

Earth Day message

We're all walking on thin ice

by Jed Goldberg
President of Earth Day Canada

Environmentalism, a movement often accused of Chicken Little scare tactics and doomsday predictions, has the unfortunate ability to often cut its own arguments short. Is our annual verbal punch-up over the lives won and lost on the ice of Labrador going to keep us from addressing the larger issues that threaten all of us again this year?

Canadians are inundated, to the point of becoming chillingly numb, with reasons why we should change the way we live our everyday lives. Sometimes it's a suggested change for the sake of selling a new, disposable mop - that doesn't do half the job a good, old-fashioned one does (but it makes the house dance with sparkles on the tube). Other times, it's a mixed choir of voices from those advocating health, wildlife or food issues that reach your ear drums at the same, bewildering moment.

There are larger issues at play that will thaw even the most hardened tree-haters among us. Meanwhile, we preoccupy ourselves by treating the health effects of our poor air quality, fruitlessly fighting over the harvest of creatures that will soon be disappearing and scrambling to secure more electricity capacity to power our energy intensive lifestyles. In its current state, our planet is suffering, and if the Earth was a patient in our hospital we'd be the worst kind of doctor for it. We consistently address the symptoms and ignore the root cause.

These preoccupations, which bind many of the conflicting viewpoints in some of



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our society's current debates, affect each one of us directly and can only be solved through a shared commitment to a cumulative response - harnessing the power of one for the benefit of all.

Increasing levels of smog, once foolishly viewed as a sign of progress and healthy industrial performance, should be seen a yard-stick for how fast we are losing the long-term achievement award for designing and building our cities. While we are out shopping for air conditioners and asthma medication for our children, money is still being poured into road building and other infrastructure developments to enable more

of us to live the suburban commuter dream. Making it quicker and easier to get in and out of the city's peripheral 'People Farms' by car is ensuring that more cars than ever before are doing their part to flavour our air. Cars aren't inherently wicked in their existence, but car-centric cities are.

The bad blood flowing on the white ice of Labrador - be it of the harvester or protestor - needs to stop before the oceans decide for us. Our place in this debate, a small role even by international scale, is really secondary as our lifestyle is melting the ice in the oceanic schoolyard that we chose to do battle on. Soon neither side's argument will float.

While a debate rages around the ethical issues of hunting seals, people seem unaware that in a few years, there will be no seals to hunt as weather patterns change due to global warming. Our fossil fuel-dependent lifestyle ensures that the ice is getting thinner and suitable seal birthing grounds are harder to find.

A step closer to long-term thinking around maintaining our way of life brings us to electricity generation. As much as it would make a true green see red an (ex-) environmentalist, or two, have joined the nuclear industry's push to gain credibility as an option for meeting our future needs. Their case for support, already weakened by the advances in efficiency of generating energy from renewables sources, takes our mind off of the larger issue.

It would be cheaper and more beneficial for the environment if we were to take the investment in expanding conventional energy generation and direct it to financial instru-

ments to make energy conservation more desirable. No matter how we source our power, conservation is the healthiest, most efficient way to ensure our lights stay on. Rather than feeding our increasing energy dependence, we would do better to reassess how we are utilizing what's available.

Living a life that balances today with tomorrow is not about taking a step back. In fact, the well-educated population that we exist within likely over analyses everyday actions to the point where we often miss the bigger picture. While we fixate ourselves on addressing the immediate and painful symptoms of our poor planetary health, we often stop short of addressing the overarching concern. Escaping this logic means investing in transit instead of rushing to build roads, and it means breathing life into energy conservation programs as opposed to nuclear facilities.

This is the path towards relieving tomorrow's society of the burden of our short-sightedness and the potential consequences of any horrible mishaps that happen along the way. Each of us can play a role by sharing the commitment to making daily choices that support this.

While we're all enjoying our new, tasteful approach to life, there will undoubtedly be a few curmudgeons floating out to sea, carrying on the same tired debate about the seal hunt. They might even be there after the seals are gone.

Hopefully, this Earth Day, before the last shard of ice melts, we can agree that unless we all do our part for the environment, both sides will be left with nothing to fight for.

Two receive awards for role in protecting Escarpment

Two long-time advocates of Niagara Escarpment protection were honoured at a dinner in Smitty's Restaurant, Georgetown, on Wednesday, April 12. Barbara Halsall of Georgetown and David Hahn of Honeywood were recognized with awards for their long and exceptionally dedicated in-

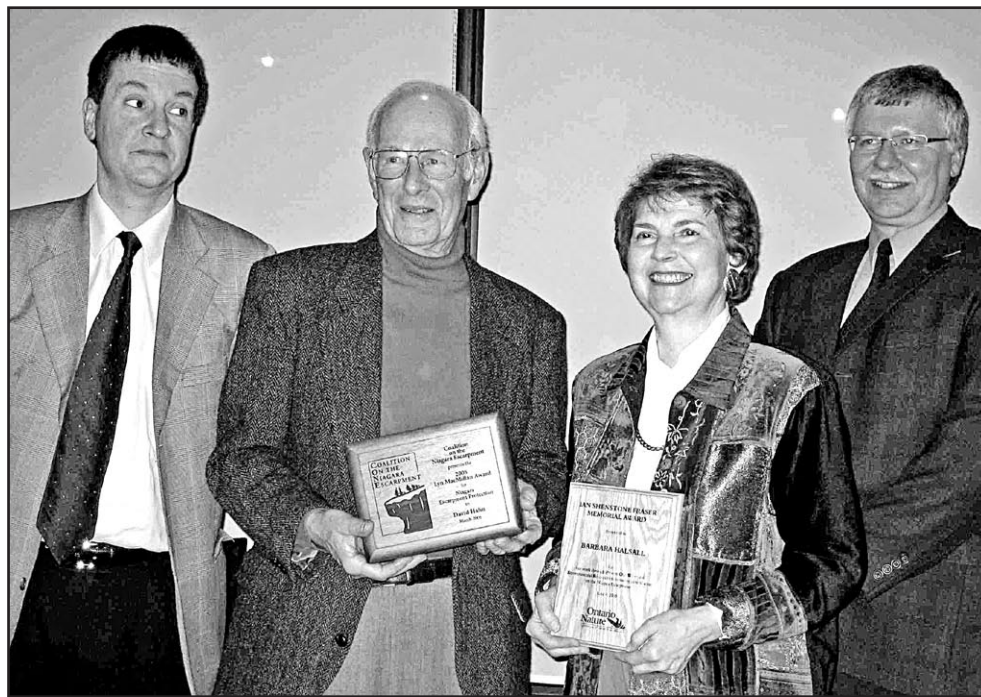
volvement in protecting the Escarpment.

Ontario Nature (the Federation of Ontario Naturalists) presented Barbara Halsall with its 2005-2006 Ian Shenstone Fraser Memorial Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the protection of the Escarpment. The award was given in recognition of Barbara's longstanding commitment and actions related to Escarpment protection in Halton Region as the leading light in the citizens' group Protect our Water and Environmental Resources (POWER) based in Halton Hills.

The Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE), which has its office in Acton,

recognized David Hahn with the 2005 Lyn MacMillan Award for Niagara Escarpment Protection named after the founder of CONE in 1978. David, a former president of CONE, has more recently been instrumental in CONE's biosphere reserve road sign project and the formation of the Niagara Escarpment Foundation, CONE's sister charity.

Steve Hounsell, President of Ontario Nature, presented the award to Barbara Halsall and André Rudnicky, President of CONE, presented the award to David Hahn. Approximately 25 local residents and guests from along the Escarpment attended the awards dinner.



ESCARPMENT AWARDS: David Hahn of Honeywood and Barbara Halsall of Georgetown (centre), were presented with awards for their roles in the protection of the Niagara Escarpment at a dinner in Georgetown April 12. Presenting the awards were Andre Rudnicky, president of CONE, left, and Steve Hounsell, president of Ontario Nature, right. - Submitted photo

Region forms transportation committee

Halton Region is continuing its practice of public consultation through establishment of a Transportation Advisory Committee to provide advice on transportation issues related to Provincial transportation initiatives within Halton and others that may impact the community.

The Committee held its first meeting in January and will meet at key milestones during the course of each Provincial transportation study.

They will have an opportunity to review and comment on documentation, provide input on the consultation program, and be engaged by the Province as part of the Stakeholder consultation.

Committee members include Halton Regional Chairman, Joyce Savoline, four Regional Councillors (one from each local municipality in Halton), Halton residents (one from each local

municipality in Halton) and representatives from the local trucking and aggregate trucking industry, development communities, local Chambers of Commerce and the Halton Regional Police Services. The Committee membership also includes representatives from the Halton Regional Agricultural Advisory Committee (HAAC), Cycling Committee and Ecological Environmental Advisory Committee (EEAC).



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