

tea leaves

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

It's Time to Repair Our Air

By Keith Stewart

Air pollution kills 1,000 Toronto residents each year and hospitalizes another 5,500. These were the conclusions from Toronto Public Health report written by Dr. David Pengelly, a leading international expert on air pollution and health.

In response to the report, TEA called for an emergency smog summit, which was held at Metro Hall on June 21, and attended by Federal Environment Minister David Anderson, Provincial Environment Minister Dan Newman, Federal Transport Minister David Collenette, and Mayor Mel Lastman. TEA called for renewed efforts from all levels of government to reduce this problem at source. This means burning less fossil fuel (coal, oil, and gas) and using the remainder more efficiently.

TEA also presented its Smog Plan, Phase Two, to the City's Board of Health. It calls to:

1. **Stop Urban Sprawl.** Adopt a 'Smart Growth' strategy which aims to: build new homes and offices in existing urban areas rather than spreading out onto valuable greenspace like the Oak Ridges Moraine; make our streets more pedestrian- and bike-friendly, and make public transit more viable.
2. **Improve Public Transit.** Increase service and keep fares down. Join TEA's Rocket Riders group to find out how!
3. **Make car-pools and bikes a more attractive way to commute to work.** TEA's new 'Repair our Air' campaign will show employers how to organize carpooling.
4. **Promote Green Power.** All levels of government can encourage green power (such as wind and solar energy) by removing regulatory hurdles and by buying green power for their own operations.
5. **Energy-Efficient Buildings.** Apply energy-saving retrofits to

every building in Toronto, financed out of future energy-bill savings, and adopt rules that encourage energy efficiency in new buildings.

6. **Clean Fuels.** Ontario has the dirtiest fuel in North America – let's clean it up.

7. **Community Involvement.** Empowering the public – through community right-to-know legislation, public involvement in decision-making, and public education – is the way to generate creative new solutions and make better decisions.

Beyond our usual smog-busting activities, TEA will be launching an exciting new "Repair Our Air" campaign this summer. It will reduce pollution from cars and trucks through car-pooling programs for commuters and an anti-idling program for corporate vehicle fleets.

Watch for our radio and print ads coming to a location near you this summer!

Special Edition

Summer 2000

REPAIR OUR AIR

Get involved in the tea community

- Update our membership database
- Join a TEA issue caucus
- Join the TEA leaves production team. We need writers and stamp lickers
- Translate TEA information & materials into other languages

Toronto Council Adopts Toughest Water Protection Law In Canada *by Shelley Petrie*

The water quality of Toronto's lakefront and watersheds will no doubt improve over the coming years, after Council restricted the amount of harmful chemicals industry can dump into the city's sewer system. A new Industrial Sewer Use By-law will be phased in over the next two years, and will dramatically reduce the levels of mercury, chromium, arsenic, cyanide, benzene and other toxic metals and organic substances in Toronto's beaches and drinking water supply.

Industries throughout North

America legally discharge chemicals used during product manufacturing or service delivery into the local sewer system. Sewage treatment plants are not designed to degrade or capture these chemicals, which in Toronto are released to Lake Ontario. During heavy rains many chemicals overflow from the sewers and are deposited directly into the Don and Humber Rivers, Toronto creeks and streams or the lakeshore.

Councillors fought off opposition to the By-law, mainly from

multinational petroleum companies, such as Imperial Oil, and the detergent industry, which uses nonylphenols – known hormone disruptors that mimic estrogen in wildlife and humans. TEA and Toronto residents can be proud that the new limits are the toughest in Canada. The By-law also initiates pollution prevention (P2) planning. Instead of controlling discharges, industries will be encouraged to use and produce less toxic substances in-house. P2 planning can eventually reduce chemical discharges to zero.

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Federal Report Recommends Ban on Urban Pesticide Use

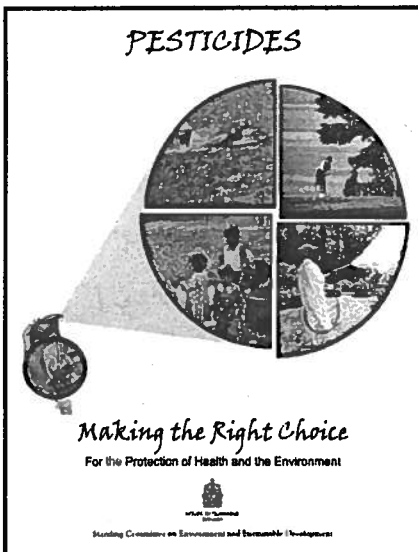
By Janet May

After twelve months of hearings, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development released its report in May and recommended a prohibition on the registration and re-registration of pesticides intended for cosmetic purposes. The report, "Pesticides Making the Right Choice For the Protection of Health and the Environment", points out that pesticides play a role "in a myriad of diseases and developmental abnormalities" and that "scientific uncertainty should not be allowed to impede effective action to protect human health and the environment". The Chair of the Committee, Charles Caccia, MP for Toronto's Davenport riding, is emphatic:

"The choice facing us is clear: either continue with our chronic dependence on pesticides to the detriment of the environment, agricultural sustainability and human health or to give public health protection clear precedence. We have already done so with tobacco, lead and asbestos. Pesticides should be next."

If adopted by the Canadian government, will the recommendations result in an immediate end to lawn spraying across the country? Not necessarily. In Canada, once a pesticide is approved for use it is not reevaluated unless there is evidence of unacceptable risk to human health or the environment. The Standing Committee proposes that all pesticides registered for use in Canada be reviewed and that the labels of those products presently approved for use on lawns and gardens be amended to prohibit cosmetic uses.

TEA is thrilled with the recommendations made by the Standing Committee. Banning the cosmetic use of pesticides has been TEA's mantra for over a decade. This groundbreaking re-



port indicates how widespread the support is among Canadians for revisions to our current regulatory system.

The report also includes a Minority Report from the Reform Party. In it, Reform regurgitates well-worn chemical industry PR:

- * "Pesticides are a necessary part of Canadian life because they increase property values";
- * "Without pesticides, urban pests will become out of control and affect the health of citizens, pets and plants and will threaten the quality of homes, lawns, schools and businesses."

Clearly, Reform members of the committee were not listening to presentations from experts from the University of Guelph, Cana-

dian Organic Certification Board and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Municipalities across the country, like Toronto, are dramatically reducing or eliminating pesticide use on public green space in response to concerns from residents. In Europe, tax incentives and consumer demand have increased the amount of farmland devoted to organic agriculture. If food can be produced organically and if large tracts of parkland can be maintained without pesticides, then homeowners and lawn care companies can make the switch, too!

Despite the positive recommendations from the Committee, nothing will happen without your support. We can be sure that Allan Rock will table new legislation to appease the proponents of pesticide reform. We can also be sure that this legislation will not go far enough. Please write to our Prime Minister and our Minister of Health to insist on implementation of the recommendations from the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Their addresses are: (remember, you don't even need a stamp).

Hon. Jean Chretien, Prime Minister
Room 309-S, Centre Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
pm@pm.gc.ca

Hon. Allan Rock, Minister of Health
Room 441-S, Centre Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
Rock.A@parl.gc.ca

Lawn care that does not cost the Earth

"Springtime is the wrong time of the year to fertilize your lawn as it encourages excessive top growth of grass and weeds" says Nikki Pulla, Project Coordinator for The Organic Landscape Alliance (OLA). "This produces a weak root system which in turn will make your lawn susceptible to pests and disease".

Fertilizing in the fall is more effective because photosynthesis activity is high and cool temperatures slow top growth. The grass will produce more food than it needs, so it stores it for use in the spring.

If you fertilize your lawn in the summer its condition will not improve, as this is the dormant period for grasses.

"When people don't see an improvement in their lawns they tend to apply more fertilizer. We advise against this because over fertilizing causes thatch

problems", says Pulla.

Over seeding in the spring and late summer will thicken up your lawn and help to out-compete weeds. Perennial ryegrass and fine fescues are two hardy grasses that are resistant to pests, weeds and drought, and have the added advantage of germinating within 7-14 days. Avoid Kentucky Bluegrass as it is a high maintenance grass type requiring lots of fertilizer and water.

Fertilizing at the appropriate time and over seeding with a diverse selection of grasses are two inexpensive and effective ways of achieving a healthy lawn.

For further information contact The Organic Landscape Alliance at (416)596-7989 e-mail-tea@web.ca



tea

Toronto Environmental Alliance

Securing Safe Drinking Water for Ontario Citizens

By Shelley Petrie

TEA and the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) have submitted an application to Ontario's Environment Commissioner to review the need for a Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) in Ontario.

The United States Safe Drinking Water Act is directly responsible for improving water quality in the US and decreasing the outbreak of water-borne diseases, such as Walkerton's *E. coli* tragedy, for the past twenty-six years.

"There is little doubt that the current Ontario Water Resources Act is insufficient to meet the challenges of protecting water quality in Ontario communities," says Rick Lindgren, a lawyer with CELA.

There is no law specifically designed to safeguard the province's drinking water, particularly at the point of consumption. Ontario lacks enforceable drinking water standards. A SDWA would entrench the public's right to safe drinking water and re-establish a safety-net dismantled by the current government's downsizing, downgrading and de-regulation. Accountability would be ensured.

TEA also called for a Consumer Confidence Report on all municipal drinking water supplies in the province to be released by the

Ontario government every six months. A Confidence Report would re-establish Ontarians' trust in their drinking water. The report would release information on municipal water supplies; test data; compliance and violations; action taken by all levels of governments and health risks posed by contaminants present in drinking water. The Report would be released to the media, the MOE's website and made available to the public on request.

Check out the USEPA's Safe Drinking Water Act @ www.epa.gov/safewater

The application will be passed to Dan Newman, Minister of the Environment for the Harris government. Minister Newman will respond to this request later this summer.

Action: write the Minister in support of such an Act and Confidence Report

**Hon. Dan Newman, MPP
Minister of the Environment
135 St. Clair Ave, West
12th floor
Toronto, Ontario
M4V 1P5
fax: 416-314-6748**

Election Dreams *By Gord Perks*

TEA intends to make the next few years the turning point in our efforts to green Toronto. We feel that we can make big breakthroughs on smog, waste, pesticides, and other key environmental issues. To achieve this goal, TEA will work hard to ensure that the city election this November raises these issues with voters and candidates.

Our campaign will be based on the very successful effort we ran in the 1997 Toronto election. In that campaign we used candidate questionnaires, coalition work, the media, and careful follow-up to specific commitments in several policy areas. As a result we achieved a phase-out of pesticides, a city-wide emergency smog day plan, and a deposit return by-law which unfortunately was overturned by the province.

This time around we will use many of the same tools but want to go further by involving a much bigger effort to involve our supporters.

Contact Jackeline Barragan at 596-0660 to get involved in our Municipal Election Campaign!

KEEP IN TOUCH

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tea leaves

is produced by the Toronto Environmental Alliance. If you have any announcements, comments, or would like to submit an article, please contact us.

www.torontoenvironment.org

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Summer Positions

Municipal Election: Jackeline Barragan
Repair Our Air: Allison Ross
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Design & Layout: Jackeline Barragan

Canada wide standards proposed for dioxin *By Rich Whate*

"Dioxin" describes a group of profoundly toxic chemicals which are released into Canada's air from incinerators, pulp and paper plants, steel factories and other sources. For the past year, TEA and environmental groups from across Canada have participated in consultations with our federal and provincial governments on strategies to eliminate dioxin pollution. The goal of these discussions is to de-

velop national emission limits and pollution prevention plans for sources of dioxin.

As a result of these consultations, a few weeks ago our provincial Environment Ministers proposed dioxin standards for incinerators and B.C. pulp and paper boilers. Municipal waste and medical waste incinerators (several of which are in Toronto and the GTA) are Canada's biggest

source of dioxin, and these standards could go a long way towards protecting our health and our environment.

TEA will continue to pressure Ontario's Environment Minister to commit to these limits through strong regulation and pollution prevention plans.

Be the Coolest Kid Around -- Join the TEA Youth Caucus *By Rich Whate*

Students these days know about BIG environmental issues: genetically-engineered foods, clear-cutting, selling Great Lakes water. But right here in Toronto, in our urban world of concrete and cars, there are important issues that you should also know about, and a great opportunity to get involved. **TEA's Youth Caucus** is busy fighting poisonous pesticides, smelly smokestacks, growing garbage and dirty drinking water right here at home -- and we need your help!

Look around and you'll see the problems. One thousand Torontonians die prematurely every year from smog. Pesticides wash from lawns to contaminate the Don and Humber Rivers. Incinerators pump toxic pollutants into our air. It's a depressing list, but you can be part of the solution by joining our Youth Caucus.

In the past few years, the Youth Caucus, made up of high school students from across Toronto, has:

- cleaned up two urban parks;
- distributed information on alternatives to lawn pesticides;
- produced a newsletter called "TEA Biscuits" (cute, eh?)
- promoted a Climate Change forum with Dr. David Suzuki;
- protested pollution from cars on Earth Day, and;
- spoke at hearings to improve Great Lakes Water Quality.

This month we will be holding our first event "Bike Wash" at Grassroots on the Danforth telling people how they can conserve and protect our Great Lakes and our air.

Consider it a sanity break from homework. The TEA Youth Caucus meets regularly and maintains a website to discuss issues and plan events. If you're interested in the environment, give us a call. You'll be the coolest kid you know.

To get involved, contact Rich at the TEA at (416) 596-0660. Visit us at www.geocities.com/teayouth.

Volunteers in Action! *By Katrina Miller*

On April 15th, the dedicated volunteers of TEA raised thousands of dollars for TEA and other community-based environmental initiatives. In coordination with the Brewer's Retail and Earth Day Canada, 40 TEA volunteers (staff included) stood outside 25 beer stores across Toronto and asked patrons to donate their returnable bottle deposits to the environmental initiatives of TEA. Response was outstanding! Some stores raised over \$350 and over one thousand TEA brochures were distributed to interested community members. TEA extends a great big thank you hug to all of the volunteers who gave their time and their smiles to this initiative. TEA also thanks the Brewer's Retail and Earth Day Canada for involving TEA in such a wonderful opportunity. Throughout the summer, TEA's volunteers are planning on doing all sorts of community outreach events. For more information about these events or to get involved, please give us a call.

BECOME A PART OF TEA

TEA has many volunteers who work with us everyday or come to our regular meetings. Get involved by giving us a call or work on an issue that interests you. In the office call...

Leslie Moskovits
Phone: (416) 596-0660

TEA- ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
July 18th at METRO HALL beginning at 5:30 pm
There will be a key-note speaker addressing the subject of LOCAL ACTIVISM.
All are welcome. Please call office for more information.

Become a Friend of



You can contribute to TEA's work and the environment by making a donation. And because we are largely a volunteer organization every dollar goes a long way. TEA will keep you up to date on our accomplishments through TEA leaves, "What's Brewing Action Alerts" and our publications. Please check your donation below.

TEA does not have charitable status, therefore we cannot issue you a tax deductible receipt.

\$200 \$100 \$75 \$50 \$25 Other \$

Name: _____ Address: _____
City and Province: _____ Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____
E-mail: _____ Area of Interest?: _____

Please mail your cheque to: TEA, 30 Duncan Street, Suite 201, Toronto, ON M5V 2C3 tel: (416)-596-0660