

# Committed citizens can change world

By BARBARA HALSALL  
Action Alert

Margaret Mead said, "Never let it be doubted that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

For a committed citizen who wants to make change there is always the question of where to focus one's energy and effort. If you believe in this, "Thing globally. Act locally," slogan, then you may already be supporting P.O.W.E.R. (Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources), who are working to keep garbage out of the Niagara Escarpment as well as out of your water supply.

There are a great many other issues that also need attention. Pollution Probe sends out an Action Alert each month to inform people of areas where letters, faxes or phone calls could make a difference.

The December/90 Action Alert focuses on the proposed Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (Bill C-78). Pollution Probe sees the proposed bill as seriously flawed, needing major changes before it is passed.

Between 1974 and 1977, Justice Thomas Berger headed up a federal inquiry into the proposed MacKenzie Valley Pipeline and its social and environmental impacts on native communities and lands in Northern Canada. The Berger inquiry heard from native and public interest groups in public hearings and is now regarded as a landmark in Canadian environmental assessment. Canada's first unofficial environmental assessment had served its purpose: the project was put aside because it threatened the social and environmental integrity of the North.

Also in the 1970's, the federal government introduced the Environmental Assessment Review Process (EARP), which provided guidelines for environmental assessment of federal projects and projects on government-owned lands that pose potential environmental and social impacts. This process has been poorly used and widely criticized. Many major projects including

the Rafferty-Alameda Dam and the James Bay hydroelectric project show the failings of the current process. In addition, government policies that have significant environmental impacts such as the VIA rail cuts have been allowed to go ahead without assessment despite angry public outcry.

Pollution Probe is concerned that while Bill C-78 will make federal environmental assessment law, the Bill contains many of the same loopholes that exist in the EARP guidelines. It is seen as weaker in many respects.

Bill C-78 has received second reading and is now being studied by a House of Commons committee. Pollution Probe insists that this Bill must be amended to ensure: 1) government policy as well as projects are subject to environmental assessment; 2) the process is mandatory and independent. The process must be accountable, free from political interference, and produce a final binding decision; 3) the decision is enforced with proper monitoring and follow-up.

If you want to strengthen this legislation there is little time left as the committee is expected to finish in a week or ten days. Phone calls or faxes are probably better but in any case you must act today.

Contact: Robert de Cotret, MP, Minister of the Environment, Room 337, West Block, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6. Tel: 613-957-2651. Fax: 613-957-2655. Ross Stevenson, Chairperson, C-78 Committee, Room 253, Wellington Building, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6.

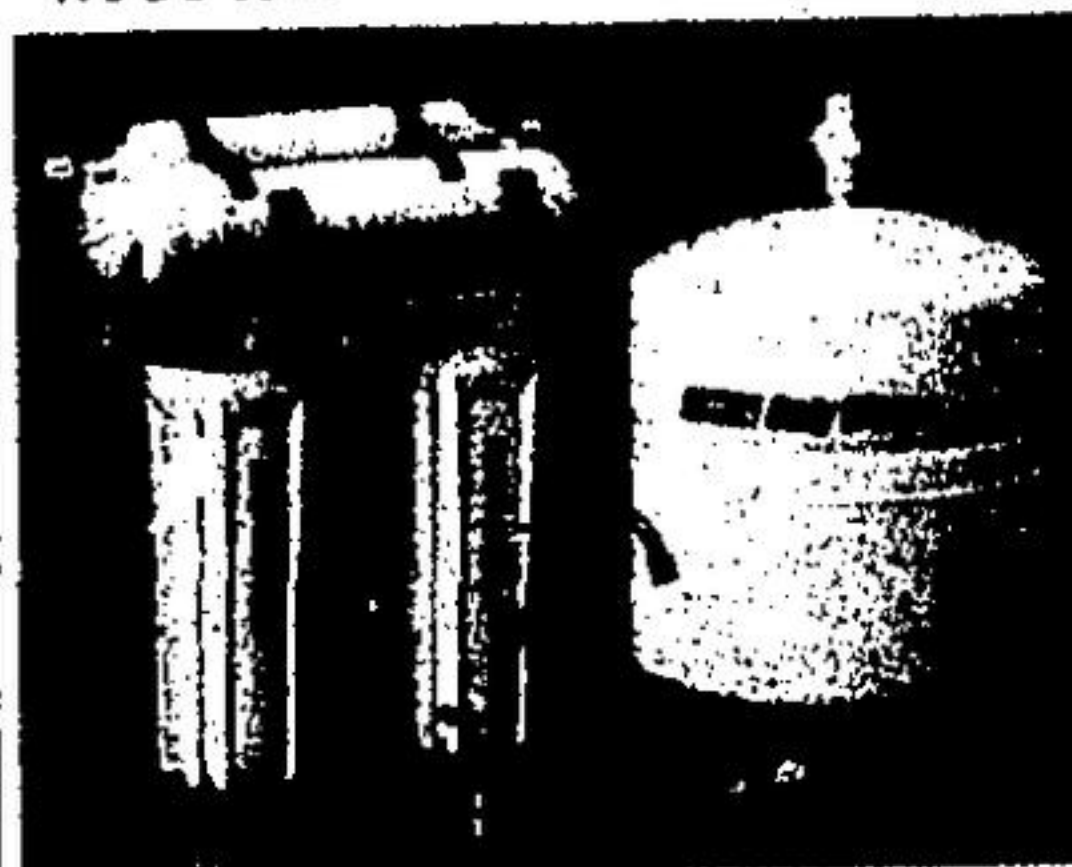
If you want to be part of the Action Alert mailing list write to Pollution Probe or phone them. Action Alert, Pollution Probe, 12 Madison Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5R 2S1. Tel: 416-926-1907.

Together, we can make a difference.

P.O.W.E.R.'s next General Meeting will be held at a new location, the Robert Little School in Acton on Wednesday, March 27th at 8 p.m. We hope to have a speaker from the Ministry of the Environment Assessment Branch. All concerned citizens are welcome.

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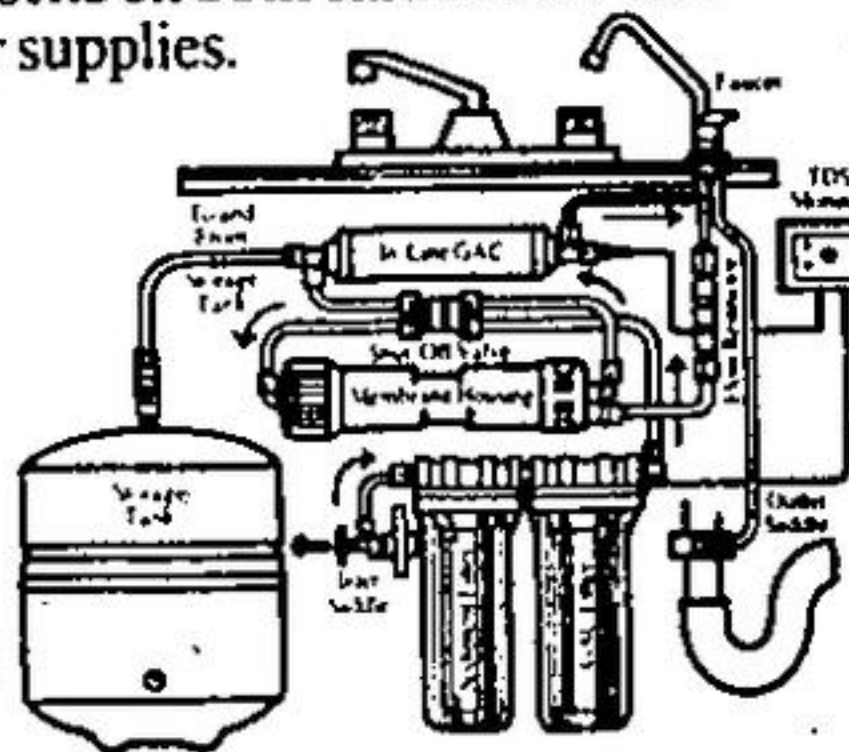
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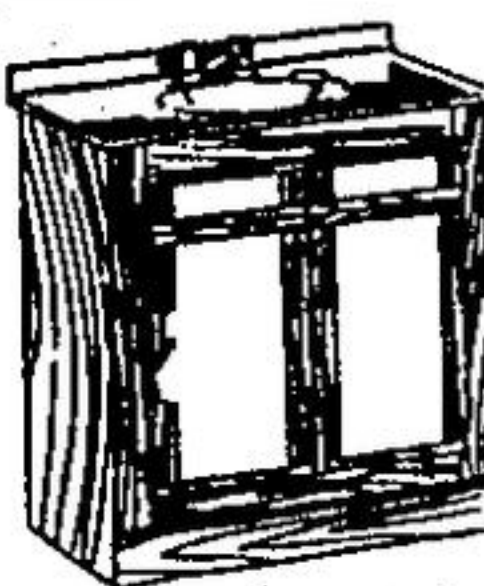
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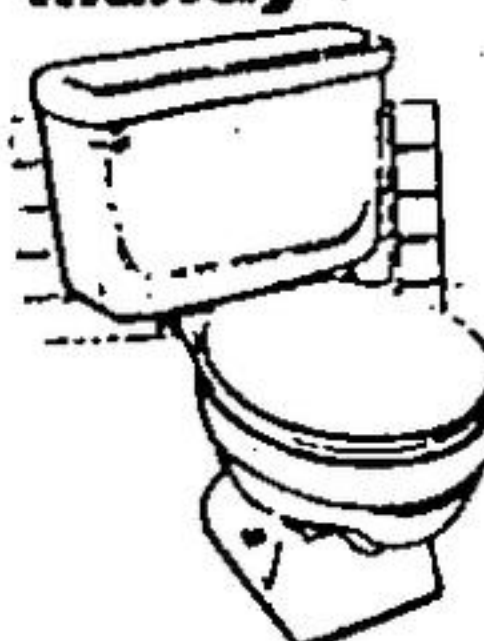
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— HOURS —  
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For information leading to the recovery of a white tandem trailer & white Bolens back hoe & front end loader stolen from Country Lane, Wednesday, February 27th between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. Persons will remain anonymous. Contact Dave at Country Lane.

**- 877-2254 -**