

# Opinion

## Some promises to help our environment

By DR. D.A. CHANT  
and W.M. GLENN

The 1980s were a cruel and greedy decade. We saw an "I've got mine" materialism sink its teeth into our culture. Our children swarmed one another for their over-priced designer clothes, while stock market insiders and takeover artists mugged our economy.

We no longer create wealth, we take it. We take it, then we waste it with little thought for the less fortunate and none for the future.

The 1980s were also the dirty decade. We discovered that our wasteful lifestyle not only pollutes our own backyards. It is also capable of punching a hole through the ozone layer, melting the ice caps and turning farmland into desert, stripping the rain forest from an entire continent, acidifying a lake on the other side of the planet and poisoning a generation yet unborn.

The 1990s have got to be the decade in which we make our environmental stand. Yet only one year into them and we're already losing ground. Canada's response to the looming global warming crisis has been negligible, our national Green Plan - a rehash of old promises - was released to limp applause, and the recession has reawakened moldy old claims that jobs should take precedence over environmental cleanup programs.

If we are to safeguard our planet and its fragile ecosystem, each of us must make a personal commitment; we must strive to make do with less, to replace personal greed with moderation. The suggestions that follow may seem overly simplistic. However, if they were to be adopted in millions of households across this country, Canada would stand in the vanguard of an environmental revolution that could change the world.

So as we embark on a new year here are a few simple promises that, if kept, could start that revolution:

I promise to stop buying disposable batteries, soft drinks in throw-away cans or bottles, those disposable cameras, and disposable lighters (hey, maybe I'll even quit smoking).

I promise, whenever possible, to leave the bag behind when I buy something. I'll shove my purchase in my pocket or my briefcase or, better yet, my re-usable canvas shopping bag instead. And I promise to save and reuse my plastic grocery bags.

I promise to start reading labels too. The easiest toxic chemical to get rid of is the one I didn't buy in the first place.

I promise to think twice before spraying any chemical pesticide around my house or in my garden or on my pets. I promise I will investigate all the alternatives first.

I promise to look for organically-grown fruits and vegetables on my supermarket's shelves.

I promise not to pour my old paints and cleaners and pesticides and used motor oils down the drain or into the sewer, no matter how convenient and simple that may be. Nor will I throw them out with the trash.

Instead, I promise to store my household hazardous wastes in a cool, dry place until they can be taken to the nearest collection centre or, in the case of my used motor oil, back to a local service station that accepts it. If my community hasn't set up a special hazwaste depot, I promise that my neighbors and I will bug our civic officials until they do.

I promise to use latex paints rather than the more toxic oil-based paints. The latex paints are also easier to use and cleanup afterwards - that means I won't have a lot of dirty turpentine and thinner to get rid of as well.

I promise not to buy overpackaged products. From now on, my eggs come in recycled cardboard cartons, and my apples and tomatoes come loose (not packed in plastic boxes or bags). If something comes covered in plastic and shiny cardboard, I promise I'll leave it on the shelf - and I'll tell the store manager why he or she lost the sale.

I promise to give composting a try. Up to 70 per cent of our household wastes, including kitchen scraps, waste paper, yard clippings and leaves, is compostable. It only takes a little extra effort and a special composting bin to turn this garbage into rich loam and I'll never have to worry about missing the garbage pick-up again.

I promise to take energy conservation seriously. To start with, I promise to check my home for heat leaks. I'll measure the insulation in my attic, check the caulking and weather stripping around my doors and windows, and look for energy leaks around fireplace dampers, any cracks in the walls and ceilings.

I promise that this year things are going to be different. I promise that this year I am going to make a difference.

Dr. Donald A. Chant is a professor of Zoology and Chairman of the Ontario Waste Management Corporation (OWMC). William M. Glenn is an environmental writer and a consultant to the OWMC on household hazardous wastes.



## A holiday safety message

Ontario Transportation Minister Ed Philip reminds drivers to keep the memories alive for years to come by practising safe driving during this holiday season.

"During the holidays, we gather with family and friends to share this festive season, reflect on the many things for which we are grateful and take a few moments to contemplate our future," says Philip. "Too often this seasonal good cheer is marred by needless tragedies on our highways."

The rate of reportable motor vehicle accidents increases during the winter months. Most recent ministry statistics show approximately 35 per cent of accidents occur from November to February.

While the fatality rate tends to decrease, this is the worst period for property damage accidents, with road and weather conditions contributing factors. Approximately one-third occur on wet, slushy, snow covered and icy roads.

A few common sense rules can make the difference. Slow down... don't rush - leave enough time to get ready, don't make it up on the road.

As always drive defensively, avoid abrupt acceleration, braking or lane changes that may cause you to skid or lose control of your car. Look well ahead for changes in traffic and increase the distance between you and the car ahead.

With shorter days, longer nights, and the likeli-

hood of unexpected changes in the weather, turn on your headlights so you can see and be seen day and night.

"With snowplows and other winter maintenance equipment in operation on our highways, drivers should be extra cautious," says Philip. "When you see the flashing blue light, give your plows and sanders lots of room to do their job."

A snowplow may travel alone or in tandem. Never attempt to pass around or between them. Your visibility ahead is greatly reduced and the ridge of snow they toss out could throw your vehicle out of control.

It's wise to pack an emergency kit in your car, especially if you travel long distances. Items such as a shovel, booster cables, flares, blanket, extra clothing, chocolate bars and boxed juice will come in handy should you get stuck or stranded.

"Most importantly, please buckle up! Use your seat belts and a child safety seat for your young ones," says Philip. "And for everyone's sake, don't drink and drive."

"So at this time of the year, with so many of us on the road, think about road safety, what it means to you, your family and friends."

"A little extra care, caution and common sense will go a long way to ensure pleasant memories for years to come."

## Cash awards for Canada's innovators

Cash awards totalling \$160,000 will be presented next year to Canada's outstanding innovators by the Ernest C. Manning Awards Foundation. Nominations for 1991 are being sought from coast to coast in the tenth year of this program to recognize and encourage Canadian innovators.

The \$100,000 Principal Award, two \$25,000 Awards of Distinction and two \$5,000 Innovation Prizes are presented annually to Canadians who have conceived and developed new concepts, procedures, processes or products

of benefit to Canada and the world.

The 1990 award winners were Dr. Yoshio Masui of Toronto for his work in the understanding of cell division and hence another significant step towards victory over cancer; Dr. Alan Davenport of London, Ontario, a world-renowned expert on the effects of wind on large structures, for his contributions to "wind engineering;" Art Fentiman of Stittsville, for his invention of a connector used in many of the world's largest space structures; Brian Olson of Regina for his development of a tractor hitch that per-

mits a safe, one-man hook-up of tractor to farm implement; and Allen Wiebe of Calgary for his development of a tool to replace the rubber fingers in lawn sweepers.

Nominees for the Awards and Prizes must be Canadian citizens resident in Canada. Nominations for the 1991 competition close on February 15, 1991.

Information pamphlets and nomination forms may be obtained from: The Manning Awards, 2300, 639 Fifth Avenue S.W., Calgary, Alberta T2P 0M9.

Halton Hills

# WEEKEND

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**KEN BELLAMY**  
Publisher

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