

Media Release

For immediate release: October 27, 2006

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York Region Environmental Alliance releases results of election questionnaire

The York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA) has just completed the 2006 YREA Environmental Election Questionnaire, which will serve as a powerful tool for the voting public in the upcoming election. The survey asked all the candidates to respond to specific questions pertaining to the environment. The four key areas addressed were greenhouse gas emissions, planning for sustainability, waste management and pesticide by-laws.

In response to a question on greenhouse gas emissions, most candidates indicated that they would support measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to pre-1990 levels, as outlined in the Kyoto Guidelines. In terms of planning for sustainability, candidates overwhelmingly supported a triple bottom line approach in decision-making and town planning, which would ensure that environmental, social and economic bottom lines are balanced.

The answers to the waste management issue shows that many candidates are questioning the move toward incineration and would like to see more town resources allocated to improving strategies to reduce packaging and divert more waste away from landfill and incineration. Many brought up the need to address waste management in apartments, condominiums, and commercial and industrial buildings.

The final question asked candidates if they would advocate for the implementation of a pesticide by-law in their community. All but 11 candidates responded with an outright 'yes'. The remaining candidates spoke of the need to improve public education regarding alternatives.

"The response rate of forty-nine per cent is extremely high, especially at a time when candidates are busy campaigning," says Leslie Atkinson, Executive Director of York Region Environmental Alliance, "I think it shows that they know their stance on environmental issues is critical in this election. It was refreshing to see so many candidates compelled to add thoughtful and lengthy responses. It is clear that many candidates are well informed about environmental issues."

"It is evident by the surge of green candidates in the up and coming election that there is frustration among the electorate who are dissatisfied with the status quo," says Gloria Marsh, Chair of the York Region Environmental Alliance. "YREA intends to hold our elected officials accountable while we work together for healthier, sustainable communities".

Survey responses are attached with this email for each municipality:

The overall survey rate of response was at 49%, or 155 out of 234 candidates. The following represents response rate by municipality: Richmond Hill, 68%; Aurora, 55%; Markham, 55%; Georgina, 53%; Vaughan, 48%; King Township, 47%; Whitchurch-Stouffville, 35%; Newmarket, 35%; East Gwillimbury, 33%.

The York Region Environmental Alliance (YREA) is a not-for-profit, incorporated organization formed in 1999 to raise awareness of environmental issues in York Region. YREA has board representation from all nine municipalities and has worked within York Region's communities in partnership with municipalities on various projects of mutual concern. It has a dedicated membership and active volunteer base.

The objectives of YREA are:

- To raise awareness of the impact of toxic substances on the environment and on human health and to campaign for the elimination of these substances
- To promote healthy lifestyle alternatives through presentations, workshops, education and outreach
- To seek ecologically sound and sustainable solutions in areas of our concern
- To work with other government and non-government agencies, volunteers and members of the community to achieve our objectives

YREA Projects:

Workshops on climate change

Pesticide education

Organic lawn care workshops

Addressing Waste (reduce/recycle/reuse)

Anti-idling community challenges

Public education: environmental information nights, speakers bureau, displays

"Green Works" newsletter and e-bulletins

Ecological Footprint Campaign - to educate residents on how to measure human impact on the environment and how to make small but significant changes to their lifestyles to reduce their ecological footprint