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

From the President's Corner

WELL FOLKS, HERE'S OUR SPRING NEWSLETTER AT LAST. IT'S AMAZING how a full-time family practice, inter alia, can make being a dedicated environmental activist a difficult proposition.

Difficult, but never impossible!.....

There are a several very important events recorded in this edition of CAPE News.

The first, and most important, is that we now have, for the very first time in our history, a fully funded executive director. After an arduous search process (in part due to the large number and high quality of applicants) a team of Board members, coordinated by our first ever executive director, Kapil Khatter (whose funding was never full!), we selected the person to take on this critical task.

Our new ED is Gideon Forman, who comes to us from Strategic Communications Inc, a firm that advises non-profit organizations on fundraising, communications, and strategic matters. There's a brief outline of Gideon's background and accomplishments elsewhere in the newsletter. All the members of the search team felt Gideon was just the dynamic, self-starting person we needed to move CAPE forward, with special skills to enhance our overall profile and impact. As he has repeatedly told us: "the environment is my passion!" We're delighted to have Gideon Forman join our team.

Second, this issue marks the first time that we've had a French section, thanks to the organizing ability and enthusiasm of Jean Ahmed Zigby, a new Board member and energetic proponent of "green health care" working in Montreal. Thanks to Jean, a group of Quebec physicians have begun to meet and discuss actions and initiatives; from this group we have received an update on current activities of members of the Quebec College of Family

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photo: Véronique Lehouck

UPCOMING AGM - Our AGM will be held on **Nov. 27th-28th** (Saturday and Sunday) in Toronto, right after the College of Family Physicians of Canada Family Medicine Forum. This year is the College's 50th anniversary so expect a good deal of fanfare and special events!

We also hope you can join us on Wed. Nov. 24th when the Environment Committee of the Ontario College of Family Physicians is holding a full day of workshops featuring a number of CAPE Board members including Dr. Riina Bray, Dr. Warren Bell, and Dr. Harold Hoffman, as well as former Board member David Rosen, now Chair of the CHEER Board.

Mark your calendar and see you in Toronto!

Physicians, forwarded by long-time environmental activist and former College President, Harold Dion.

Finally, I must say CAPE's dynamic new Board, elected at the last AGM in Calgary, is having a major impact not just on CAPE itself, but on the world at large. Just to name a few of their accomplishments: Jean Ahmed Zigby has coordinated an environmental audit and "greening" program for his workplace; Josette Wier from Smithers, BC has mounted a successful court challenge to the decision of the BC Environmental Appeal Board regarding an arsenical pesticide, and Harold Hoffman, co-coordinator of the only *Canadian Pediatric Environmental Health Clinic*, will be a speaker at the 50th Anniversary Family Medicine Forum in Toronto next November.

I will be retiring from the presidency of CAPE at the next AGM, also in November. I'll have more to say about that in our next newsletter, but at the least every member should be aware of this coming change, so that any who would be interested in seeking that role can start planning their campaigns now!

Before I end these remarks, I want to offer my profound thanks, for myself and on behalf of CAPE, to Kapil for his invaluable contribution to the establishment of our organization in the last two years. Kapil took on the executive director's role voluntarily, knowing that we had no money to pay him at the time. He did it because he believed in CAPE and he wanted to make a real contribution to change. In reality, Kapil has set up the foundations of CAPE for years to come, establishing a new head office in Toronto adjacent to CELA, setting up a new membership database system and a new accounting system, and laying out an organizational plan and a formal communications strategy, as well as coordinating the development of a refurbished website – among many other accomplishments. And all the while, receiving only very modest and intermittent remuneration, while working well beyond the guidelines for hours and projected tasks.

Thank you Kapil! Your commitment and dedication have been and will be an inspiration to us all!



Warren Bell, CAPE President

Meet Gideon Forman

CAPE'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GIDEON FORMAN, HAS AN INTERESTING AND VARIED BACKGROUND, and comes to us with skills admirably suited to our current status and initiatives. Here's a brief summary of what he's done and what he hopes to accomplish as our ED.

GIDEON received his Masters in Philosophy from McGill University and interned at *The Nation* magazine (New York), America's oldest political weekly. In the early 1990s he ran the *Canadian Peace Alliance*, leading the successful campaign to cancel the purchase of \$5 billion worth of Cold War military helicopters. In 1993 he joined *Strategic Communications Inc.*, an agency providing fundraising and strategy to non-profit organizations. His clients at Strategic included the *World Wildlife Fund*, the *Council of Canadians*, the *Pembina Institute*, and *Physicians for Global Survival*. In 1997 Gideon became Vice President; in 1999 the firm was named to the "Profit 100" as one of Canada's fastest growing companies. For the past four years Gideon has been a volunteer with the *Toronto Environmental Alliance*, assisting the group in its successful campaign to win a phase-out of cosmetic pesticides. At CAPE, Gideon has a number of goals, including greater financial stability, building a larger donor base, and facilitating pesticide bylaws in communities across Canada. He says he's "delighted to be given this extraordinary opportunity and I look forward to working closely with CAPE's board and members."

Update on MSMA

CAPE has actively participated in the process of pesticide abatement at the community level. Here's a report on the use of arsenical MSMA, from CAPE Board member Josette Weir.

OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, CAPE HAS SUPPORTED AN appeal to the BC Environmental Appeal Board (EAB) on the use of the arsenical pesticide, MSMA in my home community of Smithers, BC. At those hearings, world expert Dr. Bill Cullen from UBC testified that MSMA is genotoxic and almost certainly carcinogenic. In the past, the EAB refused to question pesticides registered by Health Canada. Now, after a Judicial Review in September 2003, the EAB has to consider evidence generated after registration. This is presently taking place, although MSMA use in BC has ended for now.

CAPE recently presented Health Canada with a questionnaire asking 17 pointed questions, through the Environment Commissioners Petition process. After the full 120 days allowed

for response, HC displayed its usual mix of confused science and intellectual arrogance. Despite refusing to meet with CAPE representatives for over a year, HC congratulates itself on its "open and transparent office".

Fifty thousand trees injected with MSMA are growing in the Smithers area. They are presently being logged even though MSMA was designated for inaccessible locations with a low probability of being logged. This exposes loggers, sawmill workers and their families to contaminated dust while communities are exposed to arsenic through the burning of contaminated bark in beehive burners. HC has refused to discuss these exposures, stating that "the Permit Holder {MOF} has indicated that MSMA-treated trees are not to be removed and their bark not burned!"

On a positive note, PMRA has indicated that MSMA will be re-evaluated by fiscal year 04-05, one-year earlier than planned. Our collective efforts obviously led to this early reconsideration. We hope that MSMA will be taken out of the market.

For the first time, we have the distinct pleasure of introducing a bilingual element into our newsletter! Thanks to the groundwork of Board member Jean Ahmed Zigby, we have established good connections with the francophone medical community in Quebec. The following is an article prepared by Harold Dion, a member of the *Health and Environment Committee* of the *Quebec College of Family Physicians*. For those readers whose French is a bit shaky, it describes the work that he and other environmentally-minded doctors have been doing over time, in particular their work with other groups. It focusses especially on their important contribution to attempting to block the construction, by *Hydro-Quebec*, of a large gas-fired generating plant in Beauharnois.

As Harold comments at the end: "We hope that this is the beginning of a long and healthy collaboration and sharing of information and experience". So do we!

Nouvelles du CQMF

Harold Dion

LE COLLÈGE QUÉBÉCOIS DES MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE (CQMF) S'INTÉRESSE À LA SANTÉ environnementale depuis 1997. Au fil des ans, nous avons notamment appuyé la *Fondation David Suzuki* lors du lancement de son livre intitulé « À couper le souffle », nous avons présenté un mémoire en commission parlementaire sur la pollution agricole occasionnée par l'industrie porcine et nous avons rencontré M André Boisclair, l'ancien ministre à l'environnement sous le gouvernement du Parti Québécois.

Plus récemment, le projet de construction par *Hydro-Québec* de la centrale thermique du Suroît alimentée au gaz naturel nous préoccupe énormément. L'opération de cette centrale contribuerait d'une façon importante à la génération de gaz à effet de serre au Québec et au réchauffement global de la planète. Devant les conséquences potentielles sur la santé, nous avons participé en février à une marche dans le centre-ville de Montréal, organisée par la Coalition-Vert-Kyoto afin de dénoncer la décision du présent gouvernement de l'approuver.

Nous avons adressé la foule de 5,000 personnes, un nombre historique, pour faire connaître nos préoccupations. Par la suite, nous avons rencontré le Conseil de la Ville de Beauharnois, où serait construit la centrale. Nous avons réussi à le convaincre à refuser le projet à faire reculer le gouvernement. Des audiences publiques sont maintenant prévues pour ce printemps qui, nous espérons, aideront à faire annuler définitivement la construction de cette centrale.

Enfin, nous sommes très heureux de nous joindre à un organisme national de médecins qui ont les mêmes préoccupations que nous et nous espérons que cela est le début d'une longue et saine collaboration et de partage de connaissances et d'expériences.



DIPLOMA PROGRAM IN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

*McMaster Institute of Environment and Health
McMaster University*

The Diploma Program in Environmental Health is a distance education program designed to provide new and/or upgraded skills and knowledge in the principles and practice of environmental health.

The Diploma Program is suitable for public health unit professionals, physicians, community health nurses, environmental industrial professionals and those in labour and non-governmental organizations dealing with environmental health issues. A university degree or certification in a relevant field is required. Students who meet the required standards acquire a McMaster Post-Professional Diploma.

For further information, please contact:



McMaster Institute of Environment and Health
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Tel: 905-525-9140, Extension 27344

Fax: 905-524-2400

Email: ecoenvir@mcmaster.ca

Web: www.mcmaster.ca/mieh



emerging design



"Lawn & Garden Pesticides: Reducing Harm"
photo: Véronique Lehouck

Lawn & Garden Pesticides: Reducing Harm
NOW AVAILABLE! 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.

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

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Chair Richard Denton
President Warren Bell
Vice-president Harold Hoffman
Executive director Gideon Forman
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I would like to join CAPE in working for a healthier environment

Last Name/First Name _____

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City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

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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. (*I have attached a voided cheque and signed below*)

Signature _____

- 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.

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

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ECO Friends

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

The Toronto Environmental Alliance was formed in 1988 to promote a greener Toronto, based on equity, access, safety and a clean environment. TEA focuses on Smog and Climate Change, Urban Pesticides, Waste Reduction, Sustainable Transportation, Water, and Involving Youth.

TEA undertakes research, education and action, sponsoring public educational events, publishing documents, participating in public consultation processes and organizing action in the community, often in partnership with other NGOs, community groups, government and academic scientists.

TEA played a major role in establishing a bylaw eliminating cosmetic pesticide use within Toronto city limits.

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