



GREENWORKS



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR THINK LOCALLY FOR YOUR SEASONAL GIVING

As we slowly shift from an unbridled consumer society to a more sustainable one based on conserve economics, many of us are making more thoughtful choices about where we shop and what we buy. The local economy and especially its farmers stand to benefit from this shift. When you think locally, remember the York Region Environmental Alliance, striving to make our own backyards a healthier, more sustainable place to live and work.

GOOD NEWS FOR OUR SUPPORTERS

YREA is now a registered charity #84559 0553 RR0001 so if you find our newsletters informative, and believe the environment is worth defending, please support us. Any contribution over \$20 will make you a member and you will receive a tax receipt. Please be generous. To donate, mail your cheque to: 61 Briarcliffe Crescent, Thornhill, ON L4J 7H2. Or go to our website www.yrea.org for online donating coming soon.

YREA is in the midst of a major growth spurt – see page two for what our new part-time staff is doing. We will continue to produce GREENWORKS to educate and inform and as an important voice for other like-minded groups. Maintaining our strong record of working cooperatively with municipalities and NGOs we will continue to influence public policy and community behaviour through numerous ongoing environmental initiatives. WATCH FOR OUR ENVIRO WORKSHOPS COMING SOON! Check our website for topics, times and places.

All these projects require funding so YREA sends a huge thank you to supporters Henry, Zoe and Hannah Renglich of Thornhill for organizing a fundraising garage sale, proceeds of which were donated to YREA. They raised over \$400! That was such a good idea. We hope the next time any of you have to get rid of 'stuff' you will consider donating the earnings to us.

Heartfelt thanks also goes out to Debbe Crandall of Caledon, Julian & Jane Sykes-Brown and Louise & Simon Ingram all of the UK for their donations. The folks from the UK stayed at my Toadhall Bed & Breakfast on Lake Wilcox. I put a stop to unnecessary gifts (usually toads) from well-intentioned guests, and instead have a donation box in the B&B room.

Especially at this time of year, I and the Board of Directors and staff of the York Region Environmental Alliance extend our best wishes to you all with our fervent hopes for a greener, more peaceful world.

Sustainably yours,

Gloria Marsh

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GREENWORKS



YREA WELCOMES ANITA KOMOROWSKI & KAREN BUCKLE



Above left to right: Anita Komorowski and Karen Buckle

Anita Komorowski joins us in the role of Data Analyst/Webmaster. As a computer analyst Anita worked for clients across North America from non-profits to corporate giants for over a decade. With her degree from the University of Waterloo, Anita is well prepared to play a pivotal role in YREA's capacity building. Her strong blend of computer and management skills will be instrumental in making the YREA website the place to go for environmental information related to York Region. Residents, organizations, businesses and the public sector will be able to access the directory, e-Library and useful information specific to their community. Anita can be reached at anita@yrea.org

In September, Karen Buckle joined the YREA staff as Communications and Community Outreach Coordinator. Along with her B.Sc. from the University of Guelph, Karen brings a commitment to the environment and years of experience teaching ecological awareness and stewardship to students across the GTA. In her new position with us, Karen will be helping YREA build its capacity to better identify and effectively respond to issues of environmental concern by:

- Increasing awareness of YREA and its services within the York Region community
- Helping to build a strong regional network of environmental organizations
- Increasing YREA's volunteer base

Karen can be reached at karen@yrea.org

THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM
FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM
DE L'ONTARIO

These part-time staff positions have been made possible through The Ontario Trillium Foundation funding.



PEAK BUSTER AWARDS

The Ontario Clean Air Alliance will be presenting Peak Buster Awards to seven southern Ontario electric utilities and the Northern York Region municipalities that beat the provincial average by achieving demand reductions of 6.12% to 25.02% at the time of the province-wide system peak.

| | Demand on June 9, 2008 at 3 PM (MW) | Demand on June 26, 2007 at 4 PM (MW) | Change (%) |
|--------------------------------|--|---|------------|
| Wasaga Distribution Inc. | 16.392 | 21.861 | -25.02 |
| Hydro One | 3254.00 | 3728.00 | -12.71 |
| Orangeville Hydro | 40.060 | 45.868 | -12.66 |
| Barrie Hydro Distribution Inc. | 273.109 | 313 | -12.65 |
| Northern York Region* | 314.4 | 354 | -11.19 |
| Newmarket Hydro | 131.198 | 146.580 | 10.49 |
| Horizon Utilities Corporation | 981.702 | 1054.272 | -6.88 |
| Grimsby Power Inc. | 37.752 | 40.212 | -6.12 |

*For electric power planning purposes the Ontario Power Authority has defined Northern York Region to be the communities served by Newmarket's Armitage Transformer Station, namely, Newmarket, Aurora, Whitchurch-Stouffville, East Gwillimbury, King Township and Bradford-West Gwillimbury.



MORE ON THE MEGAWATT PLANT

By **Debbe Schafer, Chair,**
Concerned Citizens of King Township
<http://kingtoday.ca>

York Region/Simcoe is slated to have a 350 MW gas-fired peaker generator operating in a rural farm area in the Green Belt. Ontario Power Authority (OPA) received bids by four proponents for six locations. Five are in York (three in King Township, two in East Gwillimbury); one is in Simcoe (Bradford West Gwillimbury).

Initially OPA stated that this generator would not be forced on an unwilling municipality. OPA subsequently reversed this after all municipalities stated that they were 'an unwilling host'. If, after OPA selects their preferred site and the municipality remains uncooperative, a legal challenge at the Ontario Municipal Board would be the proponent's prerogative.

The protective intent of the Province's Green Belt and the Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) are not being respected. In both these Acts, the legislation allows public infrastructure only 'if there is no reasonable alternative'. Four of the potential sites are in protected countryside or natural heritage system of the Green Belt, where land values are diminished due to restrictions imposed by the legislation.

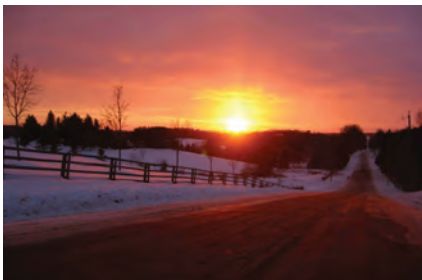


photo by Jeff Laidlaw

What can one conclude from this? The Ontario Government is not serious about protecting our natural heritage and environment. A cynic would suggest that the Green Belt and ORM ensures that there is cheap land for government-sponsored infrastructure such as generators and roads.

THERE IS INCOMPLETE DISCLOSURE OF RISK. The Minister of Environment only requires an environmental assessment (EA) 'screening' conducted by the proponents. This is not the rigorous individual EA as required for other industrial projects. Furthermore, analysis will be based on the plant running less than 10% of time although there is nothing structural to prevent the plant running 100% of time.

Generating electricity from the proposed peaker plant will result in plumes of gas with a variety of noxious chemicals and tiny airborne particles entering our local air shed. The long-term health impact of in-

halation of these chemicals has not been well studied. The impact on the organic soils of the Holland Marsh will not be identified, as the EAs will be conducted using mineral-based soils, the standard for any scientific models.

THE ARGUMENT FOR NEED IS WEAK.

OPA has been selling this generator as insurance that the lights remain on in Northern YR. Their forecast of an imbalance between supply and demand is based on estimates made pre 2005. Since then, much has changed: higher uptake of conservation programs, newer green technology, and economic downturns - Ontario has suffered significant loss of high electricity consuming manufacturing jobs. Recent electricity consumption numbers support this. For all Ontario, current highest demand periods are now almost 10,000 megawatts (MG) below the total grid capacity of 31,600 MW. Highest electricity demand this summer was 22,950 MW, which is 10% less than 2007's peak and 15% less 2006's peak.

THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES; THERE IS TIME TO RE-ASSESS.

On September 18th Minister Smitherman, the Minister of Energy & Infrastructure, ordered a re-assessment of the Integrated Electricity Plan for Ontario and more recently he delayed investment decisions for nuclear with an objective of putting more emphasis on renewable energy sources and conservation. The YR peaker plant has been omitted from this re-assessment. It should be part of it. We have enough electricity to wait for a greener energy plan for the province.

KEEP CURRENT, FIND OUT WHAT YOU CAN DO BY GOING TO www.megawhat.ca



MORaine DEVELOPMENT - Ontario's Water Hazard

By Josh Kohler & Josh Garfinkel

Ontario's Greenbelt had its third birthday this past March. The Greenbelt was designated to protect local farmland, integral watersheds, and remaining wildlife habitat. Within the Greenbelt, the Oak Ridges Moraine is a natural storage and filtration system that supplies drinking water directly to 250,000 Ontarians, and indirectly to millions more through the 65 rivers and streams that flow from the Moraine back into surrounding Lakes. The Moraine is of such importance that the provincial government actually passed protection for it, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act (ORMCA), in 2001 – 4 years before the surrounding Greenbelt was created. Surely the Moraine must be adequately protected from new developments?



In fact, after speaking with a policy advisor for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we were informed that the province is not tracking new developments on the Moraine. It seems

that now that the initial celebrations and excitement have died down, the actual realities of what is unfolding on the ground within the Greenbelt are extremely alarming.

Case in point - a controversial development application has reared its scandalous head in Aurora, igniting a battle between citizens, municipal politicians, environmental organizations and developers. Plans for the Westhill development include an 18-hole golf course and condo development that are being proposed on some of the most sensitive portions of the Oak Ridges Moraine. There are already an astounding 17 golf courses within an 8 km radius of the Westhill site, and unsurprisingly, the town has been experiencing water shortages dating back at least from 1997!

By now, most people are aware of the gaping hole in our Greenbelt legislation, permitting golf courses in the Greenbelt and certain areas of the Moraine. Unfortunately, there is a lot more going on here than legislative flaws. The twist to this story becomes apparent when examining the history of

the Westhill development application, which dates back almost twenty years - a good twelve years before the Moraine Act was passed. Westhill is one of a number of development applications that did not have any sort of approval, but was still in process prior to the Moraine and Greenbelt Acts. These 'transitional' developments may be able to by-pass the vital protection afforded to the Oak Ridges Moraine.

If this sounds ambiguous, that's because it is. Transitional developments have fallen into a legislative grey area, and it is unclear how much of the ORMCA applies to this case. Westhill does not comply with basic provisions outlined in the ORMCA, which led the town of Aurora to vote against this development in March 2008. Despite vehement opposition from council and citizens alike, Westhill development is appealing the town's decision to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

To call this case the litmus test for the highly touted ORMCA is an understatement: as one of the first transitional developments to go to the OMB, and given the OMB's long history of overturning municipal decisions in favour of development, we have legitimate fears that Westhill's transitional status will allow it to by-pass Moraine protection, setting a dangerous precedent for future transitional developments.

The province must close the door on transitional developments by ensuring proper interpretation and implementation of the Act through involvement with this precedent setting case. Minister Jim Watson is the one who can get the province to declare an interest in the Westhill OMB case so it can stand behind the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act. He can be contacted at:

Honourable Jim Watson
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
17th floor 777 Bay St. Toronto, ON M5G 2E5
Phone: 416-585-7000 Fax: 416-585-6470



EARTHROOTS Josh Kohler and Josh Garfinkel are campaigners for Earthroots, a non-profit environmental advocacy organization that focuses on protecting wilderness, wildlife and watersheds in Ontario. To learn what you can do go to: www.earthroots.org or email info@earthroots.org



YORK REGION

EDITORIAL ON ENVIRONMENT FIRST & PLANNING FOR TOMORROW MEETINGS

by Jeff Laidlaw & Gloria Marsh

The 2nd Annual Environment First Symposium and Planning for Tomorrow meetings featured speakers who gave optimistic presentations on initiatives within York Region (YR). One glaring contradiction to all this was the obvious disconnect between the rhetoric and what is actually being allowed to happen in York Region. An 'environment first' policy is clearly at odds with the 'peaker plant' project. Electricity plans came to a halt some years ago when YR vetoed the transmission idea. Right there and then YR should have taken action to put in place an energy efficient, non-polluting alternative. Revisiting this four years too late, time is said to be a factor (when, in fact, it isn't) and due diligence has gone by the wayside. Bring on the carbon tax - we will be paying dearly for this foolish choice.

MUCH MORE CAN BE DONE

- TRCA & LSRCA could do more with protecting watersheds by working with farmers to explore biomass energy from manure and agricultural waste. Walkerton would never have happened if farm nutrients had been harnessed to produce fuel.
- Higher green building standards should be mandatory, not an option. We have to get to that place now, not tomorrow, where heating and cooling our homes and powering our industries does not require vast amounts of polluting fossil fuels.
- When municipalities are reliant on development charges, they are always trying to catch up with infrastructure, putting it in place after the fact, and are not likely to want less development while caught in this vicious circle. At this writing, Guelph was the only city committed enough to the environment to ask to expand its greenbelt.
- We are told that to preserve green spaces we must have higher densities (a good idea) and development will have to occur in white fields (the new term replacing the more bucolic 'countryside' designation). Will this be like Oak Ridges, where we were promised the preservation of a 2

km Oak Ridges Moraine urban separator on Yonge Street if residents agreed to be crammed in like sardines - population rising from 7500 to 30,000? Three years after this promise we were left with a new town plan and ½ km of Moraine, the narrowest part in its 160km length. Single use single story strip plazas are still being built. These photos show what is happening on Yonge



Street and what is to come, one block away, all on the Oak Ridges Moraine. If the 'grandfather' clause is to blame for these abominations, it should be abolished when the ORM Conservation

Plan is revisited. This type of planning is not getting us out of our cars and unless mass transit, particularly trains, keeps pace with growth our towns will be unlivable.



- Like our electricity, we need to stop exporting our water if we are to have enough to sustain projected growth. Highway 7 as a pedestrian friendly thoroughfare? Hardly. People who live in high density housing along the Hwy 7 hydro corridor will be exposed to electromagnetic fields that will compromise their health. These implications are not even being considered as we speak of healthy communities. Much that was unveiled has great promise, but the talk must lead to decisive action wherein economic, social and environmental implications are part of the equation.

For more information on Environment First, Planning for Tomorrow and biomass for farmers see:
www.york.ca/Departments/Transportation+and+Works/Environment+First+Symposium.htm
www.agenergysolutions.org/site/index.php?page_id=16
www.york.ca/Departments/Planning+and+Development/Growth+Management/default+Growth+Management.htm



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2009 GREEN REEL ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL



**The City Playhouse,
1000 New Westminster Drive,
Vaughan, ON L4J 8G3
January 16 & 17, 2009**

<http://greenreelfilmfestival.com>

Tickets now on sale. Reserve by calling The City Playhouse Box Office at 905-882-SHOW(7469)

Tickets: \$5 per film, day passes \$12 a day. Full two-day festival passes are \$20.00

Includes an on-site Green Market of green vendors, environmental groups, information kiosks, activities and refreshments.

Admission into the City Playhouse Green Market is free and several community screenings are being held free of charge. All are welcome!

JANUARY 16, 2009

- 10:30am – MORROW & JASP GO GREEN - tickets \$8 or free with pass
- 11:30am – SQUIRM : The Story of Cathy's Crawly Composters
- 12:30pm – Town At The Top of The World – free screening
- 1:30pm – Darfur Now!
- 3:30pm – El Contrato – free screening
- 4:30pm – Five Ring Circus
- 6:00pm – Shipbreakers - free screening
- 7:30pm – SHARKWATER
- 9:00pm – Where In The World Is Osama Bin Laden?

JANUARY 17, 2009

- 10:30am – MORROW & JASP GO GREEN - tickets \$8 or free with pass
- 11:30am – Encounters At The Edge of The World
- 1:00pm – Be The Change - free screening
- 2:00pm – Geologic Journey – The Great Lakes – free screening
- 3:00pm – SQUIRM : The Story of Cathy's Crawly Composters
- 4:00pm – Up The Yangtze - free screening
- 6:00pm – The Price of Sugar
- 8:00pm – Good Morning Khandahar – free screening
- 9:00pm – Garbage Warrior

If you haven't had the pleasure of attending this fabulous, local event, don't miss it this time around. Besides the noteworthy films, you can enjoy the enviro fair and get a chance to hobnob with GREEN politicians in between screenings. We already have some of our finest committed to attending.

For an overview of each film go to

http://greenreelfilmfestival.com/pb/wp_79f5b090/wp_79f5b090.html

TRASH CANS & GREEN BINS



HOME DEPOT for working in partnership with Newmarket and YREA in pesticide education and for voluntarily removing pesticides from their shelves, even in municipalities without pesticide bylaws.



JOE LBOVIC for proposing yet another golf course/residential development, this time adjacent to a wetland and environmentally sensitive area in Aurora and for his audacity in front of council - essentially saying they owed him the approval of this proposal for what he has given to the town.



AURORA COUNCIL for not being intimidated and turning down the Westhill Lebovic application.



LCBO for their waste reduction initiatives, their Natural Heritage Fund which supports efforts to preserve and restore wildlife habitat throughout Ontario and for their promotion of Ontario wines.



ONTARIO HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION BOARD

for making ride sharing illegal unless you meet a silly criteria. For more info about this nonsense go to: <http://save.pickuppal.com> - if you can ever get out of your traffic jam.



RONA INC. has pledged that by the end of 2010 all lumber in its stores will come from certified forests, giving preference to the FSC standard. Rona's new policy will shake up the logging industry in Quebec, as they are the largest Canadian distributor and retailer of home renovation. Bring on the ripple effect.