

Autumn 2000

From the President's Corner

Another year has passed, and CAPE has evolved steadily. I'm particularly pleased to announce that our membership has almost doubled, primarily through personal contacts and word of mouth.

We've added two members to our Board. Irena Buka, a pediatrician from Calgary, is working on linkages with the pediatric community. Steve Tsekrekos, a resident at the University of Alberta, is our liaison with the medical education community. While not yet a Board member, Peter Sakuls has begun the task of updating and upgrading our web site.

Two Board members have left this year: Pierre Gosselin, who so ably linked CAPE with the International Society of Doctors for the Environment; and Kelly Martin, who wrote the acclaimed submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Sadly, V-P Nicole Bruinsma has had to withdraw because the breast cancer, which she is certain is related to toxic exposures, has returned. We wish her and her husband Scott, also a Board member, and her children and family, our very best.

Children and the environment continues to be our central programming theme. CAPE has collaborated in setting up the Canadian Children's Environmental Health Network (CCEHN), spearheaded by the Canadian Institute for Child Health (CICH); this includes a website (www.healthychildren.ca), and a social marketing campaign entitled "Healthy Environments for Healthy Children." CAPE joined the CICH in presenting a workshop on environment health at the conference "Beyond 2000: Healthy Tomorrows for Children and Youth" in Ottawa, June 14-18. Alan Abelsohn worked with the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), on a review of Canadian legislation relating to children's health. Trevor Hancock contributed most of the environment and health data to the CICH report entitled "The Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile," which was released to the media on Aug. 22, 2000.

On Nov. 8, 2000, David Rosen is organizing a Public Forum on the Environment and Children's Health in Toronto. This will feature Dr. Graham Chance, principal author of the CICH report, Kathleen Cooper from CELA to talk about their study, Jean-Dominic Lévesque-René, a 16 year old environmental cancer survivor from Québec, and a representative from Federal Health Minister Alan Rock's office.

We've survived financially through the last few months, thanks to some substantial individual anonymous donations. My thanks to all who have supported CAPE with money or with hard volunteer work. Your efforts are deeply appreciated

Greening Health Care: A First Step

Trevor Hancock

A hospital is a potent symbol of health to its community. CAPE has always included the greening of health care as one of its priorities, because the health care system should be a leader in environmentally responsible practices.

However hospitals are the most significant North American point sources of dioxins (as a result of incineration of PVC and other chlorinated products), major sources of mercury pollution, contributors to both air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions because of their above-average expenditure of energy and other resources, and major producers of solid, liquid and gaseous wastes.

Although in Canada the health care sector comprises almost 1/10th of our GDP, no public body has yet addressed the broad environmental impact of health care.

In Ontario, for example, the 1998 Report of the Environmental Commissioner noted that the Ontario Ministry of Health, although professing concern about environmental health, ". . . has devoted few resources to these commitments and has made little effort to . . . protect the public from the effects of environmental hazards." The Commissioner added that "there are 59 operating hospital incinerators in Ontario, none of which have had air pollution control systems installed."

One of the earliest initiatives in the area of greening health care was in Toronto, where the Health Care Environment Network was formed in the early 1990s, bringing together members of management teams from hospitals across Southern Ontario. In the mid 1990s, the Canadian Centre for Pollution Prevention and Karrin Broadhurst developed a program on pollution prevention for hospitals, while a few individual hospitals and Toronto's University Health Network have also developed important initiatives.

The Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) is now a Canadian "chapter" of Health Care Without Harm, a US coalition of health care and environmental groups addressing dioxin/furan and mercury pollution. Mercury reduction within health care has also been the focus of programs from Pollution Probe and the Comité de santé environnementale du Québec. The Canadian College of Health Service Executives has an Energy Innovators program (see article by Kent Waddington), and other initiatives have taken place, notably in Massachusetts and in Queensland, Australia.

But what has been missing so far, in all of these activities, is a comprehensive assessment of the environmental impact of health care.

The CAPE AGM in Ottawa on October 21, 2000, will include a one day workshop, with funding and support from Great Lakes United, Health Care Without Harm and the Toronto Environmental Alliance, on greening health care. With participants invited from major national health care organizations as well as local hospitals and providers, we hope to both spur local action and lay the groundwork for the establishment of a National Coalition for Green Health Care. See you there!

Notice of Annual General Meeting, October 21-22, 2000

The Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment will be held in Ottawa on Saturday, October 21, and Sunday, October 22, 2000.

This date coincides with the annual meetings of the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Canadian Public Health Association.

Agenda

Saturday, October 21, all day & Workshop: "Health Care Without Harm," on 'greening' health care (see article by Trevor Hancock), in the 'Blue Room' of the Ottawa General Hospital.

The first part of the CAPE AGM will commence at 4:30 pm and will adjourn at 6:30 pm, and will include the President's Report, Treasurer's Report and other "technical" details.

A CAPE dinner and social evening will be held in a local restaurant, starting at 7:00 pm.

Sunday, October 22 — reconvene the CAPE AGM: strategy and programme planning session for the next year. This session will commence at 9:30 am at the headquarters of the Canadian Medical Association, and will conclude by 3:30 pm.

The Energy Innovators Programme

Kent Waddington

The Canadian College of Health Service Executives (CCHSE) became involved in 1998 with Natural Resources Canada's Office of Energy Efficiency (NRCan-OEE), to help the Canadian health services sector meet our country's new energy efficiency and emission targets. These include the reduction of harmful greenhouse gas emissions to six percent below 1990 levels within the period from 2008 to 2012.

CCHSE has also been asked to initiate a dialogue on the topics of energy efficiency and climate change. We are thus working, like you are, to meet the climate change challenge and to bring about lasting change in energy use attitudes within health care.

Whether through a formal presentation to a local or regional board or committee, creating an in-house Environment Committee or 'Green Team,' a round table discussion at a conference, or a desktop display, there are dozens of avenues open to provoke thought and encourage action. They provide opportunities for staff, associates, and clients in the health care sector to become involved in the fundamentals of cost reduction & both fiscal and environmental.

We encourage you to share your own ideas, projects, successes and experiences with us so that we in turn may promote them to others through newsletters, publications or the many regional and national promotional events that we participate in each year.

Gandhi said "we must be the change we wish to see in the world." Bringing about environmentally sound change involves everyone, and it therefore requires a commitment from us all.

To learn more about how you can get involved in the Energy Innovators, please contact Kent Waddington at kwaddington@cchse.org or 1-613-756-0435.

Here's a basic list of web sites of interest to CAPE members.
We invite all members to share their own favourites.

Health Promotion/Population Health

- Health Canada www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/hpo/
- Ottawa Charter/WHO Europe www.who.dk/policy/ottawa.htm
- Canadian Health Network www.canadian-health-network.ca

Healthy Communities

- International Healthy Cities Foundation www.healthycities.org
- US Coalition www.healthycommunities.org/
- WHO Europe www.who.dk/healthy-cities/
- Ontario Coalition www.opc.on.ca/ohcc/
- Villes et Villages en Santé vvs.neomedia.com/
- Québec WHO Collaborating Centre www.ulaval.ca/fsi/oms/p1En.html

Health and Environment - General

- World Resources Institute www.wri.org
- European Centre for Environment and Health www.who.it/index.htm
- Health Canada/Healthy Environments www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/healthyenvironment/
- Canadian Environmental Law Association www.cela.ca/
- Pollution Probe www.pollutionprobe.org/
- David Suzuki Foundation www.davidsuzuki.org/
- Ecological Footprint

Global Change and Health

- Centre for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard School of Public Health www.med.harvard.edu/chge/
- Intl Society for Ecosystem Health www.oac.uoguelph.ca/ISEH/index.htm
- CPHA Climate Change and Health project www.ccah.cpha.ca/

Children's Health and the Environment

- Children's Environmental Health Network www.cehn.org/
- Canadian Children's Environmental Health Network www.healthychildren.ca
- Canadian Institute for Child Health www.cich.ca

POPs and Pesticides

- Pesticides Action Network www.panna.org/
- International POPs Elimination Network www.ipen.org

Organic Agriculture

- Canadian Organic Growers www.cog.ca <http://www.cog.ca>
- Farm Folk/City Folk www.ffcf.bc.ca

Medical Environmental Organizations

- National Association of Physicians for the Environment www.napenet.org
- Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment www.cape.ca

Healthy/Health-promoting Hospitals

- Planetree www.planetree.org
- Center for Health Design www.healthdesign.org/
- WHO Health-promoting Hospitals Network www.univie.ac.at/hph/

Green Hospitals

- Sustainable Hospital Project www.uml.edu/centers/LCSP/hospitals/
- Health Care Without Harm www.noharm.org/
- Energy Innovators Project, CCHSE www.cchse.org
- [Health Care Environet](#)
- Canadian Centre for Pollution Prevention

News Briefs

Pesticides

Halifax has passed a bylaw that will shut down cosmetic use over the next four years; CAPE supported the activist community there. We have prepared a Position Statement on Pesticides which will be posted on the web site soon; we endorse the position of the Federal Standing Committee, but advocate further the restriction of pesticide use in all settings to critical emergency use, and call for the aggressive promotion of organic growing techniques.

Greening Health Care

In addition to the workshop on Oct. 21, 2000, at the same time as our AGM in Ottawa, we are also awaiting further communication from Prof. Bill Rees this month about help in carrying out (finally!) an ecological footprint analysis of a Canadian health care institution.

GMOs

We now have our Position Statement on GMOs posted on the website; while not advocating an outright ban on the technology, it urges recalls and stringent restrictions on open releases of all GMOs. Warren Bell had an opportunity to expose the New Zealand government's behind-the-scenes support of GMOs recently, due to an errant mailing from the New Zealand Consulate in Vancouver; an exchange with the Consulate led to action by the NEW ZEALAND Green Party that caused a considerable stir 'down under.'

Organic Food

The Canada-Cuba Farmer to Farmer Project is advancing slowly. It now has the firm support of the Canadian Society for International Health, which is helping to seek CIDA funding. A presentation on the project, which aims to encourage large-scale organic farming within a cooperative anti-corporate management structure, will take place at the CSIH conference Nov. 12-15 in Ottawa.

Global Warming

The Canadian Public Health Association has just completed a 2 day workshop on this topic. Trevor Hancock and David Rosen represented CAPE. Along the way, Trevor attacked the petroleum industry for downplaying the existence of global warming and its health consequences, likening them to the tobacco industry. Now Friends of the Earth are considering suing the oil industry over global warming, citing action against the tobacco industry as a model to follow. Stay tuned!

CHEER Foundation

Work on CAPE's new charitable status foundation has begun. The positive acronym CHEER stands for "Canadian Health and Environment Education and Research." At press time, the final draft of our application to Revenue Canada is ready for signing and submission. The proposed executive of CHEER is President: David Rosen; Treasurer: Cathy Carlson; Secretary: Ellen Buchman; and Board members Roger Hollingworth, Tom Barnard, Riina Bray, and Peter Sakuls.

Walkerton

Through Kapil Khatter, CAPE has received standing for Part 1 of the Walkerton water crisis inquiry addressing the causes of the crisis. Many other environmental groups are collaborating here, so our role will be small. But CAPE also has standing for Part 2, addressing general environmental policy, consisting of written papers commissioned by the inquiry. We can write responses on any issue for which we feel we have expertise.

Ecofriends

The David Suzuki Foundation was established in 1990 to communicate ways of achieving a balance between social, economic, and ecological needs. Since then, the Foundation has played a leadership role in raising awareness of many issues, notably the health effects of air pollution and climate change. This includes successful, collaborative public education initiatives with physicians across Canada. DSF has also worked to educate the public, government and business leaders about the urgent need for strategies to reduce global warming caused by human activities. For further information, contact 1-604-732-4228 or www.davidsuzuki.org.