



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR **INCINERATION (AGAIN)**

I have had a number of emails and a conversation with some York Region Councillors stemming from a letter submitted on incineration, partially reprinted below. There is a concern on the cumulative effect of incineration, and well there should be. Not only from the toxic soup of emissions but also from the combined effect of at least three more incinerators slated to be built in southern Ontario very soon.

Instead of being hell bent on incineration York and Durham Region should be looking at ways to reduce garbage further (thereby obviating the need for an incinerator entirely) by dealing with the waste from restaurants, shopping centres, grocery stores, businesses, multi-unit dwellings and by banning styrofoam and non-recyclable packaging.

To this end, YREA's volunteer researcher, Cristina Amicucci is presently compiling data on recyclable, compostable packaging. Our intention is to approach some of the producers of excess packaging with this information in an effort to encourage them to reduce by using these alternatives.

Dr. Paul Connett, a Professor of Chemistry, and a leading world expert on waste management, published a paper entitled Municipal Waste Incineration: A poor solution for the 21st century. The title says it all. His zero-waste approach is not to seek ways of destroying garbage, but to stop making it in the first place. A pretty logical way of walking the talk of sustainability.

Even with the cleanest incineration technology, there is no question that the toxic cocktail of emissions – lead, cadmium, arsenic, mercury and chromium, as well as dioxins and furans produced during combustion – will all contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and impact the health of people as far afield as Nunavut and Greenland, let alone those in our own backyards. There is also the issue of residues – 15,000 tonnes of toxic fly ash that will have to be buried as hazardous waste yearly. York and Durham Region Councillors would do well to make emissions monitoring mandatory at the pelletization plant in Vaughan as well as for the industries that will burn the pellets, tires and other garbage as fuel.

To find out more about visionary waste management solutions, please go to:
http://www.wastestudygroup.org/library/docs/PaulConnett_20070828.pdf and
http://www.no-burn.org/resources/library/Poor_solution.pdf

Gloria Marsh

In this issue

Message from the Chair	1
Trash Cans & Green Bins	2
YREA AGM	2
Dealing with a Chemical Legacy ..	3
Local yes...but also Organic.....	4
The Big Pipe Report	5
Ecological Action Conference.....	6
Earth Hour	6
Thank you	6



GREENWORKS



Spring 2008 Volume 2, Issue 1

Page 2

TRASH CANS & GREEN BINS

Spot anything to shout about. Send in trash can and green bin info to membership@yrea.org.

A CERTAIN MAYOR AND COUNCILLOR who take time out of their busy schedules to participate in the cutting down of a small woodlot while the rest of York Region scrambles to add to its forest cover.



AURORA, NEWMARKET, RICHMOND HILL AND VAUGHAN meanwhile, have their own tree bylaws



in place, over and above that of York Region to protect trees from thoughtless, random acts of destruction.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO for taking the well intentioned endowment of the David Dunlop lands and turning them into profit making by selling out to developers. The last big patch of urban green space in Richmond Hill will be converted to more suburban sprawl.



RACHEL GINSBERG & THE ECO-ETHICAL GROUP OF DR. J.M. DENISON SECONDARY SCHOOL IN NEWMARKET

These avid environmentalists collected over 250 signatures in a petition against the water bottling plant proposal in East Gwillimbury. When young people show a concern for issues such as watershed recharge degradation, there is hope for our future.

Congratulations to the York Region Environmental Alliance for making a difference in our communities



Lui TEMELKOVSKI
Member of Parliament - Oak Ridges/Markham

Room 315 East Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
T 613 992 3640
F 613 992 3642
temell1@parl.gc.ca

YREA AGM

MARCH 28, 2008

If any member wishes to attend or put their name forward or nominate another person as a potential board member, please RSVP to membership@yrea.org.

We ask that all board members make a commitment of 4 volunteer hours per month in various capacities for YREA.



Dealing with a Chemical Legacy...or Not

Anna Tilman, Canadian Environmental Network
Delores Broten, Watershed Sentinel

Tens of thousands of substances have been in commercial use in Canada for decades without any assessment of their potential toxicity to human health or the environment. It was only in 1994 that the picture brightened when Canada began to require such an evaluation before any new substance could be placed on the market. This left a backlog of approximately 23,000 substances to be tested. In response to this need, provisions were brought into the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) in 1999 to require the government to categorize these 23,000 untested substances and identify those that were of concern by September 2006.

At the end of this seven-year exercise, approximately 4,300 substances were identified as being potentially harmful to human health and/or the environment. By law, the federal government is required to take action on those substances. The Chemicals Management Plan (CMP), announced in December 2006, was the federal government's response to the legal requirement. Now that almost a year has passed (how time flies) since its announcement, it is time to take stock of this plan to see whether it is on the path to deal effectively with the legacy of chemicals.

'THE PLAN' AT A GLANCE

Of the 4,300 substances identified as potentially hazardous, approximately 500 have been designated as "high priority" because they are persistent, bioaccumulative and inherently toxic to non-human organisms, and/or pose a high hazard to human health. Another 2,600 are designated as "medium priority", while 1,200 are considered to be of "low concern". The Plan aims to "take appropriate action by 2020 on all of these substances". But the entire process by which these substances have been prioritized is unclear.



photo: Mike Richards, Georgia Strait Alliance

The high priority substances, the key focus of the plan, are being handled by various mechanisms. The most prominent one is the three-year "Challenge" program which focuses on 193 of the most worrisome chemicals. Industry has been "challenged" to provide information that would affect the government's decision on what action to take, in particular, whether to declare them toxic under CEPA 1999. Another 150 of these substances are not currently used in Canada. If there is any new use proposed for any of these substances, it will be assessed as a new substance on the Canadian market.

The remainder of the high priority substances are related to the petroleum industry and there is no information on any proposed action for these substances. The high priority substances under the Challenge program will not work their way through the assessment process until at least 2011. There is no actual deadline for the implementation of any action.

As for the 2,600 medium priority substances, no plan has been released to address them, although voluntary agreements are suspected to be the likely path. The 1,200 substances of low concern were recently subjected to a rapid screening process which failed to apply the precautionary principle or assess toxicity to humans. 754 of these substances were identified as not toxic, requiring "no further action." What is happening to the remaining substances is unclear.

The Chemical Management Plan is such a convoluted process that it is questionable whether it can deal adequately and effectively with the thousands of potentially hazardous chemicals. Consider, for example, Bisphenol A, one of the Challenge substances, which is widely used to manufacture everyday products from sunglasses and CDs to water and food containers and baby bottles. It is a known endocrine disruptor, shown to have carcinogenic effects, developmental toxicity and possible neurotoxicity and, it leaches from food and beverage packaging. The government should be banning it immediately rather than sheltering it through a lengthy challenge process.

Could the CMP be a veil for a covert plan to harmonize toxic standards in North America? The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) is an unpublicized agreement of the NAFTA partners that commits the three countries to harmonizing chemicals regulation, as much as possible, by 2012. The SPP will almost certainly weaken an already rickety Canadian regulatory system and jeopardize Canada's autonomy in how it deals with toxic chemicals: it could replace the CMP with something even worse.

This article originally appeared in Great Lakes News and has been reprinted with permission.



LOCAL yes

Evelyne Gharibian, HeartyCatering.com



With all the talk of buying local food, we must not overlook the need to seek out organically grown local produce if we are truly concerned about sustainability.

Organic farming is a method of crop and livestock production that involves much more than choosing not to use certain pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics, and growth hormones.

The general principles of organic production, from Canada's Organic Standards, 2006, include the following:

- Protect the environment, minimize soil degradation and erosion, decrease pollution
- Maintain long-term soil fertility by optimizing conditions for biological activity and a state of sound health within the soil
- Maintain biological diversity within the system
- Recycle materials and resources to the greatest extent possible within the enterprise
- Provide attentive care that promotes the health and meets the behavioural needs of livestock
- Prepare organic products, emphasizing careful processing, and handling methods in order to maintain the organic integrity and vital qualities of the products at all stages of production

but also ORGANIC

- Rely on renewable resources in locally organized agricultural systems

Many organic farmers believe that a successful organic system begins with the soil - a healthy soil produces healthy plants and, in turn, healthy livestock and people. They regard soil as a living organism of inter-dependent processes and life forms.

Organic farming promotes the use of crop rotations and cover crops, and encourages balanced host/predator relationships. Organic residues and nutrients produced on the farm are recycled back to the soil. Cover crops and composted manure are used to maintain soil organic matter and fertility. Preventative insect and disease control methods are practiced, including crop rotation, improved genetics and resistant varieties. Integrated pest and weed management, and soil conservation systems are valuable tools on an organic farm. Organically approved pesticides include "natural" or non-synthetic pesticides as indicated in the Permitted Substances List of the organic standards. These products must be registered for use in the specific crop-pest situation by fed-



eral and provincial regulations and approved for use by the organic certification body. All grains, forages and protein supplements fed to livestock must be organically grown.

Organic food production prohibits using highly soluble or synthetically compounded mineral fertilizers, synthetically compounded pesticides, growth regulators, antibiotics, hormones, colouring or other artificial additives, ionizing radiation, and recombinant genetic engineered plants or animals (genetically engineered organisms - GEO). Prohibited products and practices must not be used on certified organic farms for at least three years prior to harvest of the certified organic products. Livestock must be raised organically and fed 100% organic feed ingredients.

Organic farming presents many challenges. Some crops are more difficult than others to grow. However, there are successful organic farmers in every county in Ontario producing almost every commodity. The main reasons farmers grow organically are concerns about the effects of chemicals on health and the effects of conventional farming on soil quality and conservation. All very good reasons to go organic.

Another reason is the demand for organic food within Ontario; there is a lot more interest in certified organic produce with the consumer willing to pay more than they would for conventional, pesticide laden alternatives - a great

...continued page 6



GREENWORKS



Spring 2008 Volume 2, Issue 1

Page 5

The Big Pipe Report

by YORK - SIMCOE NATURALISTS



York-Simcoe Naturalists (YSN) are an affiliated group of Ontario Nature. For over a year YSN attended public consultations for an extension of "big pipe" into Rogers Reservoir to service growth in Holland landing, Queensville and Sharon. This project is just one of many "big pipe" projects in York Region that take sewage to the Duffin's Creek treatment plant in Pickering, for discharge into Lake Ontario. The project would involve transferring large amounts of water out of the Lake Simcoe watershed to Lake Ontario. Recognizing the environmental impact of "intrabasin" transfers of this kind, Ontario and several US states signed an agreement last year under the Great Lakes Charter, where they agreed not to engage in these projects.

The study did not consider a local treatment plant on nearby Lake Simcoe as an alternative, despite findings in the past that it was preferable not to transfer water out of the Lake Simcoe watershed, and finding that it could service up to 52,500 people more and meet the phosphorus targets for Lake Simcoe. Heavy traffic volumes, noise, pollution and loss of farmland has characterized development in Newmarket and Bradford, surrounding the study area. While some new infrastructure is needed to service reasonable and approved growth in East Gwillimbury, and to remove the sewage lagoons in Holland Landing, YSN questions the need for a massive and extremely expensive and hard-to-service pipe installation, which puts no limits to growth on a very small area surrounded by Greenbelt.



Redside dace

The project will also have unknown, potentially serious impacts on the East Holland River at Roger's Reservoir, a provincially significant wetland. The proposed pipe route would require an 8m-wide access road and construction easement along the northern edge of the reservoir through habitat for a variety of threatened species (cut leaved cone flower, least bittern, Redside dace). The construction of the pipe would require the dewatering of this provincially significant wetland as well as one of only a few remaining Redside dace creeks near Sharon. The Redside dace is designated threatened under the Ontario Endangered Species Act. It is a species of special concern under the federal Species at Risk Act, and it is now under consideration for an endangered listing under federal legislation. YSN has made a submission in support of this designation.

YSN is extremely concerned about the effects of dewatering in the Rogers Reservoir and Sharon Creek vicinity. The 200 metre predicted dewatering radius encompasses most of the Reservoir wetland area. Despite the im-

portance of the fish spawning nursery, rare species and provincially significant wetland in that radius, no mitigation measures are explored or described in the Region's environmental assessment. The specific location of sensitive species, nesting sites, bird migration sites, amphibian habitat is not explored. The precise location of the route through, around, or near these features is not discussed. YSN sees nothing in the environmental assessment (EA) review to presume that compliance with provincial policies for these types of natural heritage features is possible or achievable.

In our view, the EA performed for this project was seriously deficient, by ignoring most of the impacts of the project, from sprawl, water use, endangered species, wetlands, pollution and lake levels, it corrupts any sensible understanding of what it means to do an "environmental assessment". YSN requested a "bump up" in August 2007 which would require further study to be done, in more detail. The Ontario Minister of the Environment is currently considering this request. We also requested a full environmental assessment hearing.

We believe that a class EA isn't detailed enough to fully assess the impact of this project on our community. The people of East Gwillimbury are at a major turning point, where development will soon be a major factor in our once quiet rural community. East Gwillimbury should not experience this change at the expense of environmental protection and careful planning.

You can make comments supporting the inclusion of the Redside dace in the "endangered" category under the federal Species at Risk Act by writing to the SARA freshwater recovery team fwisar@dfm-mpo.gc.ca until March 31, 2008.

Comments in support of YSN's bump-up request can be sent to the Ontario Minister of the Environment.

You can reach York-Simcoe Naturalists at ysnclub@yahoo.ca



GREENWORKS



Page 6

Spring 2008 Volume 2, Issue 1



MARKHAM - MAKING A DIFFERENCE

WHAT: ECOLOGICAL ACTION CONFERENCE (EAC) hosted by Youth Environmental Network of York Region (YENYR)

WHEN: April 9, 2008, 8:30am – 2:30pm
WHERE: Town of Markham Civic Centre



If you are a high school student or teacher in Markham and want to be part of environmental problem solving, then the Ecological Action Conference (EAC) hosted by YENYR is the event you need to attend.

In creating a stronger awareness of sustainability, EAC will be a platform for youth and educators of Markham to input and gain an understanding of their ecological impact on their community and the world. Initiatives will be developed so that participants will be able to make changes to reduce their ecological footprints.

To qualify as a participant, you must make a pledge to reduce your ecological footprint in some way. Register for the conference at www.yeny.com

YENYR gratefully acknowledges the support of these major sponsors:



60 EARTH HOUR – MARCH 29, 8PM - 9PM

If your municipality isn't joining the one hour electricity shutdown taking place all over the world, you can do it yourself in your own home. Turn off lights, computers, TVs and stereos. As symbolic as this event may be, isn't it a good time to reflect on the need for lasting measures?

Things to do in the dark –

- o Stargaze
- o Have a candlelit dinner
- o Go for a walk in the dark
- o Read poetry by candle light
- o Have conversations in the dark: tell secrets, truths, scary stories
- o Take a pledge to make a permanent difference to improve your environment
- o Have a discussion with a group of friends on how you can all make meaningful changes



THANKS!

We thank these ardent supporters for their donations:

Martin Chen, Adele Freeman, Catherine Marshall, Carel Moolman, Tim Rudkins & John Sguigna. The draw for a framed print was won by renewing member Carel Moolman.

Support of a different kind came from YREA's volunteer researcher, Cristina Amicucci who has been busy compiling data for us on biodegradable and recyclable packaging.

Local yes... cont'd from page 4

opportunity for interested farmers to switch to more sustainable organic practices.

My direct experience with local organic farming comes from volunteer work at the 35 acres Born Family Farm, a Biodynamic Farm located in Beeton, Ontario. The farm uses manual weeding and harvesting techniques, offering more physical challenges than most other farms, conventional or organic. For example, because the carrots and beets are pulled out of the ground by hand, Mr. Born can choose to plant varieties which are not possible to harvest with machinery. Once a week, Mr. Born drives his produce to the Village Market located at the Waldorf School in Thornhill, 65km from the farm. Here he not only sells his crop, but also shares his stories and gardening knowledge with customers -- a great value added when buying directly from the farmer!

Now that I am providing catering services on a full time basis, I try and buy most of the produce directly from local organic farmers markets. Supporting local organic farmers, gardeners and processors is an essential part of assuring that the very healthiest food gets to your table.

Source: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/06-103.htm> by Hugh Martin

Evelyne Gharibian is the owner of Hearty Catering www.heartycatering.com