

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

From the President's Corner

ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES WE FACE AT CAPE IS TRYING, ON the one hand, to be responsive to the myriad of environmental issues that are brought to our attention each day by other organizations, and, on the other hand, to keep focused on our core work. Every week we receive requests to sign statements, write letters to government, or speak to the media about issues ranging from Persistent Organic Pollutants to Greenbelt protection to non-smokers' rights. Balancing these competing pulls is difficult, but over the past year we've developed a new division of labour between staff and board members which seems to be successfully addressing the problem.

When it comes to responding to the wider environmental movement or the media, we generally call upon our board members. In the last few months they've done a wonderful job acting as CAPE's eyes and ears. They've given talks, presented scientific papers, written support letters, and spoken to the TV, radio, and print media. They've kept us connected to our partner groups and been strong ambassadors.

And this has allowed CAPE staff to concentrate on this year's core project: lawn pesticide restrictions. Focusing initially on Peterborough, Edmonton, and Ottawa, CAPE has provided expert help to local groups interested in passing bylaws prohibiting non-essential pesticides in their communities. CAPE's support was essential in the recent Peterborough by-law victory and now the focus has moved to Ottawa where things look promising.

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Peterborough to Prohibit Lawn Pesticides

photos: emerging design

City bylaw will protect 70,000 residents from toxic chemicals

PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL HAS PASSED A MOTION TO BRING IN A BYLAW PROHIBITING non-essential pesticide use effective March 1, 2006. The motion, led by Mayor Sylvia Sutherland, passed by a vote of 8-1.

"When I talked with Mayor Sutherland about the pesticide issue prior to the vote, she told me, 'You're speaking to the converted.' I am delighted to say that the Mayor is a woman of her word. She and Peterborough Council are to be heartily commended for their courage and initiative on this issue," said Gideon Forman, CAPE's Executive Director. "They are political leaders who truly put the needs of children and the environment first."

CAPE has been working on the bylaw with a local Peterborough group, *Pesticides Beware* (PB), since June, 2004. In September, CAPE released polling – carried out by the national pollster Oracle Poll Research – showing 84% of Peterborough residents support a total

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UPCOMING AGM - Notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, November 19th-20th 2005 (Saturday and Sunday) in Ottawa. The venue has yet to be announced. **Mark your calendar and see you in Ottawa!**



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Since taking over as executive director in May, 2004, Gideon has made CAPE the heart of the movement for local pesticide by-laws. He has also worked hard to make the organization financially stable. His fundraising team, which includes part-time staffers Daniella Grosvenor and Kanae Li, has expanded CAPE's membership and brought in important grants from foundations excited by our work.

Our growing membership is the key to our success. CAPE's members continue to be the lifeblood of the organization, supporting CAPE with donations and their time. Thank you again for your support, and here's to a successful 2005 and a pesticide by-law in Ottawa.

Dr. Kapil Khatter, CAPE President

Changing the Environmental Impact of a Montreal CLSC: Project likely to Triple!

Jean Zigby

THE INITIATIVE TO 'GREEN' HEALTHCARE IN ONE MONTREAL CENTRE MAY BE EXPANDING FASTER THAN expected! With the recent mergers of health institutions in Québec, the former CLSC Côte-des-Neiges finds itself with two other centres equally enthused about greening their practices.

The three centres are part of the new Centre de Santé et Services Sociaux (CSSS) Côte-des-Neiges-Métro-Parc Extension and is the latest opportunity to change the purchasing, use, and disposal of healthcare material for the greener. Already these sites have been shown how to organize volunteer Green Teams and have representatives on the new CSSS Environmental Management Committee.

Recycling and selected toxics reduction are in full force at the Côte-des-Neiges site. Dynamic group teaching sessions on the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) are also underway and have received very positive employee feedback. The goal is to brainstorm with each employee by the end of May on how to decrease consumption and environmental impact. This includes meeting with all new employees during training to get them on board with the environmental policy right from the start.

The goal is to make 'green' equipment available to all healthcare institutions in Montreal.

The most exciting new opportunity has been the invitation by Québec's largest medical procurement firm, Appro Montreal, to present 'environmentally friendly' criteria to their administration. The goal is to make 'green' equipment available to all healthcare institutions in Montreal. A second meeting will take place this fall and representative buyers from all the healthcare institutions will learn more about the importance of moving the province-wide 'green purchasing' initiative forward.



**Lawn & Garden Pesticides:
Reducing Harm** CAPE video
NOW AVAILABLE!

photo: Véronique Lehouck

Lawn & Garden Pesticides: Reducing Harm CAPE's long-awaited video on lawn and garden pesticides. This unique 10 minute video sets out the scientific evidence linking common household pesticides to a variety of serious illnesses, including cancer, reproductive problems, and neurological diseases. 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 of the video, please contact Gideon Forman, Executive Director, at gideon@cape.ca.



3 out of 4 in Ottawa Say “No” to Pesticides

Seventy-five percent of Ottawa residents support a complete phase-out of pesticides on residential property, a new poll has found. The poll – the most comprehensive to date – comes as the City begins deliberations on a bylaw to prohibit non-essential pesticide use on lawns and gardens.

The survey also discovered that pesticides are used by just 14% of Ottawa homeowners.

“Taken together, these data give city councillors all the ammunition they need to bring in a bylaw,” said Gideon Forman, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. “The number of people using pesticides is relatively small and the number who want them prohibited is enormous.”

The poll also asked respondents how pesticide reductions could best be achieved: through a bylaw coupled with public education or through public education alone. More than seven out of ten (70.7%) chose the bylaw-education package.

“This finding is very significant”, said Dr. Cathy Vakil, a member of the Ontario College of Family Physicians and a CAPE board member. “Residents feel the City’s current policy of simply providing information on pesticide reduction isn’t sufficient. The vast majority want public education teamed up with a bylaw.”

Public concern over toxic lawn products has been growing since the Ontario College of Family Physicians released a landmark study in 2004 linking pesticide use to serious illnesses including cancer and birth defects. The study was hailed as Canada’s most comprehensive review of the effects of pesticides on humans.

The polling was sponsored, in part, by the Laidlaw Foundation and conducted by Oracle Poll, a leading research firm whose corporate clients include Inco Ltd., Domtar, and Abitibi Consolidated. A total of 525 randomly selected Ottawa adults were interviewed. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.3%, 19/20 times.

“... the only way to reduce pesticide use significantly is through legislation.”

reduce their pesticide use by just 50% over four years.

“The voluntary approach simply wouldn’t protect Peterborough residents – especially children,” said CAPE’s president, Dr. Kapil Khatter. “All the research we’ve seen shows that the only way to reduce pesticide use significantly is through legislation.”

CAPE is also working toward a bylaw in the City of Ottawa. In February the organization released an Oracle poll showing 3 out of 4 Ottawans support a complete pesticide phase-out on residential property. [See sidebar for details.] The poll was released at a press conference hosted by Ottawa’s Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Robert Cushman, a strong bylaw supporter. The results were featured on page one of *The Ottawa Citizen’s* City Section. Further polling, released two weeks later, showed nearly 8 out of 10 Ottawa residents (77%) feel pesticides are a threat to the environment.

CAPE has been working on the bylaw with a local Peterborough group, *Pesticides Beware* (PB), since June, 2004. In September, CAPE released polling – carried out by the national pollster Oracle Poll Research – showing 84% of Peterborough residents support a total phase-out of lawn pesticides on private property. In October, the physicians’ group released a second poll showing 75% of residents believe pesticides pose a health threat to children.

“The polling was a crucial piece in CAPE’s overall strategy,” said Forman. “But the numbers would never have been so strong if it hadn’t been for the educational work *Pesticides Beware* has been doing locally for years.”

Pesticides Beware ran a petition drive that garnered 4,000 signatures from local residents calling for a pesticide phase-out. In the Fall of 2004, the group also ran a campaign that resulted in the collection of 1,900 pro-bylaw letters.

Prior to CAPE’s intervention, the city was poised to adopt a purely voluntary approach to the issue, asking residents to

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At the end of February, CAPE board members Dr. Cathy Vakil and Professor Scott Findlay presented two papers at a scientific conference organized by CAPE's local partner, The Ottawa Partnership for a Pesticide Bylaw. Dr. Vakil summarized the findings of the Ontario College of Family Physicians' landmark *Pesticide Literature Review*, of which she was an author. Professor Findlay explored the issue of risk assessment, explaining that the Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency cannot make claims about pesticide safety, only risk. He noted that whether a risk is acceptable is not a scientific question but a social one.

"The Ottawa Partnership did a phenomenal job putting

this conference together", said Forman. "They got over 250 people out on a cold February night and made a significant contribution to educating city officials on the hazards of cosmetic pesticides."

CAPE's pesticide work has been made possible by generous financial support from the Laidlaw Foundation, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Auto Workers, the Pilkington-Henniger Charitable Trust, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the Flavelle Foundation, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Pesticide-Free Ontario, and hundreds of individual CAPE members. Our heartfelt thanks to them all!

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

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Membership

Members \$100

Supporters (*Honorary mention and a free copy of The Canadian Guide to Health and the Environment*) \$200

Students, retirees, those with limited income \$25

Member Organizations (*one vote per organization*) \$50

(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*).

Please take a monthly donation

of \$ _____ from my account on the 1st of each month.
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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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CAPE
ACKNOWLEDGES, WITH GRATITUDE,
THE GENEROSITY OF OUR FUNDERS:



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LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO



ECO Friends

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

Pesticides Beware

Pesticides Beware formed in March 2001, when a group of citizens gathered together during a pesticide seminar at the *Peterborough Public Library*. The group became very active educating the public on the hazards of pesticides and alternative lawn care methods. They sent information to 10,000 homes in Peterborough, had tables at local events and collected over 4000 signatures for a petition calling for a pesticide bylaw. They emailed City Councillors, wrote letters to the editor of local newspapers and spoke before City Council, convincing them to set up a committee to examine the pesticide issue in Peterborough.

The determined efforts of *Pesticides Beware* deserve much credit for the passing of Peterborough's new bylaw prohibiting non-essential pesticide use effective March 1, 2006!

www.pesticidesbeware.com

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