



Task Force Work Group Helps City Fight Global Warming

In December, at the urging of the Environmental Task Force, Toronto City Council adopted a target to reduce CO₂ emissions by 20% of 1990 levels by 2005. In part to help meet this target, the Task Force established a Sustainable Energy Use Work Group to develop an Action Plan to lead Toronto towards a sustainable energy future.

Building on the ideas generated in a September 1998 Task Force workshop chaired by Councillor Joan King, the Work Group is looking into how to promote energy conservation and support renewable energy sources. This initiative will not only reduce emissions of various greenhouse gases, it also will help reduce smog in the city.

Global climate change is one of the most important environmental issues of our time. Scientists agree that global warming is caused by the increasing concentration of greenhouse gases (mostly carbon dioxide) in the atmosphere largely due to human activity. While it is not possible to predict in detail what will happen as the atmosphere gets warmer and more unstable, recent flooding and ice storm events in Manitoba and Quebec provide examples of the kind of damage and devastation climate change can bring to Canada.

There are plenty of excellent initiatives to draw upon in developing a plan to reduce CO₂ emissions and combat climate change. For example, the Greenest City's "Walking School Bus" program (illustrated in the photo above) funded by the Toronto Atmospheric Fund, has 20 participating schools in Toronto. The program reduces greenhouse gas emissions, decreases traffic around schools, increases children's safety, improves local air quality, increases parents' and kids' physical activity, and enriches a sense of neighborhood. For more information on the Task Force's Sustainable Energy Use Plan, please call Drew Shintani at 392-1454.

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Did You Know?

- The City of Toronto has an Energy Efficiency Office which implements measures to reduce CO₂ emissions in the City. Through programs such as the Better Buildings Partnership, the Energy Efficiency Office works with building owners and managers to improve buildings by making them more energy- and water-efficient. The Energy Efficiency Office and others in Works and Emergency Services have implemented measures that have successfully reduced the emission of the equivalent of 2.5 million tonnes of CO₂.
- Pollution Probe is again organizing a Clean Air Commute challenge for 1999. Companies across the Greater Toronto Area will be encouraging their employees to find commuting alternatives to the automobile. This year's commute takes place June 21 - 25. Last year, the new City of Toronto participated for the first time in an interdepartmental challenge. This year, the City of Toronto will take on challenges from other organizations.
- Motor vehicle emissions are the main source of air pollution linked to respiratory health problems. The City has passed a by-law to limit vehicle idling to a maximum of 3 minutes. Contravening the by-law can result in fines of \$105, but the by-law emphasizes helping people understand why it makes sense to minimize engine idling. You can obtain more information about the by-law by calling (416) 392-7434.

How Big is Our Ecological Footprint?

How big of an ecological "footprint" is our City placing on the Earth? The Ecological Footprint measures the environmental impact of human activities by calculating the "footprint" or the area of biologically productive land and water area needed to supply the resources and assimilate the wastes that population generates, using prevailing technology.

A report, "How Big is Toronto's Ecological Footprint?", estimates that our city currently impacts an area over 280 times its size. In other words, the average Torontonian needs 7.6 hectares of land, an area roughly equivalent to five city blocks, to support his or her activities. At this rate, the City's consumption per capita is roughly 3.8 times greater than what recent international studies consider to be sustainable.

A lifestyle questionnaire can determine an individual's ecological footprint. For example, traveling 10,000 km per year (approximately 27 km per day) by automobile needs half a hectare of forest (approximately the size of a football field) to absorb the carbon dioxide that the car emits during that year. Twenty-seven kilometers is equivalent to driving from the Scarborough to the Etobicoke Civic Centres. One return airplane trip to Paris, France consumes an equivalent amount of energy.

Determine the size of your ecological footprint, with the ecological footprint questionnaire available on the City's Internet site at www.city.toronto.on.ca/energy/footprint.htm. Visit the site and complete your own questionnaire! To obtain "How Big is Toronto's Ecological Footprint?", please contact Eric Krause at (416) 392-1560 extension 8-6106 or ekrause@city.toronto.on.ca.

Green Economic Development Work Group

The Task Force is setting up the Green Economic Development Work Group to identify opportunities to achieve economic and environmental benefits. If you are interested in this Work Group, please contact Fred Hendriks at (416) 395-7633.

ETF Citizen Member Profiles

The Environmental Task Force includes 9 councillors and 18 citizen members. Each issue of this newsletter profiles some of the members.

Dr. Beth Savan

Dr. Savan is Director of Environmental Programs, Innis College, University of Toronto. She has authored two books, participated in several award-winning radio series on environmental topics and co-directs the grass-roots monitoring organization, "Citizens' Environmental Watch".

Mr. Bob Shaw

As Regional Director, Central Region, Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Mr. Shaw is responsible for achieving compliance with provincial environmental legislation and delivering the Ministry's programs in the Greater Toronto Area.

Education and Awareness Work Group

The Education and Awareness Work Group of the Task Force is meeting to plan what educators can do to help achieve an environmentally sustainable Toronto. Participation in the Work Group will provide an opportunity to build partnerships for action.

Moving toward an environmentally sustainable Toronto requires all Torontonians to fundamentally change attitudes, behaviours, and practices. These changes are essential to protect and improve the quality of our air, water, and land and to ensure the well-being of present and future generations.

The Work Group will identify strategies and actions to help Torontonians:

- better understand the importance of environmentally sustainable behaviours in the context of their environment;
- adopt more environmentally sustainable behaviours; and
- establish a culture in the city to make this happen.

The Work Group's report will be available on the Task Force web site in the summer. For more information, please contact Karen Puhlman at (416) 661-6600 ext. 230.

Advanced Environmental Governance Consultation Continues

In February, the Task Force released a consultation document titled "Towards Advanced Environmental Decision Making in the City of Toronto." The document looked at how political and administrative structures can be improved to better deal with environmental issues and community input. It proposed various options. The Task Force is now considering the extensive feedback that was received and will put forward recommendations in a new report, to be released for public comment in early June. The Task Force will hear deputations from stakeholder groups on this new report at its June 28th meeting.

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