

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment – the national voice of physicians on issues of health & the environment

## From the President's Corner

### Are we finally starting to take the dangers of chemicals seriously?

AT THE 2002 WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN Johannesburg, world leaders committed to minimizing the adverse effects of chemicals on human health and the environment by the year 2020. Since then, representatives from countries across the globe, along with non-governmental organizations and industry, have had three major meetings to create a Strategic Approach to the International Management of Chemicals (SAICM).

Countries are committing, by 2020, to minimizing the risks from substances produced, used, released or incorporated into products. They are committing to the precautionary principle, to the protection of vulnerable populations, to the use of safer alternatives and to the management a substance's entire life-cycle. It is a commitment to protect everyone from the unsafe use of chemicals, whether rich or poor.

CAPE will continue to push for the same protection at home. The production and use of chemicals is increasing worldwide, with 300 or so new substances entering Canadian life each year. Infants are starting life with chemicals inherited from their mothers, chemicals that accumulate in our bodies over our lifetimes and could lead to adverse health effects. Emerging science is revealing previously unknown neurological, immune system and reproductive impacts, sometimes at surprisingly low doses.

An opportunity to influence Canadian chemical regulation will begin in 2006 with the five year review of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA). Changes are needed to strengthen the act, for example, better legislation to eliminate persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic substances. The existing provisions have been completely ineffective.

CAPE will also be pushing for a broader CEPA that includes consumer products. Substances in consumer products such as cleaning products, children's toys, cosmetics and others have not been covered by CEPA; they fall under the Hazardous Products Act

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## Canadian Biomonitoring Project

### Sign-on Letter from Doctors and Nurses

photo: Michael Kelly

*Dear Doctor or Nurse,*

CANADA HAS A UNIQUE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN A COMPREHENSIVE understanding of the health impacts of chemicals in our environment. But our government must act quickly, or this opportunity will slip away.

Please consider adding your name to the attached letter, (see page 3), to Prime Minister Paul Martin, urging the government to have Canada participate in a major U.S. biomonitoring study that will measure chemical levels in the human body over time. With the data that the study will produce, Canada will finally have comprehensive evidence for sound public health policy decisions with regard to the health impacts of chemicals in our environment.

**But only if we act now!**

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## Lawn & Garden Pesticides: Reducing Harm

CAPE's 10 minute video sets out the scientific evidence linking common household pesticides to a variety of serious illnesses. It offers information from the Ontario College of Family Physicians' ground-breaking pesticide study and presents safe lawncare alternatives.



**Excellent for showing at public meetings or for educating local politicians.**

**To order the video, please contact Gideon Forman, Executive Director, at [gideon@cape.ca](mailto:gideon@cape.ca).**

## President's Corner...continued from page 1

which is powerless to act unless there is a specific regulation for a product. So, for example, though CEPA can regulate lead, it can do nothing about lead in toys or jewellery. An effective CEPA would apply to toxic substances no matter what the source of exposure.

CEPA also needs to include the substitution principle. Substances should be replaced by safer alternatives whenever feasible. Present risk assessment methods, however, look at chemicals in isolation; the existence of a safer alternative is not considered in the assessment and has no bearing on whether the government lists a substance for action.

All CAPE members are invited to participate in the CEPA review. Anyone who would like to prepare a brief or testify at committee in early 2006, on behalf of their clinic, hospital, organization or just themselves, should contact me at [kapil@cape.ca](mailto:kapil@cape.ca). I look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Kapil Khatter, CAPE President

**Medical authorities support a pesticide phase-out for one reason.**

**You're looking at her.**

Our leading medical authorities say pesticides are a threat to our children's health. That's why they support a phase-out of pesticides on lawns and gardens in the City of Ottawa.

If you share our concerns, please call Mayor Charette and your city councillor today and ask them to support a pesticide phase-out.

**You can reach the mayor and your councillor by calling 3-1-1.**

For more information – or to receive a compelling video on safe lawn care alternatives – call the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment collect at (416) 306-2272 or visit [www.cape.ca](http://www.cape.ca)

**Support a pesticide phase-out.**

Logos for RNAO, CEPA, and other organizations.

With members' support, CAPE ran the largest pesticide bylaw campaign in City of Ottawa history. This *Ottawa Citizen* advertisement helped generate calls to the Mayor's office – which ran 10:1 in favour of a bylaw.

## A Pesticide-Free Ottawa

by Daniella Grosvenor

INTENSE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO PASS A PESTICIDE-FREE BYLAW IN OTTAWA. HEARINGS ON the issue were held by the city's Health Committee and followed by a split vote of 10-10 by Ottawa's City Council on October 26<sup>th</sup>. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, another vote was conducted just as CAPE News hit the press. Many of our CAPE members and partners spoke out and CAPE arranged for doctors to speak at the hearings. After the hearings, the Health Committee strongly endorsed the proposed legislation. CAPE organized doctors to meet with the *Ottawa Citizen* editorial board, after which the *Citizen* published a pro-bylaw editorial.

CAPE has been campaigning in Ottawa for a year and a half. We collaborated with the *Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario* in launching our pesticide video, published letters and opinion

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## Ecosystem Health: Prescribing a New Vision for the Future of Medicine

Originally written by CAPE Chairperson Dr. John Howard. Published in the *Alternatives Journal*, Vol. 31 No. 3, 2005. Adapted by Daniella Grosvenor

MEDICAL CARE IS IN A CRISIS THROUGHOUT North America and the skyrocketing costs of health care are alarming. In Ontario alone, the percentage of the provincial budget devoted to health care has risen from 34 percent in 1995 to 41 percent in 2004.

The solution lies in more strategic spending. Fortunately, the ecosystem health model provides a new vision for the future of health care. Traditionally, under the doctor-patient model, the doctor diagnoses the patient's disease and then treats it. In the patient-centred model, the doctor considers the illness but will also consider the context in which the patient lives, for example, the family and the community.

The ecosystem model incorporates principles from the first two models but also considers the important interaction of the patient with the environment- not just the physical environment and traditional aspects such as physical, mental and occupational health, but also the economic, social and political environment. For example, under the ecosystem model, a patient with asthma will not just be prescribed medication

to ease symptoms, but the model will force the health care provider to consider: What caused the patient to suffer from asthma? What can the physician or society do to prevent the problem from developing in other people?

Under the ecosystem model, less government spending would be allocated to health care, but more would go to clear determinants of health – things such as education and social programs. This model focuses on the health needs of an entire population and allows decisions to be made on a regional level, since it is only on this level that leaders are able to understand the collective needs of people.

So where are we today? We have a system that delivers health care in a traditional medical model to a population that wants the patient-centred model, but really needs an ecosystem health model. Fortunately, the implementation of the ecosystem model will allow us to best meet the needs of the population, which will best meet the needs of individuals.

To receive the full article please contact Alternatives at : [info@alternativesjournal.ca](mailto:info@alternativesjournal.ca)

## Sign on Letter from Doctors and Nurses...continued from page 1

To add your name to the letter, **sign it, with your full name, title, community or affiliation, and fax it to 416-960-9392, attention the *Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment***. Or email us with this information, to [daniella@cape.ca](mailto:daniella@cape.ca).  
For more information call 416-306-CAPE.



The Right Honourable Paul Martin  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Martin,

We are writing to encourage you to take advantage of a unique window of opportunity to expand Canada's understanding of the health impacts of chemicals in our environment.

The U.S. government is currently launching a long-term children's study that will assess environmental influences on children's health, including testing for chemicals. They have officially invited Canada to join. With Canadian funding for a general population testing program, our country would have strong biomonitoring regime to help us assess the public health risk of chemical exposure.

The U.S. study will follow 100,000 children from womb to adulthood and test them for a broad spectrum of chemicals, such as pesticides, air pollutants, cleaning products and chemicals from plastics. Given the difference in social and environmental conditions, however, the American data would only be partially relevant for Canadians.

Piggybacking on the U.S. study would be a cost-effective way for us to collect this important data for Canadian children. The information gathered would be invaluable to Canadian public health policy makers and help to identify high-risk groups in the population and regions of the country where exposure is higher. In addition, combining efforts to create a larger study would substantially increase the value of the data. Finally, a study of this size would invigorate Canadian environmental health research through the establishment of research centres to undertake the study.

We urge you to act in the upcoming federal budget, providing the necessary funds to undertake this project as the resources must be in place in the coming year to meet timelines for coordinating with the U.S. children's study.

Sincerely,

## CAPE Meets Edmonton Mayor

CAPE's campaign to win a pesticide bylaw in Edmonton moved into high gear this summer when we were granted a private audience with the city's mayor, Stephen Mandel. CAPE requested the meeting to update the Mayor on the latest pesticide science and to introduce him to local environmental activists and doctors working on the issue.

While our local partner, *Pesticide-Free Edmonton*, had been trying on its own to arrange a meeting with the Mayor, their calls were not returned. Three days after CAPE put in a request, the Mayor's scheduling assistant booked the appointment.

CAPE's Executive Director, Gideon Forman, and former Vice President Dr. Harold Hoffman presented Mayor Mandel with a summary of the Ontario College of Family Physicians' ground-breaking *Pesticide Literature Review* as well as a statement on cosmetic pesticides from the *Canadian Cancer Society*. Elisabeth Beaubien, Coordinator of *Pesticide-Free Edmonton*, briefed the Mayor on a pro-bylaw editorial in the *Edmonton Journal*.

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## Pesticide Free Ottawa...continued from page 2

articles in the *Ottawa Citizen*, met with 10 city councillors and launched an ad campaign. Our strategy in the capital was to inform councillors about the scientific hazards of pesticide use and to establish a landmark bylaw. Establishing a bylaw in the capital city would not only protect local citizens, but would send a clear message out to all Canadians that pesticide by-laws are necessary to protect people's health.

CAPE ran large advertisements in the *Ottawa Citizen* that urged residents to contact their local politicians and voice their concerns about pesticides. Our ad sponsors included the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the Canadian Cancer Society, and the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario.

We would like to give a special thanks to the organizations that partnered with us. Most of all, we would like to thank CAPE members who have continually supported our work. Some members throughout the country even attempted to contact Ottawa councillors, signifying the national scope and importance of this issue.

## Cape Meets Edmonton Mayor...continued from page 3

The Mayor confessed to not knowing a great deal about the issue but promised to learn more. He said he personally did not use pesticides on his property and seemed genuinely interested in the *Journal* editorial. While he did not make any commitments on legislation, he seemed very willing to open a dialogue between activists and his office. He felt the first area where the city would consider pesticide restrictions was parkland, rather than residential property. (CAPE is calling for a bylaw which would restrict pesticide use in both settings.)

Perhaps the meeting's greatest benefit was for our local partner. Ms. Beaubien seemed delighted that her organization

was finally being heard by City Hall. "Physicians seem to have real access to the corridors of power. When they speak, politicians listen."

CAPE's Edmonton pesticide education work is generously supported by the *Alberta EcoTrust Foundation*.

alberta  
ecotrust because it's our home!

## Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

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## I would like to join CAPE in working for a healthier environment

Last Name/First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dr  Ms.  Mr.  Miss  Mrs.  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership

- Members \$100
- Supporters (*Honorary mention and a free copy of The Canadian Guide to Health and the Environment*) \$200
- Students, retirees, those with limited income \$25
- Member Organizations (*one vote per organization*) \$50  
(*My cheque is made out to the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment*)
- I would like updates on CAPE-related activities. Please put me on the CAPENEWS listserv (*for members only*).
- I want to get involved in CAPE.

### Donations

I am sending a donation of:

- \$50  \$100  \$500  \$1000  Other \_\_\_\_\_ to support CAPE's environmental advocacy work (*My cheque is made out to the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment*).
- Please take a monthly donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ from my account on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. (*I have attached a voided cheque and signed below*)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like a charitable tax receipt for my donation. I understand that these donations will only be used for research and education activities. (*My cheque is made out to the Canadian Health and Environment Education and Research Foundation (CHEER)*)
- Check here if you do not want your name shared with other like-minded organizations.

### Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

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### CAPE ACKNOWLEDGES, WITH GRATITUDE, THE GENEROSITY OF OUR FUNDERS:



THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION  
LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO



Canadian Union of Public Employees  
Ontario College of Family Physicians  
Pilkington-Henniger Charitable Trust  
Hundreds of individual CAPE members



## ECO Friends

This feature section contains a brief synopsis of a group that shares CAPE's basic perspectives.

### Pesticide Free Edmonton

*Pesticide Free Edmonton* (formerly *Lawns for Kids*) was formed in 2003.

This citizens group has recently made great efforts towards a bylaw to phase out the use of pesticides in Edmonton. They have written letters to the press, posted information and displays at local conferences and lobbied city councillors and the Mayor in an effort to raise awareness about the benefits of a pesticide phase out. The group also partnered with the *Sierra Club* and the City to organize two public information events with special guest Carol Rubin, author of "How to get your Lawn off Drugs". *Pesticide Free Edmonton* also worked with CAPE to conduct a survey of Edmontonians (which showed strong support for pesticide reduction), and joined CAPE's meeting with Edmonton's Mayor, city councillors, and city parks staff.

We thank *Pesticide Free Edmonton* for their hard work and dedication to protecting the health of Edmonton's citizens and environment.