



# Managing Increasingly Wet Summers Naturally

Green infrastructure projects tackling problem

By Megan Krohn

**IT'S BEEN A WET SUMMER!** If you have noticed an increase in rain during recent summers, you would be right. Rainfall has increased 12 per cent since 1950 according to the Insurance Bureau of Canada. They also note that extreme weather events, which used to happen every 40 years, are now occurring every six years. Climate change has led to an increasing number of ex-

treme storms around the world, and the runoff from these storms causes damage to property, overflows of sewage into the waterways, erosion of riverbanks and a host of other issues.

This increase in rainfall is happening at the same time as our cities are growing and natural surfaces are being covered with parking lots, *continued on page 4 >>*

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(Right) Students from St. George School looking over the planting plan and learning about our Province's native plants.

(Above) Inspiring us with his work ethic! Volunteers of all ages came out to help on the volunteer day.

PHOTO

PHOTOS: MANITOBA ECO-NETWORK

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## Executive Director's Message

By Karen Peters



PHOTO: ERIN HEMBRADOR

**OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS** the Manitoba Eco-Network has continued with its mandate to educate the public on environmental issues and connect people about these as well. As our members are aware, we are part of a coalition in support of the Cosmetic Pesticide Ban (*see page 11*). Should the ban be lifted, we are active at Manitoba Eco-Network to provide information and services to the public, which will allow people to continue lawn care that will benefit and not harmfully impact human and environmental health.

“ The Climate Change Connection program is working with Manitoba Education to support teachers in climate change curriculum development and providing Climate Change intensive workshops for educators.

Building partnerships with our members is key to what we do. In that regard, we have continued to develop and participate in collaborative efforts with Climate Change Connection groups, Organic Lawn Care outreach and workshops, Youth Outreach, and the Water Caucus.

To that end, the Eco-Network and its programs have continued with public education through the Organic Lawn Care Education Program providing workshops and tabling at events. Our Water Caucus program is working on a rain garden in conjunction with Save Our Seine that demonstrates how water from a large retail parking lot can be retained and filtered before it flows to the Seine River (*see cover story*). It is our hope that we will see this work continue in both large and small scale projects.

The Climate Change Connection program is working with Manitoba Education to support teachers in climate change curriculum development and providing Climate Change intensive workshops for educators. Our Youth Program collaborated with the Green Action Centre and WRENCH in exploring and overcoming the barriers to high school students cycling to school. October is Sustainability Month and the Manitoba Eco-Network is once again the coordinator. As you receive this issue hopefully activities are in full swing to heighten public awareness on sustainability issues. It would be fantastic if we all get out and support the activities listed on the Sustainability Month calendar. For more info, check out [www.sustainabilitymonth.ca](http://www.sustainabilitymonth.ca)

In addition to the *Eco-Journal*, members have been taking advantage of our website [www.mbeconetwork.org](http://www.mbeconetwork.org) for updates on beach water quality, green job postings, as well as updates on all of our programs. Our 2015/2016 annual report will be available after our AGM which will provide greater detail on our activities. As always, we continue to strive to do the best we can to serve our members and reach out to the general public.

*Karen Peters is the executive director of the Manitoba Eco-Network.*

## October

### 1-2 **Alpine Club of Canada MB, Gooseneck Rock Climbing**

Join us for an exciting two days of rock climbing at Gooseneck out in Northwest Ontario. Gooseneck offers the greatest quantity and variety of accessible climbing in Northwest Ontario.

[www.accmanitoba.ca](http://www.accmanitoba.ca)

### 3 **20X20 Sustainability Night**

*Manitoba Museum, 190 Rupert Avenue*

**Doors** 6:30PM

**Presentations** 7:00PM

**Tickets** \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door – available for purchase Sept. 6

Join in the fun for an evening of fast paced presentations exploring sustainability in our world. Seven presenters will present 20 slides for 20 seconds each. After, stay for cocktails and appetizers over conversation.

[www.sustainabilitymonth.ca/20x20-sustainability-night/](http://www.sustainabilitymonth.ca/20x20-sustainability-night/)

### 7 **Green Drinks at the Kings Head Pub**

Working, volunteering, or interested in the environmental sector? Join us for an informal monthly get-together of after-work bevies. **Contact [info@mbeconetwork.org](mailto:info@mbeconetwork.org) for more info.**

### 21-23 **Yoga Retreat, Falcon Trails Resort**

Join us for a weekend of yoga + meditation workshops, fresh meals, sweat lodge and live music! Recap at the end of the day in a lake front cabin with a hot tub.

[www.falcontrailsresort.com/news/yoga](http://www.falcontrailsresort.com/news/yoga)

### 27 **Fort Whyte Alive, Twilight Run**

Use your headlamp to light the way through the forests and trails of FortWhyte Alive during this late night 5 and 10k run! Join us after this fun run for some smokies, s'mores and cold beverages by the fire. Every participant that registers will receive an LED headlight to light their way!

**For registration information visit:**

[www.fortwhyte.org/event/twilightrun/?instance\\_id=10439](http://www.fortwhyte.org/event/twilightrun/?instance_id=10439)

## October 1-31

### **Celebrating Sustainability Month**

Organizations from across Manitoba will be providing opportunities to learn more about sustainable living during this month-long series of events, including film screenings, workshops, concerts, art exhibits and more!

Have a sustainability event to promote? Contact [ellen@mbeconetwork.org](mailto:ellen@mbeconetwork.org) to get your event listed on the calendar.

**Visit [sustainabilitymonth.ca](http://sustainabilitymonth.ca) for more details.**

### **Indoor Downtown Farmers' Market**

*Thursdays, Manitoba Hydro Building*

October 6 & 20

November 3

December 1 & 15

## November

### TBD **Water Workshop**

Join us as we chat with speakers on important local issues around water including green infrastructure and alternative land use.

**More information to follow on our events page ([mbeconetwork.org/get-involved/events](http://mbeconetwork.org/get-involved/events)) or sign up for the Water E-Bulletin for updates at [mbwatercaucus.org](http://mbwatercaucus.org)**

### 19 **Niverville Annual Winterfest & Market**

Join in on Niverville's second annual Winterfest and Market. Enjoy activities, holiday shopping, skating, the Christmas tree lighting and much more.

[www.nivervillecreation.com](http://www.nivervillecreation.com)

### 27

#### **Fort WhyteAlive - Santa in the Forest**

The big guy himself makes two special appearances at FortWhyte this season to hear your wishes. Our photographer will be on hand to take a winter portrait of your family.

[www.fortwhyte.org/events/](http://www.fortwhyte.org/events/)

## DECEMBER

### 4 **Fort WhyteAlive - Santa in the Forest**

The big guy himself makes two special appearances at FortWhyte this season to hear your wishes. Our photographer will be on hand to take a winter portrait of your family. [www.fortwhyte.org/events/](http://www.fortwhyte.org/events/)

### 18 **Christmas Bird Count, Nature Manitoba**

This is a great opportunity to see some wintering birds in the city. Join tens of thousands of other birders across North America in this event and help contribute to our knowledge of winter bird distribution. A potluck dinner and compiling session will be held afterwards.

[www.naturemanitoba.ca](http://www.naturemanitoba.ca)



<< continued from page 1  
Wet Summers...



PHOTO: MANITOBA ECO-NETWORK

Community volunteers celebrate after a day of hard work converting this paved space into a community garden.



PHOTO: MANITOBA ECO-NETWORK

Students from St. George School and École Lacerte helping with the planting day at the Niakwa Trail Rain Garden.



PHOTO: MANITOBA ECO-NETWORK

Students from Brooklands School enjoy their new outdoor learning space during their annual outdoor challenge.

driveways, roads, and buildings. These paved surfaces interfere with the natural movement of water, forcing it to run off the surface (picking up pollutants along the way) to the nearest drain, eventually ending up in the waterways.

### How do we manage this increase in rainfall in communities with growing populations requiring development?

Green infrastructure may be one alternative to conventional rain-water management. Many municipalities and organizations have begun to include green infrastructure in community planning. It is a way to incorporate natural processes into built spaces to help manage rain water, reduce flooding, improve air quality, and lessen the effects of climate change. Cities such as Minneapolis, Portland, and Seattle have had great success with green infrastructure projects such as rain gardens, green streets, and permeable pavement. Support and resources are available to communities and organizations looking to explore green infrastructure options in Canada through Green Communities Canada (based in Ontario). Toronto, Calgary, and Ottawa are a few Canadian cities starting to test green infrastructure.

“ Climate Change has led to an increasing number of extreme storms around the world, and the runoff from these storms causes damage to property, overflows of sewage into the waterways, erosion of riverbanks and a host of other issues.

Here in Winnipeg the Manitoba Eco-Network, with technical support from GCC, has been working on two demonstration sites to showcase alternative ways to manage runoff and reduce flooding: the Niakwa Trail Rain Garden on Fermor Avenue at St. Anne’s Road, and Brooklands Community Garden at Brooklands School (1950 Pacific Avenue West).

### Niakwa Trail Rain Garden – Native plantings and landscaping slow the flow and filter runoff

The Niakwa Trail Rain Garden is a 450 m<sup>2</sup> garden that runs alongside the parking lot of the adjacent grocery store. The parking lot previously drained into the Seine River through an underground pipe, which emptied into the waterway. The Rain Garden was designed by HTFC Planning and Design with input from the Manitoba Eco-Network and Save Our Seine. The design allows the site to temporarily capture runoff, encouraging water to absorb into the ground and be filtered through the soil and the plants. In the fall of 2015, 60 volunteers came together to plant over 600 native plants at the site. In addition to cleaning the water that runs off the parking lot, the Rain Garden contains plant species that provide food and habitat for birds, butterflies, and other pollinators.

### Brooklands Community Garden – Removing hard surfaces to improve water quality

Brooklands School in the Saint James School Division, has embraced green living and community engagement through programs such as their walking school bus (a program that helps students walk to school in the safety of a group of their schoolmates and parent volunteers), and through their annual outdoor challenge (two weeks of classes that are conducted entirely outdoors). Together with Urban Eatin’ Landscapes, and the

Manitoba Eco-Network, the school planned a “depave” project to remove asphalt in the schoolyard and replace it with an outdoor learning and garden space.

This past May 15, eight volunteers from the Brooklands community came together to tear up 150 m<sup>2</sup> of asphalt, build 15 raised garden beds, and plant over 300 native and edible plants – all in less than eight hours. This new green space, in addition to being a community garden and an outdoor learning space for the students, will reduce runoff from the school property. With the removal of hard surfaces, the rain now has the opportunity to soak into the ground and be filtered through the soil and plants. This reduces the load to our storm sewers, and improves the water quality by reducing pollutants that are carried into the waterways through runoff.

### Training the next generation

The Niakwa Trail Rain Garden and the Brooklands Community Garden have provided opportunities for students to get involved as volunteers. Over 60 students helped with the projects, and many of the same students are involved on an ongoing basis with weeding, tending the plants, and monitoring the sites. These sites provide outdoor learning spaces to talk about ecosystems, plant and animal life, hydrology, urban water management issues, food security, and so much more.

For more information about volunteer opportunities, or to request a presentation at your school, please contact [water@mbeconetwork.org](mailto:water@mbeconetwork.org) 🌱

*Megan Krohn is the Water Caucus Manager at the Manitoba Eco-Network, and has a passion for making use of natural processes to help solve urban water issues.*

## Thanks to our funders and partners

Brooklands School (St. James School Division)  
 Casera Credit Union  
 City Councillor Brian Mayes and the Community Incentive Grant Program (City of Winnipeg)  
 Co-op Community Spaces Grant Program  
 EcoAction Community Funding Program  
 Green Communities Canada’s “Depave Paradise”  
 HTFC Planning and Design  
 J & K Zinn Landscape Contractors  
 Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship  
 Nature Manitoba’s Bluebird Fund  
 The RBC Blue Water Project  
 Save our Seine  
 Urban Eatin’ Landscapes  
 Winnipeg Harvest  
 WWF-Canada  
 Loblaw Companies Limited (Loblaw Water Fund).

**As well, a BIG thank you to the many volunteers who have been involved in both projects.**



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# Perceptions of Beauty

By Neil Bailey

**GREEN LAWNS.** As Canadian as backyard barbecues, maple syrup and ice cream cones in the summer. They are one idea of beauty. A beauty that is great for soccer, baseball, and lawn bowling. A beauty that is easily defined by its uniformity, free from the nuisance of anything unwanted.

There are many other kinds of beauty, of course. Looking at some of the world's most amazing gardens, we see great diversity in the types of beauty represented in what we choose to cultivate, and preserve. Without leaving our country, or even our city, different conceptions

of beauty are presented to us. This street in Jasper (pictured) has been left to flower, and has become a beloved alternative to the other monoculture medians, for residents and visitors alike.

So where does this obsession with lawns and grassy boulevards come from? Are we addicted to grass? Why do we spend so much time, money and effort trying to maintain a crop that has so few benefits, beyond simple aesthetics?

There is a certain beauty in creating order out of chaos. We know that humans have a

preference for objects and images that exhibit specific proportions, and that the presence of different colours has an impact on our mental states. If it is true that the colour green is a “great balancer of the heart and emotions,” does it not make sense to fill our field of vision with a uniform, verdant splendor?

Yet, something seems amiss, here—or incomplete. If what we want is a uniform, green carpet, why not go the way of astroturf?

Some may argue that there is also beauty to be found in the acts of maintenance and care. Beyond the discussion of specific aesthetics, we



Not your typical roadway - a Jasper median left to flower.

PHOTO: NEIL BAILEY

tend to react strongly to the act of caring, and the conscientious ordering of things in our environment. We are dumbfounded by the sheer effort of pointillism, awestruck by the patience exhibited by zen gardens. If aesthetics are important, the means by which we arrive at them can be equally important. If not, what is a bonsai tree, other than a tree that has failed to thrive?

There is also beauty in death and dying, the deconstruction and rebirth of things. Our conceptions of beauty often fail to acknowledge these concepts, preferring the “order” of human intervention to the “chaos” of ecological complexity. By failing to acknowledge the

towards order, colour and proportion, but also our perceptions of the effort and values invested in the maintenance of a space. If the hands of a doting gardener add a certain value to a space, then the broad application of fertilizers and pesticides seems a much cruder method of obtaining a desired aesthetic (even without considering the negative impacts of widespread pesticide use). Maybe part of the value in maintaining organic, pesticide-free green spaces is related to a different metric of care. Perhaps pulling weeds by hand is a preferred technique precisely because it takes a bit longer. And maybe that extra time spent in our gardens is itself a gift, providing time for reflection and

meditation in the course of our work.

While writing this article, I couldn't help but think of my friend Rob, who has for years practiced his chalk art on a busy street corner in Halifax, NS. Unlike artists of pen and ink, Rob's art is transient, ephemeral. It continues to exist in the world because he continues to create it, no two pieces the same, hundreds of his sidewalk murals layered in succession onto the same concrete slabs.

I know that when I look at his art, it has real value, even if it will inevitably be eroded by dust and rain and busy feet. And if that value exists because of his diligence and care in creating beauty in the world, I can't help thinking that there's more to this lawn and garden debate than what we're used to hearing.

I really hope there is.



*Neil Bailey is the Living Green, Living Well Coordinator with the Green Action Centre, and is interested in how collaborative community action can lead to resilient and beautiful places.*

“While some may argue that there is also beauty to be found in the acts of maintenance and care... is our obsession with grass an admittance of our inability to reconcile this type of beauty with our aesthetic preferences?”

value of death as an essential ingredient for life, are we missing out on one of nature's greatest teachings? Is our obsession with grass an admittance of our inability to reconcile this type of beauty with our aesthetic preferences?

In our work on compost education, this is one of the biases we must overcome: the perceived “ickyness” of nature. Once people gain a deeper appreciation for the complexity of soil microbiology, the beneficial relationships between worms and dirt, the magnificence of mycorrhizal relationships, and the absolute necessity of creepycrawlyslimeythings in the production of fertile and productive soil, these perceptions tend to change. Aversion replaced by reverence, we gain an appreciation for the connectedness of things, which is part of the growing concern for the impacts of pesticides. We see that a functional ecology relies upon countless species' overlapping roles, and that maintaining this ecology requires us to look beyond narrow concepts of productivity or aesthetics.

Looking at these issues together, it would seem that our perceptions of beauty include not only our innate and primal tendencies





# Celebrating 25 years of Conservation in Manitoba

By Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society



THE MANITOBA CHAPTER of the Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society was thrilled to celebrate their 25th year of conservation in Manitoba with a paddle down the Assiniboine River.

Starting at Omand Park, representatives from Green Action Centre, the Manitoba EcoNetwork, Mountain Equipment Co-op and Know the North hopped into the more than 25 canoes and kayaks with CPAWS staff, board members, volunteers and supporters. Before docking at The Forks, the flotilla made a quick stop at the Manitoba Legislature docks to pick up the Minister of Sport Culture and Heritage (and second acting Minister of Sustainable Development) Rochelle Squires who spoke at the event along with CPAWS Manitoba Executive Director, Ron Thiessen.

“The support and enthusiasm shown to us by Manitobans is an incredible boost to our efforts as we look to the next 25 years of conservation successes in this province.” said Thiessen.





PHOTOS: CANADIAN PARKS & WILDERNESS SOCIETY

# Desem breads at Tall Grass

Pavailler



*Tall Grass head baker Loic Perrot working with the upstairs brick oven.*

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to bring out the finer details, as done in Europe for centuries. This is where our new brick oven upstairs at your Tall Grass neighbourhood bakery in Wolseley is at its best.

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# Pesticide Ban Review Raises Skepticism

Province consultation on new legislation questioned

By Bowen Smyth

**MANITOBA'S PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT** is reviewing a pesticide ban that was introduced just one year ago. Responding to a request by the Association of Manitoba Municipalities for a “complete review” of the Non-Essential Pesticide Regulation, the province announced the opening of public consultations on July 18.

Given the AMM’s opposition to the ban “due to significant cost implications and effectiveness concerns,” the news of a review came as a blow to many environmental groups, even though Minister of Sustainable Development Cathy Cox would not identify the new government’s position on the issue.

Ecojustice lawyer Kaitlyn Mitchell, originally from Winnipeg and currently based in Toronto, said she’s surprised that Manitoba is reviewing the pesticide legislation so soon after it was introduced.

“It’s a good idea to review laws after they’ve been on the books for a while to make sure they’re achieving their purpose. This law hasn’t been around long enough to know if it’s working,” Mitchell said. “If there’s a loophole, if the law needs to be amended, that should be what is looked at during the review, rather than the entire act.”

As Canada’s only national environmental law charity, Ecojustice has made important contributions to pesticide legislation at all levels of government. They partnered with Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Manitoba, a coalition of 30 local and national organizations, to pressure the province to introduce the 2015 ban. Coalition representative Josh Brandon is also surprised by Minister Cox’s announcement.

“This is opening up the legislation to a process that we’ve already been through,” Brandon said, referring to a poll conducted in 2013 that found that 71 per cent of Manitobans supported banning the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides. “We were all hoping that this was beyond us and we could move to the next step of improving regulations and reducing the health risk facing Manitobans.”

The health risks of cosmetic pesticides have been identified by a number of reputable na-

tional and international organizations including the David Suzuki Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, and the World Health Organization. Pesticide exposure has been linked to cancer, reproductive issues including brain and nervous system defects, respiratory illnesses, learning disabilities, and death due to poisonings.

What is seldom included in the discussion is the impact of pesticides on soil health. Overton Environmental Enterprises (OEE Inc.) is



In the municipality of Jasper, pesticides are banned. These photos show some of the flowers and other “weeds” often killed by pesticides.

a locally owned and operated business specializing in alternatives to chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Founder Dale Overton explained why weeds are likely to show up in our lawns and green spaces in the first place.

“Salt-based fertilizers don’t do anything for long-term soil health and fertility. So as soon as you wean off those fertilizers, the weeds come in. One of the ways to minimize weeds is to create the healthiest grass possible, and healthy soil,” Overton said. The two key ingredients? Overseeding, and top dressing with compost.

“We make a weed-seed free product that’s high in nutrient value. It’s pure compost. It’s not blended. Of course you’re going to perpetuate a weed seed problem if you’ve got soil producers that are producing products with weed

seed,” Overton added. “At my house, I don’t use herbicides at all. I don’t get weeds because my grass is so thick and lush. In the springtime, I get dandelions but I outgrow them.”

With eight years in business and an impressive range of local and international clients — including municipal and federal governments, golf courses, nurseries, soil blenders, forestry companies, and large-scale farms — OEE Inc. offers an example of achieving ecological balance in cost-efficient ways.

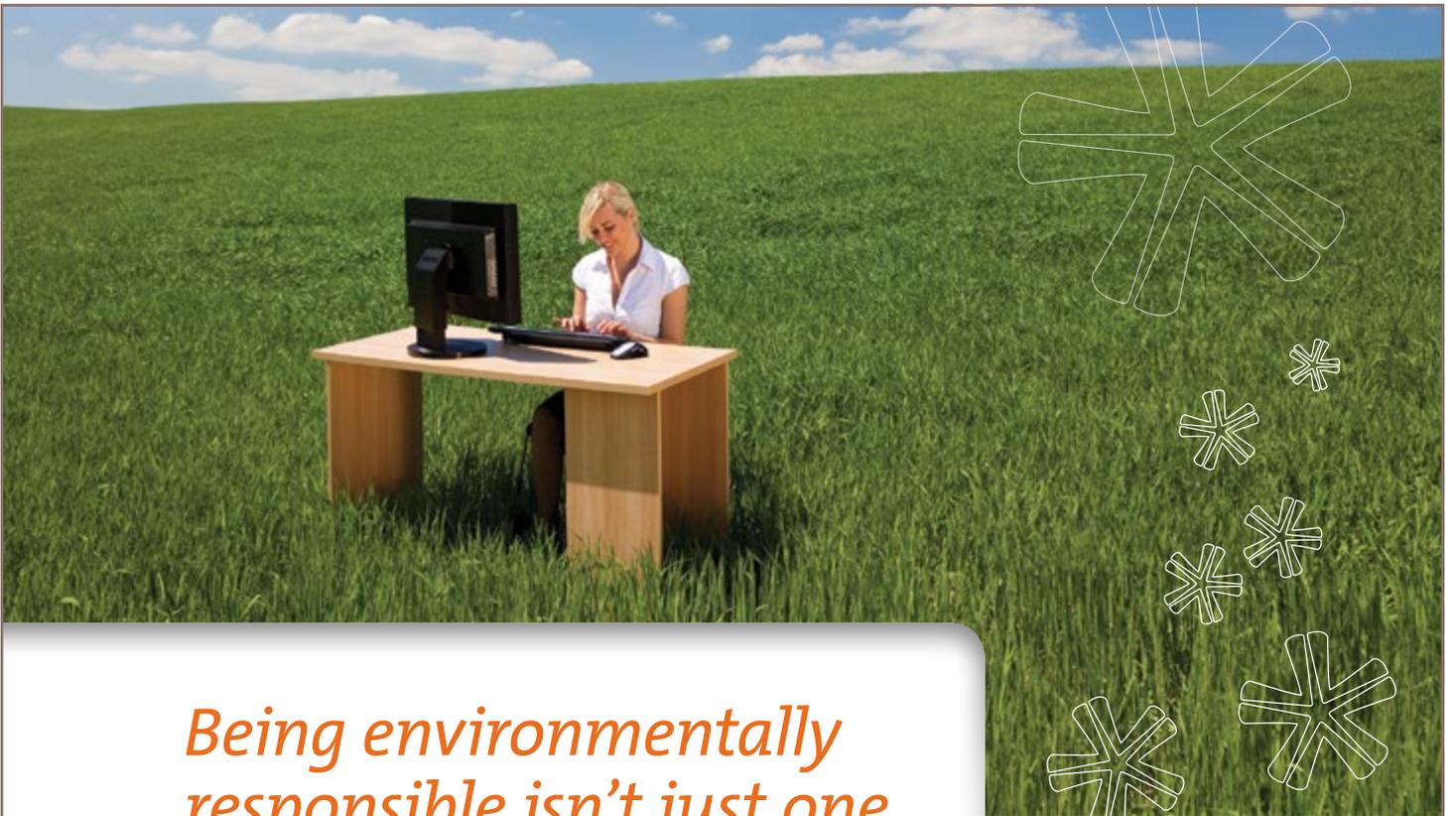
Members of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities have estimated that alternative products such as Fiesta will increase the costs of weed control by up to 20 times, or 2,000 per cent. However, the City of Winnipeg’s weed control budget increased by only 15 per cent between 2014 and 2016, reflecting inflation and population growth over the period.

Pesticides — whether chemical or biological — simply act as a bandage, masking the symptoms without treating the problem. Urban soils tend to be depleted in nutrients and compacted due to the stripping of topsoil, and regular disturbances such as construction. Quality compost naturally aerates soil and creates a supportive soil food web that enables plants to absorb all the nutrients they need.

In contrast, herbicides kill the microbes that allow plants to absorb nutrients from the soil, creating a dependence on chemical fertilizers. If finances are the real cause of the ban’s review, there are more economical solutions than pesticides, whether biological or chemical.

Public consultations for the cosmetic pesticide ban review will formally end on September 12, but those who miss the deadline can express concerns to their elected representatives, or connect with Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Manitoba to advocate for improved legislation to prevent the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides. 🌱

*Bowen Smyth is the Communications Coordinator for Compost Winnipeg, a social enterprise started by Green Action Centre.*



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