

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment – the national voice of physicians on the environment and health

Calgary Pushes for Groundbreaking Pesticide Ban

CAPE assists with city-wide campaign

by Farrab Khan

CAPE IS WORKING WITH LOCAL ACTIVISTS IN CALGARY TOWARDS winning a by-law to phase out the use of lawn and garden pesticides. The ban would be the first of its kind in all of Alberta and one of two in the Prairie provinces.

A local group, Coalition for a Healthy Calgary (CHC), has been active over the last eighteen months, bringing attention to this important public health issue and would like to see their city join the list of over 135 municipalities across the country that have taken the significant step of prohibiting the use of these poisons.

CHC Board member Cindy Tuer has seen great progress since the anti-pesticide campaign began in late 2006. "It's a different climate than when we first started", says Tuer. "People are more aware, we've partnered with the Canadian Cancer Society and we're getting more attention... We're on the verge of a tipping point and these are all encouraging signs."

In 2006, CAPE and the Sierra Club helped commission a poll in Calgary which showed overwhelming support for a phase out of these harmful chemicals. According to the Oracle poll, 82 % of Calgarians

support phasing out pesticide use on private residential properties, 84 % support phasing out pesticides in public parks and 89 % support a phase-out on other public spaces such as schools and hospitals.



The polling, along with advertising in local papers and meetings between city aldermen, CAPE and CHC brought the pesticide issue to the forefront of last year's municipal election. Whereas early meetings with city officials were difficult to obtain, with so much popular support, the pesticide issue is now impossible to ignore.

"Calgary is the largest municipality in Canada without a pesticide by-law", explained Ms. Tuer. But things could change this year. A Notice of Motion was introduced in February, which directs city staff to draft a plan for the legislation and implementation of a ban. In June, 2008 CHC plans to make a deputation to City Council before the Environmental Advisory Committee releases a report on the issue.

A pesticide ban in Calgary would be groundbreaking, as the first of its kind in Alberta, and it would protect over one million Canadians from harmful and highly unnecessary chemicals.

For more information on how to get involved, please visit www.healthycalgary.ca.

From the President's Corner

THIS SPRING I HAD MY FIRST TOUR OF SARNIA, Ontario's "chemical valley." The drive along the St. Clair River features holding tanks after smokestacks, one sour smell blending into another. A high-way of unpainted concrete.

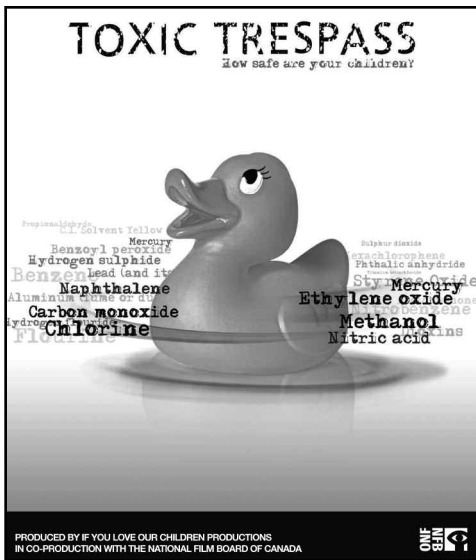
According to a new report by Ecojustice, there are 62 large industrial facilities within 25 kilometers of Sarnia and the nearby Aamjiwnaang First Nation reserve. Forty percent of Canada's chemical industry is sited here and emits more air pollution than the entire province of New Brunswick.

The facilities sit on three sides of the Aamjiwnaang territory - a tranquil neighbourhood and deer-run forest, downwind and downstream from the pollution, and many residents are concerned about the possible health effects.

A recent study in *Environmental Health Perspectives* found a significant drop in male births over the previous ten years, the proportion of male births reaching a low of 35% from 1999-2003. These results echo a trend being seen in many parts of the world: fewer boys and more girls.

There is widespread concern that the Aamjiwnaang birth ratio changes may be the result of pollution-related hormone disruption, but this issue has yet to be addressed. Local facilities are not required to monitor their emissions or the levels of exposure to area residents. Health Canada has proposed a study, but two years of discussions have yielded little progress.

In the meantime, the Aamjiwnaang have decided to help themselves by starting a "bucket brigade" to



Toxic Trespass

A documentary about our kids and the chemical soup that surrounds them

TOXIC TRESPASS, A COMPELLING NEW FILM ON CHILDREN'S health and the environment, investigates the growing evidence that we are conducting a large-scale toxicological experiment on our children, and explores what some scientists, doctors, activists and others are doing about it. The film is a co-production of If You Love Our Children Productions and the National Film Board of Canada, with the support of Women's Healthy Environments Network (WHEN). The DVD and a companion resource guide, *Taking Action on Children's Health and the Environment*, will be available from WHEN and the NFB in the near future. For ordering information, please call (416) 928-0880 or visit www.womenshealthyenvironments.ca.

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collect air samples and by organizing a conference bringing experts and community members together to share knowledge and plan strategy.

Though there have been modest reductions in emissions from Sarnia-area facilities, none report substitutions or product reformulations to decrease releases of air toxics. Many are reportedly polluting more than their sister facilities in Europe and the United States. Action is needed to reduce pollution and prevent harm to the Aamjiwnaang and other residents in the area. *Action is needed now.*

Dr. Kapil Khatter, CAPE President

CAPE Leads Meeting with Environment Minister

Hon. John Gerretsen reiterates promise to ban lawn pesticides

THE YEAR 2008 STARTED ON A HIGH NOTE AS CAPE CHAIRED AN IN-PERSON MEETING BETWEEN Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen and health-and-environment organizations on the issue of lawn pesticides. The government had promised to ban these products and CAPE and its partners were meeting the Minister to outline their vision of the new legislation.

"We were particularly encouraged because our meeting was one of the Minister's very first consultations with stakeholders," said CAPE Executive Director Gideon Forman. "I think it's a measure of the weight that health groups bring to the table."

Also attending were the head of the Ontario College of Family Physicians, Jan Kasperski, the head of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Doris Grinspun, and Public Issues Manager at the Canadian Cancer Society, Irene Gallagher.

CAPE and its partners presented the Minister with a five-point statement that urged the government to ban both pesticide use and sales.

"A ban on sales is crucially important," said Forman. "Because if people can't buy these poisons, they can't use them – which means we'll reduce pesticide-related illness dramatically."

The group statement was signed by 15 leading health and environment organizations including the David Suzuki Foundation, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, and the Ontario Medical Association (Section on Pediatrics).

"The Minister took our statement in hand, read it, and then said we'd assembled one of the most impressive lists of signatories he'd ever seen," explained Forman. "He went on to say he would introduce the pesticide ban in Spring 2008, with passage likely in the Fall."

While the signs are looking very positive at this point, CAPE will continue to meet with key decision-makers, encourage doctors to write the Premier, and publish articles and letters to the editor – to ensure the passage of the most health-protective legislation possible.

CAPE's Forman said to Mr. Gerretsen: "Minister, you have a chance here to pass the strongest pesticide ban in North America."

Prescriptions for Survival: THE PHYSICIAN IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE CONFERENCE

CAPE is collaborating with Physicians for Global Survival and the Association of Doctors for the Advancement of Physically Active Transportation to sponsor a conference for physicians, medical students and the public September 25th-27th in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Key note speakers include Dr. Helen Caldicott. For more information visit www.pgs.ca.



Dr. Richard Denton Kick-starts Environmental Health Endowment

AS SOMEONE WHO HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTALIST, Dr. Richard Denton goes back a long way with CAPE.

Dr. Denton lives and works in Kirkland Lake, ON, where he has a family medicine practice and has been actively involved in a number of environmental issues including a local pesticide ban and promoting recycling.

Earlier this year, Dr. Denton contributed a gift of over \$11,000.00 in mutual funds to start an Environmental Health Endowment for CAPE's charitable wing. His gift will be named "The Dr. Denton Family Trust."

"Doctors are leaders in the community and should show that leadership by becoming advocates for our patients' health", said Denton. "If we put money towards doing good things, the benefits will live on for many years."

Dr. Denton's hope is that his colleagues will be encouraged to contribute to this new endowment which he says will "allow CAPE to take on environmental health issues for years to come."

"Richard's gift is really ground breaking," said CAPE Executive Director, Gideon Forman. "His wonderful generosity will allow us to take our work to a new level. He is a great friend to CAPE – and the planet as a whole."

For information on how you can contribute to the Environmental Health Endowment, please contact Gideon Forman at 416-306-2273 or gideon@cape.ca.

Speaking out...

by Dr. Warren Bell

On January 26th 2008, I presented the opening keynote address to the Alternative and Integrative Medical Society (AIMS), a student-run body in the Faculty of Medicine at UBC. The presentation delineated the global food industry and its current disastrous effects on human health and ecological sustainability, and offered some ways to bring about positive change.

Participants were stimulated and challenged by the day-long event, which included healthy local, organic food. One participant, Dr. Tirso Gonzales, from UBC's Kelowna campus, liked what he heard well enough to ask me to repeat my presentation to his Indigenous Studies course on "Food, Identity and Place." I also talked to the first year class at the College of Massage Therapy in Vernon on therapeutic approaches that take into account the ecosystem around us. The weekend before that, I gave a presentation called "Who Owns Our Food?" at a Seed Savers event held in the little town of Enderby, in central BC – attended by over 400 farmers and concerned citizens. And a couple of weeks before that, I was one of two speakers at an afternoon event in Salmon Arm on Energy Sustainability.

So it would seem that things are poppin'! More presentations are in the works on pesticide bylaws, general environmental change, and the development of our new and critically necessary "global culture." The public appetite for accurate, truthful evidence of the massive scale of ecological change, and the need to swiftly but rationally take responsibility for preventing future disasters, is growing by leaps and bounds.



Shared Interest™ Awards
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CAPE has been awarded the Citizens Bank of Canada 2007 Shared Interest Award in the amount of \$16,800.00. CAPE placed fourth among a list of 12 other finalists, including Médecins Sans Frontières and Amnesty International. The award was granted based on votes by Citizens Bank members and credit card holders. Thanks to all who voted for CAPE and to Citizens Bank for their generous support.



photo: Véronique Lebeck

Lawn & Garden Pesticides: Reducing Harm

Now Available! This unique 10 minute DVD sets out the scientific evidence linking common household pesticides to a variety of serious illnesses. It offers information from the Ontario College of Family Physicians' ground-breaking pesticide study and sets out safe lawncare alternatives. **Excellent for showing at public meetings or for educating local politicians. To order your copy, please contact: Farrah Khan, Executive Assistant, at : farrah@cape.ca**

**"Upcoming AGM:
Nov 29-30 in Toronto
– contact CAPE for details."**

NOW You Can Donate On-line at www.cape.ca

Now it's easier than ever to support CAPE's vital environmental work. Go to www.cape.ca and hit the "Donate Now" button on our home page. Your gift will go to CAPE's charitable wing, assisting our crucial education and research activities. You can make the gift in honour or memory of a friend or family member. And you'll receive an instant tax receipt!

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Last Name/First Name _____

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Membership

- Members \$100
- Supporters (*Free DVD on Lawn Pesticides*) \$200
- Students, retirees, those with limited income \$25
- Member Organizations \$50
- Executive Membership \$1000

(My cheque is made out to the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment)

- I would like updates on CAPE-related activities. Please put me on the CAPENEWS listserv (*for members only*).
- I want to get involved in CAPE.

Donations

I am sending a donation of:

- \$50 \$100 \$500 \$1000 Other _____ to support CAPE's environmental advocacy work (*My cheque is made out to the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment*).

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Card # _____ Expiry Date _____

- Please take a donation of \$ _____ from my account each month. (*I have attached a voided cheque and signed below*)

Signature _____

- I would like a charitable tax receipt for my donation. I understand that these donations will only be used for research and education activities. (*My cheque is made out to the Canadian Health and Environment Education and Research Foundation (CHEER)*)

- Check here if you do not want your name shared with other like-minded organizations.

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ECO Friends This feature section contains a brief synopsis of a group that shares CAPE's basic perspectives.

Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA)

The Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) is a non-profit environmental advocacy group and free legal advisory clinic.

Founded in 1970, CELA has worked on a number of issues ranging from water sustainability to nuclear phase out and toxic substances and pesticides. CELA and CAPE have recently partnered, along with a number of other health and environmental organizations, to promote a province-wide pesticide ban in Ontario.

For more information on
CELA's work, please visit www.cela.ca.



We're growing!

Since 2006 CAPE has grown
from 450 to 2,900 members.

