



York Region Environmental Alliance

*Advocating for pollinators & habitat gardens,
organic local food, watershed protection;
raising awareness – environmental toxins,
pesticides & GMOs, ecological responsibility*

2025

Annual Report



Winter pollinator patch

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. We engage the public at community events and virtually through YREA's very popular quarterly e-news (over 800 subscribers) our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page (over 500 followers).

York Region Environmental Alliance is governed and administered by a volunteer board of directors. We employ an arm's length accounting service to provide an annual financial statement.

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

Gloria Marsh, Executive Director

Susan Sigrist, President/Chair

Sylvia Halligan, Secretary

Donna Pearson

Liz Beesley, Joyfully Organic Farm

Wai-Ting (Elizabeth) Liu

Patty Ella, Accountant, 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. May we follow the example of Indigenous peoples to honour and protect this Earth we call home.

2025 ISSUES & ACTIVITIES - SUBMISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT

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

LETTER TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: PESTICIDES, HEALTH, TRADE

June 17, 2025

Prime Minister Mark Carney mark.carney@parl.gc.ca

Minister of Trade Dominic LeBlanc dominic.leblanc@parl.gc.ca

Minister of Agriculture Heath MacDonald heath.macdonald@parl.gc.ca

Minister of Health Marjorie Michel Marjorie.michel@parl.gc.ca

Minister of Foreign Affairs Anita Anand anita.anand@parl.gc.ca

Yves-Francois Blanchet yves-francois.blanchet@parl.gc.ca

RE: PESTICIDES, HEALTH, TRADE

Canada rates 38th in population but [5th in pesticide use](#). We fall behind nearly 90 per cent of countries in the world when it comes to banning harmful pesticides, including the European Union. The EU has banned or not approved 383 pesticide ingredients while Canada has prohibited only 28. How does Canada expect to increase trade with the EU unless we align our laws with these countries, including Italy that has drastically [reduced Canadian wheat](#) imports because we allow 500 times more pesticide residue than they do? Like the EU, Canada has committed to reducing the risk of pesticides by at least 50 per cent by 2030, yet a 50% reduction will be nowhere near enough to reach the 383 prohibited in the EU.

Our food chain is significantly impacted by pesticides leading to so many [health issues and diseases](#), it is no wonder we have a health crisis. We could save billions in health care costs by simply moving to regenerative/organic agriculture and one of the reasons YREA advocates for [organic food in schools](#).

Pesticides are also toxic to pollinators, beneficial insects, birds, mammals, amphibians and fish. Seven different pesticides were found in hundreds of dead and dying monarchs at an overwintering site. Organic farming practices provide a healthy alternative to the detrimental effects of chemicals that pollute the environment and all organisms within it. Organic land management protects all species, including pollinators that are crucial to [agricultural and economic productivity and food security](#), and also mitigates the crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.

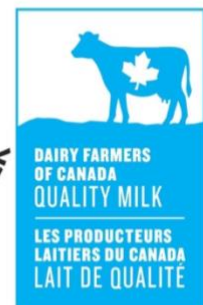
YREA fully concurs with Monsieur Blanchet that Canada must retain domestic dairy control in any trade renegotiations with the USA so we do not permit any more US products into our country. Although it is banned in Canada and the EU, the USA allows bovine growth hormones (rBGH). Canada will remain at a competitive disadvantage unless we align our laws with enlightened countries so we can expand trade and develop new trade opportunities.

rBGH = GMOs in US DAIRY

Although banned in most industrialized nations due to health risks to humans & harm to animals, genetically engineered recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) is injected into dairy cows in the US to increase milk production. Some serious concerns include:

- Increased many health problems in cows, including mastitis that can lead to bacteria and pus in milk (requiring antibiotics). Impinged on the welfare of animals; caused reproductive disorders (EU Report)
- Antibiotic use in food animals can lead to antibiotic resistance in humans
- Linked to various forms of cancer – breast, prostate, lung and to tumor development (Cancer Society)
- Precocious puberty

Look for the Canadian Milk symbols



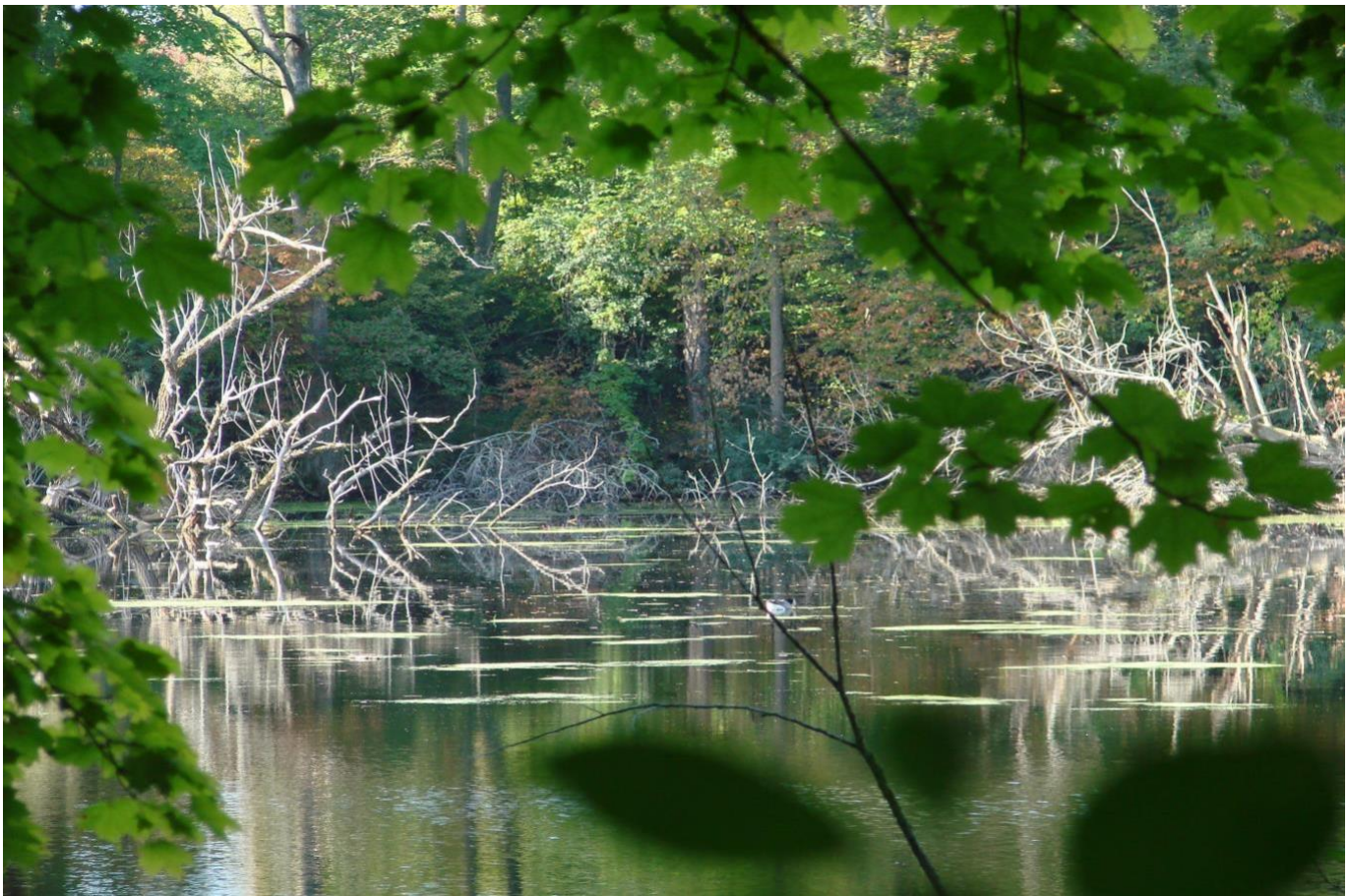
**BUY CANADIAN DAIRY, SUPPORT OUR OWN FARMERS
& SAFEGUARD ANIMAL & HUMAN HEALTH**

YREA OPPOSITION TO WETLAND DEVELOPMENT, RICHMOND HILL

RE: CITY FILES 13572 & 13586 BAYVIEW AVENUE opposing this development since 2020, resubmitted 2025

York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA) is writing 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.

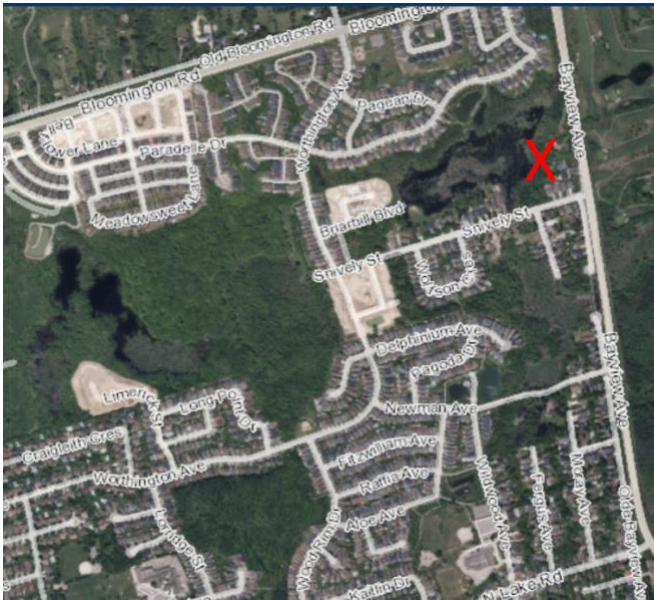
Wetlands are critical to water filtration, flood retention, erosion control, carbon storage, nutrient cycling and groundwater recharge. They also provide habitat for specialized wildlife communities and species at risk. Wetlands enhance our resilience to many of the anticipated impacts of climate change - 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.



Wilcox – St. George Wetland Complex, 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:

- A homeowner and 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 beside my former property, my 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, 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.

BUILDING CANADA WITH RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY

YREA was one of 105 environment, labour, Indigenous & community group signatories who wrote to the Prime Minister and Ministers urging them to prioritize funding for electricity transmission, renewable electricity, strategic interprovincial electricity projects, Indigenous and community ownership and energy efficiency, including system upgrades to energy storage as key projects in the national interest. [Read full submission here.](#)



COMMIT TO NATURE THIS ELECTION/VOTE FOR NATURE

YREA was one of 45 organizations jointly writing to all political parties requesting that they commit to protection and restoring nature as part of their election priorities which included:

- Protecting 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030
- Restoring and enhancing protections for Ontario's species at risk
- Enabling and respecting Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, and including Indigenous-led conservation efforts
- Increasing climate adaptation funding for nature-based solutions (wetland restoration, tree planting)
- Permanently protecting large intact forest areas of public lands from industrial resource extraction (e.g. mining and forestry). The full campaign can be [viewed here](#).

YREA SUPPORT FOR LOCAL FOOD & URBAN AGRICULTURE, RICHMOND HILL

RE: Committee of the Whole Meeting of June 18, 2025

11.6 SRPBS.25.051 LOCAL FOOD AND URBAN AGRICULTURE IN RICHMOND HILL



York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA) commends efforts to move forward with expanding local food opportunities and establishing urban agriculture in Richmond Hill. However, it is important that 'organic' agriculture be added as a vital requirement for these initiatives. Otherwise we will not be able to further our goals to protect pollinators, watersheds, the environment or human health, as pesticides are a major cause of pollinator decline, watershed degradation and human health issues. Food must be free of harmful toxins for the benefit of all.



Expanding community gardens is indeed worthwhile but establishing urban farms as a way to create local business opportunities and supporting the next generation of young farmers is equally important. This would be a way to have residents connect directly with the farmers who provide them with nutritious local food. YREA has suggested that the Phyllis Rawlinson farm/park be one of the considered locations. TRCA would be an excellent partner with their experience in [CSA urban agriculture](#). YREA encourages the development of these initiatives in an expedited manner so that local food needs can be addressed to support the increase of our population and recent surge of development.

ONTARIO 2025 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

YREA was one of 41 organizations requesting that the Ontario government increase investments to protect and restore nature by addressing the interrelated crises of biodiversity loss and climate change using nature-based climate solutions to provide environmental, social and economic benefits. Funding requested to enhance enforcement capabilities of Ontario's Conservation Authorities and Parks and to align with other Canadian commitments to cooperate for nature. Read full [submission here](#).



FEDERAL BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

YREA, along with 64 organizations requested that Canada increase investments in protecting and restoring nature. The Government of Canada's commitment to national biodiversity targets and protecting nature was evidenced in the Throne Speech and needs to be continued. Read [full letter here](#).

[ERO 025-0380](#) ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT 2007 REPLACED WITH BILL 5

Over 100 of us urged the government to not proceed with plans to scrap the 2007 act and replace with a far weaker Bill 5. After years of neglect, endangered species in Ontario need more protections, not less. Bill 5 puts the environment at risk across Ontario. This follows years of the Government of Ontario weakening provincial protections for nature. The bill also fails to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to free, prior and informed consent. This disastrous legislation will have irreversible consequences for Ontarians and the natural world around us. Economic uncertainty cannot be used as a pretense for sacrificing vulnerable species, transparent governance and Indigenous rights. We urge you to repeal Bill 5 immediately. We need economic solutions that operate in harmony with nature, not in conflict with it, and that support Indigenous reconciliation. More info on [Bill 5 here](#).

YREA SIGNED ON TO ADDITIONAL SUBMISSIONS AS FOLLOWS:

[ERO-019-9306](#) Support to further expand Ontario's protected areas to reach 30% by 2030 along with adoption of an Ontario Biodiversity Strategy. [Read full submission.](#)

87 orgs expressed concerns about [Special Economic Zones](#) that would be exempt from having to comply with provincial & municipal laws & without any input from impacted communities or public oversight.

[Reiterating objection](#) to the replacement of the Endangered Species Act 2007 with a far weaker Species Conservation Act 2025 which limits defining of habitat, listing of species & offloads responsibilities.

94 organizations urged the province not to proceed with the amalgamation of Ontario's 36 conservation authorities into seven regional conservation authorities as described in [ERO #025-1257](#) and the other changes under Schedule 3 of Bill 68. These proposed changes are the latest in a series that have systematically undermined the independence and decision-making power of conservation authorities to the detriment of community flood resilience, water quality and natural ecosystems in the parts of the province they serve.



FEDERAL APPEAL - CANCEL APPROVAL OF GLYPHOSATE USE IN OUR FORESTS

A new report, [Forest Spraying & Forest Food](#), written by Mary Lou McDonald LLB & President of Safe Food Matters, shows the assessments for the use of glyphosate products on forests are flawed. Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) did not assess the consumption of food from the forest even though it was required to. The result has been high pesticide levels in berries foraged by people as a source of food, disproportionately affecting Indigenous peoples and their food security. Scientific studies and surveys support this finding. Glyphosate is also toxic to terrestrial and aquatic forest species, based on PMRA findings. An appeal was sent to the federal government to cancel the use of glyphosate spraying in forests which would fulfill its primary mandate of protecting the environment and human health, including vulnerable sub-populations and future generations. YREA was a signatory. [Read letter here.](#)

Petition with over **310,000** signatures to the Ontario legislature by MPP France Gélinas on April 22, 2024 calling for an end to the use of non-essential chemical herbicides in Ontario's public forests, supported by [resolutions](#) from Indigenous organizations, hunters, anglers & Chiefs of Ontario. YREA was a signatory.

With the recent [retraction of safety evaluation](#) & risk assessment of Roundup/glyphosate for humans, we now have the scientific and legal clout needed to push for a ban on this pesticide.

YREA COMMUNITY EVENT PARTICIPATION

VAUGHAN EARTH HOUR

YREA's passport questions asked visitors why we need to use less paper & why we need to avoid bottled water. The answers were found on our display in these images -

AVOID BUYING BOTTLED WATER

If you must buy bottled water, recycle afterwards



65% of trees cut in Canada's boreal forest are used to make paper.

Choose paper products with these symbols -



MAYOR WEST'S MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

An opportunity to engage with a new crowd of the unconverted. Susan said the interactions were great.



Susan Sigrist, President of YREA & Richmond Hill Councillor Scott Thompson

RICHMOND HILL BLOOMS & ECOFEST EVENTS

YREA handed out milkweed seeds & info on why we need [pollinator gardens](#) along with a plant list as well as info on the [toxicity of fabric softeners & dryer sheets](#), what we can all do to [keep our water clean](#), our [SHOP](#) booklets and a check list on how we can [MAKE EVERY MONTH EARTH MONTH](#). We also drew attention to the importance of organic food and looking for the [Canadian milk logo](#) on dairy products. Lots of interest in learning about GMO foods with people taking photos of our display.



YREA'S ACTIVITIES, ADVOCACY & CONCERNS ALIGN WITH THESE GROUPS

Alliance for a Liveable Ontario
CBAN – Canadian Biotechnology
Action Network
Canadian Organic Growers

Friends of the Earth Canada
Ontario Clean Air Alliance
Ontario Greenbelt Alliance
Ontario Headwaters Institute

Ontario Nature
Organic Growers of Ontario
Safe Food Matter
Stop the Spray ON/Canada

A SNAPSHOT OF YREA'S 2025 E-NEWS



YREA continues to connect with many hundreds of people digitally via our quarterly newsletters. This platform enables us to provide subscribers with reports on our advocacy work as well as inform them of day to day issues of concern that might affect them. We encourage an understanding of sustainability through education and to help us think of our choices in terms of their impact on human and environmental health, our natural resources and our planet.

[Winter e-news](#) shared info on sustainable seafood, the collusion of the PMRA with the

pesticide industry and sited some good news of the growth of more ecological cultivation practices in the Canadian floral industry. Links to enjoyable winter outdoor activities were included.

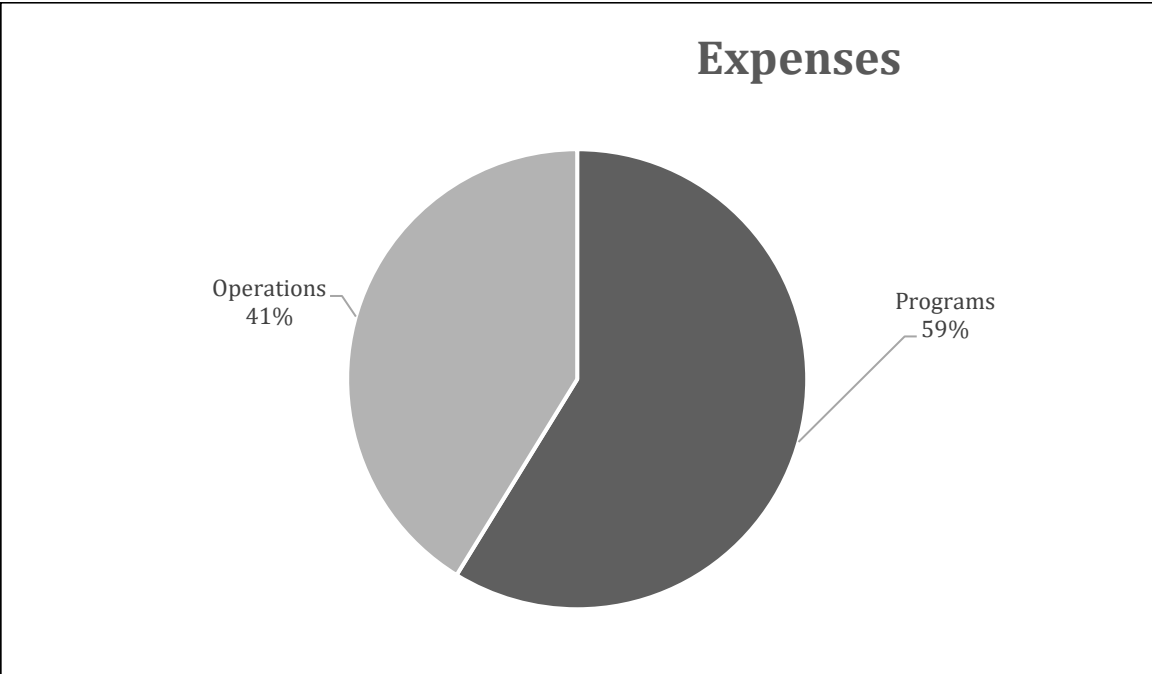
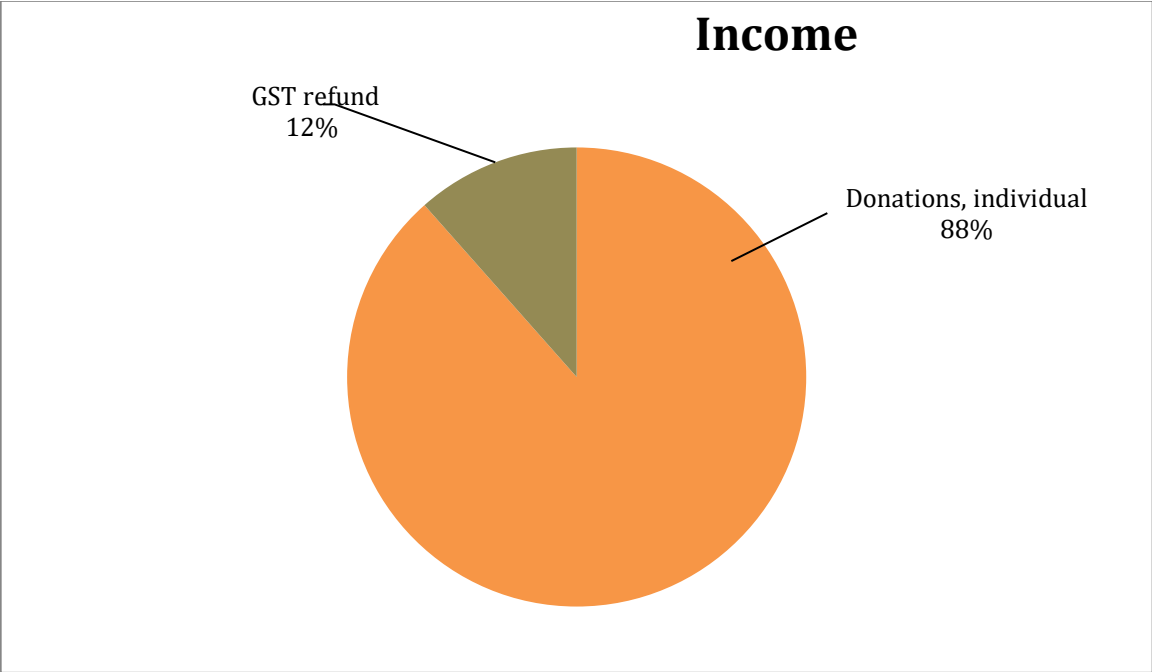
[Spring e-news](#) explained the meaning and necessity of watershed security, suggested an energy saving option via thermal blinds. Links to YREA submissions and our annual report were included as well as reading recommendations and plant suggestions to attract birds, bees and other pollinators.

[Summer e-news](#) discussed the need to decolonize our gardens, to stop idling and to avoid toxic chemicals in sunscreens. There was info about geocaching adding another dimension to nature walks and a recipe for natural mosquito repellent for those who refused to use the available options because of concerns about their ingredients.

[Autumn e-news](#) asked subscribers to consider the carbon footprint of computer data storage, provided a downloadable pdf presentation about [TOXINS AND POLLUTANTS TO AVOID](#) and outlined better alternatives to geoeengineering to moderate climate change. Links to submissions to government were posted as well as a call for volunteers in the forming of a nature stewardship group in Vaughan to deal with invasive species. Our annual reminder to leave the leaves as well as reading recommendations were also included.

YORK REGION ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

2025 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**

PROTECTOR \$1000 - \$1999

Gloria Marsh

GUARDIAN \$500 - \$999

Marilyn Isaac Stewart



STEWARD \$200 - \$499

Sylvia Halligan

Diane Keating

Spencer Lanthier & Diana Bennett

Susan Sigrist & Mark Hubbardd

André Willi

KEEPER \$100 - \$199

Sylvia Bowman

Cynthia Hyland

Terry Knight

Angela Marsh & Justin Keating

Peter Miasek

Donna Pearson

Debbie Schaefer

Tom Waechter

Anonymous (1)

FRIEND \$25 - \$99

Sharon & Jim Bradley

Wai Ting Liu

YREA does not utilize costly and unsustainable paper mailings
or separate email solicitation requests for donations,
which makes us doubly appreciative for the kindness of our donors

Special thanks to YREA's volunteer board members &
to volunteer Mark Hubbard, website wizard & scam sleuth

LOOKING BACK AT 2025 & AHEAD TO 2026 FOR YREA

YREA's engagements at community events is a very important way to share knowledge and spread the word regarding issues of concern, not only with the public, but also with municipalities. We received many positive comments about our quarterly e-news, noting how informative and helpful they are. This will continue in 2026 as we try to motivate people to act to enable positive change for the betterment of nature and the planet. Emerging and ongoing issues will also be addressed collectively through the organizations of which YREA is aligned.

YREA's 2026 ADVOCACY FOCUS:

- [Toxins & pollutants to avoid](#)
- Organic food, pesticide & GMO advocacy/education
- Ban glyphosate use in farming & forestry [STOP the SPRAY](#)
- How we can all make [EVERY MONTH EARTH MONTH](#)
- Watershed security & water protection
- [Planting for pollinators](#) & restoring meadow habitat
- Incineration & waste concerns & monitoring



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MAKE EVERY DAY
EARTH DAY