When: Thurs. Nov 5, 2009 7pm-9pm
Where: Seminar room, York Region Admin. Bldg
17250 Yonge St. Newmarket, ON

What: Sylvia Bowman, Conservation Director of the York Simcoe Naturalists will speak to us about the efforts of the many groups working together to preserve the Maskinonge River watershed.

Breakout discussion dealing with attendees' concerns will follow.
To register, contact Fiona Wood 416-556-8065 or fiona@yrea.org and bring your own mug.



GREEN DIRECTIONS FOR VAUGHAN

By Alan Shefman, Ward 5 Councillor, Thornhill, City of Vaughan



On April 21, 2009, the City of Vaughan took a major step to entrench environmental sustainability in every aspect of its activities. On that day Green Directions Vaughan was launched at the Civic Centre. Green Directions Vaughan, the City's Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan, is the result of many years of environment initiatives that have been undertaken and a one year process of consultation and research by consultants, City staff and members of Council.

While there are many major initiatives described in the Plan, more important, Green Directions is about changing the way we think – and it's already having an impact. In the last couple of months, for example, two committees I sit on have moved from paper minutes and agendas to almost totally electronic. How many trees will be saved over a year? How much less energy will be used? For certain, our ecological footprint diminishes. The little things do matter!

At the launch, as part of its commitment to changing how things are done at the City, rather than hand out copies of the report, news releases, brochures and so on, a memory stick with all the necessary information was available.

This plan provides guidance on how we operate as a more sustainable municipality, how we provide our services and maintain infrastructure, and how we regulate others through the planning process. It essentially requires us to re-think how we function in order to be a sustainable city.

There are six goals set in the Master Plan. These are then broken down into more detailed objectives and actions. Each action is assigned a time frame for implementation, the department responsible, and any potential financial implications. This is a plan of action, not a document to put on a shelf somewhere. In talking about what we use, our goal is to significantly reduce our use of natural resources and the amount of waste generated.

Another example of how the City is adopting a more sustainable approach to its work relates to how we manage our roads during the winter. We have recently implemented GPS technology to keep track of snow ploughs at all times. We then began using a special liquid salt brine to prevent ice forming on bridges prior to heavy snow falls rather than dump salt randomly. Finally, we have installed a road monitoring system, which tells us the road temperature among other things. As a result of these interlinked actions, we now have the capacity to prevent excessive use of de-icing materials. Our trucks on the roads less while still maintaining, if not improving safety.

It's about changing our thinking and the way we do things. Green Directions Vaughan defines for us a clear and understandable vision of sustainability for our city as well as laying out our future actions. This plan is not optional. It now becomes both the cornerstone and the measure by which every action we take must be evaluated.

Alan Shefman is Vice-Chair of the City's Environment Committee and Chair of Greening Vaughan. He may be reached at 905-832-8585 x8349 or via email: alan.shefman@vaughan.ca

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE OPENS IN VAUGHAN

A first in York Region, the Leed certified McCleary Court drop off centre takes many materials not accepted through the Blue Box program, including Styrofoam, bulky items, shredded paper and electronics.

Reuse partners, Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity York Region, permanently located on site, means this location also accepts clothing, textiles, housewares, books, CDs, DVDs, renovation and building materials, plumbing and lighting fixtures as well as doors and windows. Clothing and textiles no longer suitable for resale are sent to a secondary stream through Goodwill.

More good news - plans to build a similar facility in Richmond Hill are in the works. For details on the McCleary Court Community Environmental Centre go to www.york.ca/waste





BOTTLED WATER: THE HUMMER OF THE DRINK WORLD

By Susan Sheard, Teacher, YREA Volunteer

Water is fast becoming the Hummer of the drink world says Margaret Chandler of Respect for the Earth and All People (REAP). Take a walk through the bottle of water's life cycle and I think you'll agree that at every stage of its life, from conception to rejection, bottled water strikes out.

STAGE 1/STRIKE 1 - MAKING THE BOTTLES

- A Waste of oil: About one and a half million tonnes of plastic are used worldwide per year to manufacture plastic water bottles. It takes about a quarter of a water bottle of oil to make the plastic for that one bottle, to fill it with water and to transport it. (Of course, a lot more oil is used if your water comes from overseas).
- Greenhouse gases: The production of one plastic bottle releases more than four times that bottle's weight in greenhouse gases.
- Toxins: The manufacture of PET plastic (polyethylene terephthalate) generates at least 100 times more toxic emissions than an equivalent amount of glass. And the toxicity doesn't end there. Trace amounts of antimony, a metal used in the process of making PET plastic, leaches into the water as it sits in the bottle. While large doses of antimony can cause dizziness, nausea, cholesterol, blood-sugar problems, and even death, trace amounts of antimony are considered harmless. Still, a trace + a trace = more than a trace, doesn't it?
- Water down the drain: It takes about five bottles of water to make one plastic water bottle.

STAGE 2/STRIKE 2 - FILLING THE BOTTLES

- Where does the water come from? Some water bottling companies use ground water. Others, including Pepsi (Aquafina) and Coke (Dasani) simply bottle municipal tap water.
- Pure and healthy? Whatever the source, suggestions that bottled water is purer or healthier should be recognized as the advertising ploys they are. Ontario's municipal tap water is tested up to 300,000 times a year. Water bottling plants are tested, on average, once every three years.
- Sucking public water sources dry. If people really want to pay 500 to 1000 times more to get some tap water or agricultural runoff in a plastic bottle, why shouldn't they? Ask the people whose local water supplies are running dry. While federal and provincial law says that water cannot be transferred out of a water basin, there's a rather big loophole. Companies are allowed to export municipal tap water as long as it is packaged in containers of 20 litres or less. This is becoming a serious matter in many communities. Ottawa Riverkeeper is fighting Aquablue International, which is planning to move into Smiths Falls, bottle 340 million litres of water a year and sell it elsewhere. In Guelph, the Wellington Water Watchers are fighting the Nestle Corporation, which is taking 3.6 million litres a day, causing a reversal of groundwater flow.

STAGE 3/STRIKE 3 - DEALING WITH THE EMPTIES

- At least they're recyclable. Yes, many useful items can be made from old plastic bottles, including carpet, polar fleece and artificial lumber. And it takes less energy to make these things from used plastic bottles than it does to make them from oil. So, is Mountain Equipment Co-op going to run out of fleece if we stop buying and recycling water bottles? No chance of that. Apparently, the billions of tonnes of plastic we use and throw into recycle bins yearly is more than meeting the demand for used plastic.
- Most water bottles don't ever make it into recycling bins. Nearly 80% of all plastic water bottles end up as litter or in landfill, where they take about 1,000 years to break down. Even worse, staggering amounts of plastic garbage, including water bottles, are collecting in the world's oceans, where they break into pieces small enough to be eaten by animals and work their way up the food chain.

Need more convincing? Check out www.insidethebottle.org; www.canadians.org/water/issues/Unbottle_it www.thinkoutsidethebottle.org

KEEPING OUR WATER OFF DRUGS

By Sharon Bradley

Health Canada has reported that there is growing evidence that improper disposal of unused or expired prescription and non-prescription drugs such as throwing into the garbage, flushing down the sink or toilet is having a detrimental effect on the environment. Pharmaceutical waste can contaminate groundwater and natural watercourses and soil. It can also act as an endocrine disrupter, which is harmful to the growth, development and reproduction of aquatic species. All of these factors can potentially disrupt the ecological functioning and health of our watersheds and their residents.



Therefore, it is extremely important that unused and expired prescription and non-prescription drugs be disposed of properly. Fortunately that is not difficult. Shoppers Drug Mart and many other pharmacies have programs to accept unused pharmaceuticals and ensure that this waste is handled properly. This service is

not well advertised but it does exist, so please share this information with family and friends.



GREENWORKS



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Artist & Author Pamela Meacher invites you to join her at:



The Word on the Street

Queens Park, Toronto, Ontario
Sunday, September 27th 2009, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Scugog Showcase for the Arts

Scugog Community Centre, 1655 Reach Street, Port Perry, Ontario
Friday, November 6th, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. (First night, First Choice)
Saturday November 7th, 10 a.m. to 5p.m.
Sunday November 8th, 10 a.m. to 5p.m.

Lake Scugog Spring Studio Tour

Port Perry, Ontario
1st weekend in May, 2010

For more information, email pmeacher@sympatico.ca or call 905.985.8851
Pamela will also be available to sign her latest book.

Advertisement

TRASH CANS & GREEN BINS



YORK REGION TRANSIT for allowing their buses to idle for up to 15 minutes when there is no reason for it. Shame. This contravenes many municipal anti-idling bylaws.



ONTARIO'S 24 PUBLIC COLLEGES for putting in place energy conservation plans which have steadily reduced consumption and increased efficiency as each phase has been implemented. Measures taken to date include light sensors in classrooms, green roofs on buildings, wind turbines on campus and biomass-fuelled water heaters.



METRO GROCERS for offering a return-to-retail plastic bag recycling programme. Customers are encouraged to drop off plastic bags at any of their locations. In the last two years, Metro in Ontario, with the efforts of customers and staff, has diverted over 1000 metric tonnes of plastic from landfill as a result of this program.



LOBLAWS, LINWELL GARDENS & MYERS INDUSTRIES OF BRANTFORD for partnering on the first national closed-loop post-consumer recycling in the plastics industry. Last year they recycled 270,000 kilos of plastic garden pots, flats and tags brought back to Loblaws by customers. New pots of post-consumer plastic are manufactured at Myers and Linwell uses them for their plants. <http://www.thestar.com/article/673802>



GREENWORKS



PAPER AND OUR FORESTS

By Fiona Wood, YREA Communications and Outreach Coordinator

Despite the electronic age of email, voicemail and storing documents on computers, our paper consumption has increased five times since the 1950s. The Canadian forest industry does about 90% of its cutting in virgin forests, and 90% of the harvests are done by clearcutting (removing all tree life from the forest).

What can we do to help reduce paper consumption?

- **Reduce**
Obviously, the best solution is reduction, whenever possible use less paper - email, phone, and alternatives like white boards and hemp paper.
- **Reuse**
keep your 'goose' paper (good on one side) paper in a box on your desk to write notes and lists on.
- **Recycle**
Use your blue box and when you do need to buy paper make an informed choice.



SHOP LIKE THE PLANET'S WATCHING

- **Look for the FSC logo**
The Forest Stewardship Council is a worldwide distinction that guarantees that the wood used in the product came from certified, sustainably managed forests.
- **Recycled Content**
Paper that simply says recycled content just means that they have used the offcuts from creating lumber at the sawmill. Pre-consumer Content means they are reusing the trimmings left over from the large rolls when creating sheets of paper at the paper mill. The phrase to look for is Post-consumer Content. This usually has a percentage indicating how much blue box paper has been included when making the product. The more post-consumer content the better although 100% post-consumer content is hard to find.
- **Consider how the paper was made**
Because we tend to choose blindingly white paper products, the pulp generally has to be bleached. The best choice is unbleached paper. As a second best, look for how it was bleached:



TCF: Has been whitened using oxygen-based bleaches instead of chlorine (best choice)



PCF: Contains some post-consumer recycled paper that may or may not have been bleached using chlorine in a previous life, but no chlorine has been used this time around.



ECF: No pure chlorine gas has been used, but other forms, such as chlorine dioxide have. (poor choice)



When choosing paper, read the labels carefully. There will probably be a note next to the symbol saying how much of the paper content is FSC certified. As with recycled, the more the better. Any combination of FSC certified, and recycled is also OK. For example: Paper with 60 percent recycled, 40 percent FSC certified content equals 100% sustainable.

YORK REGION'S FORESTS - FSC CLOSE TO HOME

In 1998, York Region took over the management of all York Regional Forests from the Ministry of Natural Resources. It is to be applauded for being the first publicly owned forest to be certified by the FSC in Canada. The Region has also developed a 20-year management plan, and has a Regional Forest Advisory Team. The community is encouraged to become involved in their forests. York Region staff and members of the Regional Forest Advisory Team offer a series of monthly events open to the public. For more info, visit: <http://www.york.ca/Departments/Transportation+and+Works/Forestry/Take+a+Walk.htm>



BECOME A MEMBER AND YOU COULD WIN THIS PRINT

Through campaigns and education we increase the public's understanding of the environment and its importance by offering seminars, workshops and meetings and by collecting and disseminating information on issues of concern. We have a strong record of influencing public policy related to the environment.

Become a York Region Environmental Alliance member and be part of the solution. Your name will be entered in a draw for this stunning framed print (valued at \$250) donated by award winning artist Pamela Meacher. Draw to be held at our AGM in February.

Donating to YREA is easy. Make an online contribution through CanadaHelps by visiting www.yrea.org. All contributions over \$20 will make you a YREA member and you will receive a charitable tax receipt. **If you prefer, enclose this form with your donation and mail to:**

YREA, 225 Lakeland Crescent, Richmond Hill, ON L4E 3A5

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City/Town _____ Postal Code _____

Phone _____ email _____

Please note the amount of your donation enclosed: -

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian \$2000 & up | <input type="checkbox"/> Protector \$1000-\$1999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Custodian \$500-\$999 | <input type="checkbox"/> Steward \$200-\$499 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeper \$100-\$199 | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend \$ _____ |

Please note: YREA does not exchange the personal information of our members/supporters with other organizations or groups.

We do acknowledge the names of our donors on our website and in our newsletter, but please let us know if you would like to remain anonymous.

Registered charity - #84559 0553 RR0001

YREA extends its heartfelt thanks to our latest donors

STEWARDS: Diana Bennett & Spencer Lanthier
Ken & Sylvia Halligan
Marilyn Isaac Stewart

FRIENDS: Martin Chen
Barry Wallace

Where would we be without our staunch adherents?

Financial support is crucial to our very existence and we cannot thank enough all who have made contributions so we may continue to educate and influence for the betterment of our communities.

There is also another important component to a vibrant organization and that is its volunteer base. We are extremely grateful to all those who sign up in this capacity and devote their time to events, meetings and research on our behalf. During the year, these fine people have added their time and skills to YREA workings. We thank you all.

Thumbs up to these volunteers

Cristina Amicucci, Selina Anggawinata, Liz Couture, John D'Alimonte, Rachel D'Alimonte, Phil Fung, Catherine Marshall, Sara Mathew, Ronald Ng, Dmitri Shaffer, Susan Sheard, Hillary Topps, Nicholas Trevisan, Constance Tsang, Jason Wright.