



York Region Environmental Alliance

*Advocating for green energy alternatives,
waste reduction; raising awareness –
pesticides & GMOs, ecological responsibility*

2021 Annual Report



pesticides sprayed on crops as desiccant just before harvest

YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

WHO WE ARE

Incorporated in 2002 to campaign against the cosmetic use of pesticides, York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA), a registered charitable organization since 2008 #: 84559 0553 RR0001 has continually expanded its mandate to address ecological issues that impact our health and the health of our environment. Due to Covid19 restrictions in 2021, we did not participate in community events but were able to engage the public virtually and through YREA's very popular quarterly e-news (over 750 subscribers) our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page (over 900 likes/followers).

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



2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

Gloria Marsh, Executive Director

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Sylvia Halligan

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PME Management Solutions

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. First Nations, because they were here first, inhabiting this land for more than 12,000 years.

There are 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, air, plants and animals. They view their environment as sacred and feel a responsibility for its preservation for future generations. As Chief Seattle once said 'whatever befalls the earth, befalls the children of the earth'. Through Truth and Reconciliation, may we follow the example of Indigenous peoples to honour and protect this Earth we call home.

2021 ISSUES & ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS (ABRIDGED)

SOLAR COVERED PARKING LOT FEDERAL FUNDING REQUEST

York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA) began deputations to municipalities in York Region Ontario to advocate for solar covered parking lot pilot projects at suitable locations so as to become more self-reliant in our renewable energy needs. YREA supported York Region's request to the province that Ontario phases out natural gas fired electricity, estimated to raise our GHGE by over 300%. Ramping up natural gas to provide electricity will not get us to the Canadian clean electricity goal of net-zero emissions before 2050. We need to seize the opportunity & show that we do not want to contribute to climate change in this way but instead undertake local initiatives to reduce our environmental burden. Nor will small nuclear reactors fill the bill with their dangerous wastes as [YREA previously](#) pointed out.

Example of what could be done



Solar is already available for immediate, safe energy generation. We therefore request this government to announce a fund in support of local green energy projects for municipalities that wish to install solar covered parking lots at locations such as civic centres, schools, libraries and hospitals to generate on site energy for adjacent buildings and EV charging stations.



With federal funding this could be a nation-wide effort that Canada would be proud to showcase. It would also support our local economy and employment by using Canadian companies to fulfill these contracts. Read [media coverage](#) for Newmarket and King Township [presentations](#).

SUBMISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT

Independently, as well as jointly with many other NGOs, YREA made numerous appeals - provincially, regionally, municipally and federally on many issues. A sampling of abridged YREA submissions:

SUPPORT INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF FEDERAL PESTICIDE REGULATIONS

While YREA is thankful for this overdue review we are still very concerned by industry influence:

1. The fact that over 125,000 successful lawsuits against Monsanto/Bayer for cancer caused by glyphosate has not raised a red flag with Health Canada. Instead the Minister of Agriculture handed out over \$244,000 to support the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity's (CCFI) work to 'build public trust' in our food system. Given that Bayer/Monsanto and [Dow Chemical/Corteva](#) are members of this consortium, Canada, in our view, is only funding more **deceptive propaganda**. How can the promise of a pesticide review be independent of corporate influence when funding is given to CCFI some of whose members produce these toxins?
2. The Pest Management Review Agency (PMRA) began looking to increase Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) of pesticides by huge amounts in food **at the request of Bayer**. Super weeds, having become resistant to pesticides, require larger, more toxic amounts and the practice of spraying glyphosate as a desiccant just before harvest is leaving higher quantities of pesticide residues on many conventional crops. Why would the PMRA go along with this when countries like Italy have already reduced their Canadian [wheat imports](#) because they deem pesticide residues too high at our current levels?
3. Continued use of the neonic imidacloprid. Health Canada's PMRA chose to use data received from an industry-led Water Monitoring Working Group, which includes Bayer, Syngenta and the Canadian Canola Growers Association. PMRA threw out research findings from Environment Canada and independent scientists and completely reversed their earlier proposed decision to ban imidacloprid. Read [complete submission here](#).



RIGHT TO REPAIR FEDERAL LEGISLATION

YREA strongly supports the Federal government in the implementation of right to repair legislation as part of the circular economy so that manufacturers of machinery, electronics, home appliances - both large and small, are required to make their products repairable for at least 10 years after first coming to market. The lifespan of consumer goods has drastically been reduced over the last decade, making us involuntarily a throwaway society and contributing to a burgeoning waste and landfill problem.

Although Repair Cafés are springing up in Canada, it is challenging both to get parts and to repair products that are poorly made and unfixable. The world's consumption of materials has quadrupled since 1970 to 100bn tonnes while our population has only doubled. Federal Right to Repair legislation would result in emission and resource extraction reductions and would be one more step in getting us to our 1.5°C climate goal. Transitioning to a circular economy worldwide is estimated to reduce GHGE by 39%. [Read more](#).

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & PERMEABLE PAVING

YREA commented to Vaughan (Urban Water Plan EA) and Richmond Hill (permeable paving motion) on the importance of green infrastructure which should never be replaced solely by permeable paving:

- Green infrastructure in the form of stormwater ponds provide ecosystem services such as **temperature regulation**, water purification and natural aesthetics while supporting biodiversity through habitat creation for aquatic, riparian and other wildlife species which are a pleasure to observe at our neighbourhood ponds. However, the function of stormwater ponds would be greatly improved if the soil at time of construction was of higher quality, thus ensuring the survival of more trees which absorb large amounts of water through their roots. Tree planting also supports erosion control but again, survival rates would rise with better soil at time of planting.
- Permeable paving is an excellent way of keeping water at its source and these materials need to be mandated in any new developments and renovations. There are locally manufactured [permeable paving](#) options that are also [environmentally friendly](#) derived from recycled rubber tires and plastic with 20 year guarantees. A more flexible surface than concrete for sidewalks would be applauded by joggers who often can be seen using roads instead.
- Some residents who live in compact housing are paving over their entire properties for more parking. Not only does this contribute to the urban heat island effect, but also to large amounts of stormwater runoff. Permeable paving would certainly have a positive impact of water flow in these situations.
- Residents need to be directed to disconnect downspouts from storm sewers, thereby providing more water for their gardens and be informed about the detrimental impact of the overuse of road salt on the environment and the use of other alternatives.
- With the loss of trees due to disease, it is imperative to keep planting trees not only to mitigate climate change with carbon capture but to cool the environment and absorb large quantities of water.

SUPPORT OF LOCAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

YREA provided numerous submissions to Richmond Hill, York Region & Pickering. Abridged comments: Traditional farming of 200 years ago morphed into conventional agriculture after WW2 with a heavy reliance on and steady increase of chemical fertilizers and pesticide use. These detrimental farming practices have contributed to soil erosion and degradation through loss of organic matter, air and water pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss and the release of billions of tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere. We need to fix what



we broke and regenerative organic farming is the start. Organic urban agriculture is a growing worldwide movement. It does not use the same amount of heavy machinery and toxic chemicals of conventional agriculture so can easily be incorporated near our more populated areas. Examples of success include [Detroit Michigan](#) and right here in the GTA south of Steeles [Black Creek Farm](#). **Retaining countryside designation** would not put the cost out of reach for new stakeholders willing to bring back to life farms that would nurture the next generation of young farmers committed to providing us with healthy local organic food which we could actually eat while preserving and enhancing the environment instead of destroying it.

YREA SIGNED ON TO THE FOLLOWING JOINT SUBMISSIONS:

ONTARIO ERO# 019-2811 Opposing changes to Planning Act provisions, by expressing concern for the sharp increase in the inappropriate use of MZO's and the enhanced powers given to the MMAH without public input. The insidious pattern of environmental deregulation threatens farmland and natural areas including Provincially Significant Wetlands. 70 groups asked for an immediate repeal. [Read more](#)

PLASTIC POLLUTION The federal government was asked to expedite a ban on single use manufactured plastics by 29 groups who alluded to the adverse effects on wildlife and ecosystems with the 7.900 tonnes of plastic waste that are dumped daily in our landfills and environment. [Read more](#)

BRADFORD BYPASS EA REQUEST The current proposed route would fragment & destroy fish, migratory bird and species at risk habitat as well as farmland. There are less detrimental route options which need to be considered through a federal impact assessment review said 63 groups. [Read more](#)

EXPANDING ONTARIO'S GREENBELT Over 90 groups and individuals offered a new blueprint for expanding Ontario's Greenbelt that would increase the amount of farmland and natural spaces by protecting ecologically significant areas from urban sprawl to Steve Clark, MMAH. The requirements:

- Retain all lands currently protected within the Greenbelt
- Build on science and public consultation carried out during the recent boundary expansion review
- Simultaneously address public health, local food security, water security, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation and economic prosperity
- Acknowledge that there is more than enough land available to both expand the Greenbelt and build complete communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- Consult meaningfully with Indigenous communities [Read full submission here](#)



MZO DENIED FOR ORM/GREENBELT IN GORMLEY



Gormley tree tunnel Leslie St. ORM/Greenbelt

It is with great relief that YREA acknowledged the news that the Ontario government has denied the Richmond Hill request to open up Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt lands for industrial and settlement use. Gormley is a Heritage Conservation District that needs to be protected. By not paving over this strategic Moraine/Rouge Headwaters any further, there will be less risk of future flooding & an important drinking water source will be protected.

YREA is a member and/or supporter of these organizations:

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 Zero Waste Coalition
Organic Growers of Ontario
Rodale Institute
Safe Food Matter
Stop the Spray ON/Canada

SNIPPETS FROM YREA'S 2021 E-NEWS & MEDIA

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 and environmental health, our natural resources and our planet.

WINTER 2021 discussed the dangers of small modular nuclear reactor proliferation; ethical, responsible investing; detoxing our homes by learning what products are detrimental to the environment; reducing plastic waste by refilling and replenishing; alerting consumers of imported fake honey.

SPRING 2021 drew attention to the harm to wildlife and their habitats of spraying glyphosate to control invasive Phragmites when there are biological controls that only target the grass; right to repair must become a law with refurbished options available to consumers; support for local organic farmers; YREA organic gardening and SHOP LIKE THE PLANET'S WATCHING workshop announcements.

SUMMER 2021 pointed out the environmental benefits of switching to synthetic oil; not to overdo the barbequing so as to avoid carcinogenic chemicals that can lead to cancers and respiratory disease; protected places, a shared vision for Ontario; ID apps for plants, bugs and trees to enhance enjoyment and understanding of nature when in the great outdoors.

AUTUMN 2021 highlighted Fresh Acres organic farm in King township and their wonderful locally grown legumes; how we can reap the benefits of NO MOW MAY when municipalities have the sense to support rather than persecute; plastic resolution endorsed by York Region, caution regarding the greenwashing of 'biodegradable' plastics; stop the spray of pesticides on public land.

YREA began providing links to our government submissions (17 this year) in our e-news so subscribers, members & donors are able to access our responses to matters of concern.

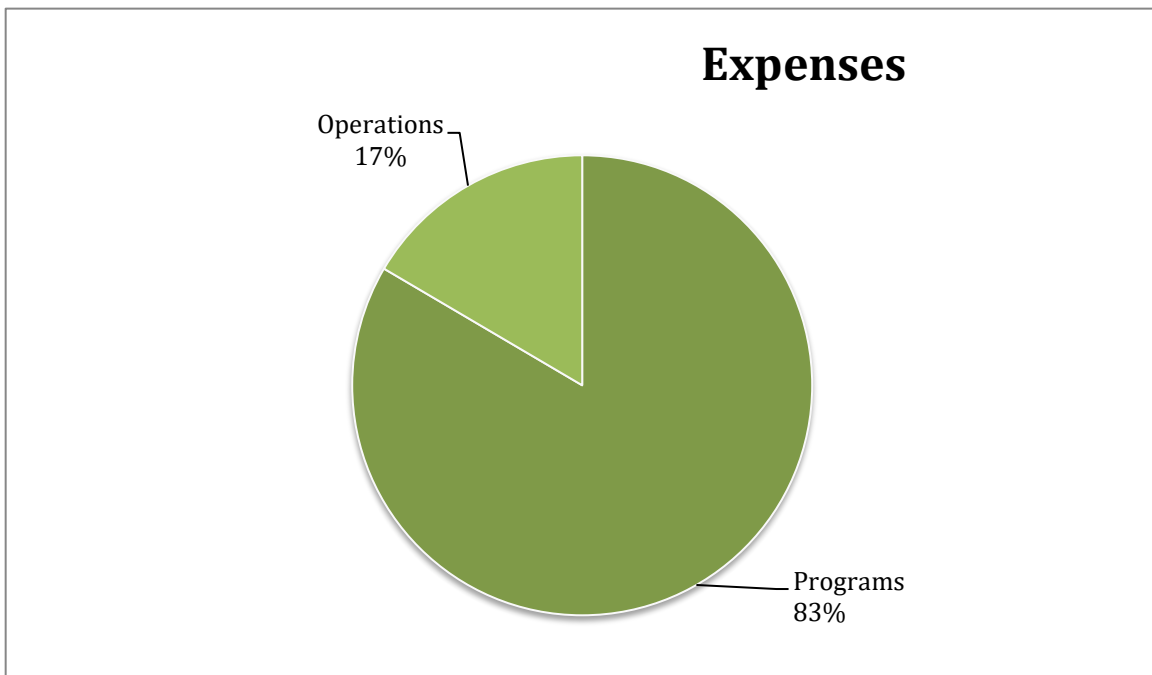
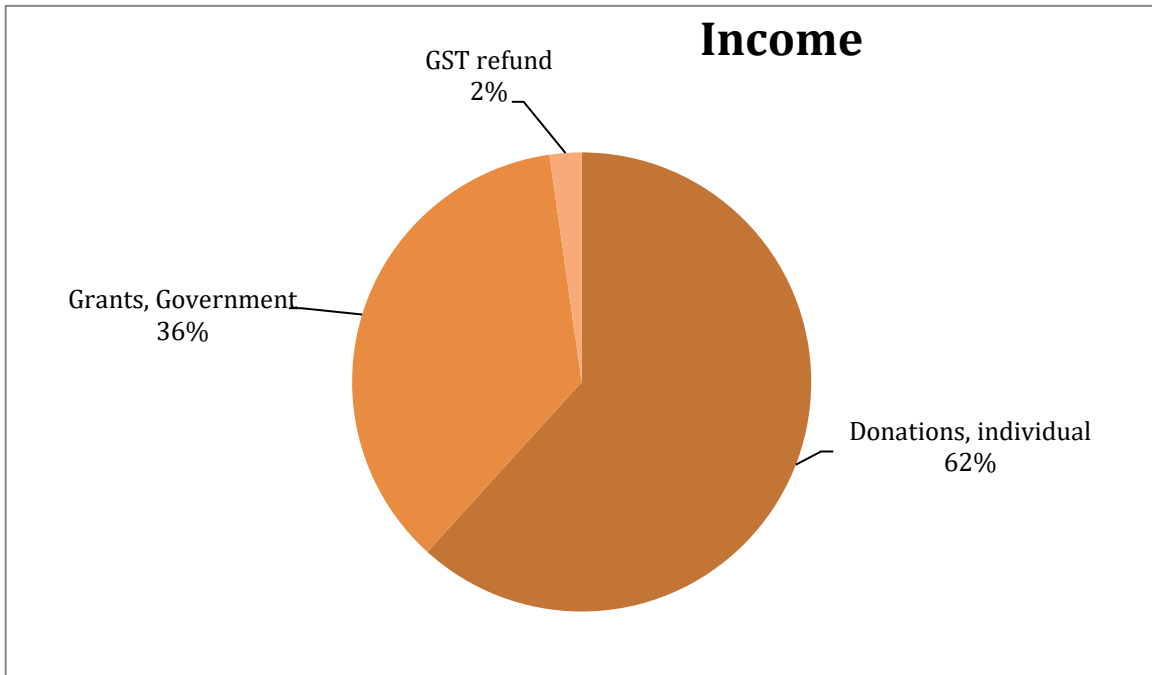
In each issue we highlighted nature activities. Although many group events, even outdoors, were still being curtailed in 2021, people can nonetheless appreciate green spaces on their own when they become aware of what is out there for them to enjoy.

YREA's garlic mustard information received [media coverage](#) helping to raise awareness of this invasive plant.



YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

2021 FINANCIAL YEAR END



**A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO ALL DONORS AND ESPECIALLY TO THOSE
WHO HAVE SUSTAINED YREA WITH ANNUAL DONATIONS
WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE**

GUARDIAN \$2000 & MORE

Mayor Bevilacqua, City of Vaughan
Gloria Marsh (*donation in kind*)

PROTECTOR \$1000 - \$1999

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CUSTODIAN \$500 - \$999

Gloria Marsh

STEWARD \$200 - \$499

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Catherine Marshall
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Tom Waechter
Anonymous

FRIEND \$25 - \$99

Donna Pearson
Canada Centre for Conscious Awareness
Corey Stinson



Sincere gratitude to Vaughan & Mayor Bevilacqua's Spirit of Generosity donation. This enabled YREA to develop digital programming of our workshops which we provided free of charge to libraries and the community. Funding was also earmarked towards ongoing pesticide research, advocacy & education.

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

Big thanks to our board members for their continued volunteer commitment to YREA

LOOKING BACK AT 2021 & AHEAD TO 2022 FOR YREA

2021 was another busy year. However, YREA's advocacy is reaping results as we are sought out to engage with various levels of government willing to heed our concerns. Now to direct ACTION In 2022.

On the local level, although municipalities encourage naturalization and call themselves Bee Cities there is still not enough education to get residents off cookie cutter lawns and instead plant for the birds, bees and butterflies. The fact that municipalities actually respond to complaints about wild gardens and issue infraction notices without instead providing information on why they are so beneficial is shameful. [Read more](#)

Through Aurora & Richmond Hill public libraries as well as at our 2021 AGM we delivered 4 presentations on [organic gardening](#), [pesticide education](#) & [sustainable consumerism](#) which drew over 200 viewers with more scheduled for 2022. Virtual communications has allowed us to reach a much wider audience from further afield.



YREA's 2022 ADVOCACY FOCUS:

- STOP THE SPRAY of glyphosate of forests on public/crown land
- Solar covered parking lots in municipalities
- Right to repair legislation/circular economy
- Rewilding and naturalization
- Pesticides & GMOs research/advocacy/education
- Organic food/agriculture/farmland conservation

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Hardwoods destroyed by aerial spraying of glyphosate, Boreal forest, Canada