

There is time to keep our planet healthy

By BARBARA HALSALL
Herald Special

As the New Year arrives many examine their lives to see what changes they would make. Dieting for weight loss and exercise are two things that are near the top of the list as many realize the importance of health. We also need to consider the health of the planet.

There was a man who became ill, not all at once, but little by little he was more and more tired and he found it more difficult to breathe. On his first trip to the doctor nothing was discovered but as time went on the doctor had to admit that something was wrong.

Unable to make a diagnosis the family doctor referred the man to a specialist and from there to another specialist and still a third specialist but no one could say exactly what the problem was or how to cure it. Finally the man was told that this seemed to be something the medical profession had never seen before. The last



specialist said to the man, "We have no cure so you must examine your lifestyle to be as kind to your body as possible."

Smoking is out and you must cut out all junk food and eat the most nutritious diet you can put together. Take time off work and spend at least half of your day in bed."

This man refused to come to grips with the problem. He carried on smoking, took no time off work and continued with his favorite junk food diet. Because he did not deteriorate quickly he felt that his lifestyle was not a factor in his fatigue and breathing problems.

Five years from the original

problems this man died after a long and painful illness. Could he have changed the course of his illness? We will never know but he might have had a better chance.

The human race is like that man right now aware that something is not right but in a state of denial. People think surely those environmentalists are exaggerating the problems. Or for a few, the problems are too big to tackle so denial is better.

But we still have time! Madame Brundtland, who chaired the World Commission On Environment and Development, writes in the foreword to Preserving Our World, "Major changes are crucial. We have the

ability to change. We have the technology. We have the communication skills. The work must begin with individuals, in our homes and villages. We must marshal public will, reaching to the decision-making chambers of government, to our international institutions and to our transnational boardrooms." "Let no one tell you to 'mind your own business'. Survival is everyone's

business..."
What resolution will you make to preserve the health of the planet? When this ecosystem dies we die with it, but you can make a difference!
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Hazardous wastes can also be found in the home

By CHRISTINE STADDON
Ontario Waste Management Corporation

Hazardous wastes are most often associated with manufacturing processes, but industry isn't the only culprit. The Ontario Waste Management Corporation estimates that households in this province generate 86,000 tonnes of paint, pesticides, used oil, batteries, toxic cleansers and other potentially harmful wastes every year.

Some of these nasties are being stored in basements, garages and under kitchen sinks. But a lot of them - unfortunately for our environment - are being poured down drains and put out with the garbage.

Many municipalities are holding special "waste days" in an effort to cut down on the

amount of hazardous waste going into landfills. These events are partly funded by provincial government grants. As of November, 53 municipalities had received grants to hold waste days in 1991, says Dennis Donohue, a project officer with the environment ministry.

The grants of up to \$15,000 a year cover part of the costs of hiring a waste management company to sort, pack, haul and dispose of the wastes. Then there are the additional expenses of renting a site, buying or renting safety equipment, and paying insurance and salaries. On average, a waste day will end up costing taxpayers around \$60,000, says Donohue.

"It's sort of a Catch-22," he remarked. "The more people they attract, the more expensive

it is." Generally, he says, waste days attract only about two per cent of the population. Nevertheless, some of the smaller communities are being forced to cut back on their costs by pooling their resources with other areas or holding fewer waste days.

In some communities, hard-hitting publicity campaigns are raising the level of public participation in waste days. Still, setting up permanent depots is the most cost-effective way of collecting hazardous wastes in large centres, says Donohue. The provincial environment ministry provides grants of between 50 and 75 per cent of the start-up costs, depending on the size of the municipality. Donohue says there are now 20 permanent depots for storing household hazardous wastes in southern Ontario.

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