



Cuts to National Network Reduce Voice for Manitoba Groups

By Josh Brandon



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ENVIRONMENTALISTS ACROSS CANADA expressed shock at Environment Canada's abrupt announcement that they were discontinuing their 34-year-old partnership with the (Réseau) Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN). The October 13 decision overturned a government commitment made six months earlier to provide core funding through a renewal of their partnership with RCEN. The RCEN was expecting to receive \$547,000 dollars in funding during 2011-2012.

The RCEN is the largest and oldest environmental network in Canada. It brings together environmental organizations across the country to share information, resources and experience for building a vibrant, national, ecological movement. Over the years, the RCEN has grown into a national umbrella organization representing 640 environmental groups across the country. It has affiliate networks in 11 provinces and territories, including the Manitoba Eco-Network. The Manitoba Eco-Network will lose \$18,000 dollars from its core funding because of the decision.

The Canadian government has been a partner of the RCEN for over 30 years, providing funding through an arrangement in which the RCEN coordinates member group participation on important consultations. In doing so, the federal government recognized the value of including divergent and often dissenting voices in policy

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Executive Director’s Letter

LET ME FIRST SAY that I am thrilled to be a part of the out-
standing team here at the Manitoba Eco-Network! I have al-
ways been inspired and motivated by the successes of the Eco-
Network, and it is truly an honour to be chosen as the new
executive director. Throughout my career with various environmental organizations, including Trees
Winnipeg, Oak Hammock Marsh and Save Our Seine River Environment Inc., I continually ad-
mired Anne Lindsey and her dedication to achieving goals incrementally while celebrating every suc-
cess, no matter how small.

During my first month in the role, I have been observing, listening and learning. It certainly did not
take me long to realize that I am surrounded by extraordinary people who are so passionate about pro-
moting positive environmental action and discovering creative solutions to environmental challenges.
As I move through this transition process, they have supported me and made me feel as though I’ve
been here all along. I am grateful for their patience and willingness to work extra hard while I adjust.

It is common knowledge that with any new job comes a steep learning curve and various chal-
enges.... Well, on October 13th I received notice that Environment Canada had decided to end its
Contribution Agreement with the Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN), as explained further
in this edition’s cover story. The Manitoba Eco-Network, as a regional affiliate of RCEN, depends on
financial assistance from the national network to expand and enhance our programs, projects and ac-
tivities across Manitoba. Equally important, RCEN has functioned as one of the primary formalized
mechanisms through which Canadians contribute to policy, legislation and environmental manage-
ment in this country.

The consequences of this devastating loss are still being felt throughout the environmental com-
munity both here and across the country. The Manitoba Eco-Network urges all Manitobans to speak
up on this issue and contact their Member of Parliament to let them know they value the the role of the
RCEN in providing effective communication on environmental issues.

Now, in terms of that learning curve and my reaction to news of the funding cuts, I’ll quote Bever-
ley Sawchuk, Manitoba Eco-Network Coordinator, who so eloquently declared, “the training wheels
are off and you’re into the fire!”

Thankfully, I am part of a strong and resourceful team of people at the EcoCentre, who launched
into action following Environment Canada’s decision. Despite the terrible news, the overwhelming
response was one of optimism and perseverance. Discussion quickly shifted to the exploration of un-
discovered opportunities amid the wreckage.

With that, I will end on a positive note by telling you that the Eco-Network is certainly up for the
challenges ahead. We recognize that in order for large-scale environmental progress to be made, we
must become an organization that reaches the mainstream. I personally would like to challenge or
overcome the perception that solutions to environmental challenges are best left to the “environmen-
talists.” It is my mission to help people understand that we are all interconnected and interdependent
with nature, and therefore we should work collectively on living sustainably. 🌱

Kristine Koster

Executive Director, Manitoba Eco-Network



PHOTO: DYLAN HEWLETT

For more environmental event listings see our website calendar at www.mbeconetwork.org.

December

12-14 Manitoba Conservation Districts Association Annual Conference. The 36th annual MCDA Conference — “Inspiring Change” — will be held at the Keystone Centre in Brandon. The event will feature keynote speakers Joel Salatin, writer and farmer in Virginia, and Bruce Vincent, motivational speaker, environmental activist and logger from Montana. The conference is open to anyone interested in watershed health and water resources. For info, contact Sharla 204.570.0164 or visit www.mcda.ca.

January

3-5 Living Prairie Museum’s Winter Day Camps offer chil-
dren (ages 7-10) the opportunity to explore the wonders of the prairie in
winter! From animal track exploration on snowshoes to baking bannock
over an open fire, children will enjoy activities that are both educational and
fun. Cost: \$15 for members of the Friends of LPM (\$25 for non-members).
Call 832-0167.

21 Banff festival films. The Alpine Club of Canada (Manitoba
Section) is bringing an evening of outdoor adventure films to the Bur-
ton Cummings Theatre on January 21. The Banff Mountain Film Festival
World Tour features amazing and thought-provoking mountain films.
Visit www.alpine-club.mb.ca.

25-26 Red River Basin Land & Water International Summit Conference. The Red River Basin Commission’s 29th Annual Red
River Basin Land & Water International Summit Conference will be held
January 24-26 at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg. This year’s theme —
“Water, Water!! Finding Solutions to Our Challenges” — will explore the
impacts of chronic flooding in the Red River Basin and the continuing work
toward a multi-faceted, basin-wide approach to reducing flood damages. For
info, visit www.redriverbasincommission.org.

February

3-4 Reel Green Film Festival and Environmental Awards Ceremony. On Friday, February 3, join Manitoba Eco-Network at the
West End Cultural Centre (586 Ellice) as we kick off the 2012 Reel Green
Film Festival with an award-winning documentary. The evening will feature
a celebratory reception and award ceremony honouring Manitobans who have
contributed to the protection and stewardship of our natural assets. Tickets
\$20. The fun continues on Saturday, February 4 at the University of Winnipeg
where we will be showcasing a series of environmental films, and inviting the
community to network with local environmental organizations. Tickets \$12.
For info, phone (204) 947-6511 or email info@mbeconetwork.org.

24-25 Growing Local Conference. Food Matters Manitoba
will host the 5th annual Growing Local Conference on February 24-25.
Growing Local brings together community members, producers and retail-
ers who are interested in finding local solutions to improve food security
in Manitoba. For more info, contact Elaine (204) 943-0822 or 1-800-731-
2638. Visit www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca.

Please email your event notices to info@mbeconetwork.org.

OF SPECIAL NOTE

By Beverley Sawchuk

IT’S BEEN AN ESPECIALLY BUSY AUTUMN for Manitoba Eco-Network, with
many opportunities to facilitate environmental awareness and expand
community connections. We followed the lead of Charles Darwin, who
said that in the history of humankind, those who have learned to collabo-
rate most effectively have prevailed!

After hosting displays on September 8 at **Ciclovía** and September 24
at **Moving Planet Manitoba**, Manitoba Eco-Network organized a fun-
draising workshop on October 18 for our Member Groups on the topic
of wills. Sincere thanks to our sponsor, **The Winnipeg Foundation**,
as well as Leslie Weir of **The Winnipeg Foundation**, Patricia Hardy
of **Tunnelwood Group** and Johanna Caithness of **Fillmore Riley** for
sharing their wisdom.

On October 19, the community gathered at **The Park Theatre** for “**Cel-
ebrating 25 years of Eco-Activism: A Tribute to Anne Lindsey**.” A
successful evening was enjoyed by many, thanks to the efforts of the
Volunteer Committee as well as local organizations that donated prize
items: **Nature Manitoba, Tall Grass Prairie Bakery, Oak Hammock
Marsh, Hunter Physiotherapy, Val Tonner Therapeutic Massage,
Winnipeg Folk Festival, FortWhyte Alive, Assiniboine Credit Union**
and **Ducks Unlimited**.

Just a few days later, Manitoba Eco-Network hosted a display booth
at the **Green Lifestyle and Natural Living Show** at the Convention
Centre on October 22-23. The event provided a wonderful opportunity
to network with both green businesses and the community.

In preparation for **Rio+20**, Manitoba Eco-Network, in collaboration
with the **International Institute of Sustainable Development**, hosted
a workshop on November 2. The workshop, one of ten meetings held
across Canada, was facilitated by **Canadian Environmental Network**
and **Stakeholder Forum**, in preparation for the **Rio+20 United Nations
Conference on Sustainable Development** to be held in Rio de Janeiro
on June 4-6, 2012. The Winnipeg workshop, sponsored by **Assiniboine
Credit Union**, was designed to encourage frank discussion among
some 50 participants (representing a range of civil society organizations)
on the subject of Manitoba’s role in the green economy and governance
for sustainable development. Sincere thanks to facilitator Rhonda Lorch
and our guest speakers who contributed to a stimulating discussion:
**Kristine Koster, Manitoba Eco-Network; Fred Meier, Deputy Minis-
ter of Manitoba Conservation; Hank Venema, IISD; John Fjeldsted,
Manitoba Environmental Industries Association; Kaeryn Gregory,
Canada Green Building Council (Manitoba Chapter); Dennis Cun-
ningham, Assiniboine Credit Union; William Glanville, IISD; Jeffery
Cottes, U of W; and Alana Lajoie-O’Malley, U of W.**

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Cuts to RCEN cont'd...

discussion. The partnership has been globally recognized as a model for citizen engagement. Over 3,000 delegates have been selected to consultations over the years. The RCEN's peer-selection process ensures valuable expert participation from groups that may otherwise be excluded from decision-making processes.

"The RCEN is the epitome of what democracy in this country has always strived to achieve. The Network allows small and large organizations alike the opportunity to stand side-by-side and be part of the Government of Canada's decision-making," said former Sierra Club executive director Stephen Hazell in reaction to the cuts.

This selection process has benefits for governments, citizens, member groups and the environment. Governments get access to a range of opinion from environmental groups across the country, including many organizations not on the radar of officials conducting consultations. As well, because the delegates are selected by their peers, the government avoids the risk of being seen as picking favourites. For member groups, it provides a fair and transparent way to have their voice heard at the federal level. The result has been better informed decisions by governments.



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As well as including most of the larger well-established environmental groups in Canada, the RCEN counts hundreds of smaller, often rural-based grassroots organizations as members.

"Our member groups in Manitoba are often small organizations, without a lot of funding and with huge volunteer commitment. They depend on the Canadian Environmental Network to stay connected on issues of national scope," said Kristine Koster, executive director of the Manitoba Eco-Network. As a consequence of the cuts, many of these groups risk losing their voice at the national table.

The cuts to the RCEN follow a recent policy pattern from the federal government that has also meant major reductions to monitoring programs for ozone and climate change. Environment Canada could potentially be making Canadian environmental policy decisions in a process that may not be transparent and democratic. The cuts to the RCEN are part of a package that will slash the departmental budget by \$200 million dollars and eliminate 776 jobs.

“The RCEN is the epitome of what democracy in this country has always strived to achieve.”

Meanwhile, the RCEN has been advised that Environment Canada will be switching to web-based forms of consultation. "Does this mean that corporations and politicians will also be shifted to web-based consultations?" said Ecology Action Centre's Jennifer McGowan in an interview with *The Dominion*. "Or will they still be at the table while small environmental organizations are plugging away at their computers?"

Regardless, the RCEN is working on rebuilding support both within government and among the public. Despite media reports that it is closing down, the RCEN is continuing to provide services through individual consultation contracts, and continues to provide a voice for the environmental movement in Canada.

Manitoba Eco-Network urges all Manitobans to speak up and to contact their elected representatives to let them know they value the work the RCEN does in providing effective communication on environmental issues across Canada. Information on how get involved is available at: www.mbeconetwork.org.

Josh Brandon is a coordinator with the water caucus of the Manitoba Eco-Network and is on the National Council of the RCEN.

RCEN Facts

Founded in 1977

647 member groups

11 affiliates – one in each province, and the Yukon, including Manitoba Eco-Network.

Represents over 600,000 members and has outreach to over two million Canadians.

Caucuses include: Agriculture, Atmosphere and Energy, Biodiversity, Environmental Planning and Assessment, Health, Toxics, Water, Fisheries and Oceans, Youth, and the International Program.

Letters to the Editor

Manitoba's winter roads provide potential rights-of-way for Bipole III

THE ECO-JOURNAL (Vol. 21 No. 4 Sept/Oct 2011) arrived this morning and I read the article by Susanne McCrea of the Boreal Forest Network entitled "The Real Costs of Hydro Bipole III."

The pristine forest of concern has already been seriously devastated by the winter roads, particularly the one to the Island Lakes communities which parallels the proposed east side right-of-way for the Bipole III high voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission line. Why has everyone neglected this fact? The winter road of concern and existing alternating current (AC) transmission rights-of way are as shown on the accompanying Government of Manitoba map of winter roads (modified to illustrate the lines).

The winter roads on the east side of Lake Winnipeg have already drastically torn through the forest. These winter road rights-of-way are useable for the construction of the Bipole III transmission line and to do so would minimize further removal of trees from the forest. Old transmission line design methods and thinking from 40 years ago must give way to the new standard where multiple use rights-of-way are the modern and necessary trend. In fact, this should be done in a coordinated design so that the winter road is converted to a Class 2 All Weather Road sharing the right-of-way with the Bipole III Transmission line. This will enable the isolated folks to join in with the rest of the province. There will be some places new rights-of-way will have to be made.

There are existing AC transmission lines in the area as indicated on the map. Where needed these existing AC transmission lines can be wired onto the Bipole III DC towers on the right-of-way to ensure the forest is not damaged further to any significant extent. In other words, both transmission circuits share the same transmission tower.

There are valid reasons an east side route for the Bipole III transmission line, and we need to see them presented professionally with environmental study, rather than dismissed with lots of hoopla and political hubris.

In case you think I don't know what I am talking about, I am an HVDC Transmission Engineer with 45 years of experience. I spent 15 years in the Manitoba Hydro Planning Department working on Bipole I and Bipole II, and as the Executive Director of the Manitoba HVDC Research Centre for 15 years. For the past 10

years I have been President of Electranix Corporation, a specialist engineering consulting company specializing in HVDC and AC transmission around the world, particularly for transmission of renewable energy sources that are challenging to connect to the main grid. We are environmentally sensitive in these matters.

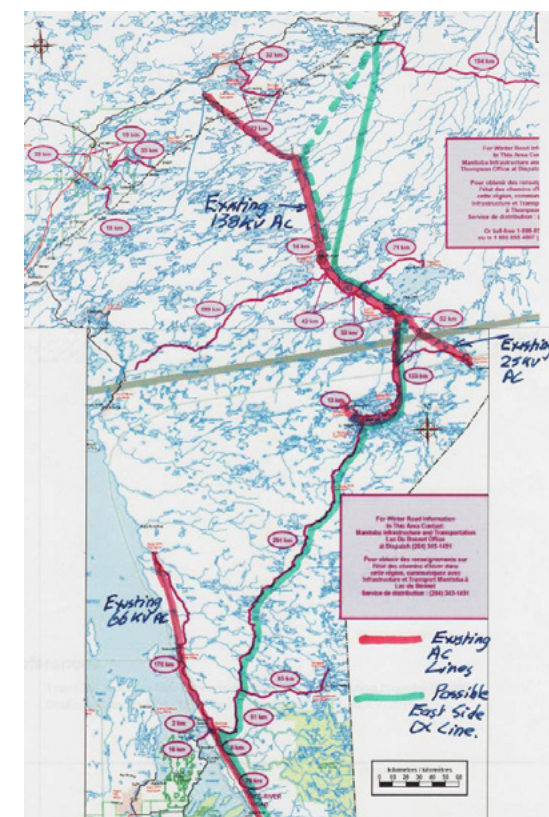
—Dennis Woodford, P.Eng

SUSANNE MCCREA of the Boreal Forest Network wrote an article about Bipole III, and the debate about where it should be built (Vol. 21 No. 4 Sept/Oct 2011). While this debate unfolds, an all-weather road is being constructed on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Until recently, PR 304 north to Manigotagan turned east towards Bissett, and left its significant footprint on the east side. Now, north of Manigotagan, a new road's interim terminus will be Berens River. It has an environmental license, I understand. Once the road to Berens River is complete, pushing on first to Poplar River and, second, to Norway House would seem to be inevitable.

My question to the environmental community is not why a hydro line on the east side is objectionable and a road is not, although that's a good question. No, my question is why the

environmental community has not debated the east side road with the same passion that it has debated the plan for an east side bipole.

—C. Hugh Arklie, Dugald, MB



Source: Map 1 at: Gov.mb.ca/mit/winter/maps.html
Modified by Dennis Woodford

Manitoba Eco-Network's 3rd Annual Reel Green Film Festival

Manitoba's only film festival dedicated to environmental issues and solutions!

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Fri., February 3 - West End Cultural Centre

An award-winning documentary, reception and environmental award ceremony celebrating Manitoba's heroes! Tickets \$20.

Sat., February 4 - University of Winnipeg

A showcase of environmental films and displays hosted by local environmental groups. Tickets \$12.

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Contact (204) 947-6511 or info@mbeconetwork.org

2012



Experiential Learning in Clearwater

Class exposes students to local agriculture, rural communities

By Sheldon Birnie



PHOTOS: SHELDON BIRNIE

FOR TEN DAYS EACH AUGUST, the University of Manitoba partners with the Harvest Moon Society in Clearwater, MB to provide students with an intensive travel and study opportunity. The six-credit-hour course, titled “Living Rural Communities & Environments,” gives students a hands-on understanding of agriculture in Manitoba and the issues facing farmers today.

Professor Stephane McLachlan has been presenting the course now for over eight years, though he is more comfortable playing the role of “facilitator” to the course, allowing the individual farmers and community members who participate in the course to assume the role of “teacher.” In this way, students interact and receive knowledge from community members unfiltered, allowing for more “experiential” learning opportunities rather than the strictly

academic learning style that is most prevalent at the post-secondary level.

This past August, twenty-seven students from a variety of disciplines — including environmental studies, agriculture, geography, arts, economics, and business — and from across the world took part in the course. Days were spent visiting farms, speaking with community members, and engaging in hands-on activities such as picking vegetables, laying garden beds, and building rainwater catchment systems. Students camped at the Harvest Moon Society “school,” which the group bought from the school district in 2001 after it closed due to the steady decline in the rural population. The grounds have since been converted into a camping area, community garden, and chicken run, but still include a play structure for local kids and benches for community gatherings.

As part of the final grade, students were expected to create or contribute to a project that would benefit the community. Examples of projects included volunteering at the Harvest Moon Festival, building shelves for the local museum, and developing literature and illustrated pamphlets about local history and agriculture.

Over the ten days spent in Clearwater, students were able to create bonds and relationships with each other, and also with community members. The influx of twenty-seven students to the town also created economic opportunities for local businesses and market gardeners. The community owned Clearwater Junction restaurant served patrons on an almost daily basis, as did the newly re-opened general store. As much as possible, food for the group was sourced locally and prepared communally, including a Com-



Clockwise from far left:
Windy Bay Hutterite Colony
Yunchao Qui strikes a pose
Visiting a holistic cattle operation
outside of Clearwater
Picking vegetables near Cartwright



munity Feast that the class prepared on the final day and shared with area residents. Homegrown favourites were prepared, as well as samples of regional dishes by international students from China and Argentina. More than eighty people attended the event at the local community centre. This event, as well as individual farm visits, round-table discussions, and informal late-night fireside chats, provided many opportunities for students and community members to learn about each other’s cultures.

“To me, the best part of this course is the friendship we built up together,” says Chu Ling, a third-year economics student from Chengdu, in Sichuan province of China. One of five international students from China taking the course, Chu Ling has been studying at the University of Manitoba for more than two years, but had rare-

ly ventured beyond the Fort Garry campus and his apartment in St. Vital. “Before this course, I did not have any local friends, and didn’t know anything about the culture here. What’s more, international students can also practice ... speaking English there.”

While such informal and often fun interactions were an important aspect of the course, the bulk of each day was spent on the ground visiting different farming operations. Small market farms, holistic grain, pork and cattle operations, and the large-scale operation of a Hutterite colony were all examined, with farmers speaking to the trials and tribulations inherent to their particular methods of farming, as well as the rewards. A day was also spent in Clearwater discussing indigenous issues related to colonization and current industrial farming

practices. In the afternoon, Anishinabe elders conducted a sweat lodge ceremony, a first for many students in attendance.

Amidst the farm visits and hands-on activities, the course allowed time for roundtable discussions of rural issues, including sessions on women in agriculture, youth in rural communities, small-town economies and rural demographic decline, and permaculture design. Much of the information touched on during these roundtables and farm visits was included in a lengthy readings package that provided plenty of food for thought. While the readings provided a solid theoretical background, the firsthand accounts of and discussions with community members provided unique insights into the issues facing rural communities.

Other highlights included milking goats on the Caver family farm near Pilot Mound, an amazing buffet lunch provided by the ladies of the Windy Bay Hutterite Colony, and, after a long, hot day, some downtime at Room-to-Grow’s rope swing and pond near Boissevain. Some students found time to fish or swim in nearby Rock Lake, while others were treated to some horseback riding at the Windy Bay colony.

Living Rural Communities and Environments is an intensive travel study experience, but an overwhelmingly positive one for both the students and community members involved. Local residents were excited to share their stories and experiences with eager students — some of whom had never spent any significant amount of time in a rural community — and many locals said that they look forward to the course coming around again at the end of each summer. Some past students have returned as teaching assistants for the course, while other former students have become perennial attendees of the Harvest Moon Festival, held each September.

If you’re currently completing your degree at the University of Manitoba, and are interested in the Living Rural Communities and Environments course, speak to an academic advisor to see if you can take the course. If you are not a student, but are interested in rural communities and sustainable agriculture, the Harvest Moon Society offers workshops and courses throughout the year, based both in Winnipeg and in Clearwater.

Climate Talks Shift to Africa

Manitoba youth delegate to attend UN COP17 summit

By Anika Terton, Public Awareness and Outreach Coordinator, Climate Change Connection



PHOTO: ANIKA TERTON

Follow Anika while she is blogging from Durban, South Africa.
www.youthdelegatemanitoba.wordpress.com



"It is the youth of the world who can set the agenda for the future and pursue it with diligence. We must do all we can to empower young people to take action, because the future belongs to them." —R. Pachauri, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

BACK IN JUNE, I was offered the great opportunity to attend the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change this December in Durban, South Africa as part of the Canadian Youth Delegation (representing Manitoba). The UN process is generally inaccessible to the average person; thus this opportunity means an incredible experience as well as responsibility and privilege.

Youth in today's world are facing major challenges — our generation has inherited the task of stewarding our society from a system based on unlimited growth on a finite planet to one in which people and our earth are the real bottom line. As stakeholders, those who will be the most affected by climate change, youth have a right to fully and effectively participate in political decisions being made today.

Having the summit take place in South Africa has great symbolic significance. A people's movement was able to overcome an entrenched unjust system of apartheid, and it showed the power of international solidarity and people achieving something by working together no matter how strong the unachievable seemed. There is talk about this being "Africa's COP": a large number of people and countries effected by climate change who ironically are least responsible for it are right there on this continent. They deserve getting a fair deal.

But where to go in a situation where serious action on climate change is a hot potato that governments put off from one meeting to the next? Negotiators have failed to take important steps at crucial preparatory meetings. While touching on some technical areas, key political issues — namely ambitious global emission reduction commitments, the future of Kyoto Protocol and long-term finance — were left unresolved.

“What many of us do not know is that Canada has been increasingly seen as an obstacle to collective action.”

The important issues for Durban start with whether countries will recommit to the Kyoto Protocol and begin formulating a roadmap towards a legally binding treaty on how to solve the climate crisis. Finance will be the key issue, and for any long-term success of climate negotiations. If governments do not address these deadlocked issues, we will likely see another failure in Durban, which would put a clear spotlight on the lack of political willingness by countries to compromise.

What many of us do not know is that *Canada* has been increasingly seen as an obstacle to collective action. At the annual United Nations international climate summits, Canada has been repeatedly singled out by environmental groups, including consecutive "Fossil of the Year" awards for being "the country who has done the most to disrupt or undermine the UN climate talks."

According to Scott Vaughan, Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the federal government is making environmental decisions and spending billions based on "incomplete, poor or non-existent information." Vaughan found that the federal government earmarked \$9.2 billion for climate change measures across seven departments last year — but wasn't able to track spending. "Right now, it's looking to us to be disjointed, confused and non-transparent," Vaughan said of Ottawa's management of the money, adding it came with mediocre results.

Canada ratified the Kyoto Protocol, but never implemented a program to reach its commitments. Since the 2009 Copenhagen Accord, the best the current government has been willing to do is commit to 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, which actually amounts to a 2.5 percent increase above 1990 levels. According to Vaughan, it would be next to impossible for Canada to meet those commitments.

To add insult to injury, Canada looks far from committed to even meet these inadequate targets according to a recent Environment Canada report. Since 1990, Canada has allowed a 24 percent increase in emissions, which continue to grow.

In the lead up to Durban the Canadian government is sending a clear message as to where its priorities are when it comes to addressing climate change issues. Canada has been actively lobbying in Europe to continue the sale of tar sands fuel and is engaged in international campaigns to rebrand oil from the tar sands as "Ethical Oil." Recently, major budget cuts have been made to the scientific research at Environment

Canada, especially among climate scientists. Scientists are restricted from freely discussing the findings of their research with the media. Moreover, the Canadian government unilaterally ended its partnership agreement with the Canadian Environmental Network and cut all of its funding while still continuing to give \$1.4 billion per year in taxpayers' money to the oil and gas industry.

In stark contrast to the Government of Canada's promise of \$30 million per year for domestic climate change adaptation, the Province of Manitoba spent \$632 million in a single year on floodproofing and compensation damages associated with the 2011 flood. Australia's government just passed carbon tax legislation and will provide \$10 billion over five years for citizens and businesses to make the shift to cleaner options.

There is only one year left until the end of the Kyoto Protocol. Where governments refuse to show leadership to prevent climate change, youth must step up to the task and remind world leaders on whose behalf they are negotiating and for what. We must refuse to let governments and industries favour short-term economic interests over the viability of the world itself.

There are a variety of ways in which Canada needs to show strong leadership. Primarily, the government needs to negotiate for stronger targets among industrial countries, while also ending subsidies to energy intensive projects such as the Tar Sands, and instead investing in clean energies and green infrastructure.

The next best option is for every province to move forward in cooperation with other jurisdictions. Manitoba took a significant step forward with its updated climate change action plan in 2008, providing strengthened policies in several places. Manitoba can be a leader on the way to a more sustainable future if we are all willing to take the next steps forward.

Follow Anika while she is blogging from Durban, South Africa. www.youthdelegatemanitoba.wordpress.com

Manitoba Environmental Awards to Honour Anne Lindsey

By Josh Brandon



THIS FALL, ANNE LINDSEY RETIRED from the Manitoba Eco-Network after a quarter-century involvement, including 23 years as executive director. In recognition of her extensive service, the Board of Directors voted to rename Manitoba Eco-Network's Protecting Our Earth Awards in her honour. Beginning in 2012, the Earthies will be called the Anne Lindsey Protecting Our Earth Awards.

For over 20 years, the Manitoba Eco-Network has provided recognition to groups and individuals for their contributions in promoting sustainability and protecting ecosystems with its annual awards. Anne, an award winner herself, has provided inspiration and mentoring for many of the groups and individuals who have won the award over the years. Anne has been active on nearly every environmental issue that concerns Manitoba. She helped spearhead the campaign in the 1980s that kept nuclear waste out of this province. She led initiatives on children's health and did much to raise awareness about toxicity in our environment. It was under her leadership that the Manitoba Eco-Network took on important causes like food, climate change, and water.

Awards are given in three categories: group, individual and special recognition. Nominations are being accepted until December 14. We invite all Manitobans to consider submitting the names of environmental groups and individuals who have made significant contributions to the protection and awareness of Manitoba's environment. This is a wonderful opportunity to recognize the important achievements of peers and colleagues. Nomination forms, criteria and more information are available at: www.mbeconetwork.org/environment_awards.

Transitional Living in Manitoba

Discovering real wealth in the art of simple living

By James Johnston, Canadian Director, Centre for the Advancement of the Steady-State Economy

THE ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS that envelope us today seem daunting. But when you take a step back to re-evaluate how to solve them, the best responses don't really come from government, or from business or corporations, but (excuse the cliché) from *you and me*. A steady-state or "sustainable" economy requires us to get serious about reinventing how we live, work, and play.

A successful community-led model to respond to these big challenges is the transitional living model — a phenomenon that is taking root around the world, including Manitoba. Transitional living strategies ignite changes that build community resilience and happiness by embracing a less resource-intensive, more economically secure lifestyle.

For individuals, transitional strategies require a shift towards simplicity and (some degree of) sharing. Eric Freyfogle, contributing author to *Voluntary Simplicity: The poetic alternative to consumer culture*, describes it as "the quest for calm, balanced, integrated lives; less clutter,

less artificiality, and lessened impact on nature; and the elevation of quality over quantity, time over money, and community over competition." If individuals consciously choose lower levels of income and consumption, they will have time to pursue less materialistic forms of life satisfaction such as the arts, farming, or athletics.

When you think about what communities looked like prior to cheap oil, transitional living strategies aren't really all that radical. Changes range from the small (like having a proprietary home, carpooling once in a while and buying vegetable shares during the summer months) to wholesale rejections of modernity (like moving into a rural community where you have to have to shower in cold water ... outside ... in the winter).

I live in an transitional community of sorts, but we haven't sacrificed any creature comforts. Like many people, we simply share a house and live downtown so that we can use active transportation to get to the places where we work (nine-to-five jobs) and play. But we're thinking of taking it up a notch and conceiving a transition town

— without ditching wifi, hot water, or privacy for that matter. So, to start the research, we convened a forum on transitional living. We screened a movie showcasing European transition towns and heard from reps for two Manitoba communities — Prairie's Edge and Northern Sun Farm.

Some large communities in Europe are fully functioning low-carbon towns. They have businesses in agriculture and artisan crafts, as well as schools and places of worship. In Manitoba, Prairie's Edge and Northern Sun practice subsistence agriculture and have some degree of food independence. Prairie's Edge consists of a smaller, generally younger group, with fewer structures and enterprises on-site. Northern Sun, by contrast, is a larger, more established group that generates shared revenue through farming and by hosting group tours.

Some folks who attended the forum were critical. A high degree of self-sufficiency and isolation naturally prompts outsiders to label these initiatives "cults" rather than "communities" because the close-knit culture is increasingly foreign to many of us. Another observer remarked to me that leaving for the country is "defeatist" because many of the big social, economic and ecological problems are urban, not rural. On top of that, if one chooses not to abandon urban life altogether, any necessary commuting to the big city would be wasteful.

A rural lifestyle is what enables a high degree of self-sufficiency for transition communities. It is also more affordable due to the prohibitive cost of urban real estate. But many of these examples require deep shifts in lifestyle that aren't for everyone, and aren't required to make positive change. There are transition initiatives within existing Manitoba communities that aren't looking to build anew, such as the South Eastman Transition Initiative (SETI) and the infant Transition Winnipeg, where individuals and families discuss how to make less drastic changes.

Whether one prefers to build anew or build a transition network within their existing community, it's clear that an improvement to our economic fortune and quality of life will only come with a greater degree of simplicity and sharing. Prosperity and progress in the 21st century economy won't be kindled by increasing Gross Domestic Product, but by engineering our lives for simplicity, well being, and happiness. 🌱

Periodical Profile

Periodical Profile features magazines and newsletters of interest to Eco-Journal readers. The Alice Chambers Memorial Library has a range of periodicals available for loan.

Green Teacher: Education for Planet Earth

GREEN TEACHER is a quarterly magazine that provides ideas and resources for educators both inside and outside of schools. The magazine focuses on a wide range of ages, from 6 – 18, and many of the activities include adaptations for different age groups. Each issue contains articles and activities to engage youth in environmental and global issues. Created by experienced educators from Canada, the United States and around the world, articles present ideas for everything from hands-on activities such as mural painting and "build your own watershed" to camping trip activities to classroom readings and discussions. The newest issue features "Navigating the Climate Crisis"; other recent features have included "The Road to Sustainable Happiness," "A New Look at Marine Education" and "From Eco-Footprints to Thoughtprints." At the end of each issue, you will find reviews of educational resources such as books, DVDs, websites, kits and lesson plans to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Green Teacher is available in hard copy and now online through the Alice Chambers Memorial Library. If you are interested in accessing the magazine online, please contact the library at library@mbeconetwork.org for a username and password. For more information about *Green Teacher* magazine, visit their website at www.greenteacher.com. 🌱

There are several other magazines and newsletters available in the library, including: *Alternatives Journal: Forty Years of Environmental Ideas & Action*; *Earth Island Journal: News of the World Environment*; *Natural Life: Inspiring natural family living since 1976*; *Bird Watch Canada*; *Water Canada*; *Manitoba Co-operator*; *Nature Manitoba News* and more.

—Wynne Haaksma



Featured Book Review

Envisioning Real Utopias

Erik Olin Wright
Verso Press, 2010. 394 pp.

THE TERM UTOPIA has been used over the centuries to mean unrealistic or idealistic — literally "nowhere." American sociologist Erik Olin Wright asks his readers to envision "real utopias" in his latest book. Utopia, he suggests, represents a fundamental aspiration of society for a better world, based on the flourishing of human possibility.

This universal desire must be tempered with recognition of the real possibilities and challenges facing us. At base, the role of emancipatory social science, he argues, is to set out the achievable and viable parameters of the social options available to us, to provide tools to social movements — like environmentalism — to help them set and reach their goals. Wright's research, while theoretical and dense, provides models, examples and analysis that can be useful for activists and organizers on the ground.

At the foundations of Wright's research is an analysis of capitalism that sees this system of production as a barrier to social emancipation. Capitalism is a system of class relations between owners of labour and capital in which the economy is coordinated through the market. According to Wright, this system perpetuates human suffering, limits freedom, and causes environmental destruction among several other ills.

This analysis accords roughly with that of many other socialist thinkers. One place Wright differs is in his analysis of the inevitability of the ultimate failure of capitalism. According to some Marxist analyses, capitalism is said to create the seeds of its own destruction. The internal dynamics of capitalism generate ever-greater crises. Alongside these crises, more and more families join the global

“Wright's research, while theoretical and dense, provides models, examples and analysis that can be useful for activists and organizers on the ground.”

working class, and workers become more conscious and radicalized. The more capitalism grows, the more opposition it creates, and the more unstable it becomes.

Wright's view is that modern capitalism has extensive capacity to stabilize itself, especially with the aid of the modern state. The overthrow of capitalism is by no means inevitable. Given the longevity of capitalism, it is more important to develop coherent alternatives to inspire others. Some of these alternatives already exist with capitalist society. Examples include cooperatives where the rationale for production does not centre around the maximizing of human profit, but on the satisfaction of human need. Participatory budgets, like in Porto Alegre, Brazil are another example. Alternatives exist wherever groups collectively and democratically decide how their labour, resources and production should be distributed, rather than leaving these decisions to be resolved by force or though the power of the marketplace.

In his examples, Wright asks us to take the social in socialism seriously. Socialism cannot be equated merely with state ownership of the means of production, as it was sometimes viewed during the twentieth century. Socialism only occurs when groups across the spectrum of society become active and participate in the important matters that concern them. In this view, real utopias do not answer to the problems of society but only pose the right questions: "There is no guarantee that a society within which power rooted in civil society predominates would be one that upholds democratic egalitarian ideals ... [but] moving along the pathways of social empowerment will provide a more favorable terrain on which to struggle for these ideals." 🌱

—Reviewed by Josh Brandon, a host of *Mud and Water* radio on CKUW, 95.9 FM (Mondays at 5:30). He interviewed Erik Olin Wright last summer.



Every person is the right person to act. Every moment is the right moment to begin.
-- Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*

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Living With White-Tailed Deer

The benefits and risks of urban herds

By Erin C. McCance

MANY URBAN CENTRES throughout North America are experiencing growing urban white-tailed deer (WTD) populations. The highly resilient and adaptable nature of WTD has contributed to their ability to survive in human-altered landscapes. White-tailed deer find refuge in urban centers due to hunting restrictions, firearms discharge laws, and minimal predation. Urban environments provide WTD with adequate shelter, available water, and both natural and human-supplemented food sources. These factors, coupled with a high birth rate, have resulted in increasing WTD populations in largely human-populated areas.

As white-tailed deer populations increase in metropolitan areas, the number of human-deer conflicts generally increase. White-tailed deer cause commercial and residential property damage by eating natural and managed flora, and pose a significant human health and safety concern. Urban deer are involved in an increasing and alarming number of motor vehicle accidents. Deer-vehicle collisions (DVC) represent a human-wildlife conflict of serious concern as they may result in significant risk to human safety, deer mortality, and vehicle damage. Research has found that over 90 percent of deer hit by a vehicle die. In Manitoba, there are roughly 6,400 DVC's every year, with approximately 410 of these occurring annually in Winnipeg.

Yet, despite the occurrence of urban human-deer conflict, WTD are a valuable resource, supplying humans with many benefits. White-tailed deer are highly valued by many urban residents for their aesthetic appeal and they have won the hearts of the majority of the human population.

In some cases, urban residents may attract deer to their property by feeding deer and/or wildscaping their yards. Residents may do so for various reasons, such as the opportunity to view deer, an attempt to reconnect the natural world



PHOTO: STUART OIKAWA

to their constructed environments, or perhaps out of concern for deer welfare. It is important to understand, however, some of the negative impacts that feeding deer may have on the overall health of the deer population.

Providing a supplementary food source creates an unnatural situation, which may balloon deer populations affecting a herd's natural checks and balances. This is especially challenging in urban environments where natural predator/prey dynamics are already out of balance.

Artificially supplied food sources have been shown to reduce WTD's ability to survive on their own, making them more vulnerable to starvation, predation, disease and DVCs. Residents feeding deer may lead to the habituation of deer to humans, removing their natural fear of humans. Man-made food sites also result in unnaturally high deer densities. This uncharacteristically high congregation of deer in one area may attract predators and may cause localized

over-browse of nearby flora, conflict for neighbours, enhanced potential for disease transmission, and may lead to aggression and social behavioural changes among the herd.

Additionally, artificial feed sites may lure deer away from their natural wintering areas, changing their behaviour and movement patterns. During the winter, deer often retreat to protective often softwood cover, or "deer yards," to avoid deep snow, high winds and extreme cold. In these areas, deer move around very little, using a network of trails that disperses them and reduces competition for natural food. Quality wintering habitat, not food, is the most important factor for deer survival.

The most critical factor in an urban environment, however, where deer reside within a matrix of busy streets, is that artificial food sites may draw deer across busy roadways multiple times per day to access the unnatural food sources. This may result in an increased risk for both human and deer safety. It is important for our successful co-existence with WTD that we learn to admire deer from a distance and enjoy having them reside within our neighbourhoods, while still allowing deer to rely on their natural skill sets to maintain their life needs. 🌿

Erin C. McCance is a PhD Candidate in the University of Manitoba's Department of Environment and Geography. A similar version of this article was also published in the newsletter of Save Our Seine.



Complimentary copy

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