

Greetings Everybody!

Some of you may have noticed that you are no longer receiving the CIELAP quarterly newsletter. That is because we are evaluating our means of communication. Meantime, in order to fulfill your need for reliable and timely information we are going to try a monthly, brief update on our web site.

We invite your comments, suggestions and your contribution. Please contact:

Anne Mitchell, Executive Director or Jan Rabantek, Project Officer at cielap@cielap.org

ONTARIO'S ENVIRONMENT AND THE "COMMON SENSE REVOLUTION": A FOURTH YEAR REPORT - (INTERIM)

The fourth yearly evaluation (interim) of the Ontario government's environmental performance was released by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) on April 12, 1999. These reports are produced as a service to help the public understand the scope and implications of the changes to the Ontario government's approach to environmental protection. "The range of environmental protection cutbacks Ontario has seen since 1995 is unprecedented," said CIELAP Research Director Mark Winfield "Landfills are being approved without public hearings, the ministry no longer tests the quality of drinking water, the ministry has a list of environmental laws it no longer enforces -- and when prosecutions so take place polluters are paying lower fines than in the past, and the list goes on," Both interim report and the chronology of events are available on CIELAP's website.

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA FOR ONTARIO

On April 21 the Environmental Agenda for Ontario was released at Queen's Park. This is the culmination of a year long project with various members of the Ontario environmental community. Ten background papers have been prepared and a summary document. The background papers and the summary document are on our web page. Please check them out. I hope that any of you will use this summary document during the upcoming election. Discuss it with a group that you are involved in; discuss it with your provincial member of parliament. Ask the election candidates whether they will support any of the recommendations in the

LABELLING OF GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

Anne Mitchell, Executive Director of CIELAP, has been involved in a stakeholder initiative about labelling of foods which are the product of modern biotechnology. We are recommending that it will be mandatory to label all of such products. We feel strongly that this is a fundamental right to know issue. We are being told that the decision will be made in the market place. Then, citizens have to have the information, so that they can make their decision - to buy or not to buy - in the market place. The responses to a focus group on genetically engineered food products were interesting. Of the respondents, none wanted genetically engineered food products, yet all felt that there will be an increasing number of such products on the grocery shelves in the future. They also indicated that if they were the Prime Minister, they would ban such products! Ms. Mitchell also participated in the public consultation meeting on April 7 in preparation for the upcoming session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling.

THE MAP OF FACILITIES IN CANADA WITH THE HIGHEST RELEASES AND TRANSFERS OF POLLUTANTS NEARLY COMPLETED

CIELAP will be releasing a map of Canada identifying pollution hot spots, using the NPRI data collected by Environment Canada. The map, in English or French, will be available at minimal cost to schools, community groups, organizations and individuals who are interested to know where the major sources of pollution are in Canada. This is the first phase of CIELAP's right to know program, using the NPRI data. The second phase will be a Citizen's Guide, to be published in the fall of 1999. The third phase is a collaborative project with the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) and the Canadian Environmental Defense Fund (CEDF) to set up a web site using the NPRI data which will allow communities to know exactly who is emitting what in their community.

WORKSHOPS IN MEXICO

CIELAP Research Director Mark Winfield participated in a series of workshops on the use of data from Pollutant Release and Transfer Inventories (PRTR) in Mexico in the week of April 19-23. The workshops, which took place in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Tijuana, were intended to increase awareness of pollutant release inventories at the community, regional and national levels in Mexico. The workshops were hosted by Presencia Ciudadana Mexicana and included participants from local and regional environmental and community groups, the academic community and health professions. Dr Winfield presented drafts of two CIELAP mapping projects using Canadian, U.S. and Mexican PRTR information. The workshops also included presentations on community level use of PRTR data and other environmental information by Wilma Subra of the Louisiana Environmental Action Network and Bruce Walker of the Montreal-based environmental organization STOP.

CIELAP'S CONTRIBUTION TO

CANADA'S NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE PROCESS

Project Officer Greg Jenish has been contributing to Canada's National Climate Change Process, specifically through the Landfill Gas Sub-Committee. Most people are likely aware that landfills produce enormous amounts of methane gas which is estimated to be 21 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. The sub-committee has been formulating options to advance landfill gas capture and control and will be holding a workshop in the near future to review the options among a broader audience. CIELAP has produced two papers for this undertaking, which should be finalized and made available to the public in the summer of 1999.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE WORKSHOPS IN COSTA RICA GOING ON

CIELAP continues to work in partnership with Fundacion Ambio in Costa Rica on issues of mutual interest. We have recently signed a three-year contribution agreement with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to work with Fundacion Ambio on organic agriculture and biotechnology. CIELAP and Fundacion Ambio are preparing background papers and will be holding workshops on these issues in Costa Rica in June.

FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS (FTAA)

CIELAP has submitted some comments on the FTAA to the committee, which was set up to hear the views of civil society. They will be put up on our web site. We will also be submitting comments to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade for the April 30 deadline. The next ministerial meeting of the FTAA will be held in Toronto in the fall of 1999. CIELAP will be participating.

ONTARIO CLEAN AIR ALLIANCE SPRING WORKSHOP

On April 20, 1999, the OCAA held its first members workshop. Despite the TTC strike, over 60 members and friends of the Alliance were able to participate in this event. The morning's special guest speakers, Dr. Ted Boadway from the Ontario Medical Association and Mr. Henry Hengeveld from Environment Canada, delivered informative presentations and provoked an interesting discussion amongst participants. The OCAA's polling results on public attitudes toward air pollution from the electricity sector were also presented by Dr. Paul Seccaspina of Oracle Research (for copies, please visit the OCAA web site at www.cleanair.web.net). The afternoon break-out sessions provided an opportunity for OCAA members to discuss ways of working together to raise public awareness about the need for strict emission limits for coal-fired power plants. The combined expertise of OCAA members and friends resulted in some excellent suggestions for the OCAA campaign. Members also had the chance to sneak preview the soon-to-be released OCAA radio advertisement. Special thanks to our funders, the George Cedric Metcalf Foundation, the Laidlaw Foundation and the Toronto Atmospheric Fund, guest speakers and members for helping to make this event a success.

WE ARE CLOSING TECHNOLOGICAL GAP

We now have about \$5,000 in our technology fund. Our plan is to upgrade and network our systems, so that all staff have the same operating systems, software and access to the internet. Also, thanks to Industry Canada's support changes are also coming to our Web site. We are working on the new design, architecture and content for our Web site. The goal is to make our site more intuitive, clear and always up-to-date. Industry Canada provided \$5,000 in support of our website. It is great but we need more. Your support and your ideas are welcome.

COMING UP

Let's go sailing with CIELAP

For the second year, CIELAP invites you to join us on the three masted schooner the "Challenge" for an evening of socializing and fun on Lake Ontario, Thursday June 24 1999 at 6 pm. You can get your tickets by contacting Kumarie Khadoo at CIELAP (416-923-3529).
