



Fate of Experimental Lakes Area Still in Question

Scientists reflect on achievements, ponder future

By Bryce Hoyer



The Experimental Lakes Area is made up of 58 small lakes and drainage basins that can be manipulated and studied.

IF ALL GOES ACCORDING to plans announced this past spring, April 2013 will usher in the end of federal funding for the 44 years of unprecedented limnological (lake ecosystem) research that has been conducted at the Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) in northwestern Ontario. Unless the federal government has a change of heart at the eleventh hour, the fate of the ELA remains uncertain and would rely on private or academic interests stepping in as possible investors to keep it afloat.

The gem of innovative geochemical, physical and biological community-based lake research has

enlightened how the world thinks about freshwater food webs and ecosystems. ELA eats up just \$2 million of federal taxpayer dollars annually, has produced research and hosted researchers that have shaped environmental policies around the world. Researchers like David Schindler, Ray Hesselein, Diane Orihel and John Shearer.

"...I now know what it takes to restore our sick waters, To leave a better place for our sons and our daughters," said Shearer, reciting a passage from the Dr. Seuss-inspired poem "The Lorax at ELA" at a tribute event held at The Forks

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on Sept. 16. Shearer spent the majority of his career as an ELA employee, starting in May of 1969 as a summer research technician hired by Schindler, decades later becoming the operations manager of the ELA.

The ELA was first to prove the role of phosphorus (P) in controlling eutrophication and toxic algal bloom levels, and they did this by adding or eliminating specific nutrients in whole-lake experiments and monitoring the subsequent nutrient levels. This was a monumental finding (one of many) that led to the banning of P from household detergents and is now a case study included in most university ecology and limnology textbooks. And it is the very nature of these imaginatively designed experiments, lakes exposed to the surrounding environment for very long periods of time, which makes the area so invaluable to the environmental sciences.

According to David Schindler, "many scientists have again invoked a need for nitrogen control in recent years, using as 'evidence' the same sort of short, small-scale experiments that whole-lake work at ELA has shown give spurious evidence, due to their inability to predict long-term, slow ecosystem responses."

"Once again, ELA has shown that these proposals will not solve eutrophication of lakes."

continued on page 4 >>

PHOTO: JOHN SHEARER

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**The advertising deadline for the
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Executive Director's Letter

FALL IS UPON US and with it comes a flurry of activity. Where to begin when there is so much to say? Have you visited the MB Eco-Network website lately? Sean, our talented Coordinator and social media guru, completely redesigned mbeconetwork.org, making it both more user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing. Our new feature box now highlights key environmental issues in Manitoba as well as initiatives of the Eco-Network. On that note, the Water Caucus, a project of Manitoba Eco-Network, now has a **website**, mbwatercaucus.org. Designed and created by Anika Terton, Water Caucus Assistant Coordinator, the website delivers information on provincial water-related activities and positive actions for improved water stewardship.

While visiting the Eco-Network website please have a look at the action we are taking on TomorrowNow, the Province's broad environmental plan that will eventually replace the *Sustainable Development Act*. Until October 31st, 2012 the Province is accepting suggestions and feedback on the priorities, objectives and actions in the plan. The Eco-Network has formed working groups to develop feedback on the five topic areas of TomorrowNow.

In addition to providing policy guidance, MB Eco-Network, along with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and Green Action Committee of the Unitarian Church hosted the TomorrowNow Public Forum on October 9th. The Forum offered the public an opportunity to provide meaningful feedback to government on Manitoba's plan for green prosperity. Thank you to everyone who attended to share his or her vision for a truly sustainable Manitoba!

The provincial government has also entered into public consultations regarding a potential cosmetic pesticide ban in Manitoba. Check out the Play It Safe document on the Eco-Network website which outlines why a cosmetic pesticide ban is being considered, which other provinces have a cosmetic pesticide ban, and what a cosmetic pesticide ban would entail. Comments on this issue were accepted until October 1, 2012, and will be incorporated into TomorrowNow.

Keeping with provincial government activities, Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship recently announced that they will be closing the Conservation and Environment Library at 123 Main Street effective December 30, 2012. Of special concern is the accessibility of the Public Registry for Environment Act proposals. The main Public Registry has historically been located at the Conservation and Environment Library. Many files in the Public Registry can also be accessed at various sub-registries throughout the province. The Manitoba-Eco-Network maintains one of these sub-registries.

Under the Manitoba *Environment Act* any developments in the province that may have significant environmental impacts must undergo an environmental assessment. Through the Public Registry, information is made available to the public on proposed developments, their environmental assessments and final licenses to proceed. Manitoba Eco-Network has long thought that an on-line Public Registry would allow the public to become informed more easily. Perhaps the closing of the Conservation and Environment Library is an opportunity to pursue an online system? Manitoba Eco-Network will be exploring this initiative with the Province, so stay tuned.

Kristine Koster
Executive Director, Manitoba Eco-Network



PHOTO: DAVID HEMTEL



OCTOBER

15 - 21 **Waste Reduction Week**

The WRW theme "Too Good To Waste" is about conveying an appreciation for the richness and beauty of our diverse world and the importance of working toward ecological sustainability by conserving resources and curbing wasteful practices. www.wrwcanda.com

18 **Rainwater Harvesting Workshop Module**

Want to reduce your water consumption, shrink your environmental footprint, and save money? In this exciting 2-day workshop we'll cover everything you need to know to capture potable water off your roof and other surfaces! Cost: \$225 (\$400 for both greywater and rainwater course). www.harvestmoonociety.org

19 **10th Annual Manitoba CD/CED Gathering**

"Enough, For All, Forever" at St. John's High School. Over 500 delegates, including community organizations, government, students and social entrepreneurs will come together to examine ways to reduce poverty and build stronger communities in Manitoba. www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/en/2012mbgathering

21 **Migration Farewell Concert**

Celebrate the fall migration of hundreds of thousands of ducks, geese, and other species. Featuring wine and cheese, a silent auction, and classical music by the Cambrian String Quartet. 7:30 p.m. at Oak Hammock Marsh. \$25 for members, \$31 for non-members. Call 204.467.3300 to purchase tickets. www.oakhammockmarsh.ca

24 **Water and the Economy: Green and Growing**

Hosted by Manitoba Environmental Industries Association, this year's Emerging Issues Conference will focus on water and green economics. During the post conference reception, a number of local Manitoba innovators will be given the opportunity to pitch their product to a panel of journalists at our Green Dragon's Lair. www.meia.mb.ca

26 **An Evening in Support of the Manitoba Eco-Network**

Come to St. Peter's Anglican Church for an evening of food, fun, and discovery. 755 Elm Street, near Grant Avenue, 6:00 p.m. Call 204.488.8093 for tickets, \$25 each. www.mbeconetwork.org

26 - 28 **Earthkeeping Institutes**

Are you excited about following Christ and caring for creation? The Earthkeeping Institutes are a chance to learn more and go deeper! Join us for a weekend of biblical teaching, discussion, sharing meals, and hands-on environmental stewardship. Bring home a new perspective and new practices to care for creation in your own backyard. www.arocha.ca

28 **MEC Fall Classic 5/10k**

Celebrate fall with the MEC Winnipeg Fall Classic 5/10k Race in Assiniboine Park! \$15 gets you a marked and measured course, timed results and fun times at the finish. All race participants are invited to a 10% off shopping night at the Winnipeg MEC on Thursday, November 1st from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Registration closes October 23rd at 10:00 p.m. For more information, contact chelsea.may@mec.ca. www.mec.ca

30 **We Day**

16,000 youth, educators and friends will inspire and celebrate the youth movement for global change at the MTS Centre. www.weday.com/event/manitoba

NOVEMBER

2 **Green Drinks**

Our beloved Lo Pub has closed its doors (but may relocate). Join environmentalists of all types at ANAF Club 60, 433 River Ave, 5:00 p.m. until whenever. Make new friends, reconnect with old acquaintances, and unwind at the end of your week. For more details, search "Green Drinks Winnipeg" on Facebook.

3 **Lake Winnipeg Beaches Bird Outing**

Late fall is a good time to look for lingering waterfowl, raptors, and gulls along the beaches of southeast Lake Winnipeg. Winter passerines, such as Snow Buntings and Redpolls, should also be present. For more information or to register, contact Rudolf Koes at 204.661.0763. www.naturemanitoba.ca

4 **Natural Beauty Products**

Don't want to use unknown chemicals in your basic personal care routine? Find "natural" commercial products too expensive? Learn how to make your own natural shampoo and conditioner, toothpaste, lip balm, moisturizer, facials, and shaving cream. Take home samples and recipes. Basic harder-to-find ingredients can be purchased for making your own products at home. November 4th or 18th, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., \$80. www.aurorafarm.ca

22 **BEMM Building Blocks Luncheon**

Building Energy Management Manitoba (BEMM) members and guests meet monthly to network, have lunch, and share information about products, services, programs, and technologies in the building energy industry. On average, 75 people attend this series. Join us for our next luncheon: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Victoria Inn, 1808 Wellington Avenue. Free for BEMM members, \$25 for non-members. Register at www.bemm.ca.

23 **Buy Nothing Day**

Buy Nothing Day is your special day to unshop, unspend and unwind. Relax and do nothing for the economy and for yourself - at least for a single day. Consider utilities, interest on debt, cell phone usage, and more. Can you really go one whole day without buying anything? www.buynothingday.org

DECEMBER

2 **Father Christmas in the Forest**

Father Christmas is in the FortWhyte forest and is ready to hear all your holiday wishes. A holiday elf will take photos of you and Santa with your camera. Stay warm by the fire and enjoy holiday carols while you wait for Father Christmas. 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Fee \$7, or \$5 for members. www.fortwhyte.org

3 & 4 **37th Annual Conservation Conference**

Featuring keynote speaker David Suzuki. Learn about watershed planning, surface water management initiatives, and sustainable landscapes administered by Manitoba's Conservation Districts. Keystone Centre in Brandon. Everyone welcome. www.mcda.ca

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

ELA cont'd...

Funding the ELA

"Research conducted at the ELA needs to be public and owned by the public so companies cannot decide which information is released and which is kept hidden," stated Diane Orihel in an interview with the Winnipeg Free Press in September.

Orihel, a PhD student in the University of Alberta's Biological Sciences department, has worked at the ELA continuously for the last 10 years, and has been at the forefront of promoting public awareness over the proposed discontinuation of funding for the ELA including as one of the founding directors of the grassroots initiative Coalition to Save the ELA. Orihel is also lead author of a recent study that ranked Manitoba's watersheds, with particular reference to Lake Winnipeg, among the western provinces most plagued by microcystin — a toxin produced by forms of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) that can result from sewage and agriculture runoff.

What are the alternatives? Having private or academic institutions, or some combination of both, foot the bill? What might be the consequences of a change in management — to the public accessibility of the data, and how it might effect the creation of policy?

Retired former head of ELA, Ray Hesslein, said in an interview with the *Eco-Journal* that, "[the ELA] should be free of adverse influences [...]" The risk of funding by private sources is that scientific freedom may be lost." Hesslein added, "That is not to say that the government is innocent of influence. It is possible that the right private organization would maintain or improve [ELA's] independence."

Hesslein, a geochemist by trade, specializes in researching isotope applications as tracers, carbon budgets and dynamics, green house gas fluxes and gas exchange, as well as the modelling of whole lake ecosystems. And like most ELA scientists, Hesslein has spent time working on the most major projects carried out across the 58 experimental lakes.

During a debate in the House of Commons on Sept. 17, Minister of the Environment Peter Kent waxed sanguine on behalf of his party's alleged appreciation for the ELA. "We have made it very clear to all stakeholders and interested parties that the intent is not to close the Experimental Lakes Area," stated Kent. "Environment Canada will assist the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in finding a suitable organization or a consortium to manage operations so that research by the academic community can continue."

"I would frankly prefer a management structure that included academia," remarked David Schindler in an interview with the *Eco-Journal*. "[Department of Fisheries and Oceans] has been a 'wicked stepmother' as a manager. ELA has always been low in their priorities despite producing outstanding science."

"In contrast," Schindler continued, "until (Minister) Kent, [the Department of the Environment (DOE)] has always been very supportive, and from personal conversations with their senior scientists, if they were allowed to speak, DOE (commonly known as Environment Canada) would still support ELA."

"This is coming right from the top level, where science that gets in the way of rapid economic development is considered to be unimportant to the current government."

When it comes to authoritative voices in the field of limnological research, Schindler's carries among the farthest. Schindler is the recipient of what are regarded as equivalent to Nobel Prizes in the worlds of ecology and limnology: the Stockholm Water, Volvo Environment and Tyler



PHOTO: EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA, FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA.

This lake experiment helped show researchers that phosphorous fertilization (water at bottom) is the primary cause of blue-green algae.



PHOTO: JOHN SHEARER

The ELA field station.

Environmental Achievement Prizes, as well as the Gerhard Herzberg Gold Medal. When at the ELA, Schindler was the first person to connect the dots between how climate warming, acid rain, and stratospheric ozone depletion impact freshwater ecosystems.

Dark days ahead for Canada's environmental sciences

Schindler is not optimistic that an agreement will be reached with the current administration. "These same people [the federal government] have ignored senior scientists and experienced, retired former fisheries ministers like Tom Siddon and John Fraser to gut the *Fisheries Act* and [*Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA)], all the while claiming that they know better than either experienced scientists or politicians."

Further to this point, Schindler likened the Harper government to overseeing "a witch hunt, where environmental scientists are the target, equivalent to McCarthyism in the USA where physicists were the main scientific target."

Diane Orihel noted that "on the day of the announcement, [Department of Fisheries and Oceans] scientists were warned they were not allowed to speak to the public, [and] they were not allowed to speak with the media."

"I am hoping that provincial governments, academia and private partners are more enlightened," said Schindler.

ELA supporters have had all summer to grow accustomed to equivocal statements like Kent's, passed down from atop Parliament Hill. The tragic irony: disembowelling the ELA would seem consistent with the current government's recent track record and ideological bent; that ob-

“What of the alternative: having private or academic institutions, or some combination of both foot the bill?”

structionist environmental science funded by taxpayer dollars runs afoul of its less constrained free-market tenets.

And if turfing the ELA is devastating in its own right, it is made the more insufferable taken in context with the suite of other blows dealt to environmental science that are becoming old hat to Canadians. With a few exceptions — an \$18-million investment in the Lake Winnipeg Basin Initiative for example — the Canadian public has been privy to categorical funding cuts to the scientific inquiry and monitoring of the environment.

On a closing note, any discussion of the ELA and the perceived anti-environmental science attitude of the federal Conservative Party warrants a shortened, substantive list of examples: for instance, the closure of the Polar Environmental Atmospheric Research Laboratory; putting an end to the independent advisory board known as the National Round Table on Environment and Economy; the significant cuts made to DFO, Parks Canada, and Environment Canada; the dissolution of the position of National Science Advisor; as well as the rewriting and obfuscation of much of the CEAA (perhaps, as has been alleged, for the purposes of streamlining approval for environmentally contentious project development).

In July, the journal *Nature* published an editorial asking the Harper government to explain its subversion of critical sectors of Canadian science. "... [There] is a difference between environmentalism and environmental science," stated the author(s), concluding, "that the latter is an essential component of a national science programme, regardless of politics."

Bryce Hoye is the Science Editor at The Manitoban, the University of Manitoba students' newspaper.

Youth Converge on Ottawa

Fourth PowerShift conference looks to shape future

By Jonathan Ventura,
Manitoba Environmental Youth Network Coordinator

THIS YEAR HAS SEEN ever-increasing social, environmental, and economic change that has favoured the streamlining of resource development projects across the country. PowerShift 2012, a one of a kind conference running from October 26-29, aims to empower youth this fall while creating a different vision for Canada.

PowerShift 2012 will help develop the skills necessary in youth in order to create hope and positive change, in response to increasing climate instability and Canada's dwindling environment record. Organized by youth, the upcoming four-day conference in Ottawa/Gatineau will unite the voices from across Canada. PowerShift will bring together the "next generation" to learn from leaders such as Bill McKibben, author and board member of 350.org. The conference will help participants work towards building an environmental and climate justice movement that will transform our society into a community that can be enjoyed by all.

PowerShift emerged on the Canadian scene in 2009. It brought together approximately 1,000 youth from all across Canada, including Manitobans, who wanted more for Canada's future and our environment. Through a week of leadership training, workshops, speakers, and action, PowerShift was able to mobilize youth to start making a difference in their communities.

This year a wide variety of stakeholders will be invited to Ottawa to run workshops and join panels in order to build capacity and help young people mobilize once again in larger numbers across Canada. Some of the planned



“PowerShift will bring together the “next generation” to learn from leaders such as Bill McKibben, author and board member of 350.org.”

discussion topics include organizing indigenous communities, oil dependence, food sovereignty and environmental racism.

With skills and knowledge learned from the conference, participants will be able to teach others and make a difference in their communities. By networking across Canada, youth will be able to solidify national campaigns against oil subsidies and major resource extraction projects like the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline.

The 2012 conference is anticipating over 1,500 participants, including some of our very own Winnipeg and Manitoba ambassadors. For more information or to participate at PowerShift 2012 visit: www.wearepowershift.ca.

Unable to make it to PowerShift but would like to connect with a participant, or make a difference in your community? Contact: jonathan@mbeconetwork.org.



Much Ado About Cosmetic Pesticides

Province to consider legislation following summer consultation

By Amanda Kinden

AS ONE OF THE ORGANIC LAWN CARE Educators at Manitoba Eco-Network for the past few years, I have had the pleasure of speaking to many Manitobans regarding their lawns and what their opinions are regarding cosmetic pesticides. On one side, Manitobans feel pressured and would like to have weed-free lawns, without the chemicals. Other Manitobans don't realize there are alternatives to cosmetic pesticides and are not willing to give them up.

Cosmetic pesticides are those chemicals that are used simply to maintain an appearance of a lawn or garden. These chemicals are designed to kill living things. There are numerous studies that show they are harmful to our health (especially children's health), our pets' health, our environment and the wildlife within it. Warning labels on the products themselves should serve as proof of their potential harm.

The provincial government entered a consultation process this summer to find out what Manitobans think about cosmetic pesticides. I am part of a group of citizens, Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Manitoba, who are working to create awareness and action in support of a strong ban on the sale and use of these pesticides to protect our health and environment. Pesticides used in agriculture, on golf courses, and for health reasons would not be affected by a cosmetic pesticide ban.

In a person's quest for the all-illusory perfect lawn, their neighbours are potentially put at risk if they use pesticides. Drift from the wind; tracking the chemicals inside their homes on their shoes; a child that plays on the grass at their friends' house whose parents use weed killer; or a pet that eats the grass during a walk. Pesticide manufacturers argue a cosmetic pesticide ban



Who needs chemical pesticides? The lawns of the Manitoba Legislature have been beautifully maintained — organically — for years.

soil health is a major consideration, and the grass is actually tended to, instead of just cut.

Another argument made by the pro-pesticide lobby is that agricultural fields, sports fields, and your lawn will be over-run by weeds within a summer if a cosmetic pesticide ban is enacted. One only needs to look to the seven other provinces that have some form of cosmetic pesticide ban. Years after a ban has been instituted in those provinces, the dandelion apocalypse has not yet happened, nor will it.

This is why education is an important aspect of a cosmetic pesticide ban. Manitobans need to know how to care for their lawns in a way to discourage weeds. It is possible, and the way people used to live before these chemicals were touted as the solution to weeds in lawns and gardens. Once pesticide demand peaked for agricultural use, pesticide manufacturers targeted lawns as a way to expand their sales.

The people who comprise Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Manitoba, and the millions of other people who would like to be exposed to fewer chemicals are fighting for their health and the environment. Pesticide manufacturers, who convince people they need their products and that they are safe, stand to lose profits if there is a cosmetic pesticide

ban in Manitoba. Who do you trust?

Although the consultation period closed on October 1, the political decision doesn't happen that day, so it is not too late to contact your MLA to let them know how you feel about cosmetic pesticides. The more Manitoba MLAs hear that their constituents want a cosmetic pesticide ban, the more likely it is to happen. And don't forget to watch for next season's Organic Lawn Care Workshops at a library near you.

PHOTO: NATALIE BAIRD

When 68 Becomes 1500



Clockwise from top left:
The view from Clearwater's
former Canadian Pacific
Railway bridge.

(PHOTO: KRISTINA MCMILLAN)

The Harvest Moon
Learning Centre hosts
workshops during the
festival and throughout
the year.

(PHOTO: JOEL TREMANAN)

The elevator, which closed
in 2001, basks in the sunset.

(PHOTO: KRISTINA MCMILLAN)

The beautiful prairie
surrounding Clearwater.

(PHOTO: JOEL TREMANAN)

The main stage was the
nightly hub of activity.

(PHOTO: JOEL TREMANAN)

Most festival attendees
camped in a makeshift
village.

(PHOTO: JOEL TREMANAN)

Soapmaker Heather Heide
was on hand at
Saturday's market.

(PHOTO: JOEL TREMANAN)



THE ELEVENTH HARVEST MOON FESTIVAL took place September 14-16 in Clearwater, MB (population 68). Along with two music stages, featuring Imaginary Cities, Al Simmons and Demetra Penner among others, a full Saturday schedule of interactive workshops kept the 1500 attendees busy. The Sunday community brunch and farmers' market, the village's beautiful rolling hills and fall colours, and the nighttime campfire jams and camaraderie provided a perennial renewal of the spirit.





Are You Ready to Invest in Less?

Peg City Car Co-op looks to expand into new neighbourhoods

By Melissa Dupuis, Vice President of the Board, Peg City Car Co-op



PHOTO: PEG CITY CAR CO-OP

Peg City Car Co-op's latest fleet vehicle addition — the Volt.

PEG CITY CAR CO-OP started as a small idea four years ago. A group of volunteers sat down together and made a list of what transportation could look like in Winnipeg. Their vision revolved around the idea of less congestion, fewer

cars, less parking, and less pollution. But that concept of less was in fact a vision for more. More opportunities for biking, busing and walking. And most importantly, a city with enough transportation choices to live car-free or car-light.

Since launching in June 2011, the car co-op has continued to grow its membership and fleet. Peg City now has four fuel-efficient compact vehicles, in three different neighbourhoods, and over 100 members. But there is more work to do.

Peg City wants to serve neighbourhoods outside of Osborne Village and South Osborne. We are looking to Corydon, Broadway-Assiniboine, West Broadway, Wolseley, the West End, Downtown, and the Exchange District. The intent is to build a sufficiently dense carsharing network that for every member, there are at least two cars located within a 10-minute walk.

Our goal over the next two years is to expand into new neighbourhoods and have 11 vehicles that serve the transportation needs of 350 members.

This is where you come in.

Peg City now has investment shares available for purchase! If you would like to see carsharing grow in Winnipeg and be a viable option for more people, investing in the car co-op will help make it happen. The car co-op has been approved as an eligible enterprise under the Province of Manitoba's Community Enterprise Development (CED) Tax Credit Program. What does this mean? Well, come income tax time, you will be eligible to claim a personal tax credit of 30% of the amount of your investment. This is an opportunity to do good for your community (while getting something in return). How great is that?

Visit pegcitycarcoop.ca/invest and check out the investment metre on the sidebar over the next few months to keep up-to-date on our progress!



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James Allum
MLA for Fort Garry Riverview

(204) 475-2270
www.JamesAllum.ca

Advice for Frustrated Drivers

Five ways to understand cyclist behaviour

By Dave Elmore, Director of Safety and Education, Bike to the Future

IN THE SUMMER EDITION of the *Eco-Journal*, the article on sidewalk riding attempted to give cyclists the skills and confidence to share the road with vehicles. The reason cyclists illegally use the sidewalk is that they believe it is safer. It is not! There are still, however, many cyclists on the sidewalks and drivers can help.

Here are five misunderstandings shared by many drivers. Clarifying these can help lead to improved cooperation on the road, and hopefully get some of these misinformed cyclists off the sidewalk.

1. Why can't cyclists just use the sidewalk or pathways?

Riding on sidewalks is illegal and more dangerous: accident statistics support this fact. Pathways are great, but they are not bike paths. Most are multi-use, which means anyone including joggers, skateboarders, people walking dogs, etc. can all use them. They are better suited for relaxed recreational riding and not for utilitarian riders who want to move quickly. They are also not fully connected, and ultimately cyclists need to use roads to get where they need to go.

2. Why can't cyclists ride close to the curb?

To understand what it's like to ride a bike you have to put yourself in the cyclist's shoes. Riding on four wheels does not compare to balancing on two. The Highway Traffic Act states that cyclists are to ride "as close as practicable" to the edge of the road, not as close as possible. Hugging the curb forces cyclists to constantly dodge hazards like ruts, potholes, manhole covers, and debris. This means moving further left into the traffic flow. A cyclist riding further out from the curb (minimum one metre is recommended) can maintain a straight line while avoiding the vast majority of these hazards.



PHOTO: JOEL TRENMANN

Understanding the perspective of cyclists can improve roadway co-existence, particularly in the absence of bike lanes like this one.

3. Why do some cyclists ride in the middle of the lane?

Construction zone, bridge, and underpass lanes are generally too narrow to share safely, and taking a middle position prevents any potential vehicles from trying to pass the cyclist. For example, underpasses are notorious for very poor road conditions at the bottom, and cyclists require more space for manoeuvring. Cyclists may also centre themselves in the lane at intersections. That way they remain visible to drivers and secure the space they need to start up when the light changes. It is difficult to maintain a straight line on a bike until you have momentum, so it's better to stabilize without tons of steel beside you.

4. Why do cyclists get so angry when I pass them?

Being passed by a motor vehicle at any distance can be somewhat disquieting for a cyclist, but when the passing distance is small, it can be downright frightening. Fright leads to anger and there you have your salute. You may feel you provided enough distance, but the cyclist may disagree. At speeds under 60 km/hr, provide at least a one-metre passing distance. At higher speeds, always move into the adjacent lane. Most roadways in Winnipeg do not have lane widths sufficiently wide for a car to pass a cyclist in the same lane. And avoid using your horn too! The sound of a car horn behind a cyclist can be very startling. They are not surrounded by steel and glass so the unexpected sound could even cause them to panic or lose control.

5. Why are cyclists always running stop signs and lights?

Cyclists most often do this to conserve momentum, but running red lights and stop signs is illegal and dangerous. Some drivers do the same thing in order to conserve momentum and reduce gas consumption, or when in a hurry. It is, however, the minority of cyclists and drivers that flagrantly break the rules. Let's not let the few create conflict for the many!

Cyclists are vulnerable road users, and drivers can make cycling safer through cooperation. Remember that inside your vehicle you cannot see what a cyclist sees, hear what a cyclist hears, or feel what a cyclist feels.



Small Steps Toward Big Change

Homemade cleaners support child health

By Chris Kolba, Project Coordinator, Children's Health and Environment Partnership

IN AUGUST, the Children's Health and Environment Partnership (CHEP) met with a group of new moms to talk about the relationship between children's health and the environment.

Congratulations to those who participated in the ABCs of Children's Environmental Health presentation that was delivered at a Healthy Start mom's group in East Kildonan. All fifteen women and Healthy Start staff made and took home a non-toxic all-purpose cleaning solution, along with a collection of easy-to-adopt recipes and tips that parents or others can use to contribute to a healthier environment — step by step, household by household.

Many commercial household cleaning and personal care products contain harmful toxins such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and phthalates. The cumulative absorption of these substances into our bodies and environments are, according to experts, strongly linked to disease, reproductive and developmental disorders. Children are particularly vulnerable due to their size, stage of development, and how they interact with the environment.

Although the evidence is not conclusive, CHEP, along with other provincial, national and international organizations, adheres to the precautionary principle in introducing substances into the environment. In other words, unless a product is known to be safe for use and/or consumption, it is best not to use it at all.

Safer alternatives are available. The goal of finding or creating and using these safer ways, is a practice CHEP believes all of us must adopt, in our personal and professional lives in order to stop and reverse the creation of toxic homes, workplaces, communities and beyond. The solution these mothers made with everyday household supplies, like vinegar and baking soda, cost pennies. Not only are they making the environment healthier, they are also trimming household expenses. Yay moms!

The workshop was one of the services offered by CHEP for parents, caregivers and other service providers. For more information contact us at 947-6511 or info@childrensenvironment.ca.



This new mother can be sure that the ingredients in her homemade all-purpose cleaner will not be toxic to her baby.

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The next submission deadline is December 1.

Contact Editor Joel Trenaman for more information:

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(Oil) Friendly Manitoba

Oil and gas companies enjoy lucrative tax benefits

By Josh Brandon

OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION has expanded rapidly in recent years in southwestern Manitoba. In 2011, there were 578 wells under development in Manitoba, and production reached 15 million barrels, four times the level of production in 2000. To some, this boom is a welcome boost to the Manitoba economy that will allow the province to compete, albeit on a smaller scale, with the fast growing petro-economies to the west. However, evidence shows that Manitoba as a whole benefits little from the exploitation of these resources. Meanwhile, the environmental costs of the industry are already significant.

Over the past decade, oil production in Manitoba has increased from less than four million barrels to 15 million barrels. Over that time the price of oil has also increased significantly, so that the value of production has increased almost 10-fold to \$1.38 billion in 2011. However, government revenues from the industry have not kept pace. A series of tax exemptions were introduced over this period. In 2007, a tax holiday on new production was announced providing a royalty-free period for new mines. The normal volume of "holiday oil" for a new mine is 10,000 m³ or about 63,000 barrels. Most wells in Manitoba are small, with relatively low levels of production. Average production in 2011 was only a little over 2,000 barrels per month. This gives each producer more than two years of tax-free production. Last year, the Province announced it was extending the tax holiday until 2015. Manitoba received \$28 million in taxes and royalties from oil and gas in 2011, only a two percent tax rate on the \$1.4 billion industry.

Meanwhile, several other tax credits provide further subsidies to the oil and gas industry. A retail tax credit for drilling equipment costs the province \$3 million per year, while reduced electricity taxes cost over \$11 million. Furthermore the cost of government services to the industry dwarf any revenues government receives. Each year the Province allocates over \$80 million to Energy and Mines, much of which is spent for the direct benefit of industry. For example, 19 geophysical programs run by the province had a bill of \$8.6 million in 2011.

The costs to our environment are considerable. Last year, 96 oil spills were recorded in Manitoba for a total of 703 m³. There is currently a backlog of 531 spill sites in Manitoba that need remediation.

New fracking technology presents increased and uncertain dangers from the industry. Manitoba does not currently track which chemicals are being used. The potential for disaster is great. Meanwhile, the greenhouse gas emissions are significant. Despite a recent slowdown in the mining industry (including minerals, metals and oil and gas), Manitoba's emissions from the sector are still more than double our Kyoto commitment.

The Fraser Institute has recently ranked Manitoba as one of the friendliest jurisdictions in the world for oil mining (5th out of 147). Little wonder. These oil-friendly policies have sparked a minor boom in southwestern Manitoba. However, it is not Manitobans who are benefiting. Most of the secondary industries are located in neighbouring jurisdictions and do not contribute to Manitoba's economy. Housing prices in towns like Virden are showing many of the ills of a boom economy, crowding out local initiatives.

All Manitobans enjoy their holidays, but it is time for the oil and gas industry to go back to paying its share.

Resources:

Manitoba oil and gas data is available through the Oil Activity Review. Manitoba Budgets are available from Manitoba Finance.

Information on the risk of fracking technology is available from the Council of Canadians.

IISD reports that oil subsidies by the federal government, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland totalled \$2.84 billion in 2008.

David Suzuki Foundation campaign to end oil subsidies.

This article was originally published in online magazine Mud and Water.
<http://mudandwater.org>



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