

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

From the President's Corner

THIS IS MY LAST CONTRIBUTION IN PRINT TO CAPE AS PRESIDENT. I AM STEPPING down, after just under a decade, to make way for new talents. (Goodbye vast salaries, commodious expense accounts, and the instant cooperation of the nation's movers and shakers...)

It's been a long and interesting road for me personally. From CAPE's conception in Ottawa in 1993, through its birth in Edmonton in 1995, to quarters in Tee Guidotti's office at the University of Alberta, then back to Ottawa to digs generously shared with us by *Physicians for Global Survival*, and finally to our current site on Toronto's Spadina Avenue, CAPE has always seemed to be on the move. The most recent step in CAPE's evolution has been the hiring of a "real" executive director – Gideon Forman – who now guides the day-to-day operations of our organization.

I leave the presidency with distinctive memories. ...getting fired up, with founding Board member Annalee Yassi, over our mutual distaste for jet-skis, which became our first subject for action. ...discovering, at our first Ottawa AGM, that through an oversight, CAPE's only members were the six of us in the conference room (which led to our fastest ever membership drive!)...witnessing Nicole Bruinsma's long struggle with breast cancer, and her eventual death – and then the huge outpouring of responses leading to the establishment of the award in her name. ...listening to John Kennedy Jr. inspiring Canadian parliamentarians at one of MP Karen Kraft Sloan's "Ecosummits". ...even just hanging out at the CAPE displays, now a regular feature of the College of Family Physicians of Canada's annual conference.

I have also had an opportunity to meet and get to know a whole host of committed, intelligent, thoughtful people who have made this task come alive, and transformed the endless stream of information about environmental matters (mostly bad news, with occasional positive flashes) from a dry recitation into an adventure. I am grateful to so many that I could not thank them all without several more pages!

In general our profession is still not inclined to lead on the path to environmental awareness. This makes the role of those physicians concerned about environmental degradation and ecosystem disruption even more critical. We still have exceptional credibility and material security in society, which confer on us a profound responsibility to address challenging

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Green Health Update

Jean Ahmed Zigby

THE PROJECT KNOWN AS "CHANGING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF A MONTREAL CLSC" at the CLSC Côte-des-Neiges, Montreal is in full swing. Following a model of environmental management outlined by ISO 14001, and inspired by The Natural Step system, I and the Administration of the CLSC have begun implementing an exciting environmental policy passed by the Board of Directors in Feb 2004. Working with a first phase principle of visibility and consciousness raising, recycling protocols and lunch-time information sessions have been received enthusiastically by employees and administrators. After consolidation of the second phase "recycling and waste reduction" this winter, we hope to begin sharing our experiences with other health centres in the Montreal area who have expressed interest. Analyses have begun on many solid waste items such as plastic specula, paper gowns, and single-sided-memo reuse.

Even prior to the formal 3R education sessions planned for all employees beginning in Jan 2005, initial surveys demonstrate a significant decrease in office paper use (our largest consumer product) since the initiative began. It is encouraging that economic and environmental benefits from a reduction in consumption have begun appearing even before formal measures have been taken, simply from employee interest in making the policy a reality.

Pesticides in our Bodies / A Toxic Legacy

OUR COLLEAGUES IN THE COALITION FOR ALTERNATIVES TO PESTICIDES (CAP), CAPE members Rohini Peris and Michel Gaudet, coordinated the hugely successful conference, PESTICIDES IN OUR BODIES / A TOXIC LEGACY on Monday, October 18, 2004 at McGill University. Keynote speaker John Laseter, Director of Accu-Chem Laboratories, led a distinguished panel from government, the medical profession and the scientific community (including CAPE member Dr. Lynn Marshall) in a stimulating session delivered to an overflow audience of over 400. Along with other activist, academic and medical organizations from Quebec CAPE endorsed this event. Thanks to the tireless work of Rohini and Michel and many others, there was major press coverage from three days before to three days afterwards, including leading commentaries, in both languages, on radio, television (CTV, CBC and Global) and the major newspapers.



“Lawn & Garden Pesticides: Reducing Harm”
photos: 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.

Operation Pesticide Bylaw

Daniella Grosvenor, Project Assistant

THIS SUMMER CAPE COMMENCED A NATIONAL PROJECT, “OPERATION PESTICIDE By-Law”, to reduce the use of cosmetic pesticides on lawns and gardens in Ottawa, Edmonton, and Peterborough. This project follows the release of our educational video, “Lawn and Garden Pesticides: Reducing Harm”.

Within each municipality, we have partnered with a local environmental organization to educate residents on the dangers of pesticide use. We commissioned Oracle Poll, a national research firm, to survey citizens' attitudes on pesticides in our 3 target communities, with a goal of gaining both media attention and political momentum.

Our greatest progress has been in Peterborough, a city of 70,000 residents, working with a group called Pesticides Beware to move local councillors towards a pesticide phase-out. Our polling showed that a compelling 84% of residents support a total phase-out of lawn pesticides on private property. The survey results landed us two front-page stories in *The Peterborough Examiner*. We have also shown several city councillors our pesticide video. Six of 11 councillors appear supportive of a by-law. This is an impressive result, because at the outset of our campaign, most were ready to accept voluntary reductions! If we can convince just one more neutral councilor, there will be a city-wide pesticide by-law. Things are looking very positive!

In Edmonton, CAPE is working with Pesticide-Free Edmonton and the Sierra Club's prairie chapter. Polling results there are also encouraging: Of those surveyed, 75% support a total phase-out of pesticides on private property. We released our results on September 27th; our polling was featured on *CBC* radio news and covered by *The Edmonton Journal*, *CTV* and *Global*. CAPE's Executive Director, Gideon Forman, spoke on a province-wide, radio phone-in show. Pesticide-Free Edmonton used the poll results for questions at all-candidates' meetings before the October municipal elections.

In Ottawa, CAPE is working with Pesticide-Free Ottawa in a similar fashion. We have shown the video to local activists and held an excellent strategy meeting with two sympathetic councillors. We will be bringing in physicians to speak with citizens and city officials. Early in the new year, when city council debates a new by-law, CAPE will release an Ottawa pesticide poll (February, 2005).



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environmental issues. We can accelerate the rate of change by applying pressure – whether informational and educational, or political and strategic – on citizens, regulators, politicians, and above all the corporate sector, who are so often rooted in “business as usual”. CAPE, in concert with like-minded groups and individuals everywhere, can say: do better.

We are in a strong position to speak out because we represent concerns about health – human health of course, but also, by a short and logical extension, the health of other life forms as well, on which we depend absolutely for our own survival. From there, it is another logical step to advocate for the maintenance and well-being of the habitats of those other life forms.

I believe CAPE will continue to be an integral part of a broad social movement rooted in establishing wholeness and harmony between humans and the rest of Planet Earth's biota. It will be a flagship for responsible and authoritative demands for change, animated by compassion and informed by science – an important and spirited part of “the solution”.

I wish CAPE, and all its members and supporters, every success in the future. I will stay on the Board for the next year as Past President ex-officio, and offer support as needed or requested by the new president or any other members or staff. But the next phase of CAPE's evolution will rest on other shoulders than my own. I hope that that person will be able to enjoy as much excitement, stimulation and satisfaction as I have in the last nine years.

Warren Bell

Warren Bell, CAPE President

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