

Strange weather a result of global warming

What is it going to take to make the connection?

We've all watched in disbelief over the past week or two as Mother Nature has crippled the province of Quebec and a large section of Eastern Ontario.

We've sat in front of our television sets each night, staring in disbelief as Montreal fell into darkness, an entire field of hydro towers collapsed before our eyes and the nation's business ground to a halt as Ottawa fell siege to the ice. And we still don't get it.

We've watched as the lights went out for three million people, and we've wondered how we would cope in the same situation. And we still haven't figured it out.

A few weeks ago, we walked around outside on New Year's Day in our spring coats and listened to year-end recaps that told us that 1997 was the warmest year this century - perhaps even

the warmest year on record.

We've watched re-runs of the year's top stories, and re-lived through the eyes of the camera, the horror of last summer's floods on the Red River. And we still haven't made the connection.

We listened to the debate, late into December, as the world's leaders tried to protect their right to pollute, while insisting that other nations limit theirs.

We heard about Canada's watered-down agreement to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by six per cent and then listened to the backlash from the provinces, most of them insisting that it cannot be done without hurting the economy.

And now Mother Nature has dealt our economy a devastating blow.

The earliest estimates are that the ice storm has done a half a billion dollars damage.

It will be weeks, perhaps even

months before the electricity grid is fully restored. And tens of thousands of people still continue to cope in emergency shelters.

It is a strange twist of fate that has brought all the pieces together.

Ironically, it was Quebec, alone among the provinces once again, that pushed for tougher greenhouse gas limits. Quebec had the luxury of doing so because it uses hydro electric dams to generate its power, rather than fossil fuels.

And now that power has nowhere to go. The grid is down.

We have heard, over the past week or two, how powerless we are in the face of Mother Nature's wrath. And while that is true, it is we who have fueled that fire.

El Nino may have contributed to the ice storm, but it was the effect of global warming that made El Nino so volatile.

After decades of trying, we are finally able to influence the

weather, and we don't like the results.

What it comes down to is this: global warming isn't about the temperature slowly rising. It's about change - erratic, unpredictable, often violent change that will devastate our existing ecosystems, primarily because of the rate of this change.

Adaptation takes time and that's one thing we don't have.

Natural disasters, like the one we witnessed last week, will continue to increase in their frequency and ferocity as our atmosphere reacts to rising CO2 levels.

When scientists first warned us about global warming, they gave us a few options:

They said we were conducting an experiment on spaceship Earth and we really didn't have a climate model that we could use to predict the outcome.

They said we could drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emis-



Your Earth

Suzanne Elston

sions through energy conservation and the development of alternatives or we could simply go with the status quo and see what happens.

Thanks to political inertia and our inability to grasp the severity of the problem, we have opted for the latter, and now we are beginning to see the results.



CORRECTION NOTICE

A printing error has occurred on the back of the SCRATCH FOR CASH scratch card. The rules and regulations should read "The odds of receiving a specific scratch and win card are as follows: ..." and the list by which the odds are listed should also have the heading "Odds of receiving a specific card".

Shoppers Drug Mart apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused you.

Essay contest for students living on farms

If last year is any indication, more than 150 high school-aged farm kids will be on the PROWL for their share of \$10,000 this winter.

The \$10,000 is the prize money for an essay-writing contest sponsored by the corn herbicide PROWL and the Ontario Corn Producers' Association (OCPA). Last year, six budding writers shared the prize. The students came from farms across Ontario - from Pembroke in the east to Petrolia in the west.

This year's entrants will be asked to submit 500-600 word essays about farm-based research. A panel of teachers will judge the essays.

Questions young farmers can answer in their essays include:

- What is gained from farmer-based research?
- How does it help in sustainable farming?
- Have you heard of any research experiments on your farm or a neighbour's farm?

- Did the research findings help local producers become more productive?
- What is learned from poor results?
- Why do farmers like to experiment?
- Is there a scientist in us all?

To enter, mail in your 500-600 word essay with a completed entry form by March 31, 1998.

Call PROWL at 1-800-263-1228 for a copy of the official entry form including full contest details.

Making The Most of Your

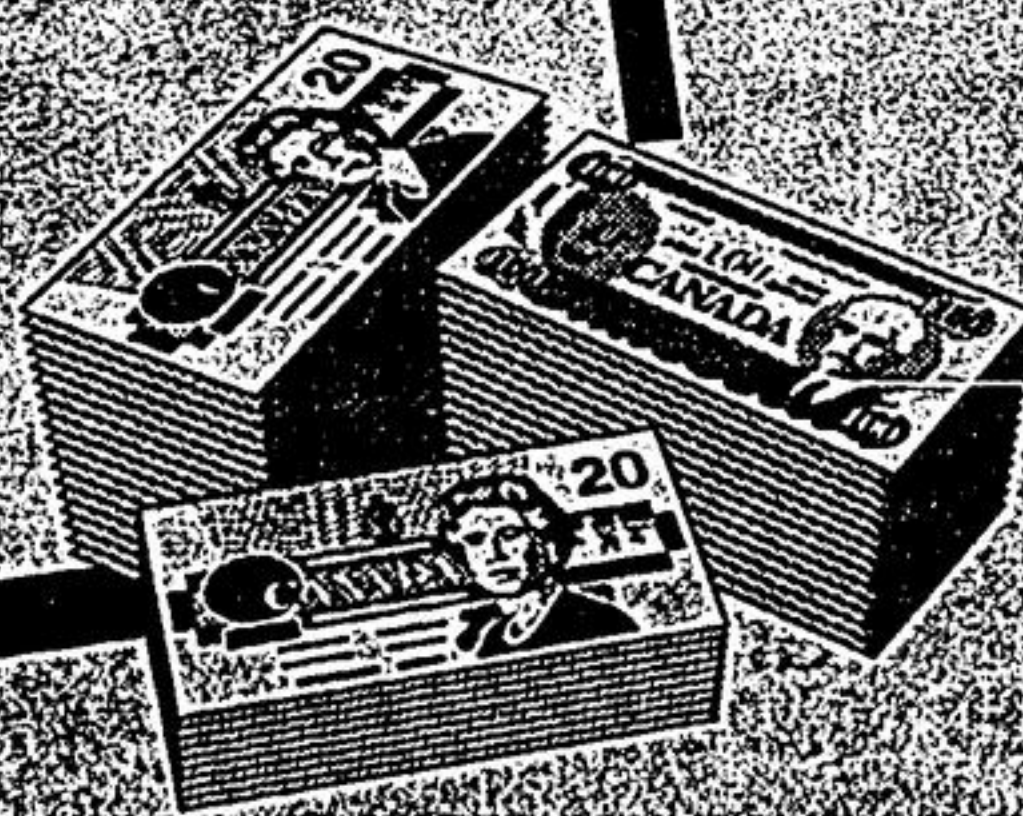
"Finances"

A special feature appearing in the Economist & Sun/Stouffville-Uxbridge Tribune every Tuesday and Saturday from now until tax time.

Reader Profile*

- 97,179 Total number of adults (18 yrs. +)
- 63.3% Own RRSPs
- 46.8% Own Mutual Funds
- 36% Own G.I.C.s
- 25.7% Own Canada Savings Bonds
- 23.4% Own Stock Market Shares
- 30.9% Household income \$75,000 plus

*1997 Metroland Readership Study, prepared by Kubas Consultants
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