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HAMILTON DAY OF ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

December 8 has been designated a day of global action on climate change and Hamiltonians can register their concern for the planet in a very individual way.

Environment Hamilton invites you to be part of the first Hamilton Day of Action on Climate Change by registering to take one or more of the five individual actions below on Saturday, December 8.

1. I will write a personal letter to Prime Minister Harper and my Member of Parliament expressing my concerns about climate change. You can come to the EH offices on the evening of Wednesday, December 5 for assistance, and to join others in this action.

2. I will sign up for the Environment Hamilton pilot vehicle use log and commit to recording all use of my car for one month. (see "Win" on page 4 for details)

3. I will park my car for the weekend and try out public transit (this option should not be chosen by regular HSR users).

4. I will borrow a copy of the Al Gore film *An Inconvenient Truth* and show it to friends or family over the weekend.

5. I will take public transit to

Toronto and join the climate change rally at 12 noon – at Dundas Square on Yonge Street.

Contact (905) 549-0900 or info@environmenthamilton.org to register. Just tell us which action(s) you are taking (just the number of the action is enough), and provide your contact info.

Call anytime and leave a message. Please register so we can announce how many Hamiltonians are participating in the Day of Action.

TOURING A SUPER LOW ENERGY HOUSE

You can heat Dave Braden's new house with a hair dryer, and he's eager to show you how he and his wife have built one of Canada's most energy-efficient houses.

Over 40 people joined an EH organized tour last month that provided more home energy education in two hours than you can find in months of research.

Dave is an organic beef farmer who has been building energy efficient houses for more than twenty years, usually one at a time. He's also a former city councillor and a member of the EH board of directors. He and his wife Cathy are building their retirement home near Valens Conservation Area, and want to share with others their low tech methods of sharply reducing their energy footprint.



The heart of the Braden's approach is stunningly simple: make the house as tight as possible by giving it two walls instead of one. That doesn't just allow for more insulation. The main benefit is to

ensure that the vapour barrier (plastic sheeting) doesn't end up full of holes in the way it does in nearly everyone else's home.

Dave calculates that those holes help create the equivalent of a 2 foot square open window in most houses. That means all the air in your house changes twice an hour or 6000 times during a normal heating season. Reducing that flow is the key to dramatic reductions in energy costs.

The Braden's house is so tight that it requires an air exchanger to keep the inside air fresh. That's

continued on page 2

ENERGY EFFICIENT HOME *from page one*

combined with a heat exchanger that ensures the warmth in your inside air is captured and transferred to the fresh air coming in from outside.

A second key step is making maximum use of passive solar heat. The south wall of the house is dominated by windows that soak up sunlight during the winter months when the sun never gets very high in the sky. Precisely located overhangs block those rays in the summer when the sun is much higher. That's also the main purpose of the porch on the west side (front) of the house.

The new house is also off the grid and will rely for electricity on solar panels and a wind turbine, with a propane generator for emergency backup. Dave and Cathy are doing most of the building themselves and are now getting close to moving in. As much as possible they have used Canadian materials and technologies and intend to closely track their energy use including indoor and outdoor temperatures.

Dave estimates their energy-saving techniques have only added about \$12,000 to the cost of their home – something they expect to quickly recoup. In response to questions from the tour participants, he offered a string of simple steps to sharply reduce energy use in older homes.

EH is organizing another tour of the Braden house in January. If you'd like to participate, please phone (905) 549-0900 contact us by email at info@environmenthamilton.org.

DUNDAS TREES ARE FOCUS OF GROWING ATTENTION

The successful Trees Count program in Dundas last summer caught the interest of a group of students at the University of Toronto's Forestry Department. They are using our survey data of trees in the Dundas Driving Park for their course assignment which is to create an Urban Forestry Management Plan. Their final report will be shared with Environment Hamilton.

Another result of our Dundas Trees Count is the emergence of a group of tree stewards in its community. Volunteers who took part in the tree survey (which inventoried more than 1000 trees in the historic area of Dundas) have formed a group called The Dundas Valley Tree Stewards.

The group has decided education is key in expanding residents' knowledge about how to care for trees.

Their first in a series of public tree-related talks is a meeting about Gypsy Moths (see below) which will be held on Tuesday Dec 4 at the Dundas Museum.

Other planned events will cover how to prune trees and care for trees through the seasons

With this information, it is hoped homeowners will better understand the importance of taking care of our city trees as well as our back-yard trees.

Another hot issue the group discussed was the need to protect heritage trees. Hamilton currently has no by-law that protects mature or landmark trees in our



This fine White Oak is estimated to be about 100 years old, and is a landmark in Dundas Driving Park.

city. The plan is to help create a definition of what constitutes heritage trees, and work on a way to protect them.

The group would like to hear from members of a previous EH Tree Committee, so we can learn from your experience.

For more information please contact jkollek@gmail.com (Julia Kollek) or call 905-627-5410.

Climate Change and Social Justice

Melrose Buffet Breakfast
with Crystle Numan
Evangelical Environmental Network

Sat. Dec. 8 - 9 am
Melrose United Church
86 Homewood Ave. Hamilton

*Suggested donation \$10
(includes breakfast)*

An Environment Hamilton
climate change workshop

Wanted: Dead? or Alive? The Gypsy Moth

Speakers: Tami Sadonajna and Marvin Gunderman

Tuesday December 4 - 7:30 pm
Dundas Historical Museum, 139 Park St. West, Dundas

PESTICIDE FIRE REQUIRES A PROVINCIAL INQUIRY

We now know that at least 5 million fish died in Spencer Creek and Cootes Paradise in the wake of the July 26 Dundas fire at one of Canada's largest pesticide companies.

Biologist Joe Minor, a member of the working group and a board member of EH, spoke to city council on November 12 about the numerous unanswered questions related to the fire at Biedermann Packaging on Head Street in Dundas.

The same meeting heard from Tys Theysmeyer, the RBG's aquatic biologist and co-author of an interim report on the effects of the pesticide fire on Cootes Paradise.

That report estimated between 5 million and 15 million young fish died in the marsh in the wake of the chemicals that poured down Spencer Creek from the fire site.

Theysmeyer and co-author David Galbraith, the head of science at the RBG, believe the likely cause was the pesticide Diazinon which was found in high concentrations in the water draining from the fire, as well as in both Cootes Paradise and Spencer Creek.

Earlier in the meeting, various city staff including firefighters had provided councillors with detailed reports on how they had responded to the pesticide fire.

Joe praised the reports but pointed to some key outstanding questions. He expressed disappointment that it hadn't been made clear that air quality monitoring by the Ministry of the Environment didn't begin until after 9 am – over seven hours after firefighters arrived on the scene.



elevated levels weren't warfarin," Minor explained to councillors. "The one that seems to be causing the most trouble was diazinon. Diazinon is a very interesting chemical to be found at this facility, because Diazinon is banned for all household, gardening and commercial use. The only exemption is for agriculture."

Minor also pointed out that the company

may be in violation of its city zoning approval – which permits the production of "garden chemicals" at the Dundas location.

He repeated that Diazinon is not a garden chemical and advised councillors to ask their staff to determine if the company is in compliance with the zoning variance.

Minor urged councillors to reiterate their earlier demand for a provincial inquiry, an action they subsequently agreed to take.

The EH working group continues to gather information about the fire and its effects. It has learned, for example, that Biedermann Packaging is one of the largest pesticide facilities in all of Canada – and one of only two of that size in Ontario.

As Minor asked city councillors: "does it make sense for that type of facility to be in a residential area, next to a creek, with a flammable roof, and no fire suppression equipment?"

Ministry officials had revealed this at the public meeting organized by EH shortly after the fire, but "only after pointed questions from the audience", as Joe noted.

Firefighters said they were told by company officials that the only toxic material in the burnt part of the factory was 100 pounds of warfarin – a poison used to kill rodents.

"The inventory that was given was incomplete and it appears to be wrong because the three pesticides found in the creek at

"The factory contained a stock of approximately 20,000 kilograms of pesticides which included Diazinon, Malathion, Warfarin, Rotenone, Carbaryl, Folpel, Bromodialone, and Bendiocarb," says the RBG report.

TIS THE SEASON TO BE ECO-JOLLY!

Whether you're celebrating Christmas or Kwanza, the holiday season is often a stumbling block on the path to sustainable living.

North Americans throw away 25% more trash between Thanksgiving and New Year's than at any other time of the year.

Not to mention the excessive amount of gasoline used during this heavy travel time. According to use-less-stuff.com, if each family reduced holiday gasoline consumption by one gallon (about twenty miles), we'd reduce greenhouse gas emissions by one million tons.

Like many people in rich nations around the world, Hamiltonians are finding ways to eschew the outrageous waste, pressure and stress, and over spending. They are *simplifying* the season while retaining its true meaning of hope, peace and understanding.

Popular actions include restricting gift exchanging, donating money in the loved one's name to a favourite charity or organization and staying home for the holidays. Time is something we never have enough of. How often do we wish we could spend more of it with someone we love? Why not give them the gift of time?

If you're planning to give presents, shopping locally helps support community businesses and neighbourhoods. Look for small business establishments as well as craft shows and church bazaars where you can obtain unique gifts such as jewellery, pottery, cards, stuffed toys and wooden toys with natural finishes (You'll be avoiding toxic paint and phthalates). Remember to bring your own shopping bags.

Support your local book stores and the arts community with gift certificates or tickets to see a play or movie or band.

Consider making your own gifts, ornaments and baked goods and avoiding excess packaging.

Wrapping gifts in pretty cloth or quirky newspaper works nicely. Instead of Christmas crackers at dinner give small bags with seeds or soap in them.

And how about a Christmas dinner that's composed entirely of locally-grown foods? Check out the farmer's market behind Centre Mall on Fridays and Saturdays for local fruit, vegetables and meats.

Tradition calls for lights? Many stores now sell the LED kind; they might even offer a rebate if you bring in your old ones. Environment Canada sources say that buying LED holiday lights uses up to 90-95 percent less energy and lasts at least seven times longer than conventional lights. They are

more durable, with no filaments or glass bulbs to break, and produce very little heat, reducing fire risk.

You could also try just buying nothing; you won't be alone. The 'Buy Nothing Christmas' movement was started by a group of Canadian Mennonites to de-commercialize Christmas and to challenge excessive consumption.

Celebrating the festive season by limiting over consumption is a way to honour the special people in your life and the Earth they live on. Buy less, love more.

Check out hamiltonclimatechallenge.blogspot.com for anecdotes from Hamiltonians who celebrate in eco-friendly ways. And visit the Environment Hamilton website for over 63 ways you can reduce your green house gases emissions all year around.

LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF & WIN A TRAIN TRIP TO QUEBEC CITY

Own a car? We're looking for volunteers to keep track of when and why they drive and complete a vehicle use log for one month. This information will help Environment Hamilton design ways to help people reduce their use of fossil fuels. It might even inspire you to leave the car at home!

We all want to make transportation choices that are informed and smart. Completing our vehicle log will give you an opportunity to discover things about your own transportation habits and make choices based on those conclusions.

We offer a simple chart to keep track of the type of driving you do (city/highway), the distance and reason for your trip, and the time and associated costs. A short list of questions about the operating and insurance costs of your car completes the survey, and allows comparisons to the cost and convenience of alternatives.

This log will take less than 1 minute a day. Please contact us at climatechangechallenge@hotmail.com or 905-549-0900 for your Vehicle Log. **When you have completed and returned the form, your name will be entered in a draw to win two return-trip tickets on VIA RAIL from Aldershot to Quebec City – a \$550 value.**

WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT EATING LOCAL?

Wondering what all the fuss on eating local is about? It's a topic that has been receiving a great deal of media coverage for good reason. Eating local is not only healthier, better tasting and good for the local economy; it also benefits the environment. By choosing foods that are produced near you, you are decreasing your ecological impact in several ways

The most obvious benefit of eating local is that it dramatically reduces the amount of transportation required to deliver a food product from farm to fork.

It takes an average of 4,497 km for 58 commonly eaten food items to reach our plates

A recent study conducted by the Region of Waterloo Public Health found that it takes an average of 4,497 km for 58 commonly eaten food items to reach our plates¹.

Compare this to the distance to your nearest farm-gate stand, farmers' market, or grocery store that carries local produce and the environmental impact is obvious.

Buying local means less 'food miles' and thus, cuts down on the greenhouse gases that contribute

to climate change.

Buying local also means supporting the local farms that



grow the items on your grocery list. Smaller farms are ideal for selling directly to consumers and through the local market because they are well suited to grow a variety of crops. While large-scale farming operations employ the use of monocultures, smaller farms grow a diversity of crops in order to provide their customers with a variety of products.

The farmers' share of the food dollar spent by consumers decreased from over 40 cents in 1910 to less than 7 cents per dollar in 1997

Varying and rotating crops promotes soil health and helps reduce the need for chemical pest treatment. Farmers of small to mid-sized farms are generally more likely to be responsible stewards and protect the ecological health of the land².

With the number of farms

dramatically decreasing in Ontario, it is important to support the smaller-scale farms that remain and operate with the integrity of the environment in mind.

Unfortunately, farming is much less profitable than it should be. The farmers' share of the food dollar spent by consumers has decreased from over 40 cents in 1910 to less than 7 cents per dollar in 1997³.

Supporting local farmers and ensuring farming is a viable occupation allows them to remain on their farm. Facing unmanageable financial pressure, many

farmers in this area are forced to sell their land to developers eager to build large-scale housing projects on fertile agricultural land. Buying local and supporting farmers helps combat the trend towards urban sprawl.

The environmental impact of where your food comes from is just one reason for the increased popularity of eating local. A recent poll conducted by the Friends of the Greenbelt found that 8 in 10 of respondents prefer to buy locally grown produce⁴. After considering the environmental impact of our food choices, it is not hard to see why!

1 Food Miles: Environmental Implication of Food Imports to Waterloo Region, Region of Waterloo Public Health, 2005.

2 Gurin, David, "Farmers' Markets: Opportunities for Preserving Greenbelt Agriculture."

3 Halweil, Brian. Eat Here: Reclaiming Homegrown Pleasures in a Global Supermarket. W.W. Norton and Co. New York. 2004.

4 Greenbelt Foundation 2007 Awareness Research.



SLUDGE INCINERATION THREAT CONTINUES

In our last newsletter, we reported that we had submitted a letter to the Ministry of the Environment challenging its decision to require only an environmental screening rather than a more rigorous individual environmental assessment for the proposed Liberty Energy sludge/biomass gasification facility.

We questioned a recent MOE regulatory change that requires waste disposal facilities using "thermal destruction methods" (forms of incineration) to avoid a full environmental assessment *if they are planning to generate energy from their facility.*

We raised concerns about the apparent streamlining of the approvals process through the addition of the 'energy from waste' element and asked how the addition could magically transform environmental effects into predictable and readily mitigated forms.

Facilities that do not embrace the 'energy from waste' element

are required to go through more rigorous environmental assessments.

The MOE response, received in mid-November, states that:

EFW (Energy From Waste) projects are considered to have known or more easily mitigating environmental effects, have a significantly smaller environmental footprint compared to a landfill, can be located in industrial zones, and when compared to a landfill, these facilities do not create the long-term impact on land-use. Emissions from an EFW facility can be monitored and impacts mitigated through pollution control mechanisms. Additionally, EFW facilities provide the additional social benefit of producing energy.

The MOE's response fails to reassure us that the provincial government has made the right decision in shifting to less stringent environmental assessment requirements for 'energy from waste' facilities.

What about the landfill disposal of ash generated from these facilities? While impacts from air emissions can be reduced, they cannot be eliminated. What does this mean for communities with air quality that is already heavily impacted by other local emission sources? And is this approach to energy generation one that is truly beneficial to a community, or should the province be focusing on more renewable approaches such as solar and wind power?

Ontario is seeing an influx of new 'thermal destruction' technologies many of which are new to Ontario or yet-to-be-proven. We wonder whether the province has become so concerned about creating new sources of energy that it has

created a regulatory system that is far from ideal where the assessment of 'energy from waste' technologies is concerned.

Here in Hamilton, the city wants to build an incinerator on Woodward Avenue to dispose of our municipal sewage sludge. The city's limited environmental assessment argued that its options are limited because of high levels of some heavy metals in the sludge.

While the city has concluded that incineration is the most viable option, we wonder whether additional treatment of the sludge might have rendered it suitable for use as a soil conditioner in more creative applications such as landscaping on brownfields or other reclamation activities.

The decision to incinerate presents many of the same problems as the Liberty Energy proposal and fails to promote (appears to put off indefinitely) any serious action to address sludge contamination problems at the source.

The city faces further environmental assessment before it can proceed to construct a sludge incinerator. Meanwhile, the provincial environmental assessment process for the proposed Liberty Energy facility allows members of the public to ask the Director of the MOE's Environmental Assessment and Approvals branch to order a full environmental assessment. Sadly, while this right exists, the province has granted only one bump-up and elevation request in the past 20 years!

The deadline for submitting elevation requests is December 10th, 2007. More info on the proposed facility can be found at www.libertyenergy.ca.

PROTECTING THE TURTLE PONDS

EH supported a fundraiser in late October to protect environmentally sensitive lands and ponds east of Confederation Park between the QEW and the lake. We have been working with residents of the area for nearly a year. They successfully fought off one proposed development in the spring and are now preparing for an Ontario Municipal Board hearing to deal with plans filed by a second subdivision developer. The event raised over \$2000 and featured a free barbeque hosted by East Hamilton Stoney Creek MP Wayne Marston.

CARBON OFFSETTING?

They've been called guilt payments and worse, but putting a cost on excess carbon emissions is supposed to encourage us to think twice about air travel and other activities that impose a particularly large burden on our planet's atmosphere. The idea has obtained enough popularity that competing companies are now seeking your carbon offset dollars with promises of using them to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Along with appearing to excuse extravagant activities that damage the planet, the approach is further complicated by the difficulty of determining whether the 'offsetting' is actually effective. Will those trees actually get planted in some far off place, and would they have been planted anyways even if you didn't fly to Vancouver for your daughter's wedding? On the other hand, we do and should feel guilty about these damaging personal actions. So what should we do?

Here's a modest suggestion. If you are going to pay to offset your excess carbon emissions, direct the money as a donation to an environmental organization with a track record of making good use of the funds. Hopefully you will include EH on that list, but there are lots of other excellent choices.

We don't want to go into the business of collecting carbon offsets. The potential dependency has a real downside. We can imagine carbon offsetting organizations being quite unhappy about declining air travel, for example, just like governments don't want to try too hard to get people to stop going to casinos because their gambling losses increase tax revenues.

MEMBER FEES AND DONATION GO TO ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY FUND

Environment Hamilton's board has decided that all membership fees and donations to EH will now be used exclusively for our environmental advocacy work. Basic operational costs of the organization such as our office, phones, insurance, accounting, etc. will be funded solely from administrative fees associated with funded projects, leaving our member contributions dedicated to the kind of outspoken activity that rarely is supported by governments or foundations.

Environment Hamilton takes its role as a local advocacy group very seriously – so much so, that we are willing to forego the benefits of charitable status so that we can take a stance on political issues. So, members and their donations are our lifeblood.

We hope you'll decide to renew your membership or join us for the first time in 2008. We would like to count on your support to let us continue the work of Environment Hamilton, work that has taken Hamilton much closer to our vision of a healthy, clean city.



Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone#: _____ Email: _____

Annual membership \$25.00

Student/Unwaged \$15.00

Membership fee: _____

Donation: _____

TOTAL enclosed: _____

I would like to volunteer

Mail to: Environment Hamilton
1130 Barton Street East, Suite 207, Hamilton, ONT L8H 7P9
Please make cheques payable to Environment Hamilton

Website www.environmenthamilton.org

Email contactus@environmenthamilton.org Phone (905) 549-0900

FIGHTING STEEL AIR POLLUTION

Ministry months late responding to EH application

Environment Hamilton turned to the media in late November to try and force the provincial Ministry of the Environment to obey the rules set out in the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR).

Back in July, EH and some north Hamilton residents filed a formal application under the EBR asking the Ministry (MOE) to review the provincial operating certificates for the KOBM Meltshop operated by ArcelorMittal (formerly Dofasco).

By law, provincial ministries have 60 days to respond to applications for review made under the *Environmental Bill of Rights*. The response required at the 60 day point is a simple decision from the ministry in question as to whether it will undertake a review or not. If the Ministry determines a review is warranted, this more involved process will then begin to unfold.

An MOE response to the application was due on September

4. Instead, EH received a letter saying the Ministry would be unable to make the deadline. Their required response has still not been received when EH issued a media release on November 26 after being informed by Ministry staff that they had nothing new to report on the progress of the application.

In the release, EH executive director Lynda Lukasik summarized the problems with the ArcelorMittal facility and the lack of MOE response.

"We've been watching meltshop emissions for almost five years," she noted. "The company itself has acknowledged in annual reports that there is an emission problem at this facility. Our hope was that an application for review would convince the Ministry to put some pressure on the company to resolve this chronic emission problem. It is extremely disappointing and frustrating that the Ministry has failed to respond to our application within the required timeframe."

Her frustration was echoed by Lorna Moreau, a north Hamilton resident who lives near the meltshop. "As we wait, our neighbourhood continues to struggle with property damage and concerns about potential health impacts from industrial fallout from sources like this one."

The Arcelor-Mittal application for review is one in a series of applications under the Environmental Bill of Rights being prepared by Environment Hamilton and residents in an effort to eliminate obvious emission problems from the industrial core and reduce the on-going problems with industrial fallout in north Hamilton neighbourhoods.

EH HELPS WIN NEW BUS ROUTE IN NORTH HAMILTON

A concerted campaign paid off in late November as city council approved the establishment of a north-south HSR route that EH recommended in late 2006.

Responding to pleas from mothers in the low-income Keith Neighbourhood, EH conducted a detailed door-to-door transit survey across north Hamilton in the summer of 2006 that collected responses from 3215 homes.

Some Keith area homes are located more than 1000 metres from the nearest HSR stop despite a city policy calling for transit access to be no greater than 400 metres.

The EH survey formed the basis of two reports submitted to the city - one of which specifically made the case for a new HSR route running along Victoria Avenue and Wentworth Street.

EH project manager Brenda Johnson followed this up by collecting support letters from businesses, schools, social service agencies and Hamilton General Hospital - all located along the new route.

HSR staff supported the new route but recommended to council that it not start until 2009, so Brenda and several Keith residents took their case directly to councillors at the November 26 special meeting on transit, and won unanimous support for implementing the service in 2008 - one year earlier than planned.

The new route will connect with seven existing east-west HSR lines and provide many existing riders with much easier access to the General Hospital and other north Hamilton destinations.

VOLUNTEER WEDNESDAYS

Looking for something to do with your Wednesday nights? Attend one of Environment Hamilton's volunteer evenings, held every Wednesday beginning at 7pm at the Environment Hamilton office. Volunteers meet to complete a variety of tasks ranging from data entry and mailing to research and brainstorming. And, of course, there is plenty of socializing involved!

These nights don't require a large time commitment and are a great way to stay involved with Environment Hamilton.

Please consider attending!