

October 2008



INSIDE:

- CLIMATE CHAMPIONS...2
- VOTE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT...3
- STACK TESTING SECURED...4
- ACTION ON PESTICIDE FIRE...5
- KIRKENDALL WALKS INTO HISTORY..7
- DISCOVERING ART BY BUS...8

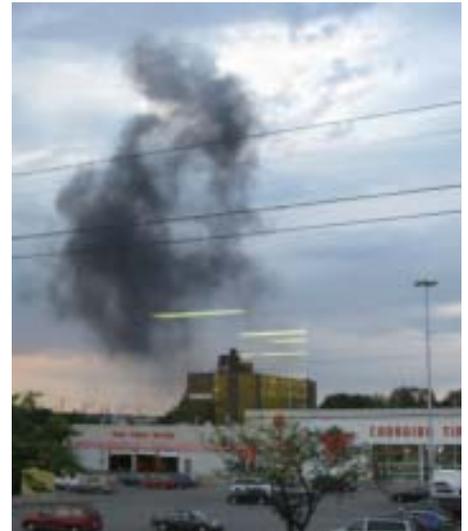
MEETING WITH US STEEL

EH staff and community reps sit down with new owners of Stelco as soot fallout increases

Environment Hamilton's Brenda Johnson and Lynda Lukasik, along with community members Lorna Moreau and Debbie Levo, met with representatives from US Steel in mid-August. The timing of the meeting turned out to be ideal as it was held right on the heels of

the multiple releases of large black clouds of particulate from the plant's blast furnace (referred to as 'blast furnace bleeds').

While we were expecting to meet with environmental staff from the company, we were also joined by Doug Matthews, the president of US Steel Canada, several plant production managers, and representatives from the company's corporate affairs office. The meeting proved to be a extremely valuable opportunity not only to ask plenty of questions about the recent emission problems, but also to



hear about the company's plans to address on-going environmental problems at the plant. Further, the meeting provided community representatives with an

continued on next page

TAR SANDS SHOWDOWN

The guest speaker at this year's Spirit of Red Hill Valley lecture will be Tony Clarke, the executive director of the Polaris Institute and the author of a new book called

Tar Sands Showdown: Canada and the New Politics of Oil in an Age of Climate Change.



Clarke has co-authored several books with Maude Barlow of the

Council of Canadians, including *Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water*. He has also led campaigns against NAFTA, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), and the World Trade Organization.

The free lecture will take place on Monday, November 10 at 7:30 pm at First Unitarian Church at 170 Dundurn Street South.

THE POLITICS OF COUNTING TREES

The cumulative impacts of Trees Count inventories

EH has just completed its seventh Trees Count inventory. In addition to adding a great deal to our knowledge of Hamilton's urban forest, this highly popular program appears to have had an unplanned political impact.

We launched the program in Westdale in June 2003, about a month after Hamilton councillors had decided the city could no longer afford to plant trees. At that point, the city was removing about 2000 trees a year because of disease, wind damage or other causes. And it was planting 750 replacements per year. But in the 2003 budget deliberations, the

planting program was deemed unaffordable.

The city's tree maintenance program was also profoundly underfunded. A grid-based trimming schedule that should cover the urban forest at least once every three years, was operating on a 20 year schedule. It only covered a portion of the urban area, and entirely excluded city parks.

Both the planting and the maintenance pictures have dramatically improved, and it appears that Trees Count played a significant role in that

see page 6

MEETING U.S. STEEL from page one

opportunity to help company representatives to understand the impacts they have experienced in their neighbourhoods because of the on-going emission problems.

We gained an in-depth understanding of the company's blast furnace, how it functions, and why the company believes there have been problems with the furnace. We also learned about the company's broader plans to address chronic emission problems that we have observed in other parts of the plant. Highlights include:

- The infamous Stelco sinter plant, known for its emissions of very fine particulate matter and cancer-causing dioxins and furans has been shut down for well over a year and the company has no plans to restart this facility.
- The company's basic oxygen furnace, referred to by local Stack Watchers as the triple stack, is due to have some remedial work done on its pollution control system. Observers report orange-coloured iron oxide emissions from these stacks on a regular basis.
- The company also discussed plans to try to address emission problems from its coke ovens.

While the company has a great deal of work to do to resolve its various emission problems, it was useful to have the opportunity to sit down and have a detailed discussion about the issues at the plant. Company president Doug Matthews stated repeatedly that US Steel is committed to Hilton Works and plans to proceed with efforts to improve the facility. We hope these commitments lead to a plant that operates well within all required environmental laws.

WANTED: LOCAL CHAMPIONS



Climate Change Champions is now working with several local businesses and organizations who have committed to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 10 percent by 2010 and 20 percent by 2020.

This is the pilot stage of an 18-month joint project of EH and Green Venture.

Our staff collect utility bills from our Champions, going back two years, as well as information on their water usage, the amount they recycle and any garbage they produce.

Using a specially-devised computer program, we can work out the amount of Greenhouse Gases they currently produce – and create a plan to help them reduce their load.

The project is engaging all kinds of organizations including large and small businesses, faith groups, schools, neighbourhood associations and community groups.

Both the environment and the

businesses/organizations bottom line benefit from the program.

Individuals can also sign up and utilize an on-line greenhouse gas emission calculator to make personal commitments to reduce their ecological footprint.

Contact Julia - 905-627-5410 or champions@environmenthamilton.org to get involved.

BRIDGE PARTY

Our Kirkendall Walks project joined with Transportation for Liveable Communities to help promote awareness of the pedestrian bridge situation in Kirkendall. As part of the Car Free Week of events, the groups held a "bridge party" on Pearl Street to celebrate the rebuilding of this foot bridge and to ask participants to contact elected representatives and sign petitions for the reconstruction of the Poulette pedestrian bridge.

A city environmental assessment is recommending replacement of the Pearl Street pedestrian crossing, but not the one at Poulette. The report is expected to be presented to the city's public works committee in late October or early November, and then to be released for a 30-day public comment period.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRODUCTS

Hamilton has a new not-for-profit organization trying to bring together people trying to save money and energy.

The Ethical Consumers Co-op is currently arranging bulk purchase of two hard-to-get environmental technologies – dual-flush toilets, and tankless water heaters.

Along with lowering the cost of



products, the co-op will also arrange a licensed tradesperson for home installations.

For more information visit www.ethicalconsumers.ca.

GORE URGES DISOBEDIENCE

In late September, climate activist Al Gore called for civil disobedience to stop the construction of coal plants if they aren't built to capture their carbon emissions.

There are twenty-eight such plants now being built in the United States, and a substantial portion of Ontario's electrical energy comes from the Nanticoke coal-fired facility.

Direct action against coal mines has been underway in the United Kingdom since last year with blockades at a new open-cast facility in South Wales. More info at <http://www.monbiot.com/archives/2008/08/05/coal-scuttled>. The price of coal has doubled in the last year as the costs of other fossil fuels had climbed.

The Coal Association of Canada says we have close to 10 billion tonnes of coal reserves which it calculates contains more energy than the countries oil, natural gas and tar sands combined.

Each week Canadian mines extract enough coal to fill the Skydome.

"I have stumbled across the single technology which will save us from runaway climate change! ...Already this technology, a radical new kind of carbon capture and storage, is causing a stir among scientists. It is cheap, it is efficient and it can be deployed straight away. It is called ... leaving fossil fuels in the ground."

– George Monbiot

BUS PASS SALES SOAR

Early indications show EH's Passport to Hamilton has boosted sales of the HSR's day pass by about 30 percent. Thanks to EH's efforts, users of the day pass now can access discounts at over 70 destinations.

The \$8.00 passes allow families or other groups of up to six people to ride the HSR all day. Passport to Hamilton was launched in mid-July. Pass sales climbed 14 percent that month. They were up 32 percent in August over the previous August, and 28 percent in September.

The day pass is a great transit deal on its own. A family of six using the bus would normally drop \$28.80 in the fare box to get to and from a single destination. With the day pass, the entire fare is only \$8.00 and it allows trips to multiple destinations all day long.

EH has magnified this great value even further – arranging for discounts of \$2 to \$10 per person at cafes, waterfront attractions,



recreation facilities, museums, bowling alleys and other destinations.

The day pass can be used by any group of up to four youth and two adults (or five youth and one adult). It's a great way to experience what Hamilton has to offer – the better way by transit.

EH is recruiting additional discount destinations. Check out Passport to Hamilton on the Environment Hamilton website for all the details.

(See related story on page 8)

VOTE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment, and especially climate change action, is dominating the American election, but getting little media play in Canada's. However there is lots of information on the internet to help you evaluate the parties and candidates and ensure that your vote is for the environment.

The Climate Action Network is a good place to start at <http://www.climatevote.ca>. It includes news and analysis of the election from Climate Action Network groups, links for taking action during the election, and videos and fact sheets on carbon pricing.

For strategic voting guidance www.vote forenvironment.ca features a riding-by-riding

prediction system that calculates what the likely vote totals would be for each party based on the day's polling, and recommends where your vote will do the most good for the environment.

The Sierra Club has published a voter's guide to the election where the environmental programs of the parties are compared and graded.

At the end of September, the Sierra Club and Greenpeace released the results of an election survey completed by all major parties except the Conservatives (who didn't respond). The two environmental groups are now urging voters: "Don't vote Conservative if you care about the environment."

EH SECURES ENHANCED STACK TESTING

The provincial Ministry of the Environment (MOE) has now provided full approval to Liberty Energy's sewage sludge/ wood-waste gasification facility, to be built on Strathearne Avenue North. But Environment Hamilton succeeded in securing additional monitoring requirements for the facility.

At a meeting organized by the Hamilton District Office of the MOE, stakeholders including Environment Hamilton were given the opportunity to provide feedback to MOE approvals staff on the draft provincial operating certificates for the facility.

Environment Hamilton pushed for MOE to require the company to undertake more comprehensive annual monitoring of the emissions from Liberty's main process stacks.

In the draft certificates, for instance, MOE only required the company to test for a long list of PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) in the first year of operation. We pushed and the company, to its credit, indicated that it had no issue with undertaking PAH monitoring with each annual stack test.

We also asked about chemicals of concern that the company had included in its human health risk assessment. Again, the company agreed to consider adding

chemicals to the required annual stack testing list and came back with additional compounds that have been incorporated into annual stack testing requirements.

EH also pushed for tighter limits on mercury and particulate emissions. While MOE did not incorporate the tighter limits we proposed, the company has expressed a willingness to pursue something akin to an environmental management agreement which would include making voluntary commitments to aim for the tighter limits we put forward.

At the end of the day, while we

remain concerned about this method for dealing with sewage sludge and the potential impacts on our local airshed, we are pleased that we were able to secure enhanced annual monitoring requirements and were happy to see the company so willing to make these additional commitments. The company has also committed to establishing a community liaison committee and this will provide a forum for organizations, including Environment Hamilton, and community members to track the facility's performance.



Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone#: _____ Email: _____

Annual membership \$25.00

Student/Unwaged \$15.00

Membership fee: _____

Donation: _____

TOTAL enclosed: _____

I would like to volunteer

Mail to: Environment Hamilton
1130 Barton Street East, Suite 207, Hamilton, ONT L8H 7P9

Please make cheques payable to Environment Hamilton

Website www.environmenthamilton.org

Email contactus@environmenthamilton.org Phone (905) 549-0900

CLEANER AIR

The Ontario Clean Air Alliance is campaigning to convince the Ontario government to commit to renewable electricity and conservation.

They have an on-line petition at www.ontariogreenfuture.ca. It also provides other ways to get involved.

GETTING ACTION ON DUNDAS PESTICIDE FIRE

It's been more than a year since a fire at the Biedermann pesticide plant in Dundas killed thousands of fish in Spencer Creek and millions more in Cootes Paradise.

The calls for a provincial public inquiry by the city, EH and others have apparently fallen on deaf ears. But EH is continuing to make

progress towards preventing a similar environmental disaster.

Our Biedermann fire working group has successfully used the Environmental Bill of Rights to extract provincial promises of a review of Ontario's pesticide rules. In response to our EBR applications, the Ontario Ministry

of the Environment (MOE) has agreed to review two sections of the Ontario Pesticides Act.

One of our applications seeks to require companies like Biedermann to provide information to fire departments. The ministry has also agreed to re-examine the exemption of pesticide manufacturers from the Act.

Section 129 of the regulations for the current legislation says: "A person is exempt from the Act and this Regulation with respect to the storage, sale or transfer of a pesticide, if the pesticide is to be formulated into another pesticide, manufactured or incorporated into a product, or transported out of Ontario."

In his responses to both our EBR applications, MOE assistant deputy minister Carl Griffith stated: "(T)he ministry recognizes the importance of the Biedermann Packaging as a significant environmental event as well as the clean-up and restoration efforts needed for the preservation of the Spencer Creek ecosystem. The protection of Ontario's environment, and the health and safety of Ontarians, is of paramount importance to the ministry".

However, Griffiths noted that that, "due to the complex nature of the issue" in both our applications, the reviews may not be completed until December 2009. EH's applications and the MOE's responses can be viewed on our website.

The Ontario government has also released its toxics use reduction strategy for public consultation, and EH is preparing a detailed response. The draft provincial policy is posted on the Environmental Registry and citizens can comment until October 11.

TREES COUNT TOO A SUCCESS!

Survey work for the Dundas Trees Count Too project (the second in Dundas) was completed in August. A group of about 20 individuals (some shown below) volunteered their time to survey the designated area over the past two months.

Volunteers often met two or three times a day and worked hard to cover all streets between and including Little John Road and South Street, Lynden and Tweedsmuir. Little John Park was also included in the inventory. The last inventory session was held on Thursday, August 22, enabling everyone to finish Woodward, the

last street included.

Over the course of the Dundas Trees Count Too, we have identified some extremely old and rare trees. South Street boasts the rare and beautiful Cucumber Magnolia, the only Magnolia native to Canada, as well as one of the oldest Kentucky Coffee trees in Ontario. Near the top of Tweedsmuir we located a 30 metre Tulip Magnolia, and there were many other interesting trees counted. Despite the uncontrollable rain and poor weather conditions, an impressive 996 trees were counted, only 4 trees short of our 1000 tree goal.



POLITICS OF TREES

from page one

transformation. The city now spends over a million dollars annually on street tree planting, putting about 3500 trees in the ground each year. It has also funded several years of mass plantings in parks and natural areas – an additional 9350 trees since 2005.

Funding for regular trimming has now achieved a 12-year cycle and additional annual improvements are occurring. A backlog of six thousand specific maintenance requests has been cut in half, the grid coverage extended across the whole urban area. And this year, council began allocating \$150,000 a year to plant trees in parks.

What's the connection with the Trees Count project?

Trees Count has no political content. It's a feel-good awareness-raising information-gathering process that engages community volunteers to examine trees in their neighbourhood in an organized way. Volunteer teams, led by a summer student coordinator, inventory public and private trees, and collect over 30 pieces of visual information for each tree.

The seven inventories completed so far in Hamilton, have examined over 7000 trees. The data is compiled and subsequently analyzed at the forestry department of the University of Toronto which produces a comprehensive report a few months after the inventory work ends.

The report is entirely fact-based. It doesn't make political statements. It just reports data generated from the inventory – how many trees of each species; how many in good, fair, or poor condition; percentage public and private, native or non-native, suitable or otherwise; etc.

The inventory work has no political content either. There are no rallies or demonstrations demanding more trees or better maintenance. The program doesn't include letter writing campaigns to politicians. It just examines and reports on neighbourhood trees.

But it's noteworthy that the lowest point in the city's tree work coincided with the start of Trees Count. Things have steadily improved since then. The process hasn't been entirely smooth but it also hasn't been the result of just one council decision. The budgetting is reviewed every year, and in the case of the maintenance program, it has been repeatedly improved. And that can't be said for very many aspects of city spending over the last five years.

So what's the connection? We think it may work like this.

The Trees Count project has very high visibility in the community. The average inventory has pulled in 40 or more volunteers. Each home in the neighbourhood hears about the project 5-7 times with flyers, home visits, a summary report, and four neighbourhood meetings - to launch the project, thank the volunteers, report the findings, and present recommendations for community actions.

The results usually draw additional media attention, and in many cases, the main aspect of interest is the condition of the publicly owned trees. Our inventories have found 30-55

percent of street trees in poor or very poor condition – definitely grist for a newspaper story about city maintenance procedures.

Trees Count generates discussion in the community about trees. Those conversations could be dominated by opinions as to why we should have fewer trees or more unhealthy ones, but we suspect that they're more likely to focus on wanting more trees that are better taken care of.

We have been told informally that councillors have received hundreds of phone calls about trees since Trees Count began. EH didn't organize those calls.

We might have looked at the 2003 situation and decided to hold rallies, demonstrations and petitions demanding improved city tree policies. That might have been successful, or it might have foundered on the usual difficulty in recruiting activists to wage such a campaign.

We've never had any difficulty recruiting Trees Count volunteers. We don't ask them to get involved in a political activity. We don't add stress to their lives, or encourage them to add stress to the life of a local councillor. We just engage them in a pleasant and practical process of learning more about their own neighbourhood and the trees that grace it.

If that knowledge and experience moves them to do something further, that's a bonus that they provide at their own volition.

But a reasonable review of the last five years suggests that a non-adversarial tree inventory program can have quite striking political repercussions. There may be some lessons here for environmentalists on how change can take place without having to fight someone to achieve it.

ENERGY-EFFICIENT

EH continues to offer tours of Dave Braden's super energy-efficient home. Call (905) 549-0900 to register.

WALKABILITY STUDY

This volunteer-based, street-by-street canvass organized by EH's Kirkendall Walks project, has generated a long list of concerns for walkers and cyclists. They include problem street crossings, gaps in the cycling network, and narrow sidewalks to non-existent ones. Sufficient snow removal on side walks was also recommended to allow passage of strollers and wheelchairs.

Kirkendall residents supporting the project are meeting with EH staff and other stakeholders (including city departments) for an October 2 presentation and brainstorming session about the walkability concerns brought up through the walkability study.

We'll be discussing ways of improving the neighbourhood's walkability as well as building on partnerships and developing collaborations with all stakeholders, including creative responses and cooperative action with local businesses and neighbours.

Some potential actions include:

- n recommendations to the city's cycling masterplan - to be submitted during the public consultation meetings this fall
- n traffic calming projects around the entrance to the HAAA grounds through community art projects, a physical roundabout, awareness actions, etc.
- n work with the local businesses to make streetscapes around businesses more walker friendly
- n promotion of walking and cycling as healthy alternatives to short vehicle trips
- n recommendations to the city about pedestrian safety issues due to traffic

HISTORY TOUR DRAWS BIG CROWD



In September, EH's Kirkendall Walks project invited local residents to on a history walk of the Locke Street area. Seventy people showed up on a beautiful sunny morning, eager to learn from local historian and author Bill Manson.

Undaunted by the enormous turn out, Bill bravely guided the group through the people-filled heritage community of Locke Street South. Walkers explored the history of the area, including its residential, commercial, and industrial development. They also learned about the historical transportation infrastructures that



both helped and hindered the sustainability of this unique neighbourhood.



Bill has generously offered to do the walk again (date to be arranged) so stay tuned for registration for this and other walks. On October 18th

Kirkendall resident Emma Cubitt will lead a tour focused on the many alley ways in the Kirkendall area. Also, a food tour is in the works so please register with us to avoid disappointment.



DISCOVERING HAMILTON'S ART

I'm a new arrival to Hamilton. To be perfectly honest, I really don't know all that much about this city to date, so I'm happy to jump at any chance I can get to explore it. As a native Calgarian (which, might I add, is a city that does not yet even have a blue box recycle program), I was happy to see such an innovative program as Passport to Hamilton.

One transit family day pass for \$8 can get you discounts, and even free admissions to over 70 different locations in the area, while promoting the use of public

transit. After taking a bit of time to choose what to see with my friend and looking over the Passport to Hamilton bus map, we ended up deciding to have more of a 'cultural day', by visiting the McMaster Museum of Art and the Art Gallery of Hamilton.

We caught the 1A on King and James Street downtown and then headed west to the University for our first stop. A 20 minute bus ride led us straight to the front doors of the museum where we began exploring some of the great art work that this museum holds.

I was amazed to see some big names in a smaller museum, including artists from Canada's famous Group of Seven, and Claude Monet, just to name a few.

After not quite enough of an Art fix, we caught the 51 and headed back downtown to visit the Art Gallery of Hamilton. It turns out the second floor of the gallery is completely free to anyone, but to see the exhibits on the 1st floor, the handy family day pass was our passport to a \$10 discount on the family rate.

There were several great exhibits going on, but I found the "Blood, Sweat, and Tears: Labour in Art" to be of particular interest, especially in such a city with strong roots and history in trade labour.

Passport to Hamilton turned out to be a great introduction to the city of Hamilton. There are so many options to choose from and it is quite easy to figure out bus routes with the Passport map. I've discovered that I have a lot more exploring to do with all these activities, while making less of an impact on the environment, of course.

Want to learn more about the Passport to Hamilton project? Please check out <http://environmenthamilton.org> for more information.

This article was written by Marisa Cooper who is working with EH this fall as part of her participation in the Canada World Youth (CWY) program in Hamilton and New Delhi, India.



The local food movement added a major restaurant event in September - a reflection of the growing recognition of the link between locally grown produce and economic development.

The downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Association organized a three week Localicious Experience in conjunction with EH's Eat Local project and local farmers.

Fifteen downtown restaurants featured locally grown products in special lunch and dinner menu items from September 19th to October 5th.

A list of the participating restaurants can be found on the Downtown BIA website at www.downtownhamilton.org.

The BIA and EH are working



to expand this exciting initiative.

Welcome to Karen

In September, EH welcomed Karen Burson as the new manager of the Eat Local project.

Karen is a well-known food activist who was the founder of the popular Bread and Roses Cafe at the Skydragon Community Centre on King William Street - recognized by Canadian Organic Growers as the best restaurant in Canada serving organic food.

Karen is a frequent writer on local food and has established Hamilton's first Slow Food Convivium.

Juby Lee, EH's fruit tree project coordinator, is the other key staff member of our Eat Local team.

Our efforts to support local food producers in the Hamilton area is generously supported by the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation.