

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## Global warming?

Since this corner has unwittingly become embroiled in the controversy over global warming and climate changes it's time the record was set straight.

Of course, we have global warming and we've been having it for 22,000 years ever since the Pleistocene epoch, or Ice Age, when most of the northern hemisphere, including Canada, was covered with glaciers. We've been warming up ever since.

There is a lot of speculation about the reasons why the ice started to melt including such theories as dinosaur flatulence and rotting vegetation which released "greenhouse gases" into the atmosphere and unfettered the sun's influence. But all of that is for the scientists and climatologists to debate. Why are we now so concerned about global warming?

Many scientists and climatologists contend that unlike a decade ago when it was only conjecture, climate change can now be seen by observing disappearing Arctic ice and permafrost, lethal storms and floods in Latin America and melting glaciers.

The three warmest years on record have all occurred since 1998 and scientists theorize that Mother Earth has probably never warmed as fast as in the last 30 years.

So why, are we suddenly seeing an acceleration of global warming?

According to scientists, people are causing the change by burning our stores of coal, oil and natural gas which releases tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) every year, although some maintain the changes may have actually started with the dawn of agriculture.

This has all led to the "greenhouse effect." CO<sub>2</sub> is a greenhouse gas that traps the sun's radiation within the lower atmosphere along with other man-made gases such as methane and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

If the current trends continue, scientists contend the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> will double in this century and raise global temperatures by around 2C to 5C causing the Greenland ice sheet and Antarctic glaciers to melt. In turn sea levels could rise to as much as six metres flooding land occupied by millions of people.

Now, not all scientists and climatologists agree with the theories abounding around climate change. One veteran climatologist from British Columbia, who appeared recently on a Hamilton television program gave it short shrift. He said that when he got into the climate science 30 years ago the popular theory was that the earth was retreating into another ice age. Now that theory is completely reversed.

The popularity of global warming got a big boost in this neck of the woods when we experienced unusually warm weather in December and the early days of January. It would be more difficult to sell now we're in the midst of a cold, bone-chilling winter. Even a global meeting of scientists recently could agree that it was only "very likely" we are experiencing global warming's dire effects. It left the door open for further speculation about its nature.

As lay people we can only speculate on whether most scientists and climatologists are right. The evidence is there: there is climate change but it's rate of occurrence is a matter of conjecture.

Few, however, would disagree with the need to reduce emission reductions in industrial countries. Developing countries such as India and China are accusing the West of using global warming as a club to stop their industrialization and rising standards of living. And what the West does could be completely wiped out by the rapid industrialization in the East.

Meanwhile, the United States, which rejected the Kyoto Protocol in 2005, says scientific uncertainty over the pace of climate change is grounds for delaying any action. Along with Australia, the U.S. wants "clean fuel" technologies as an alternative to emission cuts.

It's a much more complicated issue than we can deal with in this space. Obviously there's going to have to be a political solution to global warming but first there has to be almost universal agreement that something must be done to avoid steep climate change.



**VIEW FROM TRILLIUM TERRACE:** The hills on the west side of Acton comprise a barrier for water which flows from Fairy Lake along the Credit River system to its destination in Lake Ontario. On the other side of the picturesque hills known colloquially as "The Breezes," water flows along the Blue Springs Creek to the Grand River on its way into Lake Erie. Residents along Trillium Terrace get a splendid view of the west side of Acton and a vista which stretches north into Erin.

## There's expiry dates on everything

It was like he was preparing for a natural disaster, or maybe we needed to build an ark and take on supplies in order to survive. I think it's because he was brought up in the "Depression." For some reason my dad always seems to buy more food and supplies than we need.

We were in Florida at their condo and he had gone into the storage closet to retrieve some pop. When I saw what he was doing I started to almost scold him. "Don't drink that," I told him. "It's expired." He didn't know what I was talking about. I showed him the best-before date on the can of pop. "I told you last time we were here it needed to be thrown out... it's no good." I was upset with him that he insisted on keeping the spoiled product.

"It's fine," he told me as he cracked open a can of diet ginger ale. As he poured the can out, something odd happened that proved my point. In the glass was the fluid. Unfortunately, the top



By  
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was syrupy stuff and the bottom contained watery type fluid. The pop had separated.

"See..." I told him, "It's no good." He didn't believe me. "You just have to shake the can... it'll be fine," he responded. After tasting it, he knew I was right.

Before I knew it, we were in the storage closet and in the hallway checking canned goods. There was a procession of people. One would check the can and pass it along until it reached the garbage bag. Meanwhile the Dude was in charge of taking the bags to the trash shoot. He was doing pretty good until he reached his precious Bush Beans. He loves those things. We probably have enough Bush Beans in the closet to feed the entire state of Florida. It didn't matter what the expiry date was,

he wasn't throwing them out.

My discovery and my dad's learning curve inspired all of us. Everything has an expiry date or best before date when you think about it. A couple of days ago I called him up. "How long is cooked ground beef good for?" I asked. "Two or three days maybe," he replied. "So I guess if this is from Saturday I should get rid of it?" I asked, as I sniffed the container. "Say good-bye" he told me.

Last Saturday night it was time for him to return the question. "You know how you said about how things have an expiry date..." he inquired. "What do you think of this?" He then rattled off some numbers that didn't really make sense. It was for a can of chick peas or tomatoes or something that he wanted to use for a pot of soup. He had only bought a case of them in the fall. "I don't know... I think they're expired. Why don't you

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