

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **MOONSTRUCK - LIGHT THOUGHTS ON GARDENING**

Since ancient times, people have been aware of the effect the phases of the moon have on the planting and tending of crops. They had this innate understanding even if they didn't realize the exact cause of why it was better to sow or weed at a given time of the month. We now know that the moon's gravitational pull not only influences ocean tides but also the ground water tables under our feet and the flow of moisture through the soil and the plant itself.

Timing farming and gardening tasks to moon phases is the basis of moon gardening. For example, the best time to turn over a garden is during the last quarter of the moon because that is when the water table has dropped to its lowest point. There is less moisture within the soil, making it lighter and less difficult to turn. University researchers have shown that the DNA of plants changes and that their metabolism, indicated by such things as their water and oxygen absorption, fluctuates considerably in accordance to the lunar cycle.

Moon gardening information is now readily available on the internet (www.gardeningbythemoon.com or www.gardeningzone.org/content/content.php/lunar-gardening-an-introduction) and has even appeared in such publications as National Geographic. Before computers, I used to buy a farmers' almanac every year and consulted it even when I was transplanting or taking cuttings of my houseplants. I was able to grow tomatoes under lights and start difficult plants such as primroses and cacti from seed. Now, if I wait to cut my grass when the moon is in a barren sign, especially in the fourth quarter, I have to cut it much less often.

My dream is to eventually see community gardens at every school. Children would not only benefit from growing healthy food but could also reconnect with the rhythm and flow of the natural world through moon gardening. Even if we have a better understanding of her, nature can still be an awe-inspiring mystery for children and adults alike. Go to the links above and explore others for lunar phase charts and give moon gardening a try. It is used in biodynamic farming and by gardeners around the globe.

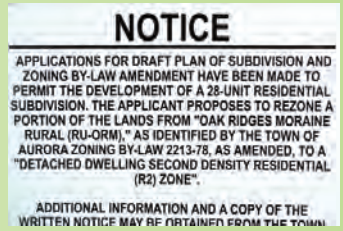
Yours by the light of the moon,

Gloria Marsh

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GO PAPERLESS

Did you know that you have the option of suppressing the mailed invoices you receive from a variety of billers? Enbridge Gas, Bell Canada and Rogers, to name a few. Bullfrog also provided e-bills, but since Powerstream has taken over invoicing, it is back to paper and that is a regrettable step in the wrong direction. Of the municipalities, the Town of Richmond Hill is to be applauded for leading the way here and will have a paperless option for tax bills by the end of the year. It is easy to sign up, just go to the websites noted on your paper bills and register. Once there, you can save yourself the time you expend monthly on paying bills by opting for pre-authorized payment, either from your bank account or a credit card. A good example of how computers can indeed, conserve paper.



GRANDFATHERS SHOULDN'T ALWAYS GET RESPECT

By Jeff Laidlaw YREA Chair & Councillor, King Township



Dealing with planning issues and the various legislations which apply can be something of a challenge to a new, or (at this point), relatively new Councillor.

Perhaps the most difficult are those applications that have been kept open/alive for great periods of time, despite the fact that no action has been taken. In King Township, for example,

Council recently reviewed development applications that had initially been submitted close to 20 years ago with extensions regularly granted, keeping these files open. Open files fail to recognize the passage of time which may have seen new legislation, directions and philosophies. In the King Township case, the review was provided for the consideration of closure of the files, and in fact, the vast majority were.

Open files in the planning world often fall under the 'grandfather clause' when acted upon. Essentially, what occurs is that new legislation, despite its goals and intent, recognizes the pre-existing condition and allows development applications that were filed prior to enactment, to not have to comply with the new legislation. They are 'grandfathered' and need only abide by previous, usually less stringent laws.

What has happened in the past, for example, with legislation like the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act (ORMA), is the development industry, being fully aware of what is to come, have filed applications before the 'grandfather' deadline date, and thus have kept their options open to uses and planning applications which, under the new legislation, would be more vigorously screened or even outright rejected.

One might argue that 'grandfathering' is a necessity to protect



the interests of developers, but it's my view that this is to suggest that the profits of developers are of greater importance than environmental protection, and frankly I have a huge problem with that. The province has said that municipalities have the power to apply the principles of the ORMA to any grandfathered applications moving forward. Yet, when an application is denied, the OMB, subsequently, more often than not, sides with the developer. These are hollow words.

"It's my view that this is to suggest that the profits of developers are of greater importance than environmental protection, and frankly I have a huge problem with that."

Based on valid ecological concerns, it remains to be seen whether the Town of Aurora will prevail in its valiant denial of the Westhill project.

A balance must be achieved between development interests and the environment. Municipalities have the right to demand that all applications truly have regard for current legislation and open files should not be allowed to survive beyond a reasonable time frame. Grandfathering needs to be considered only under very special circumstances, and should be the exception rather than the rule. Reforms to this segment of the ORMA when it comes up for review, are in order.



BREATHING EASIER

By Sari Merson of Pesticide Free Ontario

Thinking back over the decades of activism that formed PESTICIDE FREE ONTARIO and the hundreds of organizations that worked at the local, provincial and national level for pesticide legislation, I can take a breath of fresh spring air without also inhaling airborne pesticide residues.

That is because, as of April 22nd, PESTICIDE FREE ONTARIO has become a reality. The Liberal government has passed world-class and world-changing legislation under Ontario's Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act. The ban prohibits the sale and use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes on lawns, gardens, parks and schoolyards, and includes many fungicides, insecticides and herbicides. Over 250 products are banned for sale and more than 80 pesticide ingredients are banned for cosmetic uses.

Quebec was the first province to enact legislation in 2006, banning 23 pesticide active ingredients. Ontario's legislation, however, has emerged as the most stringent in North America.

Continuing the trend in Canada, other provinces such as New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are planning similar bans.

As gratified as we are about this ban, it is not all encompassing. Forestry and golf courses have exemptions and some restrictions are being phased in over two years.



However, the chemical industry is not giving up without a fight. Dow AgroSciences, a division of U.S. based Dow Chemical, has served notice to the Canadian government that it plans to challenge Quebec's ban on the herbicide 2,4-D under chapter 11 of the North American Free Trade Agreement. This is an outright challenge to democracy - when corporations

seek to control governments because their profits are at stake.

The government of Canada must be urged to vigorously defend Quebec's ban on lawn chemicals. We call on all federal parties to officially declare support for Quebec's precautionary approach and to re-examine how the federal Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) could more effectively apply precautionary principles when it comes to registration of pesticides used on lawns and gardens. The PMRA has approved 2,4-D for use in Canada even though there is much evidence it may pose risks to human immune, reproductive, and endocrine systems and that it may increase the risk of cancer. Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Kuwait have banned 2,4-D because of concerns about its effects on human health and the environment. For further info go to: http://www.davidsuzuki.org/files/SWAG/Health/DOW_Briefing--EN.pdf

Because the majority of Ontario residents wanted this kind of legislation, the government was willing, and worked with environmental and health organizations, to invoke a ban to protect Ontarians' health and their environment. We can now breathe a little easier.

Watch for organic and pesticide free lawn and garden workshops in your area, including these:

Going Pesticide Free - A free seminar series, Healthy Lawns and Gardens

Vellore Historic Hall & School, Vaughan, June 1, 7:00-9:00 pm

Interested in hosting a seminar?

Contact Pesticide Free Ontario at 1-877-640-5004 or email cibontario@mountaincable.net.

For more info

Visit www.ontario.ca/additup and <http://www.cibontario.ca/healthy%20lawns%20&%20gardens.html>

Organic Gardening

Richmond Hill, Phyllis Rawlinson Park, June 6, 10am-Noon To register call 905-588-7012 x 230

Reporting an infraction

To report an infraction of the pesticide ban in York Region call 905-427-5600.



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YREA'S PLANNING FOR ACTION MEETING MAY 7, 2009

By Karen Buckle, YREA Communications Coordinator

Our Second Planning for Action meeting featured Sara Mathews, a green real estate broker who spoke on the many advantages of energy audits and the step by step process she is now undertaking to make her home more energy efficient.



Part two of our meeting dealt with environmental issues raised during our first meeting. Our goals included:

- Choosing a project for each of the issues of most concern that would best address the root cause
- Start creating a plan of action framework for each project including: potential partners, objectives, next steps, assessing resources available for each.

Breakout groups focussed on sustainable development, land protection and a mechanism for regional funding. Please visit our website at www.yrea.org for future meeting dates and for detailed minutes of this meeting.

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POWERSTREAM that wants us all to conserve energy, but continues to send out paper invoices and does not allow their hydro clients a paperless option.



GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO for legislation to encourage industry to reduce their use of toxic chemicals. Companies will be required to evaluate their hazardous material usage and among other benefits, by switching to less dangerous chemicals will cut disposal costs.



VAUGHAN COUNCIL for degenerating into the most dysfunctional municipality in York Region. Imagine what they could be accomplishing if all their attention was devoted to municipal services and programs.



TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL for the highest Earth Hour electricity saving in York Region – a huge 27%. That is a challenge for all other municipalities to meet or exceed this saving next year.



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ONTARIO'S PROPOSED GREEN ENERGY ACT

by John D'Alimonte, YREA Volunteer & Jeffrey Harti, Windfall Ecology Centre

On February 23, 2009 the Ontario government announced Bill 150, the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009 (GEA). The bill seeks to encourage the use and development of renewable energy sources in Ontario and to promote the creation of a culture of conservation among Ontarians. The Government of Ontario estimates that if passed, this Act will lead to the creation of 50,000 green collar jobs within three years of its passage. Many of these initial jobs will result from a \$5 billion government effort to expand and modernize Ontario's electricity grid, to allow it to accommodate the thousands of decentralized energy producers (such as home owners with rooftop solar panels or farmers with wind turbines) who will be connecting to the grid as a result of this Act.

As a part of an effort to promote energy conservation, the GEA will encourage Ontarians to have an energy audit conducted when selling their homes. These audits are important because on average, homeowners who make the recommended changes can improve the energy efficiency of their homes by around 30%, dramatically reducing their energy bills while decreasing their greenhouse gas emissions. The concerns that have been raised regarding the GEA however, relate to what it does not say. For instance, while the GEA represents the government's commitment to promote and expand conservation and renewable energy, it stops short of ensuring that conservation and renewables are made priorities one and two in terms of planning the future of Ontario's energy system. As well, while the GEA would guarantee the purchase of electricity produced from renewable sources at a fixed rate for 20 years, it does not ensure that this will be the primary mechanism used to purchase renewable energy in Ontario.

Also, the lack of specifics presented by the government when they first introduced this bill was a cause for concern, as was the perception that this bill would limit community consultation on local renewable energy projects, effectively silencing local input in regard to these projects. The government seems to be listening to these concerns and recently released a series of proposed amendments to the GEA, which would include specific provisions regarding ensuring community consultation and municipal assistance, as well as examining health and environmental concerns of energy projects.



However, on April 27, 2009, Liberal members of the Ontario Legislature's Committee on General Government voted down proposed amendments to the Green Energy Act put forward by the NDP's Energy Critic, Peter Tabuns. These amendments would have eliminated special deals for nuclear projects by making it illegal for them to pass their capital cost overruns onto electricity consumers and taxpayers. This means government MPPs have voted to retain the biggest loophole in the Green Energy Act instead of acting in the spirit of the Act and ensuring a truly level playing field for renewable power projects. For more info on the GEA go to: <http://www.greenenergyact.ca/> and <http://www.cleanairalliance.org/>

A BLACK DAY FOR CLARINGTON

By Kerry Meydam, Durham Environment Watch

On Friday, May 15, Clarington Council voted 4 – 3 to endorse a Host Community Agreement that, upon the Region's approval, will rescind Clarington's 'unwilling host' position on the Durham/York Incinerator (EFW facility). This action has angered residents across Durham Region. Durham Councillors have repeatedly promised residents they won't approve or build it if it isn't 'safe', yet they are making far-reaching, binding decisions without waiting for results of site specific air quality, human health and ecological risk studies, or a report from our Regional Medical Officer of Health.

Why are residents so worried?

- Proponents say plant emissions will be well below provincial standards, but MoE is in the process of updating their A-7 Ontario Air Pollution Guidelines, making them more stringent. The emissions criteria was developed on what will soon be outdated standards which will not meet the new proposed A-7 limits for dioxins and furans, considered to be the most toxic pollutants known to science, with no amounts considered "safe".
- Covanta was approved in April 2009 as the preferred vendor to build and operate the EFW facility, yet has a well documented record of noncompliance with operational requirements as well as a history of poor labor relations with company workers. Pennsylvania's environmental protection department fined Covanta last October for exceeding emission limits, while Michigan residents are up in arms, pushing for the closing of a controversial Covanta plant in Detroit.
- Out of the HUNDREDS OF CHEMICALS emitted from a mass burn incinerator Guideline A-7 sets out fixed emissions for only nine - particulate matter, cadmium, lead, mercury, dioxins and furans, hydrochloric acid, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and organic matter.
- There is no commitment for continuous monitoring for lead, mercury, particulate matter, cadmium, organic matter, and the dioxin monitoring is unclear.
- The Covanta plan is to truck the 15,000 tonnes of toxic fly ash from the facility to a site in New York State. What would happen should the NY border close as the Michigan border will do next year? Where will the ash be stored or landfilled?
- There will be no environmental monitoring that includes ambient air, vegetation, soil, agricultural, or human biomonitoring.



York and Durham Regional Councils have endorsed the site with the MOST polluted air shed. They have chosen the residual waste alternative with the GREAT-EST health, environmental and financial risk. They have chosen the MOST LIMITED monitoring package for their environmental surveillance program, rather than the promised 'best of the best'.

They have chosen so far to ignore the informed words of over 75 concerned physicians in Durham Region who have registered their opposition to the proposed EFW to be situated in Clarington, citing the creation of dioxins and furans along with other toxic compounds, fine particulate matter which evades the best available scrubbers and is associated with adverse effects on human health. They urge the Region to put the health and environmental concerns of its citizens in the forefront and to adopt a waste management strategy that will maximize waste diversion, composting, and recycling and to explore alternatives to residual waste treatment that do not include incineration.

With the economic climate as it is, and with the Province's recent paper on "Toward a Zero Waste Future", along with their more stringent updating of A-7 Emission Guidelines it would only make sense for both Durham and York Region Councils to delay their final decision to approve this incinerator. Rushing it to completion without having all the information and without truly taking into consideration the concerns of health professionals and the public with regard to human and environmental impacts will render their 'process' only so much top show greenwashing. For more information visit: www.DurhamEnvironmentWatch.org



GREENWORKS



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Would you like to see a one-stop e-library resource for environmental news and initiatives in York Region?

Then please support YREA with a generous donation.

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We do acknowledge the names of our donors on our website and in our newsletter, but please let us know if you would like to remain anonymous.

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Another Way to Give



This is **YARD SALE** season! Organize a yard sale and donate the proceeds to YREA.

You will be doing a good thing for the environment by recycling, you will get a tax receipt for the amount of your donation and you will be helping us take action.

We need your support to to make a difference!

YREA extends its heartfelt thanks to our latest donors -

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