



vol. 23 no. 1 winter 2005

B E T W E E N T H E  
**i s s u e s**

**BETWEEN THE COVERS:**  
**The Energy Emperor**  
**Keeping The Coast Clear**  
**The EAC Index**



Light Bulb Recall—Go check your bulbs!  
Some 13 watt *Globe* energy saving light bulbs sold by the EAC are being recalled by the manufacturer due to a defect with potential fire or shock hazard. If you think you might have an affected bulb, stop using it and check to see if it is among those to be recalled  
([www.globe-electric.com/html/company/news/company-news-press\\_release.htm](http://www.globe-electric.com/html/company/news/company-news-press_release.htm)).  
Contact the manufacturer at 514-694-0444 ext. 151. Globe will replace the affected bulbs.

Thank you: To Little Mysteries Bookstore for donating proceeds from casual Fridays to the Ecology Action Centre, and to those of you who responded to our fundraising letter. We truly appreciate your support.  
Help us get to 100% Currently, there are no distributors of Ancient Forest Friendly paper east of Toronto. We'd like to change that. Businesses or organizations interested in purchasing a bulk order of 100% recycled, Ancient Forest Friendly paper, please contact the EAC at (902) 429-2202.

## letterstothe centre



nick bevan-john

### Yeah for Car Free Times!

When visiting Halifax recently, I was very impressed with your Car Free newsheet, which I came upon my last afternoon in the Gottingen Street Library, a too-late-reminder to visit you. We've been doing similar work in Regina and your work inspires us. My husband and I moved to Regina 3 years ago from Ontario – before that he was minister at the old Brunswick Street United Church, so I am aware of your work for many years. We must show that environmental, social, peace and transportation issues are all one and inter-related!

*Caroline Verrall, Regina, Saskatchewan*

### No to rate increases.

You guys are great! I don't agree, however, with the op-ed piece in the Chronicle Herald (November 2004) where members of the Energy Issues Committee agree with the Nova Scotia Power rate increases. They should be investing in energy efficiency without having to impose big rate increases. They only want to increase their profits.

*Holly Reid, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia*

Response:

Our op-ed piece was slightly misleading. While we are not fighting **against** the rate increases, we are contesting the NSPI application because it includes no measures to enhance programs for energy efficiency, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions,

energy conservation, mitigation of environmental damages or rate assistance. We are not fighting the rate increases for the primary reason that none of us have been paying the true cost of electricity EVER. That being said, it is not fair for the consumer to absorb increased taxes or fuel costs, when no alternatives are being proposed. We are asking that the rate increase be coupled with demonstrated effort by NSPI to move towards renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

Let us know what you think! BTI welcomes your comments and letters. Send to: Between the Issues, Ecology Action Centre, 1568 Argyle St., Halifax NS B3J 2B3 or email: [betweentheissues@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:betweentheissues@ecologyaction.ca)

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Photo caption: Over 60 hikers on the summit of Blue Mountain, an area currently threatened by the proposed Highway 113 project. *Raymond Plourde*



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# editorial

Working for environmental change can be daunting, but it's the positive changes and successes that have kept us going for 34 years.

The retirement of June Hall following the Spring 2004 Issue of *BTI* required that we reorganize ourselves, from the process of how *BTI* happens to how it looks. We now have a better understanding of why June needed a break! One of our main priorities was to print the next edition on recycled paper as we do with all of our reports and brochures (yes, yes 100%). *BTI* is our most expensive publication, but also extremely important in educating and communicating environmental issues. Sometimes we face difficulties in walking the talk, mostly due to monetary constraints. But we are on it. This issue is 50% recycled, and we hope to move to 100%, ancient forest friendly paper within the year.

This edition includes several new columns, which we hope will both inform and inspire:

*Action is Our Middle Name* – news and updates from EAC projects and committees.

*Citizens Choice* – you CAN make a difference and here's how.

*Ask EcoHead* – everything you ever wanted to know about saving the planet, but were afraid to ask.

*People Who Make a Difference* – profiling eco-leaders and thinkers, big and small.

*Eco-Reviews* – of books, movies, plays and art shows that deal with the environment.

Given that it is January and environmentalists always seem to be fighting uphill battles, we thought we'd fight the winter blues and celebrate our successes. Working for environmental change can be daunting, but it's the positive changes and successes that have kept us going for 34 years. That and maintaining a sense of humour. We've tabulated a few of our successes in the *EAC Index* on page 13. From our work on sustainable fisheries, to alternative transportation, wilderness protection and forestry practices, the number of projects and successes continues to grow.

Along with the improvements, *BTI* is now somewhat smaller than before. So we invite you to make use of our monthly e-newsletter – for timely updates, events, jobs and opportunities for participation. Our website is also getting a cleanup and being updated more frequently. You're also welcome to drop by or call the centre to see what we are up to. We would love to know what you think!

*Mark Butler and Susanna Fuller*

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# actionisourmiddlename

**youarewhatyoueat** The success of Harvest Festival held in Halifax on September 12 was a great start for the Food Action Committee (FAC). In October, Jen Scott of FAC, plus Marine Issues volunteers Wayne Eddy and Franklin D'Entremont attended the slow food conference, *Terra Madre*, in Italy. The FAC is in the early stages of a "foodmiles" project where consumers can assess the "transportation footprint" of their food. Is the most ecological choice tofu from California—or lamb from Tatamagouche? FAC is developing an urban garden mentoring program to link seniors with gardening experience to youth with the physical ability to lug around compost and manure. EAC's farm conservation easement and the HelioTrust project is up and running. See [www.ecologyaction.ca](http://www.ecologyaction.ca) for upcoming Food Action activities in the 2005.

**draggers are a drag** In August 2004, the judge ruled against EAC in its court case with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) over the protection of fish habitat. While DFO lawyers did not contest the science on whether or not dragging damages fish habitat, the judge ruled that habitat protection provisions in Section 35.2 of the Act do not apply to fishing, as it is not included in the definition of *undertaking* or *activity*. The fact that the science was not contested is rather telling. Not to worry—this decision only makes us more determined to protect our seas. We are working with other groups to organize a national campaign to ban dragging and on international efforts calling for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling. MIC has also been working on oil and gas issues, with three of the largest spills in the history of the east coast oil industry occurring in the last six months—why has no company been held responsible? From the good news department, EAC's efforts to ensure a continued human presence on Sable Island seems to have been heard. The multi-department working group submitted a recommendation that the station remain open and federal funding continue.

**continued on page fourteen**

**boots are made for walking** Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) had a hugely successful autumn. On September 7th, CBC TV's *The National* featured Springvale Elementary of Halifax and their Walking School Bus. Springvale is a long-time participant in ASRTS initiatives. Advocate for traffic taming and creator of the Walking School Bus, Australian David Engwicht conducted a workshop on Taming School and Neighbourhood Traffic on September 21st for over 100 people from across the province. Walk to School Week (October) had the highest participation to date, with 100 schools enrolled. ASRTS published its first issue of *Get a Move On!* and launched a new web site—[www.ecologyaction.ca/asrts](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/asrts)



**intothewilderness** In recent months, four new nature reserves have been designated by the provincial government. The Nova Scotia Public Lands Coalition, of which EAC is a driving force, is pushing for the protection of two more, Gully Lake and Eigg Mountain–James River. Over 200 people participated in the 3rd Annual Public Hikes on Public Lands. Thanks to John Abati for coordinating these hikes.

In November, EAC spearheaded the first Colin Stewart Forest Forum, organized to increase protection of Nova Scotia's forests with cooperation from forestry companies. The hiring of Minga O'Brien in September launched the Wilderness Committee's latest project, the *Standing Tall* campaign. She and intern Karen O'Kafka, along with a diverse steering committee, will be working on changing current forest practices to more sustainable methods. (see [www.publicland.ca](http://www.publicland.ca))

**doctors without cars** Thanks to TRAX's coordination of the annual Commuter Challenge, HRM came fourth Canada-wide for participation. Two new projects of TRAX and the Transportation Issues committee are in the works. TRAX is acting as the administrative body and facilitator of a newly formed group called ADAPT (Association of Doctors for Physically Active Transportation). ADAPT has several initiatives in the works, all of which promote active transportation. Wondering what to do with that old car? EAC's new Early Vehicle Retirement Project is aiming for a spring launch. Trade in that old car for a new bike, hiking boots, bus pass and more.



**February 10-12.**  
Welcoming Winter:  
Changing the Climate  
of Planning, Halifax.  
[www.dal.ca/planning/  
news/index.shtml](http://www.dal.ca/planning/news/index.shtml)  
or call (902) 494-326

**February 11-13.**  
Youth Environment  
Symposium, Univ. of New  
Brunswick.  
[www.nben.ca/aboutus/  
caucus/yag/yes.htm](http://www.nben.ca/aboutus/caucus/yag/yes.htm)  
or call 506-433-6101

**Seedy Saturday.**  
for gardeners, farmers &  
conservationists.  
Emmanuel Church Hall,  
Spryfield NS, March 12.  
Call Jean White  
902-477-2933  
or see [www.seeds.ca](http://www.seeds.ca)

**Halifax, Mar 16, 5:30pm**  
EAC Volunteer Orientation,  
[www.ecologyaction.ca/  
volunteer.shtm](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/volunteer.shtm)  
or call (902) 429-2202

**February 2005.**  
Winter Commuter  
Challenge—you CAN cycle  
in the winter!  
How to participate?  
Call TRAX (902) 429-0924  
[www.trax.ns.ca](http://www.trax.ns.ca)

For EAC Issue Committee  
meeting times, additional  
events and opportunities,  
please see:  
[www.ecologyaction.ca](http://www.ecologyaction.ca)  
or call 902-429-2202.

To spend a week in Italy meeting with farmers and food processors from around the world, and figure out how to save our precious planet! This was the task set out at the international Slow Food Conference, *Terra Madre*, last October.

It was a tough assignment, but I have always liked ambitious experiments...

On the first day, close to 5,000 people were thrust together in a huge cement building, like children on the first day of school. We began with tentative introductions, and by day two had transformed from shy strangers into a colourful, animated and familiar group. In the background, Italian folk singers passed around wine and sang in unusual, haunting harmonies. The ensuing chaos caused the organizers to pull their hair out—but they'd invited the rebels of the earth, so what did they expect?

We communicated with each other in the typical ways: through workshops, common accommodations, and in the line-ups for food and toilets. A new way of connecting emerged in the form of a spontaneous food market. Suddenly, every inch of floor space was covered with food, spices and fabric. It didn't matter what your name was or what language you spoke. The world felt rich, mostly from the contributions of the southern delegates. By the end of the four days, spontaneous dancing and music was taking over.

I thought it couldn't get any better, but the "conversation" continued for another three days at the Salone del Gusto (Hall of Taste) in a converted Fiat factory. I gave out bread samples made from heritage wheat, grown at Red Fox Farm in Centre Burlington, Nova Scotia. Hundreds of people tasted and bought the bread. All the hard work and years of rescuing old wheats paid off with dozens of compliments per hour. Bakers, farmers, millers, consumers had a field day. One farmer leaned over to me and said, "This

experience is going to fuel me for years to come."

Many of the booths were "Slow Food Presidia"—groups of people who'd come together to celebrate, preserve, and sell a certain kind of food. Selling was key. At each booth, someone explained their passion for a particular food and production process. I ate my weight in heritage fruit gelato, sheep milk cheese, and chestnut flour bread. Each booth at the conference in Italy was a success story because of con-

scious choices by people to consume quality food. Every dollar we spend presents an opportunity to actively support local economies, environmentally sustainable production and creative, artisanal processes.

In this spirit, the Food Action Committee organized a September Harvest Festival in Halifax. Over a thousand people came out to enjoy food and music and many connections were made with local farmers. Slow Food Nova Scotia organized a brilliant day of school-

yard garden gathering and cooking at the Dr. Arthur Hines school in Summerville; students worked with a chef to prepare meals and then invited their parents to eat it with them. As Nova Scotians organize themselves into food co-ops, shop in farmers' markets and demand locally produced food in grocery stores, these choices have impacts far beyond our kitchen tables.

*Jen Scott is a founding member of the EAC's Food Action Committee and Heliotrust Farm Preservation project. She lives on Red Fox Farm in Centre Burlington, Nova Scotia. [www.ecologyaction.ca/food\\_action/food\\_action.shtm](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/food_action/food_action.shtm) [www.google.ca/search?q=slow+food](http://www.google.ca/search?q=slow+food)*

**"This experience  
is going to  
fuel me  
for years to come."**

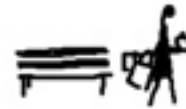


*nick bevan-john*

# ecobriefs

by June Hall

Illustrations by Sharolyn Townsend



aaron harpell

## Chemical soup

Brave man, Britain's Minister for Rural Affairs. Charged with protecting the public from poisonous chemicals, he had his blood tested to see how polluted it is. The result is not a pretty picture. Turns out this "keen supporter of organic food" has 33 hazardous synthetic compounds (out of 103 investigated) in his body, most of them banned years ago because of links to a wide range of dire health effects. Here's a rundown: 25 different PCBs, 3 brominated flame retardants, 4 organochloride pesticides, and 1 perfluorinated chemical. And that's better than most Brits; the average score is 37.

Thankfully, his levels were extremely low, supposedly "not a cause for immediate alarm," but since most of the chemicals have not been tested on humans, and we have no idea what the "cocktail effects" might be, such tests serve as a wake-up call, proof of the widespread presence of untested chemicals in everyone's environment.

*Guardian Weekly, 29 Oct. '04*

## Look waaaaay up

Take a simple law of physics—hot air rises—and stretch it to the max. That's what EnviroMission, an Australian company, is hoping to do on a sunny sheep station in southwestern NSW. Plans for a \$1 billion solar thermal power station are well advanced, and both federal and state governments have given their approval. Building could start

this year.

You'll need to sit down for this. Picture a concrete "chimney" 1 km high—twice the height of the CN Tower—and as wide as a football field at its base. Now envisage it sitting in "a shimmering field of glass and plastic" that's suspended 3.5 metres above the ground and is 7 km across. If the plan goes ahead, they'll "be pouring concrete 24 hours a day, seven days a week for two years." It works like this: As the huge body of air under the collecting area heats up (by as much as 30°C), it's drawn up the tower at winds as high as 54 km/hr, powering 32 huge turbines. Expected output: ~650 gigawatt-hours per year, enough to meet the needs of 70,000 Australians. A few questions remain: Can they raise the money? Can they engineer the tower to resist winds of up to 200 km/hr? Will it pay for itself? Are they mad?

*New Scientist, 31 Jul. '04*

## London's "congestion charge"

Hit 'em in the pocket, that's the message. But first, make sure you provide viable alternatives. In February 2003, the City of London introduced a charge aimed at limiting the number of vehicles clogging roads within the 8-square-mile area bordered by the Inner Ring Road. Drivers who venture into the "C" zone must pay a £5 (C\$11) fee on weekdays between 7 am and 6:30 pm. Failure to pay the fee results in a hefty fine; cameras monitor license plates to make sure no one

escapes. Taxis, emergency vehicles and a few others are exempt.

The program has been a great success. Bus and taxi patronage is up, car and heavy truck numbers are down, as are emissions of nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and CO<sub>2</sub>, all by significant amounts. Traffic now flows more briskly, resulting in greater fuel efficiency and fewer accidents, while discounts for "clean" cars, trucks and vans, including hybrids, have encouraged many to switch to more environmentally friendly vehicles. Understandably, there's a proposal to expand the program. Beefing up transit in advance of the program was an essential prerequisite, and the money collected pays for continued improvements. Now if only they'd lower ticket prices.

*Envir. Sci. & Technol. online, 6 Oct. '04*

## Death knell for frogs?

The world's frogs, newts and toads are in trouble. Hardly news, but now we have some numbers. Over the past three years, more than 500 scientists from over 60 nations have assessed the distribution and conservation status of all 5,743 known amphibian species.

The Global Amphibian Assessment report reveals that 43% of all amphibian species are in population decline; only one species is increasing. Of these, 1,856 (32%) are considered threatened with extinction. In addition to those known to be in decline, a further





1,300 species are probably imperiled, but we lack information. The most dramatic declines began around 1980. Since then, at least nine species are known to have gone extinct, and a further 113 haven't been seen in years. It's a complex problem, with many actors. In most parts of the world, including Europe, Asia and Africa, the major threats are habitat destruction, air and water pollution and demand by consumers. In the Americas, the Caribbean and Australia, a highly infectious fungal disease called chytridiomycosis is also wreaking havoc.

To find out more about these canaries in the coalmine, check out [www.globalamphibians.org](http://www.globalamphibians.org) . [www.scienceexpress.org](http://www.scienceexpress.org) Oct. '04

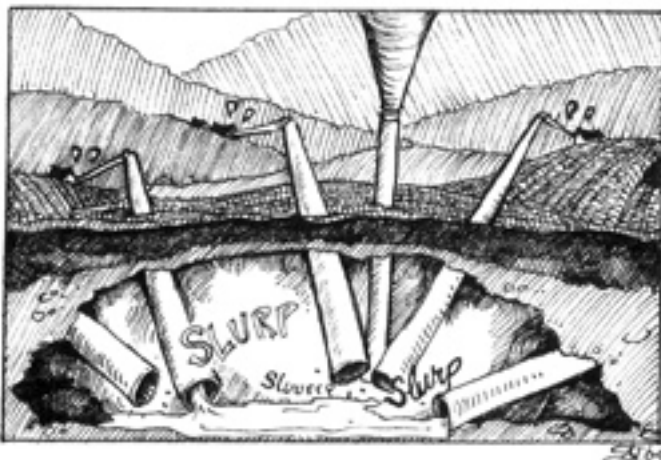
**Sucking Asia dry**

Such a wonderful innovation. Affordable pumps that can raise water from great depths, allowing even smallholder farmers to irrigate their fields, and villagers to have a reliable water supply. But now, a generation later, the wells are running dry. Take India, for example. Heavily subsidized electricity now powers about 21 million tube wells, with an additional million wells coming on stream each year. Trouble is, monsoon rains replace only a fraction of the 200 cubic kilometres or so of water brought to the surface each year, and water tables are dropping fast. In some areas, farmers now pump from depths of a kilometre, something that only large-scale producers can afford. In the southern state of Tamil Nadu, 95% of the wells owned by small farmers have dried up. In India as a whole, "hundreds of millions of Indians may see their land turned to desert" in the coming decades. It's a story repeated across Asia — in Pakistan, Vietnam, and northern China, for example. One more hit against a technology already notorious for poisoning untold millions with arsenic, a disaster detailed in several past ecobriefs.

*New Scientist, 28 Aug. '04*

**More ecobriefs...**

For more ecobriefs and updates, see also [www.ecologyaction.ca](http://www.ecologyaction.ca) (click *ecobriefs*, at top right just below the green bar).



# The Energy Emperor Is

“But he has nothing on at all,” said a little child at last. “Good heavens! Listen to the voice of an innocent child,” said the father, and one whispered to the other what the child had said. “But he has nothing on at all,” cried at last the whole people. That made a deep impression upon the emperor, for it seemed to him that they were right; but he thought to himself, “Now I must bear up to the end.” And the chamberlains walked with still greater dignity, as if they carried the train which did not exist.



aaron harpell

Let's face it; when you weave together the guiding energy policies of our Province, you are left with a fabric of words that speaks of environmental concern, but in practice, does little to shield our environment

from harm. It's time to adopt one of the lessons of Hans Christian Anderson, and shout to the Hamm government that the emperor is wearing no clothes!

And so shouts the EAC, as one of approximately forty formal interveners in the Utility and Review Board's (UARB) hearing about Nova Scotia Power's (NSP) application to revise its rates, charges, and regulations. In the course of the hearing, the EAC learned that the proposed increase in our electricity rates is intended to cover NSP's increased expenses in fuel costs and taxes. No portion of the proposed rate increase is designed to cover strategies for further reducing green house gas (GHG) emissions or the provision of energy efficiency information and assistance. In essence, as it is currently designed, NSP's rate application would further embed us in the status quo; heavy reliance on fossil fuels and minimal services for the domestic customer hoping to shave their energy use, or increase household efficiency.

Like the little boy in the crowd who shouted, “but he has nothing on at all,” the EAC's focus during the rate hearing has been less on the idea that we will be paying more for our electricity, and more on what is absent in the rate increase proposal, and in our power generation in Nova Scotia.

The EAC has not taken issue with the principle of paying more for our electricity for two reasons. First, the

direct and indirect subsidies that have long propped up the energy sector have created a fundamentally flawed umbilical cord between electricity consumers and producers. Ever since we replaced our kerosene lamps with light bulbs we have enjoyed the amenity of power to the extent that we now believe our access to it is a right. We have been willing to pay for that right because we understand that there are costs incurred in the process of supplying us with electricity. The dollar amount appearing on our power bills, however, does not reflect the full costs associated with electricity generation and use. Our electricity prices have been artificially low because they have been spared the burden of having to compensate for the damages done to our environment, and public health costs.

Environmental damages stem from the by-products of electricity generation. Sulphur oxides, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds (to name just a few) are culprits that contribute to a plethora of issues plaguing our mother-ship. Such issues include, but are not limited to, biodiversity loss, respiratory illnesses, alterations to the natural process of climate change, contamination of water sources, damage to agricultural crops and lands, and material damage (i.e. buildings, sculptures). Because damages to our environment, and negative impacts on human health, create costs that are external to the market price for electricity, they are referred to as externalities.

Nations around the world have begun to calculate externalities as a means of informing policy. Even if we can't agree on how much a specific damage to an environmental resource is worth, and argue over the exact source of the damaging pollutant, the cost of that damage is



# Wearing No Clothes

clearly non-zero. As economists and scientists converge to tackle externalities, society begins to understand the relevance of our emissions in more measurable terms. This new understanding should be reflected in our policy objectives. If it were, the cost of our electricity would rise in relation to the damage caused by its use.

This principle of ecological economics underpins the reason the EAC has chosen to not fight the idea of increasing rates. Instead, we are using the proposed increase to engage our province in a dialogue about the externalities associated with fossil fuels. Such a dialogue furthers the cause of alternative energy sources, such as wind and solar, because the externalities associated with these technologies pose significantly fewer costs to environmental and human health. In essence, if we want to reduce the costs of our electricity, then we should supply ourselves with electricity that is economically and environmentally sustainable. But this is only part of the solution.

In addition to meeting our electricity demands using “cleaner” energy sources, we can also make a difference in our bills and in our environment, by keeping our demand in check and using electricity



as efficiently as possible. Energy conservation can be as simple as turning off the lights when you leave a room. An example of energy efficiency is to replace the lights in the room with the energy efficient light bulbs. For

another example, consider conserving energy by turning down your furnace when you leave the house, and having your furnace tuned so that it provides heat more efficiently.

Efforts in conservation and efficiency create the legs of demand side management (DSM)—managing our demand. One DSM technique mirrors the old practice of putting a carrot on the end of a stick. If lower energy bills are the desired carrot, then the consumer must follow the DSM path. It can easily be argued that if electricity were free, there would be little incentive (no carrot) inspiring us to be concerned with the amount we used. Conversely, with electricity costs on the rise, the incentive to conserve and be more energy efficient is significant.

The fact that NSP has proposed to increase the energy price per kilowatt-hour for domestic customers by as much as thirteen per cent sends a price signal to consumers. That signal may provide incentive to become more conscientious users of

electricity. This is the second reason the EAC has not taken issue with the principle of paying more for our electricity.

That being said, the EAC *does* contest the fact that NSP’s proposed rate increase is not accompanied by a plan to improve the public education and customer service components of the utility. The rate increase provides nothing to help customers understand how they can use less energy, much less provide them with the tools and appliances they need to do so. Furthermore, the way the domestic rate is designed creates a situation where an increase in rates will negatively affect some ratepayers disproportionately more than others. The people most adversely affected by rate increases include low-income families and small business owners because electricity expenses typically make up a high percentage of their overall expenditures.

Financial assistance may be necessary to help customers absorb shockingly higher rates this winter, and the EAC supports the efforts of Dalhousie’s Legal Aide team as they work hard to increase access to rate assistance and services for people with low incomes. However, rate assistance is a short-term band-aid, not a long-term solution. Our Province needs to invest in programs that help us make our homes and businesses more energy efficient. We need to up the ante in terms of public education. We need NSPI to work with the HRM to retrofit every streetlight, stoplight, and light bulb that is municipally owned with something more energy efficient. We need policies that attract alternative energy research and entrepreneurship to this Province. And the good news is...we don’t need to totally reinvent the wheel to do any of this!

Earmarking funds for DSM investments has considerable precedence in Europe and much of the United States. This is often done in the form of a system benefits charge—a bill item for energy efficiency. For example, Efficiency Vermont and Efficiency Maine are agencies that were created by Acts of public boards similar to the UARB. They operate separately from

**continued on page fourteen**

# artandtheenvironment

This column reviews current cultural events, books, art shows that link the creative conscious with environmental issues. If you have an event you would like reviewed, please contact [betweentheissues@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:betweentheissues@ecologyaction.ca)

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In the spirit of positive thinking, we decided it was timely and appropriate to revisit David Suzuki and Holly Dressel's 2002 book, *Good News for a Change: Hope For a Troubled Planet*.

Suzuki, the best-known of Canada's environmentalists, purportedly wrote this book because he was tired of being viewed as an environmental doomsday prophet. He set out to find the stories that do not make the news. From India to Mexico, Suzuki discovers individuals who are making a difference. From water conservation to eco-friendly banks, the authors cover the entire environmental spectrum.

This book is dense (almost four hundred pages) but is also simply written and direct; it reads like a script from one of Suzuki's television programs. In fact, I realized halfway through the book that I could actually hear Suzuki's voice saying the lines as I read them. I am not sure what the influence of Dressel was on the book, but the prose is definitely all Suzuki.

Both literally and figuratively, it is difficult to say anything negative about *Good News*. Quite simply, it is a compendium of success stories. The people Suzuki talks with are genuine and unassuming. The results they achieve are limited in scope but vast in potential. This book heartens even the biggest cynic and shines a ray of optimism on what sometimes seems a hopeless topic.

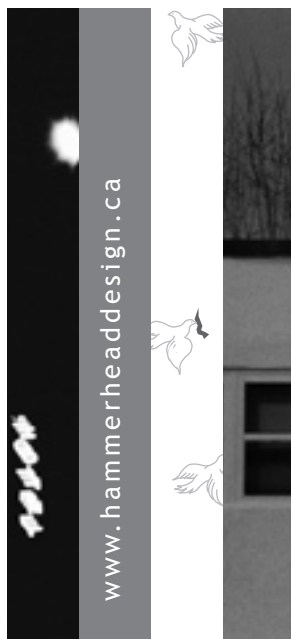
That being said, there are some parts of the



book where the authors are obviously struggling to put a positive spin on a negative predicament. Particularly, the chapter on biodiversity is not overflowing with good news. What I found intriguing about the book is the fact that the individuals profiled are just that,

individuals. I had expected to see examples of NGOs, community groups or businesses who had made collective efforts. To the contrary, the people who made the biggest difference were on their own; people who acted alone and succeeded. This book really vanquishes the "I'm just one person, I can't really make a difference" myth that prevents people from engaging in action. Finally, what struck me most, on a fundamental level, is that this is not a book about environmentalists. This is book about people who wanted to live and work while at the same time providing a benefit to their community. Whether it was paying their employees a decent wage or simply doing work they enjoy, the majority of those profiled did not begin with a desire to help the environment. The benefit to the environment was a by-product. Overwhelmingly, the message is that being socially conscious and environmentally conscious are two sides of the same coin. *Good News* accomplishes its intended goal—one can not help but feel better after reading it.

*Patricia Elliott is a lawyer with literary ambitions.*



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graphic design for tomorrow

# babywearehot!

In environmental work, there's a tendency to focus on the problem to be solved—and forget the successes. Even within the EAC office, staff don't always hear each other's success stories. But it is the successes—the obvious changes in people's behaviour, the acres of wilderness preserved, the volumes of local food brought to market—that make it all worthwhile. So we decided to compile an “index” that highlights recent EAC achievements and contrasts them with interesting facts and figures. If you like it, we'll try to make it a regular feature. If you have any provocative or inspiring nuggets—positive and negative—send them to us and we'll include a selection. E-mail to: [betweentheissues@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:betweentheissues@ecologyaction.ca) with the subject line: “EAC index”.



## The EAC Index

Number of families opting to buy chemical-free Christmas trees from the EAC: 330  
 People receiving EAC alternatives-to-pesticides materials in 2004: over 4,000  
 Canadian medical associations now advising avoidance of “*all* pesticides whenever and wherever possible”: at least one

Percentage of Nova Scotian children who are obese: approx. 25% and rising  
 Nova Scotian schools participating in Walk to School Day: 100 and rising  
 Rank of walking as a healthy, inexpensive and environmentally friendly activity: 1

Percentage of Nova Scotia land that is publicly owned: approx. 30%  
 Participants in EAC's Public Hikes on Public Lands: 200+  
 New nature reserves announced in Nova Scotia in 2004: 5  
 Protected Areas the EAC hopes to be announced in 2005: 2

People employed by the EAC in 2003-2004: 22  
 Volunteers: 250+  
 Square footage of the EAC's headquarters in Halifax: 1,600  
 Square footage of the average suburban household: 3,000

Population of Nova Scotia: approximately 900,000  
 Number of EAC members, as of January 2005: 718  
 Nova Scotians not yet members of the EAC: approx. 899,000  
 Number of members we would like to have by 2006: 2,000  
 Word-of-mouth required to help achieve this: *lots*

Transportation's contribution to Canadian greenhouse gas emissions: 27%  
 Businesses participating in the *TRAX* trip reduction project: 13  
 Businesses in HRM *not* participating in trip reduction programs: most of them  
 Universities participating in the Universal Bus Pass System (facilitated by TRAX): 1  
 Additional Halifax region universities considering the UPASS in 2005: 2

Bicycles repaired and distributed by *Bike Again* since 2001: 900  
 Recycled parts used and displayed in the EAC's bicycle art show: hundreds

Research publications by *EAC Marine Issues* since 1997: 13  
 EAC vs. Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans court cases regarding the destruction of fish habitat: 1  
 Court cases won by the EAC against the DFO in 2004: 0  
 Increase in EAC's commitment to achieving sustainable fisheries: infinite

Energy-saving light bulbs sold by the EAC since 2002: over 500  
 Number of recalls of 13W energy-efficient bulbs in 2004: 1  
 Proportion of energy-efficient bulbs that work just fine: the vast majority

Best Activist Organization in Halifax Regional Municipality, according to *The Coast* survey results: Ecology Action Centre



*Q I have heard that salt isn't the best thing to put on my driveway and sidewalk. Are there any alternatives?*

While salt is necessary for human survival—wars are fought over its availability—North American winters can lead to its overuse and abuse. Too much sodium chloride (NaCl) spread on our vast network of roads and driveways is definitely bad for the environment. Salt can kill vegetation, harm wildlife, render roadside ponds and lakes uninhabitable, and corrode transportation infrastructure—not to mention our vehicles!

The good news is that, at least for personal use, there are alternatives. Such as shovelling! It doesn't have to be arduous. It is good exercise—and can even be fun, a good way to meet the neighbours. If you have health problems, hire a neighbourhood kid. To make the job easier, get started as soon as possible, while the snow or ice is still soft. Invest in some good quality shovels and chippers of various sizes. And reward yourself afterwards with a nice, steaming mug of fair trade hot chocolate!

If your sidewalk is still too slippery, don't despair. Ashes from a woodstove or sawdust (not from treated wood) from a local hardware store or mill can help. Sand is another option—it's less harmful and longer-lasting than salt.

Larger-scale alternatives to salt are also available, but expensive. While Environment Canada has recommended that municipalities explore alternatives, this has not been a priority due to its high cost. One chemical alternative is calcium magnesium acetate, but it runs \$700usd per ton, compared \$30 for salt.

Of course, if we drove less, there would be less need for salt. Why not investigate alternatives such as flex-time, telecommuting, or adopting a more community-based lifestyle? So next time you call in sick because you don't feel like going in to work on a cold day...you can tell yourself that you are really just helping the environment.

*Q In the winter, I often warm up my vehicle for several minutes before driving away. While I don't like to let the engine idle, I want to do what is best for my car. Can you help?*

A common winter myth is that warming up your car is a good for your engine. The truth is that no more than 30 seconds of idling is necessary to get the oil circulating throughout the engine, even in cold temperatures. Idling for longer wastes gas, causes engine wear, and results in a sharp increase in pollutants entering the atmosphere.

A vehicle warms up best while it is being driven. Components such as wheel bearings, tires, and the suspension need to be moving to warm up. Driving is the best way to warm up your car—and until the engine temperature rises, it is best to avoid high speeds and rapid acceleration. Canadians idle their vehicles for a combined total of 46 million minutes per day—equivalent to one vehicle idling for 89 years! So, scrape off your windows, dress properly and don't spend long warming up your car. Remember that warming your car is also warming the planet—with unpleasant and possibly disastrous results.



# amatterofopinion

Raymond Plourde

Keeping the coast clear—Plan needed to protect habitats, regulate development.

by Jennifer Graham



While many of you are thinking of warm, sunny beaches far from Nova Scotia at this time of year, Nova Scotia's own coast is in need of attention.

"Welcome to Nova Scotia, Canada's Seacoast," proclaims Tourism Nova Scotia's official website. And visitors do feel welcome here. They come from around the world to enjoy beaches, tides, scenic hikes, and ocean-based activities such as birding, sea kayaking and whale watching. A large part of this province's appeal to visitors is that our coastal communities have working wharves, fishing boats, and people living not only near the ocean, but from the ocean. But Nova Scotia is facing a coastal conservation and public access crisis that may turn us into a coastal province with no coastal habitat.

The coastal zone has been good to Nova Scotians throughout the years, and when visitors tell us how lucky we are to live here, we smile inwardly and rejoice in our good fortune in enjoying access to the many undisturbed coastal areas that are the legacy of this province. But the growing popularity of the coast is now severely threatening the ecological integrity of our coastal habitats as well as the sustainability of our coastal communities. Nova Scotia is experiencing a wave of coastal development in the form of unregulated residential and commercial development, road construction and coastal industries such as aquaculture, quarries and oil and gas activities.

Most coastal lands in Nova Scotia have been privately owned for a very long time. In the past, however, these lands were left undisturbed, and local residents were ensured easy access to beaches and harbours for their livelihoods and recreation. This

connection is being eroded as large swaths of Nova Scotia's coasts are being subdivided and sold to new owners, who build their homes on sensitive coastal habitat and often do not respect traditional coastal access and activities.

Undeveloped coastal lands in the Atlantic provinces are relatively cheap compared to many places in North America and Europe. The pace of coastal development in Nova Scotia is further intensified by the lack of provincial legislative or policy framework to regulate it. In this regard, Nova Scotia is falling behind neighbouring provinces; both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have coastal protection policies based on identifying important and sensitive coastal habitats and establishing regulations to govern the kinds of activities that can occur on or near these habitats.

Ironically, though we are citizens of a coastal province, Nova Scotia residents have very little opportunity to participate in public discussions about the fate of our coastal areas. Most of the intense coastal development is being rushed through with little or no public consultation. For example, the provincial Department of Natural Resources is considering a zoning plan for Kingsburg Beach in Lunenburg County that would allow development to occur in the designated beach area. Kingsburg Beach is one of 93 protected beaches in Nova Scotia, and many residents fear that allowing development on one protected beach will open the door for development on protected beaches around the province. To date, there has been no broad public involvement in the development of this plan.

Concerned and alarmed by what is happening in their communities, many Nova Scotians are starting to talk with

one another about coastal development. A grassroots movement of concerned community groups is taking shape around the province, as citizen groups demand a real voice in what happens in their communities and along the coast.

Protecting our coast will require specific policy initiatives, such as strengthening the provisions of the Beaches and Environment Acts, and improving the land use planning capacities at the municipal level. It will also require a commitment from the Nova Scotia government to develop a provincial coastal protection policy and accompanying legislation and regulations. Most importantly, controlling unregulated coastal development requires the provincial government to engage the public in meaningful discussion about what we want our coast and coastal communities to look like.

Given that less than 5% of coastal land in Nova Scotia is publicly owned, it is vitally important that steps be taken to protect sensitive and important coastal habitats, regulate development and ensure continued access. If we do not act soon to protect our own coastline, Nova Scotians will be forced to travel to Labrador or New Zealand to gaze admiringly at undisturbed beaches and dip their toes in the ocean, turning wistfully to the friendly local residents and saying, "Nice view you got here; must be nice to live in a place like this."

*Opinion pieces reprinted in A Matter of Opinion have been originally published in the EAC monthly Op-ed pieces in the Chronicle Herald. Some changes may have been made. Jennifer Graham is a community-based resource management consultant and a volunteer with the Ecology Action Centre's Coastal Issues Committee. [www.ecologyaction.ca/coastal\\_issues/coastal\\_issues.shtm](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/coastal_issues/coastal_issues.shtm)*

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## continued from energy

the utilities and conduct DSM initiatives that benefit residential customers, businesses, and industry. Data from Efficiency Vermont's annual report estimates that DSM efforts in their jurisdiction will reduce lifetime carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 1.7 million tonnes, nitrus oxide by 2000 tonnes, and sulphur dioxide by 7000 tonnes. Estimates for financial savings are equally impressive. In 2003, consumers averted 51.2 million kWh of electricity usage, for a total lifetime savings of approximately \$45 million (US). In Canada, the Ontario Energy Board recently endorsed a proposal similar to Efficiency Vermont. Similarly, the *White Paper on an Energy Efficiency System for New Brunswick*, calls for price signals to assist customers in "making economically rationale decisions about energy efficiency."

The EAC asserts that the Province, and hence Nova Scotians, should be in the drivers seat of our energy destiny, not NSP. Furthermore, an assertive GHG reduction strategy, development of renewable energy, and the delivery of DSM programs should be policy priorities. Until this is the case, the EAC will continue to shout that our energy emperor is wearing no clothes.

*Ann Warburton attended the UARB hearings on behalf of the EAC and Coordinator of the EAC Energy Issues Committee. [www.ecologyaction.ca/energy\\_issues/energy\\_issues.shtm](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/energy_issues/energy_issues.shtm)*

## continued from action

### A day at the beach

Good news for Nova Scotia's coasts as the McLean Foundation recently agreed to fund the Reconnecting the Coast initiative of the Coastal Issues Committee (CIC). The primary goal of this campaign is to address coastal access and conservation. Nicole Hines was hired in June as an intern with CIC to continue work on the saltmarsh restoration project and tidal barriers audit. Members of CIC helped to organize the Coastal Issues workshop held in Cornwallis in November, which brought together diverse groups to examine existing legislation on coastal protection. Outcomes of this workshop include: coastal action priorities for Nova Scotia, which will be presented to all three provincial caucuses; as well as guidelines for coastal development, in hopes to that these will be added to the Municipal Government Act.

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# peoplewhomakeadifference



Founder of People and Planet Friendly joins EAC Staff

We are delighted to welcome Peter Blanchard to the EAC. Peter accepted the position of Communications and Outreach Coordinator last November, packed his belongings, and boarded the train from Ontario.

Peter's path to environmental issues has not been a straight one. Six years ago, he was working for a software company in Toronto and decided that his heart was not in it. With no real plan or great financial savings, he decided to opt out of the corporate, live-to-work world. For the next two years, Peter traveled, working on organic farms and visiting alternative communities.

Inspired by the places he had visited and seeing the need to bring these people and places together, Peter started *People and Planet-Friendly* in 2000. This project connects people who are working towards a more peaceful and sustainable world, and helps them to find new opportunities, share experiences, and be inspired by the work of others.

Peter began his project with next to zero resources and no experience in the envi-

ronmental or non-profit world. An online project, with tens of thousands of visitors and thousands of subscribers seems like a crowded place. But, spending long hours in front of a computer can be isolating. We are very lucky that our plea for a Coordinator reached Peter and that he chose to join us at EAC.

Planet-Friendly and GoodWork continue to operate and can be found at: [www.planet-friendly.net](http://www.planet-friendly.net) and [www.GoodWorkCanada.ca](http://www.GoodWorkCanada.ca).

As a founding member of the Nova Scotia Publics Lands Coalition and the Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia, the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) has been an important ally for the environmental community. Under the leadership of Executive Director Judith B. Cabrita, TIANS has worked successfully with a number of environmental groups to champion important conservation issues. Judith and TIANS recognised that a healthy and attractive environment is a critical part of the lure of what brings people to Nova Scotia, particularly natural area conservation and access

Tourism and the Environment... Thank you Judith!



to pristine coastal areas.

After 15 years at the Helm of TIANS, Judith is retiring. She is an outstanding advocate for both the tourism industry and the environment in Nova Scotia, showing that indeed that a healthy environment is critical to a healthy economy. All Nova Scotians who value a healthy environment are indebted to Judith for her courage, vision and leadership. The EAC wish her the best in her retirement and look forward to continuing a productive relationship with TIANS.

*Related: [www.publicland.ca](http://www.publicland.ca) [www.ecologyaction.ca/coastal\\_issues/coastal\\_coalition.htm](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/coastal_issues/coastal_coalition.htm)*

## EAC Says Goodbye and Thank You

Susanna Cheng and Angela Bischoff, who have worked tirelessly on alternative transportation with the TRAX project, are both leaving EAC. Susanna is leaving us for the warmer winds of her native Australia, and Angela is returning to Edmonton. Both will be dearly missed for their energy, ideas and determination to change things for the better.



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