

ECO-JOURNAL

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CEC to review report on hog industry by Mb. Conservation Mixed Reaction to Announcements

By Anne Lindsey

On November 8, the Provincial government surprised everyone with a package of announcements relating to water protection, and to hogs. Perhaps we could be forgiven for some early confusion about the package, given that it seemed to be a mix of agriculture and water actions, but was being announced by the Minister of Conservation. The reason? Part of the package is being referred to the Clean Environment Commission, or CEC, (which falls under the Conservation Department) for review. The government press release states "Manitoba's Water Protection Plan will be referred to the CEC for a full, independent and public review".

Temporary moratorium

However, what the CEC will actually be reviewing is a report produced by Manitoba Conservation called *An Examination of the Environmental Sustainability of the Hog Industry in Manitoba*. A temporary moratorium on the development of "large scale pig agricultural operations" (or hog barns) in Manitoba will be in place while the CEC conducts its review.

Reaction in the environmental community to the "pig pause" is generally positive. A moratorium is something that has been demanded for a long time. Vicki Burns of the Winnipeg Humane Society says her organization is hoping "that it is symbolic of the first step in the right direction" or in other words, a good starting point for an eventual permanent moratorium on unsustainable practices in the hog industry. Coming as it does, at the same time as new restrictions on phosphorus application, there is a sense that things will need to be done differently in the future. Burns would like Manitoba producers to look towards practices in other jurisdictions—something that the CEC is being encouraged to consider.

Others, though, are not so sanguine about the process. Joe Dolecki, a Brandon University instructor, points out in a letter to the *Brandon Sun*, that the moratorium exempts some 17 barn

proposals currently in process, one of which may threaten the aquifer that the Swan Valley First Nation withdraws its water supply from. Further, Dolecki says, the charge to the CEC reveals that it is to conduct "public meetings" as opposed to "hearings"—another point of contention. Formal hearings are governed by the Manitoba Evidence Act, meaning that they involve

sworn testimony, cross-examination, and expert evidence as well as from the public at large. The CEC assesses this evidence and then issues recommendations based on that assessment. Public meetings, on the other hand, are subject to no such regulations, and there is concern about the quality and integrity of information that may be presented. A petition from Beyond Factory Farming is making the

rounds, calling for formal hearings, and for the moratorium to be extended to the proposals in progress. The petition also asks for the hearings on the Olywest slaughterhouse proposal to be suspended pending the outcome of the new review.

There is also some confusion about the actual scope of the CEC hearings. In its report on the Maple Leaf meat processing plant application in 2003, the CEC recommended that an assessment of the sustainability of the hog industry be carried out for the area of the Assiniboine River basin. The resulting report from Manitoba Conservation expanded the geographic scope of the suggestion, and looked at the entire province, but the report focuses on the environmental sustainability of the industry, not on sustainability in general. Many observers hope that the scope of the upcoming hearings will respect the CEC's original recommendation, and also cover other more general sustainability issues, such as the socioeconomic aspects, animal welfare issues, and workplace health and safety, alongside the environmental considerations.

Environmental liability

So, why does the government claim that its Water Protection Plan is what the CEC will be reviewing? It's clear that the biggest environmental liability of the pork industry is the manure produced by the 8.5 million hogs produced in the province (2005 figure). That manure has to go somewhere, and the vast majority of it is spread as a fertilizer on crop lands. Problems arise when the crops cannot absorb the quantity of nutrients present in the manure. The excess runs off into adjacent water bodies, contributing to the buildup of phosphorus and nitro-

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Water sampling on the Pembina River

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Fair Trade Manitoba Launches Campaign

By Zack Gross

Twenty years ago, when fair trade foods and handicrafts first became available, very few people know what "fair trade" meant or trusted the products enough to buy them. Whether coffee, chocolate, clothing or basketry, fair trade products bring their producers a fair wage, allow for production in a clean, safe environment and have a portion of their proceeds set aside for the health and education of the communities involved.

Ten years ago, fair trade became visible on the commercial radar screen, with not-for-profits in particular leading the way. Ten Thousand Villages, the Marquis Project, Oxfam/Bridgehead Trading and other groups had set up stores or other means of distribution that filled a "niche market", attracting a small portion of the public who had heard about fair trade through churches, universities or social action groups. Fair trade stores were an extension of Third World development projects, helping rural communities and co-operatives and urban workshops to market the products of peasants, women's and disabled groups and young entrepreneurs.

Today, the fair trade market is taking off, both in the number of products available and in the increasing buy-in of the merchant community. While it continues for many to be an act of charity, solidarity and/or justice, buying or selling fair trade is also becoming a normal, everyday activity. To help generate the wave, through educational and promotional efforts throughout the province, Fair Trade Manitoba (FTM) was formed in the spring of 2006. In October, the group held a public launch, attracting over one hundred people to the screening of the new film "Black Gold" about the global coffee market. That day, October 17, the annual International Day for the Elimination of Poverty, also marked the launch of FTM's web site and shopping guide.

An on-line shopping guide

Putting the on-line shopping guide together carried some surprises with it. Most people, when asked how many merchants carry fair trade products, might have guessed twenty or thirty in the province. It wasn't long, however, before FTM researchers had gathered over 100 businesses and organizations—grocery stores, specialty shops, cafes, craft shops, consumer warehouses, clothing stores, red carpet services, travel & outdoor activity stores, co-ops, wine shops, and many more. FTM sees itself working with all sides of the marketplace—suppliers, merchants and consumers—to grow the sales of fair trade products.

The Assiniboine Credit Union, soon to be Manitoba's largest with over 100,000 members, has a staff specialist promoting socially responsible investment, including the purchase of fair trade products. Canadian National Railways recently committed to serving only fair trade coffee. Many of the larger grocery chains carry fair trade along with other brands—Costco, Safeway, Co-op Marketplace, Sobeys, and Harry's Foods, to name a few. Starbucks carries certified (by Transfair Canada) fair trade coffee and offers to brew it the 20th of every month, or whenever patrons ask for it. They also carry an uncertified brand of their own, which is problematic.

Among the problematic sellers are Tim Horton's and Second Cup who are describing their coffee supply system to be as good for their producers as fair trade. They argue that they work with suppliers whose policies and practices benefit the economies of the Third World communities they deal with, and follow good environmental practices. Some smaller outlets in Manitoba have also not certified their products with Transfair, citing the extra paperwork and expense that would entail. Fair Trade Manitoba currently recognizes any third party certification, such as Canadian, US, European or country of origin.



Photo courtesy Fair Trade Manitoba

Fair trade products used to mean just coffee and tea, as well as crafts. Now, in foods, there are also chocolate products, sugar, dried fruit, bananas, and more. Fair trade cut flowers are also becoming more available. Non-food items now include clothing, accessories and sports equipment (particularly soccer balls). All fair trade food products are now organically grown and suppliers such as Kicking Horse in BC, Cocoa Camino in Ontario, and Dagoba in the US, are winning awards for their entrepreneurial leadership and their excellent products.

This doesn't spell the end of the challenge for fair trade. Consumers need to know that fair trade, organic products are increasing in availability and decreasing in price. People need to know about the incredible hardships endured by producers in the "free trade" system, who face grinding poverty, human rights abuses and child slavery in the jungle cocoa and sugar cane fields of West Africa, the coffee and tea plantations of the Horn and East Africa, and the factories of South Asia and Central America. In recent days, FTM has participated in major events at local high schools and campuses to tell these stories.

To learn more, you may want to go to Blockbuster Video and rent Black Gold about the coffee industry in Ethiopia and its struggle in the world market. You can also log onto www.fairtrademanitoba.ca to learn all about fair trade and download the shopping guide. When you see that a certain merchant is not featured in the Guide, get them to contact FTM at fairtrade@mcic.ca. Chances are that we have sent them a form to fill out and they haven't returned it. You may also want to participate in the One Month Fair Trade Challenge in February, 2007. Get your church, workplace, union local, school or some other group you know to officially go fair trade for a month—and let us know about it! FTM is also looking for members, donors and volunteers.

You can make a difference

Our purchasing decisions in Manitoba can help to turn around the lives of exploited farmers and factory workers overseas. Shopping doesn't have to be, any longer, a selfish act!

Zack Gross is Program Coordinator at the Manitoba Council for International Co-operation (MCIC) and Secretary of Fair Trade Manitoba.

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What's Happening

Dec. 4—Manitoba Naturalists' Society Members' Night at Franco-Manitobain Cultural Centre, 341 Provencher Blvd, at 7:30. The first part of the evening will feature: (1) *What Happens When There is No "Murre" Cod*—using Seabirds as indicators for Northern Hudson Bay and (2) *Cycling in la Belle Province in Fall Colours*. The second part of the evening will be our member's market where you can purchase books, artwork, greeting cards, etc. Coffee, tea, cookies, in abundance! Call 943-9039 for info.

Dec. 16—*Christmas Bird Count* at Oak Hammock Marsh. Calling all bird enthusiasts! Explore the marsh and surrounding area during Oak Hammock Marsh's Annual Christmas Bird Count. Help us count our winter residents. The fee is \$5.00 for members and \$9.00 for non-members. Call 467-3300.

Dec. 27–29 & Jan. 3–5—*Winter Camp* at Oak Hammock Marsh. Come and enjoy winter by joining us for a frosty good time at winter camp! Activities can include snowshoeing, bannock baking, winter games and more. This camp has both indoor and outdoor components and is sure to please! Most appropriate for ages 6-9. Register today! Call 467-3300.

Dec. 31—*Veggie New Year's Eve!* Start your New Year's Eve with a Chinese vegan feast organized by the Winnipeg Vegetarian Association. Affinity Vegetarian Garden, 208 Edmonton St. at 5 pm. \$15 for WVA members or \$17 for non-members, tax & tip included. Call 843-0251 to reserve. Deadline for reservations is Dec. 30.

Jan. 8—*Protecting the Aquatic Environment: Threats and Their Sustainable Management*, with Dr. Jan Oleszkiewicz, Dept. of Civil Engineering, U of M. A Manitoba Naturalists Society Indoor Program Event. Pauline Boutal Theatre, Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, 340 Provencher Blvd. 7:30 pm. \$2 for members and \$6 for non-members. For information call the MNS office at 943-9029.

Jan. 13—*Conquer the Cold! Seine River Hike & Lunch*. The 4th annual *Discover the Seine in Winter* hike will begin and end at the Hindu Centre, 999 St. Anne Rd. followed by an Indian lunch, presentation from Save Our Seine, silent auction and door prizes. Start time 10 am, approximately 9 km. Advance registration required, deadline Jan. 5. See www.prairiepathfinders.mb.ca for details.

Jan. 22—*Eastern Region Provincial Forests: Take a Closer*

Look, with Tim Swanson (Forester, MB Conservation). A Manitoba Naturalists Society Indoor Program Event. Pauline Boutal Theatre, Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, 340 Provencher Blvd. 7:30 pm. \$2 for members and \$6 for non-members. For information call the MNS office at 943-9029.

Jan 23–25—*24th Annual Red River Basin Land & Water International Summit Conference*. Ramada Plaza Suites, Fargo, North Dakota. This year's theme is "The Ripple Effect: Working Today for a Better Tomorrow" and continues to build on past conferences through a basin-wide approach for identifying issues such as water quality and flood damage reduction. The conference is intended to foster international cooperation in identifying watershed issues of concern to citizens living and working in the Red River Basin. It is a public forum for education, training and information dissemination. Visit <http://www.redriverbasincommission.org/Conference/conference.html>

Feb. 5—*Manitoba, Winds of Opportunity* with Jim Crone, Director of Energy Economic Development, Province of Manitoba. Jim will provide an overview of the global wind industry and what's on the horizon for Manitoba, and an update on the St. Leon project, Manitoba's first wind farm. A Manitoba Naturalists Society Indoor Program Event. Pauline Boutal Theatre, Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, 340 Provencher Blvd. 7:30 pm. \$2 for members and \$6 for non-members. For information call the MNS office at 943-9029.

Feb. 23—*Farm Focus Day* at Boissevain School, celebrating/stimulating rural diversity with a Trade Fair and presentations on farm opportunities. Announcing winners of Small Farm Challenge. No registration. Lunch provided by Turtle Mountain Ag Society for \$2. Comedy/Music evening. For more info Call/Email: 534-6296 / tmedc@mts.net

Feb. 24—*Reversing the Trend Conference* at Boissevain School, presentations on repopulation and viability of smaller scale farms and rural businesses. Pre-registration requested. Cost is \$15 including lunch. Call/Email: 534-6296 / tmedc@mts.net.

Feb. 26—*Orchids, Beauty in Diversity* with Doris Ames and Eugene Reime, Native Orchid Conservation Inc. A Manitoba Naturalists Society Indoor Program Event. Pauline Boutal Theatre, Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, 340 Provencher Blvd. 7:30 pm. \$2 for members and \$6 for non-members. For information call the MNS office at 943-9029.

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MANITOBA WILDLANDS

Supplemental Groundwater Supply Requested CEC Hearing: Pembina Valley Water Cooperative

By Kimberley Ballance

The Pembina Valley Water Cooperative (PVWC) is a regional water supplier that provides treatment and distribution services to approximately 45,000 residents in south central and south-western Manitoba. Currently the PVWC treats water from the Red River and the Stephenfield Reservoir. Although the PVWC is only utilizing about half of their licensed water withdrawal, they have indicated that their current water supply is susceptible to periods of drought. As part of their risk management strategy, they need to ensure that the water supply is safe and secure. The PVWC contends that a new supply from an independent source is the solution.

The potential source selected was the lower sand unit of the Glaciofluvial Sandilands Aquifer Complex in southeastern Manitoba. This virgin supply would require the water to be transported 95 kilometers to the Morris treatment plant which is an existing part of the PVWC distribution system.

In response to a number of concerns expressed by the public, the Clean Environment Commission was instructed to hold hearings for this proposal. The CEC hearings were held on November 7th and 9th of 2006 in Freidensfield, Manitoba. PVWC

presented the proposed project including an overview of the technical aspects of the pumping of the aquifer. The CEC panel, in particular Ian Halket, questioned the proponent on their knowledge of the recharge rate of the aquifer and downstream effects. It was determined that it would be impossible to know concisely how much water was available and how downstream users would be affected.

The Manitoba Eco-Network, as a registered participant, hired experts to bring quality information to the CEC panel. Issues brought to the table included a thorough review of existing legislation at the local, provincial and national levels, that would indicate that the project should not be able to proceed, if government followed its own policies and laws. Interestingly, the RM of Piney, the area where the proposed withdrawal point is, implemented bylaw 45/06 that prohibits the bulk transfer of water from their territory.

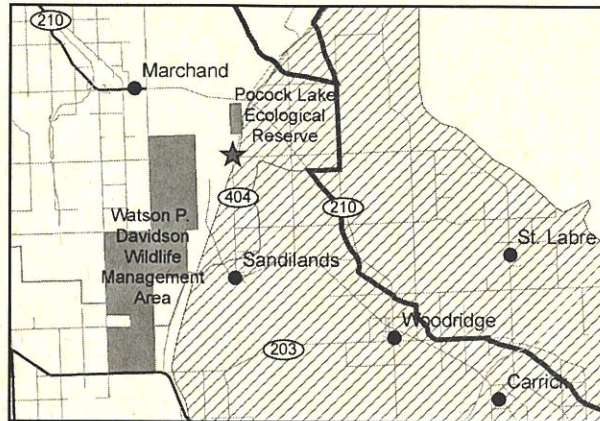
Dr. David Brooks, Policy Research Director of Friends of the Earth Canada, assisted the Manitoba Eco-Network in their presentation with a strong argument for water conservation and utilizing water of appropriate quality. Conservation efforts in the PVWC supply region would be a much more cost efficient alternative to the \$12 million proposed project. Even conservative retrofits to homes and businesses would justify this alternative. (We're not talking about reverting to outhouses here, simply using low volume technology that is readily available on the market.)

Evaluation of land and water use practices

Prior to the construction of new water projects, Dr. Brooks advised that an evaluation be completed of current land and water use practices to determine how better use could be made of existing natural water flows. As well, water quality should be connected to water use. For uses where non-potable water can be utilized, it should be available for use. Given that good quality ground water is found to the east of the Red River and lower quality ground water to the west, it is logical to make the best use of regional resources by extracting the latter for those uses that do not require potable water.

Although a number of options had been explored by the PVWC in their reports, there was no serious thought given to the "no-project option" as proposed by Dr. Brooks. Sam Schellenberg, CEO of the PVWC, indicated in his rebuttal that a no-project option would mean "devastation" to the communities and people that PVWC serves. This, however, is in total disregard to existing water that is being used unsustainably in the region. The no-project option does not mean that no action is taken, instead, alternative policies or programs would be put in place to provide the same services and at the same level of

see "Drilling in Sandilands" next page ►



PVWC wants a major well (marked by star). Map from PVWC's report, Please Look the Other Way.

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Drilling in Sandilands

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security. A no-project option would force the proponent and its municipal owners to undergo an overhaul of existing water use practices in the region.

Low flows on the Red River are understandably an issue that the region is forced to deal with. Drought conditions on the Red River are likely to seriously reduce flow about once every twenty years. Given that Canada does not have an apportionment agreement with the United States, the Red River flow could be reduced in the future. However, from a cost-efficiency perspective, organizations are well advised to choose options that emphasize value. "The general economic prescription in planning is to invest capital to cope with chronic problems but to use operating funds to cope with periodic ones" (Brooks, 2006). This means that when problems occur only occasionally, it is cheaper to deal with them at that time, rather than investing huge sums of money up front on capital projects that will remain mostly idle until needed.

A number of municipalities and stakeholders spoke for and against the proposed project. Generally, RMs and municipalities where residents are utilizing PVWC's supply and distribution system were in favour of the proposed project, while residents outside the region either requested increased environmental examination and scientific assessment or outright rejected the proposed project.

Manitoba Eco-Network made a closing statement indicating three final points that the panel should consider.

1. The Sandilands Uplands region has significant ecological importance and should be given a special designation and protection.
2. The PVWC should have to re-organize water use within their region prior to accessing new supplies in other areas. Conservation needs to be a priority.
3. The no-project alternative is the path that should be taken to move towards sustainability.

Sam Schellenberg made a closing statement indicating that the PVWC request for water was a small request and that the project will increase information regarding groundwater in the region. He also indicated that the PVWC was committed to their mitigation plan and if surrounding water users were affected, the tap would be shut off, regardless of the \$12 million capital investment. Finally, Mr. Schellenberg stated that the PVWC plays an important role and cannot continue to rely on the Red River for its water supply.

The CEC panel is required to make a recommendation to the Minister within 90 days. Copies of the hearing proceedings can be found online at http://www.reidreporting.com/pembina_valley.html.

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Growing with the Community Since 1985

Going 3D for Alternative Transportation

By Tom Young

Winnipeg is a city of automobiles. Although there is a minority that use other modes of transportation for reasons of health, ideology or inability to afford the cost of driving, most Winnipeggers drive—as simple as that. Other options are not generally seen as convenient. It need not be this way.

The debate over alternative transportation options in the City of Winnipeg has been growing over the past several years. There was the rapid transit plan that was notoriously axed by the newly-elected Sam Katz in 2004, who wanted to shift federal and provincial funding to community centres and who argued that a 'Made in Winnipeg' plan was needed. Then in May of 2006, the monthly Critical Mass ride through downtown, aimed at raising awareness of cycling as a mode of transport, caused great controversy when several riders were arrested by police. Significant activism to raise cycling issues in the city followed. The fall civic election can be seen as a sort of culmination of this activity with a local group, SPIN, organizing a (peaceful) rally of over 500 cyclists on Pembina Highway and candidates such as Kaj Hasselriis campaigning heavily in favour of public transit and alternative transportation options.

With Sam Katz back in the Mayor's Office, it is hard to say if alternative transportation will gain much ground. Based on his previous term in office, one would have to conclude 'No'. But even if Katz were to surprise us all and move aggressively forward with implementing the new rapid transit plan, improving pedestrian infrastructure and creating real commuter cycling routes, would it be enough to change the way Winnipeggers travel in their city? Likely not. There are things missing in Winnipeg besides just the physical infrastructure of alternative transportation, things that improved urban planning could go a long way towards addressing, if the political will and belief in good planning existed.

3Ds: Density, diversity, and design

Robert Cervero, an American researcher into urban transportation, has identified 'three D's' that are necessary to foster high-quality public transit service and highly-walkable streets: density, diversity, and design.

Density is a four-letter word for many people; it is often associated with poverty, crime, noise and ugly high-rises. But this negative perception need not be the case. High density neighbourhoods, if well-designed, can be very livable, safe and urbane places to live. The revitalization of the Exchange District shows that density and quality of life can go hand-in-hand. And of course, density can also put enough people in a smaller amount of space such that high-frequency, convenient public transit service becomes a possibility.

Diversity refers to a mix of uses side-by-side, or even within buildings. Land use zoning came about in the early 20th century largely as a health measure, separating noxious industry from the places people lived and shopped. Throughout the century, however, zoning went much further than it really needed

to, separating everything out into little zoning compartments, with obvious impacts on transportation: if shopping, offices or movie theatres are not allowed to share space with people's homes, people are forced to travel more. Diversity means breaking down some of those barriers and mixing different uses again. Putting homes or offices over shops could mean that hopping in the car would no longer be the most convenient option.

Good design can mean the difference between one of those ugly high-rises and a city landmark that everyone points to with

pride. But design isn't just about architecture; in urban terms it is also about the public spaces between buildings, our streets. Drivers, speeding by at 60 km an hour or more, have very little relationship to the streetscape in which they are driving. Pedestrians, on the other hand, move at a much slower pace, browse shop windows, and interact with others on the sidewalk. This means that the environment through which a pedestrian moves is much more important to them than that in which a driver moves. You can see this in the comparison between the drab boringness of the parking lots and strip malls lining major arteries like Pembina Highway, as compared with the liveliness and people-oriented

buildings one can see along Corydon Avenue.

Pursuing the 'three D's' doesn't mean banning cars from the streets. What it does mean is that we take steps to rebalance our transportation system so that there are real options out there for people, and that our urban environment does its utmost to make it easy for people to move about in other ways. Cars have their place, and they will always be the easiest option for certain types of journeys. But the key concept is that not having a car is currently a major handicap, whereas in the future making a journey with a car could become just one among many viable and convenient options.

The reasons to do this are manifold. Obviously, walking, cycling and public transit consume fewer resources, spew fewer contaminants into the air, and contribute to more active lifestyles than driving cars. But these modes are also more socially just and economically accessible. Not everyone can afford a car, but most can afford a bike, and almost everyone comes equipped with a pair of feet.

Take the lead or fall further behind

Winnipeg is a slow-growing city, but change is happening. Supporting public transit, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure investments with planning policies that increase density and land use diversity along major routes and improve the design of both buildings and streets could, over time, create urban spaces that are not only more interesting and active, but also more supportive of alternative transportation options. Things are changing in the world; Winnipeg can try to take the lead, or it can sit back and watch itself fall further and further behind.

ECO



Illustration by David Henry

Pigs and Water

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gen in our freshwater lakes, most notably Lake Winnipeg. Manure runoff is exacerbated when it rains heavily after application and during spring run-off, especially if manure has been applied in the non-growing season.

The key culprit here is phosphorus, which has been the subject of much research and discussion in developing both the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation (under the Environment Act) and the Water Quality Management Zones for Nutrients Regulation (under the Water Protection Act). Essentially, a government expert committee developed recommendations for phosphorus application to agricultural lands, and they were widely disputed—as too restrictive by the pork industry and too permissive by the environmentalist farming community.

More spreadlands are needed

Public meetings (not hearings) were held on the issue, in what was broadly seen as an unsuccessful example of public process, and now the government has issued a final regulation under the Environment Act. It claims that this is “one of the strongest” such regulations in the country (of the two that now exist). The rural group, Citizens for the Responsible Application of Phosphorus (CRAP) will be studying the new regulation over the coming days. Their first reaction is that it contains some minor improvements to the draft, but still allows for over-application of phosphorus. The group believes that phosphorus must be regulated based on residual soil nutrient levels, that manure application must be tailored to site-specific conditions, and that manure application rates must not exceed the average requirements for the specific crop to be grown. This position has been endorsed by 24 organizations in the water caucus. Ruth Pryzner of CRAP states that the problem is the small area of land on which the manure is spread: only 5% of cropland in all the Prairie provinces. If the industry insists on housing so many animals in confined areas, the spreadlands will have to be increased, she says. Unfortunately, this will cost the industry a lot of money.

The report that the CEC will be reviewing spends quite a bit of time on the issue of manure, and how it relates to other elements of the new Water Protection regime. It's clear that no matter what all the other contributors are to the excess nutrient problem, (and the City of Winnipeg's water treatment plant is a big one) the government properly wants to deal with the hog industry portion sooner and not later. Of note, the government also announced a fund to assist producers negatively impacted by the new regulations on manure application, and pledged to have more enforcement and monitoring personnel in place.

Another interesting component of the Water Quality Management Zones for Nutrients (WQMZN) regulation has been introduced for public comment—restrictions on application of fertilizers containing nitrogen and phosphorus for some soil types, and a ban on application in buffer zones around water bodies.

This of course, includes urban areas—lawns, parks and golf courses. Ian Greaves, of the Campaign for Pesticide Reduction! Winnipeg, hails the new restrictions, noting that many homeowners don't appear to consider at all what occurs beyond their property line. With the many hundreds of turf areas bordering water bodies in Winnipeg, the new restriction should assist in greatly reducing nutrient run off in urban areas. Landscapers and lawn care companies will have to adopt more sustainable turf management methods, Greaves observes, as current non-organic practices are dependent on the application of fertilizers. A question does arise about whether compost from backyard bins will be allowed for turf care in these buffer zones areas. Manitoba Eco-Network's Organic Lawn Care project advocates the use of compost as a perfect soil amendment.

The new buffer zones regulation is open for a 60 day comment period, ending January 22, 2007. The regulation can be accessed through the Public Registry (File # 1514), or online at www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/ or call us at 947-6511 for assistance. Check the CEC's website at www.cecmanitoba.ca for updates on hog industry hearings (not posted at time of writing) and www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/envprograms/livestock/ for details on the CEC's terms of reference, and a copy of the hog industry report referenced in this article.

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Proposed Ban on Phosphates in Detergents

By Jennifer Lukovich

In the December 2006 edition of Canadian Geographic, Lake Winnipeg is recognized as Canada's “Forgotten Lake”. Lake Winnipeg is indeed a lake in crisis. Excessive nutrient loading to Lake Winnipeg from its watershed, encompassing four provinces and three states, resulted in the largest algal blooms on record in summer 2006. With evidence of increased eutrophication and a mass of algal blooms in the North and South Basins, it is essential that definitive and easily implemented legislation be established to ensure significant reduction in phosphorus, which strongly contributes to the growth of algae.

Bill 206, “The phosphorus-free dishwashing detergent act”, is an example of such legislation. Introduced into the Manitoba Legislature by Dr. Jon Gerrard and the Manitoba Liberal Party on November 21st, 2006, Bill 206 calls for a provincial ban on the use and sale of automatic dishwasher detergents containing phosphorus. With an anticipated 2% reduction in phosphorus loading resulting from this ban, and the availability of phosphate-

free dishwasher detergents on the market, Bill 206 will assist in restoring Lake Winnipeg to health in a manner similar to highly-effective legislation for phosphate-free laundry detergents implemented over 30 years ago to save Lake Erie.

The proposed legislation for phosphate-free dishwasher detergents is one from a series of recommendations outlined in such reports as the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board Report, “Our Collective Responsibility”, as well as the “Saving Lake Winnipeg” report based on a forum hosted by the Manitoba Liberal Party in March 2006 amongst scientists, stakeholders, public policy-makers, and environmentalists from communities in the Lake Winnipeg watershed.

Additional information on Bill 206 may be found at <http://www.manitobaliberals.ca/jonsblog.html>, and the “Saving Lake Winnipeg” report at <http://www.manitobaliberals.ca/documents/Saving-Lake-Winnipeg-Report.pdf>. If you would like to see this bill become legislation, please contact your MLA, with a letter of support.

Manitoba's Golden Goose

By Peter Miller

Two recent announcements have focused on Manitoba Hydro's ability to bring wealth to Manitoba from export earnings. We need to look equally at how that wealth is produced, how it is distributed, and how power is priced to Manitobans.

Keeping the golden eggs coming

Several weeks ago, the Province announced a \$2.2 billion agreement to sell 375 MW of electricity to Minnesota's Northern States Power from 2015 to 2025. If completed, this sale will fulfill the promise of firm export sales at a favorable price that justify the construction of Wuskwatim.

Note, though, that despite the addition of 200 MW from Wuskwatim, "aggressive" conservation programs, and 100 MW of new wind generation (with another 1000 MW of wind planned), this new contract is for 25% less power than the current \$1.7 billion 500 MW contract running to 2015. As Hydro CEO Bob Brennan observed, it is more money for less power.

The good news is that the price is right. The bad news is that all of Manitoba's conservation and wind development are not yet sufficient to offset a domestic load growth of 80 MW a year gnawing steadily into our capacity for energy exports that bring millions of dollars into the Manitoba economy each year.

So how can the flow of golden eggs from the Hydro goose be maintained? Government's answer in last week's Throne Speech is: build Conawapa.

Distributing the golden eggs

But how will these earnings be distributed? Except for a small portion to fund conservation, the bulk will subsidize our electricity rates. Manitobans pay significantly less than the depreciated costs of supplying them power and much less than market value. Indeed, perversely, the more valuable electricity is in the marketplace, the less Manitobans pay for and thus value it, because the subsidy increases.

What's wrong with artificially low electricity rates? The short answer is that it undermines conservation, costs money, harms the economy, is inequitable, and harms the environment.

- Low rates discourage conservation investments because payback is too low. Subsidizing inefficient usage while promoting Power Smart is like stepping on the brakes and the accelerator at the same time.

- Dollars dissipated on wasted energy are unproductive, and higher-than-needed electricity consumption reduces power available to earn export dollars. Jobs and business opportunities in retrofit and energy efficiency industries are also lost.

- University of Winnipeg economist Michael Benarroch reckons that Manitoba could be debt-free if we had sold power at Saskatchewan's rates and used the extra income to retire debt.

- Those who consume more power grab more subsidy (or, less politely, the biggest piggy gets the most slop). This is inequitable.

- Wasted electrical power produces environmental costs by accelerating the construction of new generation and transmission like Conawapa and removing the option of displacing electricity generated from GHG-emitting coal and gas in Ontario and the U.S.

A better alternative

In Public Utilities Board testimony earlier this year, energy economist Jim Lazar estimated that Manitobans would reduce their electrical consumption by a third if faced with full-value

electrical rates, thereby freeing up for export additional power approximating the yield expected from Conawapa. Whatever was taken from Manitoba citizens as a whole in higher rates could be returned to them in conservation assistance, lower taxes, and additional social services. The significant extra export earnings enabled by more efficient energy usage at home would be gravy.

It is time for the Province and Manitoba Hydro to consider replacing the current lowest rate goal with a power smart rate goal, i.e. one which reflects the full value of Manitoba's electricity, at least in the tail block rates. A good example is Seattle City Light, which charges only four cents a kilowatt hour for the first block of energy and more than doubles the rate thereafter. Special lower rates and extra conservation assistance are available for low-income, elderly, and disabled persons.

In addition, our strong export earnings, if not squandered on rate subsidies, could support a sizable dividend to the Province (as occurs, for example, in BC and SK) available for social investments, debt retirement and tax reduction. The Manitoba Hydro Act might require amendment for this to happen.

Let's stop wasting our Hydro wealth in unfair ways subsidizing rates that promote inefficient energy usage. We can better preserve "the Manitoba advantage" with power smart rates that provide a modest amount of power to address basic needs efficiently but escalate thereafter to full value. A power smart rate policy would simultaneously enrich Manitoba and increase global environmental benefits by freeing exportable power to displace coal and gas generation in other jurisdictions. It could do so without building Conawapa.

Once we've taken that step we can debate the merits of Conawapa and optimize the value of new generation.

Peter Miller is a Senior Scholar at the University of Winnipeg and frequent intervener before the Public Utilities Board on behalf of Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM) and Time to Respect Earth's Ecosystems (TREE).

[A version of this article appeared in the November 26, 2006 edition of the Winnipeg Free Press—ed.]

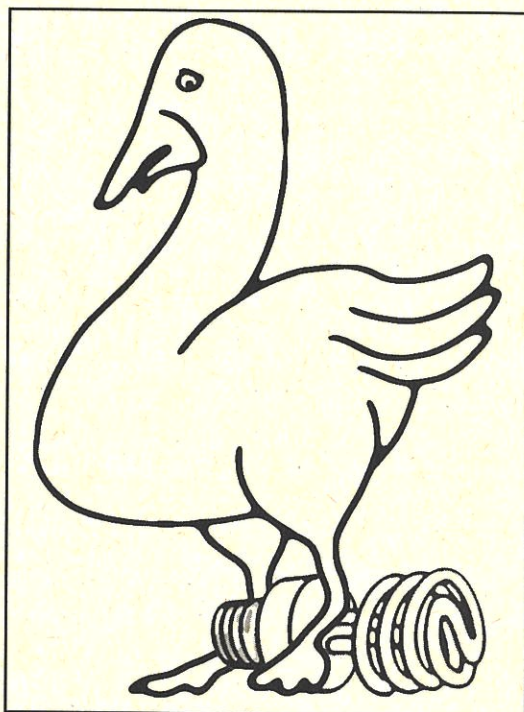


Illustration by David Henry

Naturescape Manitoba

By the Naturescape Manitoba Collective

For those who love nature and gardening, a new book is about to arrive in bookstores. The book is *Naturescape Manitoba: All you need is a little space*, and the special part is that this book is specific to southern Manitoba, the Prairies Ecozone to be exact. The Prairies Ecozone starts at the southern border, includes the cities of Winnipeg and Brandon, and extends north all the way to Dauphin.

Naturescape Manitoba is unique in the realm of gardening books because it focuses on the plants and animals native to Manitoba. It is a "how-to" source book for people who want to bring back a bit of the natural world to their surroundings, attract more birds and butterflies to their garden, or simply do something different in their yard. It's an exciting new book offering an alternative to conventional gardening approaches and providing readers with information and a wide range of project ideas for native planting, low-maintenance yard care and water conservation.

This 200-plus page book features full-colour photographs, original sketches and watercolour paintings and detailed species information unique to the Prairies Ecozone of Manitoba. It includes descriptions of plants, what they need to grow and

survive, and even ways to combine them in a garden setting. There are also chapters on birds, butterflies and even some of the lesser-known creatures such as toads that might inhabit a garden. *Naturescape Manitoba* provides advice and projects on

how to make your yard hospitable to the creatures that you want to see while also giving ideas and projects for deterring the pests. In the back of the book there are tables providing very detailed information on over 270 plants from wildflowers to trees, and over 225 animals from butterflies to deer, all native to southern Manitoba.

Naturescape Manitoba was created as part of a collaborative initiative of Manitoba conservation groups and agencies: the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, the Manitoba Naturalists' Society, the Fort Whyte Centre, the City of Winnipeg, Environment Canada, and Manitoba Conservation. *Naturescape Manitoba: All you need is a little space*, published by the Manitoba Naturalists' Society, will be available in local bookstores such as the Living Prairie Museum, McNally Robinson, and Fort Whyte Centre in December 2006.

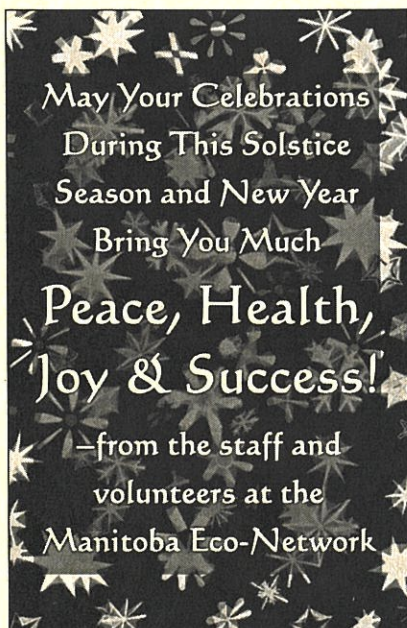
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Some Changes at the Eco-Centre

Visitors to the EcoCentre will note some tenant changes here on the third floor. The Boreal Forest Network left the EcoCentre last Spring. Manitoba Food Charter was a temporary tenant over the summer months, until their new home at St. Matthews Anglican Church was ready. Now, that space will be occupied by two groups who have agreed to share it: Beyond Factory Farming has a half-time staff person (who happens to be Glen Koroluk,

now the half-time Water Caucus coordinator), working on promotion of socially and environmentally responsible livestock production. The Churchill Northern Studies Centre will soon join him, on a part-time basis, as they set up a Winnipeg base for their major capital campaign to rebuild the Centre in Churchill. We welcome these two new tenants!

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Are you a Climate Champion?

By Anne Lindsey

Yes? Then Eco-Journal is looking for you! A new feature in the Journal will celebrate citizens among us who are going ahead and making a difference. Not content with waiting for governments and industry to act, these folks are taking matters into their own hands and changing the way they do things. We want to hear from you if you're someone who has made a significantly climate-friendly change in the last six months. And we also want to hear if you've been making those choices for a long time. We want to share your accomplishments with our readers, and inspire others to join the "Climate Champions' Honour Roll".

Walking the Talk

Two of our inaugural Climate Champions hang out at the University of Winnipeg, and both of them talk a lot about climate change.

Danny Blair is PARC-MB Hydro Climate Change Research Professor in the Department of Geography. He also happens to be the Co-Chairperson of Climate Change Connection. Danny is well known in the community for his active promotion of the latest climate change science, and works hard to advocate for change. Recently, Danny made the decision to ditch his car. Reasoning that this particu-

lar vehicle was not as fuel-efficient as it could be, he was using it less and less. He has now relinquished his insurance and is taking the bus on a regular basis. Danny notes that the bus is proving convenient, and though he may purchase a fuel efficient vehicle in the future, he's convinced that for him, no- or low-car use is a viable option.



Danny Blair shows off his now unused plates.

Going high-efficiency

Mark Burch is the Sustainability Coordinator for the University of Winnipeg, where he has been instrumental in getting strong policies in place as a foundation for major environmental changes on campus. But his passion for protecting the climate doesn't end there: Mark and his partner Charlotte are completing a major retrofit of their modestly sized home in the Riverview area.

Re-doing the insulation and wiring, changing some major appliances, replacing the furnace with a high-efficiency model, and retrofitting all the windows (amongst other

measures) has resulted in a whopping 75% (gas) and 51% (electric) drop in their energy usage (and utility bills!). The natural gas reductions correspond directly, of course, to a 75% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

Mark and Charlotte can now demonstrate that they consume about 1/3 of the total energy used by the previous owner, and have calculated that their total greenhouse gas emissions as a household of two is about 1.5 tonnes per year. This is far below the national average of about 10 tonnes, and is an impressive example to other home owners!

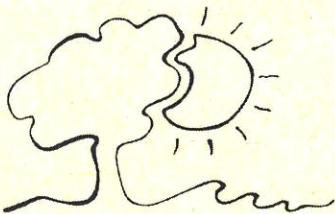
Person power

Our third "inaugural champion" is someone who has been substituting person power for fossil fuel power in his transportation habits for decades. Eco-Network member Kevin Miller has been a dedicated bicycle commuter since 1974 to and from his Transcona home and his work downtown, and not only that, he uses his bike for non-commuting transport as well. Kevin cycles in all weather and happily shares his tips for comfortable and safe cycling. He's been doing cycling advocacy since 1992 as a member of the Manitoba Cycling Association's Recreation Transportation Committee, and is also an active participant in Resource Conservation Manitoba's Commuter Challenge Planning Partners Group.

Best of all, Kevin has imparted his climate-friendly commuting practice to the next generation. His son is also an all-weather bicycle user, and neither of his adult kids own a car!

Congratulations to these Climate Champions!

Want to "join the club"? Tell us your climate-friendly story and help to inspire others to action. Climate Champions will soon be posted to the Climate Change Connection website at www.climatechangeconnection.org.



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Eco-Housing Project Seeks Participants

By Karen Ridd

A new form of environmentally conscious housing is coming to the Winnipeg region. Hazel Creek Commons is a developing co-housing project 30 minutes east of the city. Co-Housing combines the benefits of cooperative housing with the benefits of individual ownership: land is owned in common, many resources are shared, there is a strong emphasis on community—but people build and own individual homes.

The Hazel Creek project is striving to create an eco-village with straw bale construction, use of passive solar heating, and alternative grey and black water systems (such as biogas digesters or composting toilets). The co-housing project presently owns 80 acres of mixed arable and forested land, with a beautiful creek traversing the property,

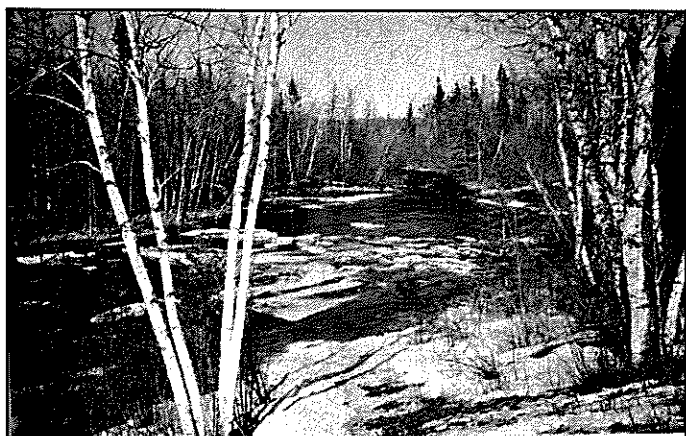
a large organic garden and room for small animal husbandry. The present house on the property is ideally suited to becoming a common house: it was built as a retreat centre, and has significant open space, large kitchen, and large windows overlooking the creek. Construction of the smaller individual units may begin as early as spring 2007, on land that has previously been a woodlot. All old-growth stands on the property will be protected.

For more information, or to join this project, contact Karen Ridd at 204-866-4489 or contact@hazelcreekcommons.org Web site: hazelcreekcommons.org.

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(Left) Playing on the new treefort at Hazel Creek Commons. Photo by Karen Ridd.



View of pristine Hazel Creek (left), enjoying life on the deck of the Common House (right). Photos by Gord McIntyre

The Manitoba Eco-Network

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Sign me up as a member of the Manitoba Eco-Network

Enclosed is a cheque for:

- \$25 Supporting member (individuals)
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- \$50 Other organizations (businesses, government departments and corporations that do not otherwise qualify for group membership)

I'm also enclosing a donation of _____ to help with your public education activities.
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I'm interested in volunteering for the Eco-Network. Please call me!

Name(s) _____ Group (if applicable) _____

Telephone # () _____ E-Mail _____

Mailing address _____ Postal Code _____

Area(s) of interest _____ Volunteer skills _____

A supporting membership includes a subscription to **Eco-Journal** as well as notice of events and regular updates on issues and is open to any individual.



Group members are entitled to nominate representatives for a position on the Eco-Network Steering Committee. Group membership is open to any non-governmental, non-profit group which has as one of its objectives the enhancing or furthering of environmental quality, protecting the environment or environmental education.