

Manitoba Eco-Network MEMBER UPDATE

Spring 1994

Important news about the
Eco-Network for member
groups and supporting
members only

Environmental Resource
Centre 867 Westminster. Call
772-7542, fax 772-7563 or
Email (WEB) to men @
web.apc.org

06/94 or earlier means time to renew

If you are a member group and your membership is due, a slip is included in this package for you to return. Please see that the person who is responsible for your group attends to the \$30 dues. You can double check your expiry date by the mailing label (month/year).

For individual members, you can check your mailing label the same way and send your \$25 membership fee to:

Manitoba Eco-Network,
Box 26007-116 Sherbrook St.
Winnipeg, MB R3C 4K9.

The sooner you renew, the easier and cheaper it is for the Network. Generous donations over the cost of membership are always welcome, of course, and eligible for a charitable tax receipt.

Calling all member groups and supporters

There are 8 positions open on the Manitoba Eco-Network's 15 member steering committee. Paid up member groups of the Manitoba Eco-Network are eligible to nominate one candidate each to stand for election to the steering committee. (Only paid-up member groups are permitted to vote in the election so check your mailing label -- if it says 05/94 or before your group owes \$30).

To nominate a representative to be on the ballot your group should write a letter expressing your intention to do so by May 9. Call Sharon at 772-7542 if you need more information.

The election will be held in the business part of our Annual General Meeting on May 28 from 1 to 3 p.m. at St. Paul's Anglican Church 830 Point Road.

Getting involved

Individual supporting members are welcome at the meeting, but cannot vote unless you are representing one of the member groups. If you are someone who is interested in being involved at the steering committee level, you can express your interest to a member group that you are involved with, or you can call the Network staff -- we might be able to match you with a group that wants to be represented. There are many other ways of getting involved in the Eco-Network

For the record a steering committee member's responsibilities include attending monthly meetings, involvement in committees (standing or ad hoc), an enthusiasm for our communications and networking mandate, a commitment to bring forward the interests of the group you represent and to communicate back the needs and news of the Network, representing the Eco-Network to the community, providing a policy framework for the staff to operate under, assisting with the identification of funding and other resources, and other activities as determined by the steering committee.

In short, there is quite a lot of work for very little glory, other than the satisfaction of contributing to a very worthwhile organization and a chance to express your own interests in affecting change in our society's response to environmental challenges.

Also don't forget that member organizations are eligible to nominate delegates to the Canadian Environmental Network Annual Meeting and Conference. Our region is eligible to choose three delegates (in addition to one staff person and our representative to the national steering committee) whose travel and accommodation costs will be subsidized by the CEN. Again, call Sharon at 772-7542 for information.

MANITOBA ECO-NETWORK ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

May 28 1 pm to 3 pm

St. Paul's Anglican Church, 830 North Drive

New developments at the Eco-Network

Re-energizing the movement in Manitoba

The Eco-Network is examining organizational changes to re-energize our mandate, and pursuing new projects to put solid resources behind Manitoba environmental efforts.

Following a retreat in February the Eco-Network steering committee has decided to look at setting up issue caucuses similar to ones that operate nationally under the wing of the Canadian Environmental Network (CEN). Health and Education were mentioned as potential caucuses which would draw together environmental activists and others interested in the interplay between those issues and environmentalism. CEN caucuses are allotted a small amount of coordination by CEN staff and a bit of SEED money for basic activities (i.e. mailouts). Beyond that the caucuses are free to pursue their own priorities and projects and responsible for finding their own resources. The Manitoba Eco-Network has yet to determine the scope of activities or support that is realistic at the provincial level.

Another idea to re-energize the environment movement is to hold regular panel discussions on issues at the same time each month as a way of focusing action, swapping information and developing strategy and involving new recruits in the groups that are active. The first discussion topic is still to be announced but is tentatively scheduled for May 18.

Watch for more on this on your favourite bulletin board.

Volunteer Program to recruit activists

The Eco-Network has been granted \$30,000 by the Winnipeg Foundation to fund a one year Volunteer Effectiveness Program. The program will allow the Network to assess its own and member groups volunteer needs, and then actively recruit new volunteers. The program will provide training and orientation for the new volunteers and place them with participating groups.

The Eco-Network is designing the program to respond to an ongoing problem: grassroots groups tend to dwindle in numbers as their work becomes more complicated and intense. Organizational details get overlooked because the priority is always responding to issues. The

idea is not to change the groups but add to them so the core of activists can keep responding to issues, but with some backup. We hope that by providing orientation and training we can help the groups utilize volunteers that might have otherwise been inaccessible.

The project also explicitly promotes and supports self-initiated action. The Eco-Network hopes to encourage personal action as well as the inception of neighbourhood groups, coalitions, letter writing networks -- whatever action individuals are able to pursue.

Stay tuned to this channel

The Eco-Network is actively pursuing funding to develop a television series for public access television. Preliminary discussions with Videon (VPW-11) elicited enthusiasm about a new environmental show, especially for our attempt to design a show that gets out of the studio and captures on video the ideas and alternatives that are available within the environment movement in Manitoba.

Producing a show doesn't require additional funding, but we are aiming as high as we can, with the understanding that we will undertake what is possible.

It's actually premature to be even talking about this, but we are so excited at the prospect that we couldn't contain ourselves.

Core funding still the problem

Even though we are launching new programs the funding picture at the Eco-Network isn't actually rosy -- we still face the problem of inadequate core funding and subsequent reliance on projects to provide administrative money.

We are also feeling the effects of the expiration of our development program grant November 1 (and the departure of Development Director Sandy Hurwitz at the end of December) and looking ahead with trepidation at the expiry of a three year grant for our communications program at the end of this calendar year.

Carrying out new programs may seem like spitting into the wind but we are determined not to be deterred from the important work that we know needs to be done.

You can help by making sure that you or your group renew your membership, by finding room in your newsletter or presentations to include a pitch for support to the Network, and by bringing your ideas and support to the Annual General Meeting and Potluck Dinner on May 28.

Taking action on elections

A provincial election is imminent, maybe not this Spring or Fall but within the year. Traditionally the Eco-Network has played a coordinating role in organizing candidate questionnaires and a leaders debate.

To get things rolling the Eco-Network is asking for your suggestions about questions and concerns that should be addressed during an election campaign. Bryan Johnson, an Eco-Network Steering Committee member representing Citizens Against Neurotoxins is also initiating an effort to collect policy statements on provincial issues to influence the level of debate during the campaign.

The policies will be collected into a document for circulation to candidates at the close of nomination. While the document may only serve as "pre-fabricated" policy for politicians who mean well, the goal is also for some of the suggestions of environmental groups to emerge as legislation or policy after the election.

To get involved, to get your policy statements included or to find out more call Bryan at 452-9748.

David Suzuki and the Manitoba Eco-Network

The Manitoba Eco-Network is assisting with an upcoming visit to Winnipeg by David Suzuki.

The geneticist and host of CBC's Nature of Things is including Winnipeg in his cross country Change Tour which is raising funds for the David Suzuki Foundation. The tour is striving to bring together existing knowledge and practical experience into a new set of ecological ground rules for sustainability.

The talk at the W on Monday May 30 also includes an address from Manitoba's First Nations, an address by Tara Cullis and a book signing by David Suzuki.

Tickets are available after May 1 for \$21.50 (\$16.50 for members of the Manitoba Eco-Network. All tickets purchased from the Eco-Network will support our Environmental Resource Centre and other activities.

To get your tickets drop into 867 Westminister Avenue or call us at 772-7542 (cash or cheque only please).

Reclaiming the Spirit of Community: Tools for Action in Building Healthy Community Networks Integrating § Health § Environment § Community Economic Development

Co-sponsored by
Healthy Communities
Winnipeg and the
Manitoba Eco-Network

With workshops on:
*Community Development Alternatives, Green City, Food
Systems, Health and Safety, Urban Village and
Community Culture Building*

MAY 14

..... 9 to 4 p.m. Crossways in Common
222 Furby at Broadway

For information or to register call conference coordinator Amanda Brabant (284-1761)

Restating the Eco-Network's purpose

We're different from most groups but an important part of the picture ...

Often the Manitoba Eco-Network is called upon to explain itself and sometimes even member groups have a hard time expressing succinctly what we are about. Coming up to our Annual General Meeting, and, given some of the other initiatives the Network is pursuing, it probably wouldn't hurt to repeat ourselves.

Firstly, because we are a group of groups (about 40 voting members) the Eco-Network doesn't take public positions on issues. We are explicitly a non-advocacy communications and public education vehicle by and for the environmental groups in Manitoba.

That may be where some of the confusion lies -- we're different from most groups. We see it as the role of the member groups to advocate on particular issues while we reserve the right to advocate only for public participation in decision-making about our environment. While we're not in the news on the day to day struggles against destructive projects, negligent enforcement or misguided policy, that doesn't mean we are absent from the struggle altogether. We aren't shy to bring debate on these issues to the public in *Eco-Journal* or in public meetings and the groups know our resource centre is their resource centre.

This approach means that we are able to do what others cannot -- we are largely a pro-active rather than a reactive organization -- not that there aren't a good deal of crises that need a response, it's just that there has to be an

independent voice that tries to make inroads on public education, to support the efforts being made by individuals in our province

and to provide a forum for the expression of comprehensive alternatives.

Our three areas of effort are: basic support for the member groups (i.e. meeting space, fax machine etc., referrals, coalition building) outreach and education to the public and potential activists, and networking with other regional and national networks.

We have a variety of tools to accomplish these goals, including *Eco-Journal*, which highlights member group activities, reports on other issues of concern and presents alternative views, public forums such as election debates or panel discussions), the *Green Guide to Winnipeg* and our Environmental Resource Centre.

We are very proud that the Eco-Network is one organization that is actively recruiting new support, not just for our own existence, but for the environment movement in Manitoba. New initiatives such as our Volunteer Effectiveness Program will help mobilize the goodwill we have earned into active participation in member groups and local issues.

When we are asked to explain ourselves in a sentence we usual say that we emphasize local issues, support grassroots environmental groups and conduct outreach and public education.

From that jumping off point the Network is what you, and the organizations you support, make of it.

MANITOBA ECO-NETWORK ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & POTLUCK DINNER

Business Meeting from 1 to 3 p.m.

- *Steering Committee Elections*
- *Selection of delegate to the Canadian Environmental Network*
- *Member groups info swap*

Vegetarian Potluck Dinner 6 - 9 p.m.

- *Dessert Auction and Silent Auction*
- *1994 Environmental Awards Ceremony*
- *Presentation on The Future of Manitoba's Parks by CPAWS*

May 28 St. Paul's Anglican Church, 830 Point Road and North Drive in Fort Garry

TICKETS (\$5 ADULTS, CHILDREN FREE) AVAILABLE BY PHONING 772-7542