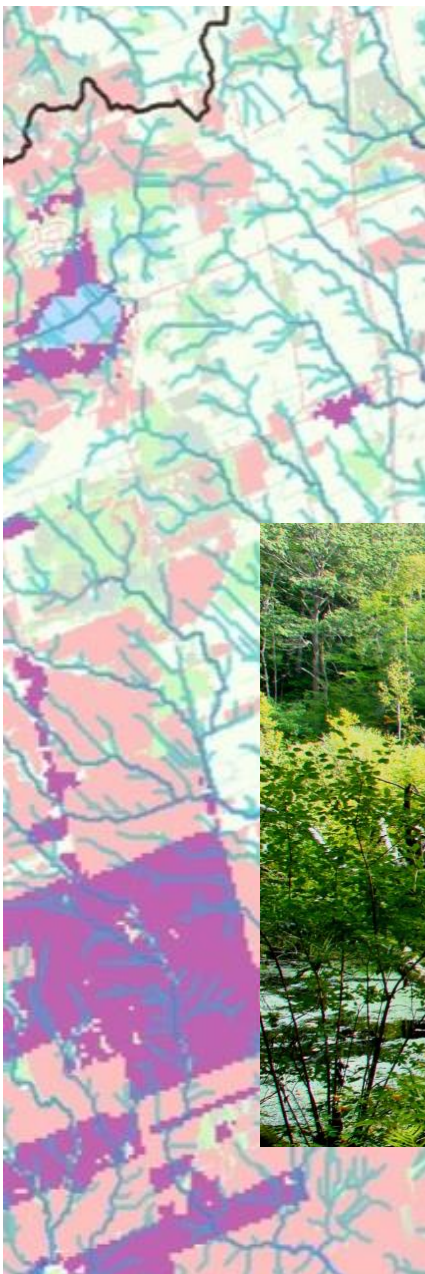


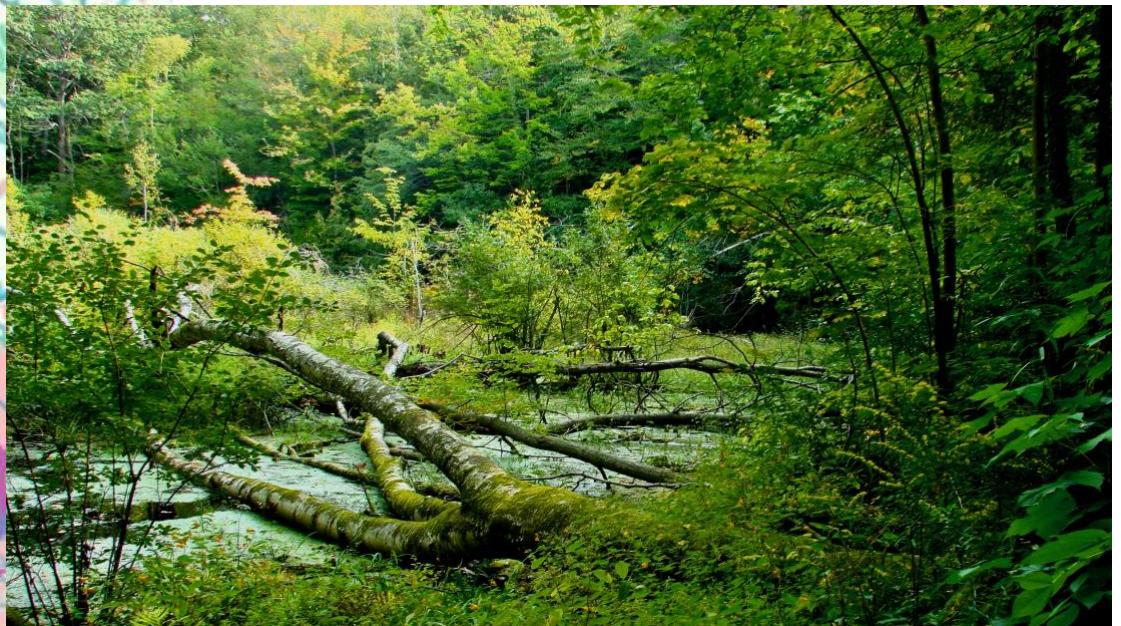


# York Region Environmental Alliance

*Advocating for environmental protection;  
raising awareness – pesticides & GMOs,  
ecological responsibility, reducing carbon footprint*



## 2020 Annual Report



# YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

## WHO WE ARE

Incorporated in 2002 to campaign against the cosmetic use of pesticides, the York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA), a registered charitable organization #: 84559 0553 RR0001 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, YREA's very popular quarterly News & Views [e-news](#), (over 750 subscribers) our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page (over 700 likes/followers).

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



## 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

Gloria Marsh, Executive Director

Abdullah Abbas, President

Susan Sigrist, Secretary

Liz Beesley, Joyfully Organic Farm

Donna Pearson, Director

Sylvia Halligan, Director

Don Harfield, Biochar Technical Advisor

Patty Ella, Accountant, PME Management Solutions

## 2020 ISSUES & ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

### YREA INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that we are located on the ancestral lands, sacred gathering places and traditional territories of many First Nations including the Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples. Through Truth and Reconciliation, may we follow the example of Indigenous peoples to honour and protect this Earth we call home.

Before our province was called Ontario it was Upper Canada and before that – from 1534 it was New France. It is home to many First Nations people. First Nations because they were here first, inhabiting this land for more than 10,000 years.

We have over 30,000 place names in Canada that are of Indigenous origin. These are often descriptive of the location named because of the inseparable spiritual connection First Nations have to not only land but also to water and air. They view their environment as sacred (we need to learn from them) and feel a responsibility for its preservation for future generations. On YREA's website we quote Chief Seattle who said 'whatever befalls the earth, befalls the children of the earth'. We wouldn't be in this climate change mess if more of us, including our leaders, took this message to heart.

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### SUSTAINABILITY SYMPOSIUM – FEBRUARY 9, 2020

YREA was fortunate to participate in this event hosted by Councillor David West in Richmond Hill. We were able to engage in person to person community outreach before Covid19 necessitated a lockdown.

**1st Sustainability Symposium  
in Richmond Hill**

Reducing our environmental footprint  
through sustainable practices

February 9th, 2020 - 1PM to 4PM  
Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts  
10268 Yonge St, Richmond Hill, ON L4C 3B7

**Join me!**

\*\*This is a free event and we encourage all to bring your  
donation for Richmond Hill Community Food Bank

**HOSTED BY**  
*Richmond Hill*  
**DAVID WEST**  
Ward 4 Councillor

**Sponsored by**  
CEDS Environmental Care

## ASSAULTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT CONTINUE

Independently, as well as jointly with many other NGOs, YREA made numerous appeals - provincially, regionally and municipally regarding irresponsible development proposals and bad policies that would negatively impact our environment. A sampling of some abridged YREA submissions follow -

### YORK REGION COUNCIL - RE: PROPOSED CHANGES TO PROVINCIAL GROWTH PLAN

**PROJECTING GROWTH TO 2051** is extremely foolhardy given that the province is using unfounded population forecasts. York Region is attracting far fewer residents than anticipated for growth to 2041 but proposed changes to the Growth Plan would allow municipalities to use even higher, tenuous population projections to guide future planning. This is very rash, crystal ball gazing, as there is already an over designation of land for future housing and employment without the unnecessary need of converting more farmlands, woodlands and wetlands into unrequired developments.

### EMPLOYMENT/RETAIL LAND NEEDS MUST BE RECONSIDERED

Build it and they may NOT come. Covid19 has changed employment space needs appreciably as it is estimated that fully 2/3 of employees will now permanently work remotely. Retail malls may also not be as utilized given that consumers are accessing online shopping for a good deal of their needs with companies now favouring and developing a greater online presence.

### CONSERVING FARMLAND & GREEN SPACES

This pandemic has also magnified the importance of local food security. If we are being denied face masks, what will happen when climate change and drought reduce agricultural capacity in the US? We could just as easily be denied food. Therefore it is essential that our farmland be conserved for growing healthy local food to meet the needs of our communities and not redesignated for more suburban sprawl, a model of the 1950s that should have been shelved decades ago. New high density and affordable



developments that lack conservation spaces will adversely affect the health and well-being of communities as is presently happening during Covid19. Apartments with no balconies; developments with no green space for walking & recreation will add immeasurably to mental & physical stress, urban heat island temperature increases & climate change.

### OAK RIDGES MORaine & WATERSHED PROTECTION

One of the Oak Ridges Moraine's most important functions is that it acts as a water recharge and discharge system. Paving it over with high density development needs to be considered in the context of past mistakes. After sewers were installed in the 1980s in Oak Ridges running east/west along North Lake Road toward Yonge, the gravel sewer bed wicked away the recharge water of the Humber Watershed that fed Lake Wilcox. This caused a dreadful decline in water quality of the lake. Channels had to be built to try to restore the recharge function to the lake. A lake lung was installed to try to clean up toxic blue green algae to no avail. It actually made it worse.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue sewer affected over 100 wells in Stouffville up to 15kms away. Major dewatering was required due to construction delays caused by deficient initial environmental assessments. Water that should be recharging the Rouge Watershed is to this day being wicked into the Pickering sewer system and the Rouge Watershed is still being adversely impacted. Paving over Moraine watersheds will contribute to more flooding and deprive us of clean drinking water on which millions of Ontarians depend. Nutrient loading in our watersheds can be better addressed by investing in improved farming practices such as transitioning to organic/regenerative systems rather than only in monitoring.

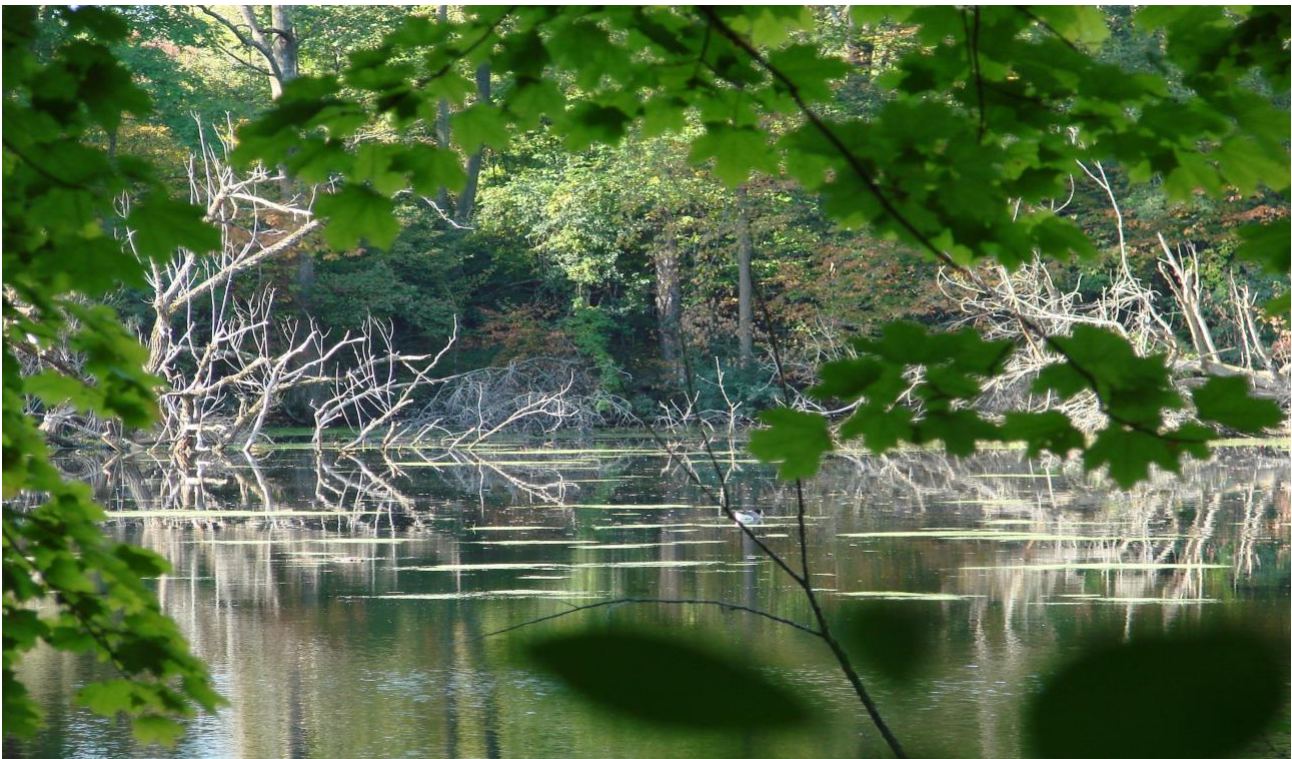
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## WETLANDS UNDER THREAT - DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

### RICHMOND HILL CITY FILES D01-20003 & D02-20009 13572 & 13586 BAYVIEW AVENUE

York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA) wrote in opposition to this development application and in support of preserving what is left of this already much compromised Forester Marsh, Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) within the Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) Wilcox-St. George Wetland Complex of the Humber Watershed. Oak Ridges Moraine wetlands are rare, covering only 2% of the land base and need to be protected.

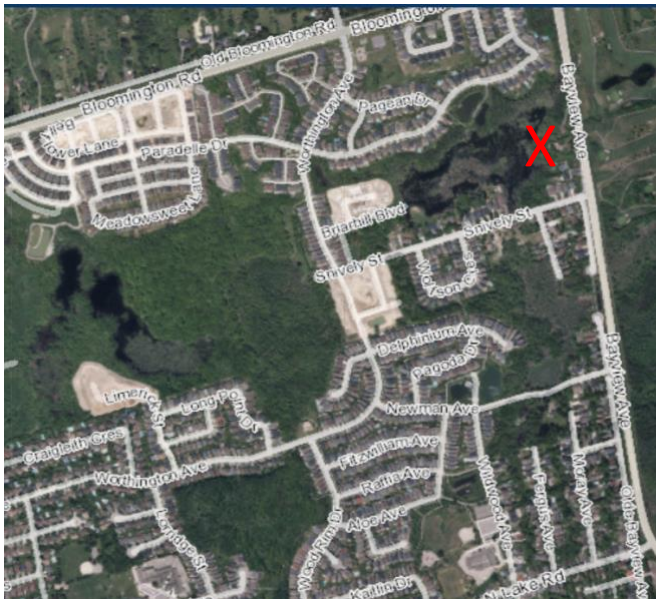
Wetlands are critical to water filtration, flood retention, erosion control, carbon storage, nutrient cycling and groundwater recharge. They also provide habitat for specialized wildlife communities and species at risk. Wetlands enhance our resilience to many of the anticipated impacts of climate change - including flooding, drought, loss of biodiversity and play a critical role in carbon storage. Yet encroachment and development are some of the factors that have left us with only 10% of our original wetlands in southern Ontario. It is not surprising that we are now prone to extreme flooding.



*Forester Marsh ESA, Wilcox – St. George Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW)*

## HOW MUCH DEVELOPMENT IS TOO MUCH?

In the MNR recommendations of May 2000 they emphasized the importance of maintaining wetland function so as to accommodate seasonal water fluctuations and cautioned that even minor alterations could have dramatic impacts. Who chose not to listen? Its recharge and discharge function has been seriously compromised as noted in the TRCA report where existing flooding issues persist and will only get worse with more development, additional stormwater and paved surfaces. Comparing the images from the present with 1970 it is evident that we are at a tipping point in overdevelopment in this area.



Cautionary tales from the past:

- Homeowner & builder on North Lake Rd had to dig 16' foundations because of unstable peat soil.
- During pile driving of foundations of a house on Lakeland Crescent an adjacent home suffered a shift, a shattered sliding back door and a cabinet dislodged from a wall.
- A faulty dewatering system in a condo in Richmond Hill resulted in the sand and soil layer under the building gradually being pumped away. The building became unstable. It was evacuated for months while remedial work was done. This included filling voids in the substratum, replacing the lost soil and stabilizing the structure. The remedial work cost more than \$7 million.

Building in a bog. Who will be held liable when similar occurrences happen in this project, the developer or the City that permitted this development? Because it is imprudent to build here, this development will unleash untold problems. Even an impact analysis (IA) which would have assessed the opportunities to mitigate and diminish the extent and nature of the effect to habitat both on- and off-site, short and long-term outcomes, could not have endorsed this development. As YREA cannot envision any ecological offsetting that could make this project viable, we therefore suggest avoidance as a means to prevent irreversible damage from occurring by changing location of this development. Could there be a land swap? Could the developer gift this area to the TRCA or Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust in exchange for a tax receipt? These issues need to be explored.

## MINISTER'S ZONING ORDER (MZO)

A Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) is part of the Planning Act; it allows the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to make a ruling on how a piece of land is to be used and zoned in the province, with no opportunity for appeal by municipalities or citizens. Formerly used in emergencies, over 33 MZOs were issued in just a year with developers ready to embrace this route as a way to avoid the local planning process. This method of fast tracking development will take away decision making from municipalities, do long term damage to the environment and enable more sprawl to devour Ontario farmland.

### MZO ISSUED IN AURORA WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH TOWN

YREA'S comments below were sent to numerous provincial ministers as well as Aurora Town Council

#### RE: POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR 50 - 100 BLOOMINGTON RD. WEST

This is a property that if developed with enough forethought and the existing environment in mind could be a beautiful enhancement to the Town of Aurora and the Oak Ridges Moraine. There is space to build a long term care home at the northern boundary while still being able to preserve the Pineridge Wetland Complex at the southwest corner and the forest at the eastern side. These locally significant wetlands, evaluated in 2018 by Ontario Streams occur in a mix of rolling forested lands and regenerating meadows among public institutional buildings and estate residential homes and are linked by intervening forests, hedgerows and meadows. There is wildlife movement between the wetlands within the complex and from the surrounding uplands connecting to a major east-west corridor of the Oak Ridges Moraine. This area is home to 13 mammals, 10 reptiles and amphibians. The populations of Wood Frog, Gray Treefrog, Spring Peeper and American Toad rely on the wetlands for breeding, but forage and hibernate in upland forests and, in the case of the toads, upland meadows.



To ensure wetland function it is important to maintain and take into account water quality, quantity and seasonal duration during any building construction. Alterations to water regimes, such as additional impermeable paving could have impacts on wetland communities and their resident species.

The two kettle wetlands are particularly sensitive to hydrological changes since they are reliant on the surrounding kettle slopes for their water supply. The wetlands do not have any outflows, and therefore any substances that enter the wetlands remain there. The kettle slopes currently in a natural state, help absorb and mitigate deleterious substances and help maintain water balance. Maintaining and enhancing these kettle slopes in a natural state are critical to protect the features, the interconnected network of wetlands and uplands, species and community biodiversity.

There could be a wonderful opportunity to develop partnerships with students of the adjacent Cardinal Carter High School for trail building, tree planting and restoration in the areas marked with an **X** and citizen scientists for plant and wildlife identification and wetland monitoring as we look to more outdoor learning and encourage an appreciation of nature. As we become more urbanized, wild places are being sacrificed to make way for playing fields. Yes, playing fields encourage athletes, but we also need natural spaces to provide the environment which will nurture diverse citizenry such as artists, biologists, naturalists, photographers and scientists as well as athletes. Covid19 has made us all realize more than ever, the importance of these green spaces for our wellbeing and mental health. The Auditor General of Ontario would certainly agree.

Ms Lysyk has also taken the province to task regarding not meeting GHGE targets and not improving building standards. Would be worthwhile to emulate British Columbia on the green building front and this [checklist](#) could be helpful for both a visionary developer and the province. Easily doable would be green/solar roof, greywater reuse, permeable paving (a must), solar covered parking lots, EV charging area, naturalized landscaping to support pollinators and for the enjoyment of visitors. The initial investment in a green building would provide a good level of self-sufficiency, energy savings, cut GHGE and costs in the long term and could be a template for meeting improved building standards in the construction sector.

York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA) has been appalled by the growing number of development proposals that have had absolutely no consideration for the environment. This is an opportunity to design and build in a holistic manner - taking into account, respecting and enhancing the natural environment while providing an outstanding building for the health needs of the community. Given that inadequate health care & deaths have been consistently higher in for profit long term care facilities YREA asks, will this project again be for profit at the expense of people in its care or for the people?

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## MARYLAKE MZO REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FROM KING COUNCIL

### RE: GMS-PL-2020-28 AUGUSTINIAN FATHERS (ONTARIO) KING TOWNSHIP

Minister's Zoning Orders are being granted helter-skelter across the province without public consultations or necessary studies and environmental assessments. New Tecumseth Council denied support for 3 MZOs with one Councillor noting that the cost to get water to the development areas in



question would be too high for a long-term care facility. These are the self-same issues that need to be considered in King Township before bulldozing ahead.

Although the project does have merit, careful scrutiny with appropriate scientific studies are even more necessary than usual given that the subject lands are on the Oak Ridges Moraine and should comply with the ORMCP and King's OP. The fact that the province is taking power away from municipalities and can ignore important protection plans via MZOs is extremely troubling. There is a reason these plans were enacted and to circumvent them would be foolhardy.

Public input can be invaluable to refining and improving a development application. What is worth doing is worth doing well, which means due diligence and taking the time to get it right. Disorderly haste in ramming this through could potentially lead to missteps and regrets in the future. YREA also questions the need for yet another conference centre when King already has Eaton Hall and Kingbridge.

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## CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES' ROLE IN LAND USE PLANNING - WATERSHED PROTECTION STRIPPED BY PROVINCE



York Region along with other municipalities, YREA & over 100 NGOs could not dissuade the province from enacting Bill 229 which effectively transfers power to issue permits from CAs to the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry (MNRF). CAs provide much-valued bridges across municipal boundaries to understand & address environmental concerns such as flooding. Because they operate at the watershed level, they are ideally positioned to encourage science-based collaborative strategies and decision-making. Ontario cannot remove the mandates of CAs for the preservation of land & watershed management without dire future consequences.

Among the key concerns identified in Schedule 6 Bill 229 are:

- Narrowing of the scope and powers of Conservation Authorities, impeding the achievement of the overall purpose of the CAs, which is to provide for the organization and delivery of programs and services that further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources in watersheds in Ontario;
- Restricting the duties of Conservation Authorities' members so that they no longer must act to further the watershed-based mandates of the Conservation Authorities, but rather can act only on behalf of the narrower interests of their respective municipalities;
- Reducing the ability of Conservation Authorities to act as independent public bodies in land use planning, including removing their ability to seek to appeal municipal planning decisions;
- Introducing new rights for developers to force fast-tracking of development approvals and to appeal decisions they do not like, without providing the same opportunity to citizens who may wish to challenge decisions that damage the environment;
- Giving the Minister new power to overturn a conservation authority's decision to refuse to issue a development permit.

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

Canadian Organic Growers  
Food and Water First  
Friends of the Earth Canada  
Land Over Landings  
Ontario Clean Air Alliance  
Ontario Environmental Alliance  
Ontario Greenbelt Alliance

Ontario Headwaters Institute  
Ontario Nature  
Ontario Urban Tree Council  
Ontario Zero Waste Coalition  
Organic Growers of Ontario  
Rodale Institute  
Safe Food Matter

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## SNIPPETS FROM YREA'S E-NEWSLETTERS

In spite of Covid19 restrictions YREA was able to still connect with many hundreds of people digitally via our quarterly newsletters. This platform enables us to promote an understanding of sustainability issues and provide information to help us think of our choices in terms of their impact on human & environmental health, our natural resources & our planet Earth.

**WINTER 2020** besides providing a snapshot of news, dealt with ways to detox our homes by switching to nontoxic cleaners, provided reasoning behind the DIRTY DOZEN, a list of vegetables to avoid that have high pesticide residues. YREA was also glad to announce a local source for compostable cups, plates, bowls & food containers to replace polystyrene.

**SPRING 2020** among other issues, advocated for clover in our lawns, wider boulevards to plant larger trees to mitigate urban heat island effects & commended York Region for declaring green infrastructure a 'must have' rather than just 'nice to have'.

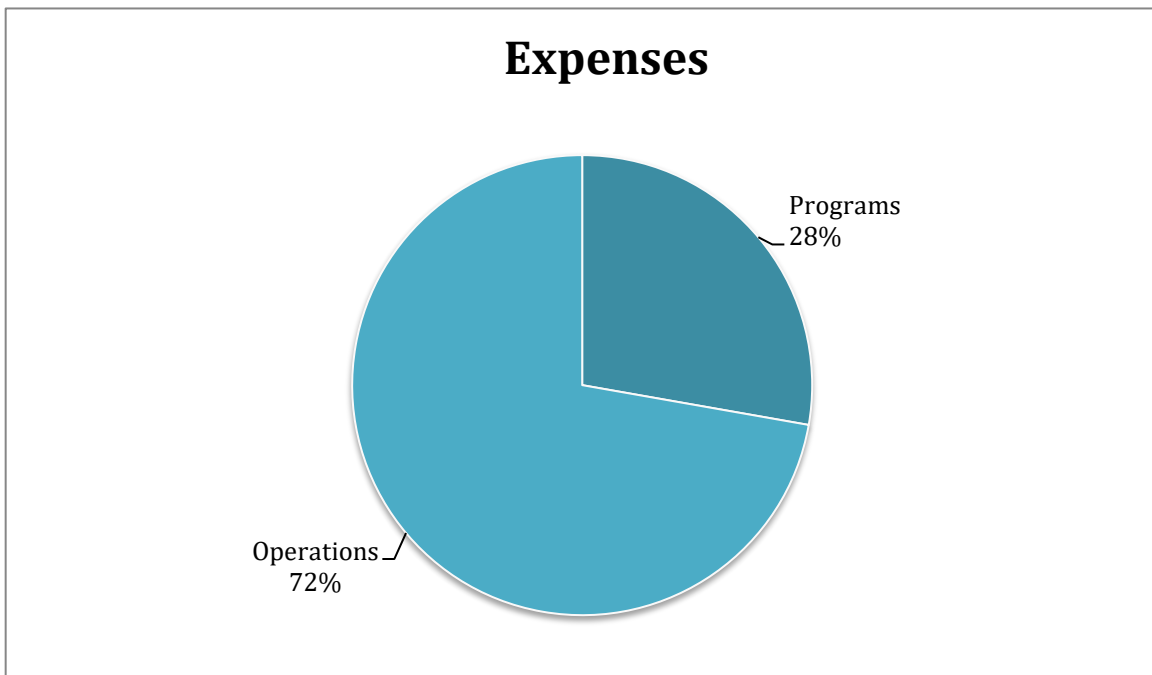
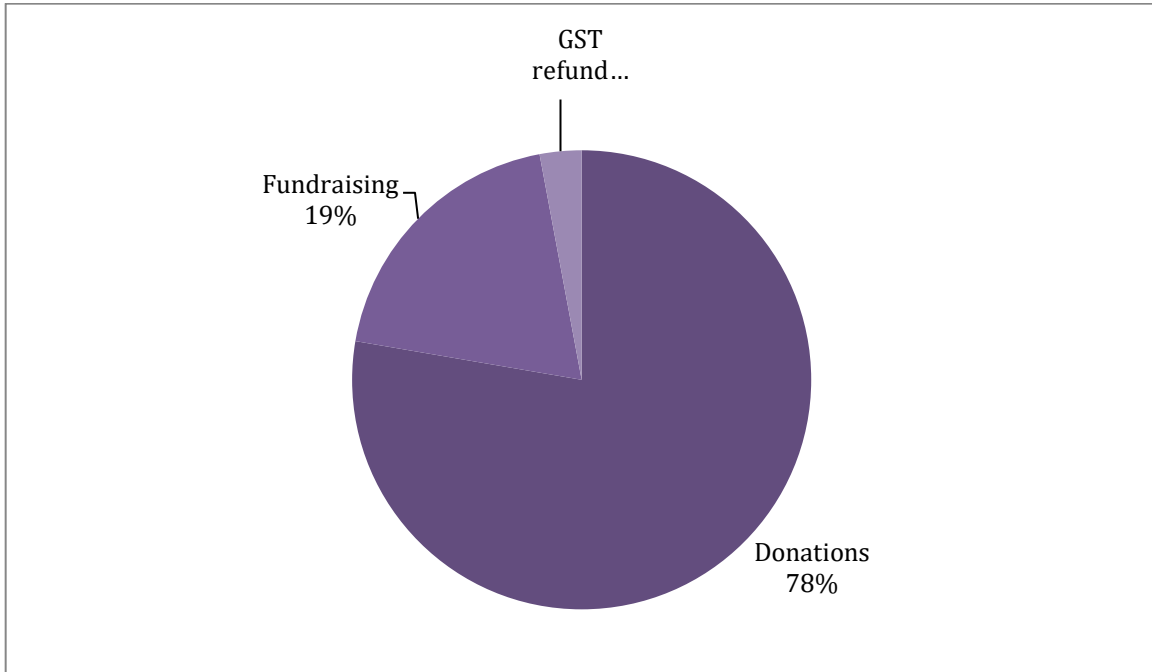
**SUMMER 2020** advocated for organic agriculture, that green roofs be the law everywhere & that people sign a petition calling for GMO labelling. This issue also showcased Joyfully Organic Farm with their cut flower & farm share programs. Local source for paper straws to replaced plastic announced.

**AUTUMN 2020** reported on government initiatives or lack thereof, provided reasoning in support of Canadian milk, Ontario wines & local organic, fair trade coffee roaster. We also reminded subscribers of YREA's SHOP LIKE THE PLANETS WATCHING downloadable booklet.

In every issue we highlight nature activities. Although 2020 curtailed most group events, even outdoors, people can still appreciate green spaces on their own when they become aware of what is out there.



2020 FINANCIAL YEAR END



OUR HEARTFELT THANKS TO ALL DONORS AND ESPECIALLY TO THOSE  
WHO HAVE SUSTAINED YREA WITH ANNUAL DONATIONS  
WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE

**GUARDIAN \$2000 & UP**

Gloria Marsh  
*(donation in kind)*

Stephen Cockle  
Terry Knight  
Mark Hubbard & Susan Sigrist  
Angela Marsh & Justin Keating

**PROTECTOR \$1000 - \$1999**

Marilyn Isaac Stewart



Donna Pearson  
Leah Taylor Roy  
David Schneck

**CUSTODIAN \$500 - \$999**

Tom Waechter  
Anonymous

**STEWARD \$200 - \$499**

Leslie Atkinson  
Diane Keating  
Sylvia Halligan  
Gloria Marsh

**FRIEND \$25 - \$99**

Abdullah Abbas  
Victor Axiotis  
Marney Beck  
Karen Cilevitz  
Tanya Marsh  
Cathy Nesbitt

**KEEPER \$100 - \$199**

Sharon & Jim Bradley

Many thanks to YREA's fundraiser supporters -  
Diane Keating, Lee Adamson, Susan Sigrist & Marsha Cave which earned \$975

YREA does not do any costly mailings or separate email solicitations,  
which makes us doubly grateful for the kindness of our donors


Thanks to our board members for their continued volunteer commitment to YREA

## LOOKING BACK AT 2020 & AHEAD TO 2021 FOR YREA

2020 followed 2019 with even more advocacy and letter writing. The enormous amount of issues of concern have not diminished but only grown. YREA even wrote as far afield as Moncton NB Council in support of [Sylvain Ward's](#) front yard veggie garden. More people left the confines of their homes to get out in nature & that was a good thing, as hopefully this worthy habit will become a part of our lives.

### YREA's 2021 FOCUS:

- Pesticides & GMOs
- Organic food/agriculture/organic farmland conservation
- Solar paneled parking lots
- Biochar
- SMRs -Small modular NUCLEAR reactors
- Webinar development of YREA's workshops. Made available to schools, educators, libraries, health & community centres for their virtual programming & downloadable from YREA's website for the general public.



### Pesticides & GMOs what you need to know

YREA presents food for thought on the impact of pesticides & GMOs on human health & the environment

York Region Environmental Alliance – [yrea.org](http://yrea.org)  
raising awareness of toxic substances since 2002

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