

# tea leaves

May 1998

the Newsletter of the Toronto Environmental Alliance

## New City, New Challenges

Editorial-

People who live in Toronto know the importance of progressive local government to environmental protection. Unfortunately, many of us are worried that, in the next year of disorganized and chaotic transition, environmental goals and programs may be lost.

TEA was vocal in the anti-megacity debate. We argued that the environment is best protected with an organized citizenry, working with strong local government, who act on residents' concerns and encourage other jurisdictions to take stronger action. We lost that battle.

And now we're lost in mega-city madness. So far, it may seem that all we do is meet. And plan to meet some more. But we have gained some ground. As we go to press, the Budget Committee is wrapping up a decrease in funding for water conservation and down-spout disconnection, a compromise on water rates and little more than the status quo for waste reduction.

Watch for Councilor Jack Layton's Special Task Force on the Environment to take the lead in setting out environmental priorities and management practices for the city in transition. Activists and TEA members should actively petition task force members to respond to our issues. TEA will also encourage a broad-base network of environmental, labour and social justice groups to come together to help lead the members to some obvious, and some creative, solutions to our local environmental problems. Watch, too, for major environmental issues to be addressed through the routine of standing committees. Works and Utilities still struggles with disposal and reduction of Toronto's over two million tons of garbage, alternative disposal for our sewage, and the deteriorating quality of Toronto's air.



## Smog Plan Stinks

By Véronique Lehouck

After two long years of consultations, Norm Sterling has finally released the Ontario Smog Plan. In keeping with its "business first" slant, the Tory government has let industry off easy with a plan that has low pollution-reduction objectives and lacks any enforcement. The target is to reduce the number of "smog days", when the air quality is considered poor, by 75% over the next 17 years. In order to meet this target, polluters are expected to voluntarily cut back their emissions by 45%. With such a generous time-frame and no enforceable controls, smog producing industries have very little incentive to start retrofitting their operations with cleaner technology.

The plan also fails to address our dependence on the automobile, the major source of smog in Ontario. In the consultation process, TEA participated in work groups composed of a handful of environmental organizations and an overwhelming majority of representatives from the automobile, petroleum, chemical and other polluting industries. Despite the obvious conflict of interests that are bound to arise in such a committee, a number of useful proposals on mixed land use, reducing commuting, and increasing public transportation were put forward. However, with no government support in the form of money or legislation, industry would then have to turn around and fund these initiatives, an unlikely event to say the least.

*It's what's inside that counts*

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The Urban Planning and Development Committee is a focal point for TEA's sustainable transportation and pedestrian initiatives. And the Community and Social Services Committee has some jurisdiction over our parks, and we'll continue to push for a ban on pesticide spraying there.

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# LOOK OUT 1998! TEA TURNS TEN!!

By Naomi Robinson

That's right! This summer will mark TEA's 10th year of existence. A whole decade of making a difference in Toronto's environment; we should be very proud of all our accomplishments. And lucky for us, Marc Collister, an energetic young college student is making a video about TEA's tenth anniversary.

All will be welcome to TEA's tenth birthday party which will take place this summer(see side-bar). At that party, we'll officially unveil our new TEA logo. You heard right! After ten years, several attempts, and a million different opinions we've come up with a versatile new logo: it speaks to our urban yet grassroots, colourful personality, and it establishes to the outside world the oft-used term "TEA" as the nickname that we're known by. For those situations when we don't want to appear too friendly, we can also use just the bottom half of the logo

## TEA'S 10th Anniversary Party!!

Thursday, July 2nd  
@ the Rex  
194 Queen St West

Come have a blast!

Board members and staff spent a weekend in February up near Collingwood at the annual TEA cozy retreat, planning for our upcoming tenth year. Working from the draft strategic plan, 'TEAM TEA' worked on issues surrounding caucuses, staff, board, and short and long term goals. Some of the most exciting news to come out of this year's cozy is that we could possibly have THREE new caucuses soon at TEA; a WATER caucus is starting up to work on quality, conservation, and privatization issues; a YOUTH caucus to give students and other young hipsters somewhere at TEA to do environmental work (remember the fantastic force that emerged at the youth conference last Earth Day?!); and the ROCKET RIDERS may become a TEA caucus and continue working on issues surrounding Toronto's public transit system. Contact the TEA office for more info if you'd like to get involved with one of the new caucuses on the block.



Toronto Environmental Alliance

## New City Threatens Green Initiatives

By Sarah Lambert

As the new City Council overseeing the megacity sorts itself out, there is a risk that environmental programs might be lost, overlooked or discarded in the shuffle. It is TEA's goal to preserve and expand the following Agencies, Programs and Bylaws.

### Agencies:

Healthy City Office, Environmental Protection Office, Toronto Atmospheric Fund, Environmental Centre for New Canadians, Environment Advisory Committees, expand the Task Forces to Save the Don and Save the Humber to cover the Rouge, Mimico

and Taddle Creek.

### Programs:

Inclusion of Bicycles in Cordon Counts, Side Street Sanding, Energy Efficient Street Lighting, Annual Sporting Goods Reuse Event, Parkland Naturalization, Storm Water Management Manual, Corporate Smog Plan, State of The City Report, Driveway Giveaway, Bicycle Users Groups, Neighbourhood Traffic Committees.

### Bylaws:

Natural Garden, Ban Use of Pesticides on Public Property, Main Streets Policy, Traffic Calming Guidelines, Anti-idling.

Environmentalists are going to have to be extra vigilant. Concerned about particular issue? Find the committee responsible in the side bars that follow, contact the councilors and make your voice heard.

## Toronto Council Watch ...make your voice heard



### CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Purchasing, facilities management and fleet management, real estate, finance and legal issues.

**TEA goals:** Reduce smog. Promote Green Fleets Program and an Emergency Smog Reduction Plan for high smog days.

**CHAIR:** Dick O'Brien 392-4099

John Adams 392-0013

Maria Augimeri 392-4021

Anne Johnston 392-4090

Norm Kelly 392-4047

Gloria Lindsay Luby 392-1369

Doug Mahood 397-9262

Joe Mihevc 392-0208

David Miller 392-4072

Case Ootes 392-4032

Kyle Rae 392-7903

Bruce Sinclair 392-1370

# Fear and Loathing in Kyoto

By Lois Corbett

When over 8,000 delegates from the world's nations met in Japan in December, it was not clear that a legally binding agreement could be forged. The planet's largest emitter --the United States --had yet to slap its reduction target on the negotiating table. The U.S. Senate demanded that the American team walk away if developing countries did not agree to sign the protocol.

Canada was backed up against its own fossil fuel lobby wall. Around the Canadian delegation table tempers flared --especially as more and more politicians joined the daily briefings.

Literally hours before the Kyoto session opened, Canada announced it had agreement from the provinces --with Quebec as the exception --to commit to stabilize its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at 1990 levels by 2010. After 10 days of intense lobbying Canada agreed to a six percent reduction in GHG and our neighbours to the south said they'd go one better and cut them seven percent. Unfortunately, even if the agreement succeeds in meeting its targets, greenhouse gases will continue to rise - the main argument made by environmen-

talists who trash the Kyoto compromise. They also say the protocol has too many loopholes, like how countries can deduct man-made "sinks"--forest plantations, for example -- and was built on amoral concessions like tradable emissions systems.

But both the supporters and detractors agree that the Kyoto conference brought welcomed international attention and public scrutiny to an environmental issue too long ignored, especially in Canada. Our country has never signed an international agreement that carried such potentially drastic changes in the way we live and work. To meet our six percent reduction target in 12 years, we will have to cut our country's fossil fuel emissions by 25 percent to make up for projected economic and population growth.

We all need to push our local, provincial and federal governments to quickly adopt aggressive reduction targets and clear implementation plans and schedules. Whether we like, or hate, the Kyoto protocol is not really the question. How we plan to reduce and eventually break free of our dependence on polluting fossil fuels is much more important.

*Lois Corbett is TEA's Executive Director and was an environmental group representative on the Canadian delegation to the third Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto.*

## Toronto Council Watch ...make your voice heard

### URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



In charge of planning and building, transportation, roads and traffic.

**TEA goals:** Promote TTC funding, new low-floor buses, and bike lanes.

**CHAIR:** Joe Pantalone 392-4009

Frank Faubert 392-4008

Irene Jones 397-9273

Blake Kinahan 392-4039

Peter Li Preti 392-0201

Pam McConnell 392-7916

Ron Moeser 392-1373

Howard Moscoe 392-4027

Judy Sgro 392-4066

Mario Silva 392-7016

Mike Tzekas 392-1372

## New Challenges

*(Continued from page 1)*

Any "downsizing" of municipal staff has severe environmental consequences. With fewer people to monitor our water quality, run re-use days and household hazardous waste depots, and spear-head progressive smog reduction programs, we run the risk of losing environmental protection initiatives and the chances of having the City take on the new ones TEA's proposing. We must work with our labour colleagues to better communicate the social and environmental impacts of drastic municipal downsizing.

TEA has produced a concise report called **Agenda for a Green Toronto**, outlining the environmental initiatives we want our new city to undertake in its first year, and the estimated budget impacts of the programs and changes we suggest. You can get a copy of the report by phoning TEA at 596-0660, or by popping by our office at 122 St. Patrick Street, Suite 209.

New City. New challenges.

Same planet.

I guess we have a lot of work to do.

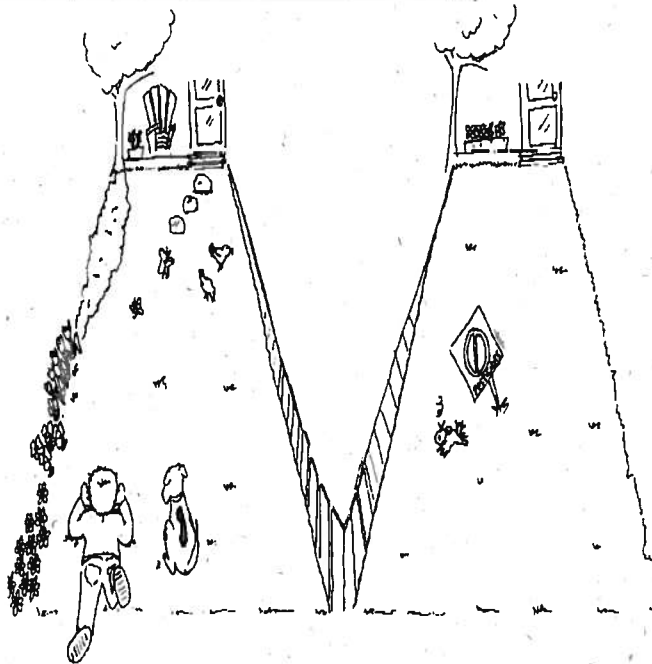
Lois Corbett, Executive Director

# A Tale of Two Lawns...

## "Chemical-free" lawn

The key to a chemical-free lawn is to help the grass become healthy and it will be naturally resistant to weeds and pests. Here are five easy steps to a chemical-free lawn:

1. **Choose the right grass and overseed.** Perennial ryegrass, fine fescue and Kentucky bluegrass are most appropriate.
2. **Mow you lawn with a sharp blade at a height of 3-3 1/2 inches.**
3. **Water once a week.** Grasses need one inch per week. In mid-summer don't be desperate—the grass will green up when rain returns.
4. **Rake in your clippings.** They're the best fertilizer. If you must fertilize, choose a slow-release organic product, and apply it in the Fall, not the spring.
5. **Relax.** Enjoy the spare time and money you've saved.



## "Pesticide-dependant" lawn

Pesticide companies would have us believe we need chemicals for a healthy green lawn. They're **WRONG**, and they're risking our environment and our health in the process.

Pesticides have been linked to cancers, allergies and hormone disruption in humans and animals. Children, seniors and pets are especially vulnerable. Lawn chemicals also pollute our water and drift in the air.

**Choose a green lawn without poisons. Cancel your lawn care contract today!**

Contact TEA for a list of chemical-free lawn care companies

## Toronto's Moving Towards Reuse

By Gillian Flower

In late January, the new City of Toronto Council voted overwhelmingly in favour (47-4) of a TEA proposal of an all-beverage refill program for the megacity. City staff and lawyers were instructed to draft all necessary plans and by-laws for final approval. As the refill legislation was not stricken from the books at the conclusion of last year's review of provincial environmental regulations, this proposal could become a reality. If this program is approved, and is adopted by Toronto and other municipalities, the government may be forced to create a provincial plan. At the very least, the issue will gain momentum in time for elections.

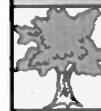
For over a decade, soft drink manufacturers have been in blatant violation of Ontario's environmental regulations. These laws clearly state that unless 30% of a company's containers are refillable, the right to use non-refillable alternatives is lost. To date, manufac-

turers have allowed the percentage of refillable containers to drop below 1%. As reuse is less polluting and energy intensive than recycling, TEA is acting on several fronts to bring back refillable containers.

Earlier this year, TEA's appeal against Coca-Cola was denied. As the government was unwilling to enforce its own regulations, claiming to be "in discussion" with Coke regarding refill quotas, it was ruled that compliance could not be expected of the company. Although the existence of these six year old so-called "discussions" has yet to be proven, the manufacturer may continue its operations with the government's blessing. However, it is not over yet, as TEA is thinking of taking the battle to a higher court.

Despite TEA's set-back with Coca-Cola, TEA's Return to Reuse campaign has made some significant headway over the last year. If you would like to get involved with this program, please contact our office to lend your support.

## Toronto Council Watch ...make your voice heard



### COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

Oversees housing, social services, homes for the aged, parks & recreation.

**TEA goals:** reassign parks & recreation to the Urban Environment and Development Committee. Reduce pesticide use, which falls under parks and rec. (East York had a policy of no pesticide spraying on public property.)

**CHAIR:** Gordon Chong 392-4061

Elizabeth Brown -392-0205

Raymond Cho 392-4076

Olivia Chow 392-4044

Rob Davis 397-9261

Michael Feldman 392-1371

John Fillion 392-0210

Joan King 392-4038

Chris Korwin-Kuczynski 392-7919

George Mammoliti 397-9268

Michael Prue 392-4035



**FREE LAWN SIGN!**  
Coming soon to your  
neighbourhood!

TEA will be knocking on  
your door, asking you to  
plant a free "Chemical-  
free lawn" sign in your  
front lawn, or drop by  
TEA anytime to pick one  
up!

**Toronto Council Watch**  
...make your voice heard

**WORKS  
AND  
UTILITIES  
COMMITTEE**



In charge of waste management, water and sewers.  
**TEA goals:** Promote Blue & Grey Box recycling; composting; water preservation, reduction of chlorine in water treatment; refillable beverage container by-laws; garbage diversion vs waste-haul; broadening the anti-incineration policy of the old City of Toronto.  
**CHAIR:** Betty Disero 392-7011  
Gerry Altobello 392-0213  
Lorenzo Berardinetti 397-9274  
Ilja Bossons 392-4096  
Sandra Bussin 392-1376  
Tom Jakobek 392-7915  
Jack Layton 392-4060  
Bill Saundercook 397-9255  
Sherene Shaw 392-1374  
David Shiner 397-9252  
Michael Walker 392-7906

## Elvis Returns T.O.'s Garbage to Sender

By Gillian Flower

TEA's Waste Reduction caucus was involved in an October 24th action with Elvis Presley himself and members of Ecology Centre Ann Arbor and NO WASTE of Michigan. The King presented mayoral candidates Hall and Lastman with letters from 4,000 Lansing citizens opposing the contract - and 15 bags of well-traveled Toronto garbage. This action was also an attempt to bring the otherwise ignored issue of waste management to the forefront in the mayoral campaign. January 1st, 1998 marked the beginning of Toronto's contract with Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI). 1,250,000 to 2,500,000 tons of Toronto garbage will travel to a landfill site in Lansing, Michigan over the next five years.

The City's contract with BFI has serious environmental consequences beyond its obvious contribution to air pollution associated with the transportation of garbage by truck. Transporting garbage elsewhere removes the motivation for waste reduction as a minimum of 250,000 tons of waste must be handled annually by BFI. In

addition, time pressures to find permanent solutions to the garbage crisis are removed. Finally, with its garbage in someone else's backyard, Toronto's diversion rate, currently a pathetic 21%, has little hope of ever reaching the 50% target set for the year 2000. In fact, this deadline was coincidentally extended to 2006 when the BFI contract was signed.

Since Elvis' visit, TEA has requested a commitment by Mayor Lastman to diversion rather than to disposal. To this end, TEA has recommended the creation of backyard and community composting programs, of a bottle deposit/return program, and of a twice-yearly pickup of bulk items such as toys, furniture, clothes and appliances. The impressive fibre recovery rate achieved by the Grey Box program in the former City of Toronto should be adopted as a minimum standard. The implementation of suggestions such as these would help Toronto lose its dependence on foreign disposal companies for our city's waste management.



Elvis showed up on the steps of both mayoral candidates' city halls "to return Toronto's garbage to sender."

# CAUCUS REPORTS...big plans ahead

We have many successes to highlight from the past, several months, and big plans for ensuring that our environment remains a top priority for our new Toronto government in the months (and years!) ahead. Here's a brief summary of what we've been doing and where we're going...Don't forget -you can get involved in helping protect your environment - we always need more volunteers, so call the TEA office for caucus updates and meeting schedules!

## Urban Pesticides Caucus

- Petitioned to stop pesticide spraying on Toronto General Hospital property. This convinced them to meet with us and revisit their policies and try to get chemicals away from hospitals.
- Helped the Catholic Women's League draft a provincial resolution to stop pesticide use on church properties and to promote it to communities.
- Our Home Safe Home project continues to explore partnerships with social housing agencies as a model of household toxics reduction in apartment buildings.

### Plans for 1998:

- protect and expand pesticide by-laws in Toronto
- work with the World Wildlife Fund to develop a pesticide education campaign in 10 Ontario communities
- organize an information and "chemical-free lawn" sign neighbourhood outreach program for the Spring

**Meeting info:** Rich Whate 596-0660

## Smog and Climate Change Caucus

- distributed "Our Changing Climate" junior-level school curriculum. Green Brick Road is doing workshops in Toronto schools, and working on language translation and web site.
- released a critique of Ontario's Smog Plan

### Plans for 1998:

- pressure new Toronto councilors to adopt a City Smog Plan to prevent summer smog days
- encourage local corporations to adopt smog prevention programs (Corporate Smog Contracts)

**Meeting Info:** John Wellner 596-0660

## Waste Reduction Caucus

- Elvis himself (?) Sang "Return to Sender" as TEA and Michigan activists dumped bags of garbage right into the mayoral offices to tell Hall and Lastman that Michigan didn't want Toronto's garbage!

- we successfully lobbied the new City of Toronto to put a deposit-return by-law for beverage containers on their "to do" list.

- the 2nd Green Gift Sale was a success with 35 vendors and 6,000 patrons!

- Our Use It, Re Use It Guide was an overwhelming success, with over 23,000 copies distributed and a funky website ([www.reuse.org](http://www.reuse.org))

- helping New York state environmental groups and depot owners to fight scrapping of the bottle bill

- distribution of 6,500 household composters in Toronto

### Plans for 1998:

- promote deposit-return through supermarket actions, and high school and university campaigns

- plan summer composter distribution

**Meeting Info:** Michael Khoo 596-0660

## Sustainable Communities Economic Development (SCED) Caucus

- produced discussion paper on the horrors of water privatization

- participated in Toronto Transition Team process

### Plans for 1998:

- continue to promote sustainable environmental practices for the new Toronto

**Meeting Info:** Doug Macdonald 978-2078

## Environmentalists Plan Transportation (EPT)

- worked with Environment Canada to monitor air quality in Toronto

- lobbied the province to avoid inner-city bus deregulation

- 407 ActionGroup held 2 press conferences

- Feet on the Street produced "Walkable City" pamphlet

### Plans for 1998:

- Spadina Festival on July 1 (in partnership with Bloor JCC and other community organizations)

**Meeting Info:** Joan Doiron 929-5483

## Ecuador Caucus

- Accion Ecologica continuing to work in Quito with local indigenous communities to stop oil exploration and mining.

- consultation with Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for three-year program funding

### Plans for 1998:

- build on local-global connection between activities in Ecuador and those in Toronto, particularly linking production in developing countries with consumption in North America. Promote Toronto's role in global systems

- build links to local network to help Accion Ecologica protect Ecuador's national parks

**Meeting Info:** Keith Stewart 656-1954

## Rocket Riders

- signed up over 100 new members

- held two public rallies to protest TTC privatization

### Plans for 1998:

- help stop cuts to TTC budget

- meet every 2nd Tuesday

**Meeting Info:** Gord Perks 596-0660

## NEW WATER CAUCUS!

Water, water, everywhere...and always under threat. Increasing pollution and the danger of privatization continue to threaten Lake Ontario and our environment. Now more than ever, the protection of our water needs to be a priority with all levels of government, including Toronto's. So, with the arrival of a few keen volunteers, we're pleased to announce TEA's new Water Caucus.

**Call the office for more information at 596-0660.**

## NEW YOUTH CAUCUS!

Our new "Youth Action Group" is already meeting and coming up with great ideas and environmental projects! It's a chance for students to make their mark for the environment!

**Call the office for more information at 596-0660**

**TEA leaves**  
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TEA leaves is produced every few months on unbleached 100% recycled paper

## Smog Plan Stinks

(Continued from page 1)

The only effective change is the "Drive Clean" program. Like in BC and California, Ontario drivers will soon be forced to regularly tune-up their vehicles. Since an inefficiently running vehicle pollutes up to twenty times more than when it is properly tuned, it will make a difference. When the program is fully implemented, Norm Sterling estimates that it will reduce emissions of Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) by 15,000 tonnes and CO<sub>2</sub> by 900,000 tonnes. However, the improvement is overshadowed by our increased use of coal-fired electrical plants. According to

Ontario Hydro, this will augment emissions by 15,000 tonnes of NO<sub>x</sub> and 6 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> this year alone.

Currently, 1,800 people die each year due to killer air in Ontario. Hospital admission studies have shown that there is no safe level of exposure to ground-level ozone, a key component of smog. The government's weak attempt to reduce those hazy summer smog days, will bring little relief to millions of southwestern Ontarians who are forced to breathe dirty air each year. Over 50% of our air pollution comes from the States. Norm Sterling is in no position to start negotiations with our neighbours until he does a better job of cleaning up at home.

### TEA PUBLICATIONS

Here is a list of some of the info to be had from TEA

#### PAMPHLETS / FACTSHEETS

##### NEW -"Our Changing Climate" Junior Level Curriculum Unit

A curriculum unit on climate change designed for students and teachers in junior level classes.—\$30.00

##### NEW -Use It, Re-Use It

The guide to reuse, repair and rental businesses in Toronto.—FREE

##### NEW -Return to Re-Use

A look at deposit-return systems to reduce waste and save taxpayers money.—FREE

##### NEW -User Pay

User pay for residential garbage neither reduces waste nor saves money -find out the better alternatives.—FREE

##### Pesticide-Free Zone Kit

A series of factsheets outlining alternatives to lawns and alternatives to pesticides; also provides tips on how to talk to your neighbours.—\$3.00

#### Green Lawns

A guide to environmentally-friendly lawn care.—FREE

#### "Sustaining Our Community" Series

A series of factsheets with the theory and how-to of making community economic development responsive to environmental concerns.—FREE

#### Green Tours

A guide to environmentally-important sites in the Toronto area.—\$5.00

#### VIDEOS

##### Growing Like a Weed

Explores the issue of urban pesticide use and possible health effects caused by these chemicals. Also illustrates chemical-free lawn care.—\$15.00

##### Great Lakes -Great Lawns

Views from community activists and homeowners around the Great Lakes basin and their efforts and successes in eliminating pesticide use.—\$15.00

##### Auto Domination -Avenues of Change

Backgrounder on current transporta-

tion issues and sustainable alternatives.—\$15.00

#### REPORTS

##### Moving Up the Ladder

The place of reuse and refill in Canadian waste management strategies.—\$15.00

##### Organic Waste Diversion and the Greater Toronto Area

A critical analysis of the GTA's 3Rs analysis input document.—\$15.00

##### Curbing Curbside Toxics

An examination of the GTA's 3Rs Analysis.—\$15.00

##### Paper Diversion in the Greater Toronto Area -Threat or Promise?

Examination of collection and diversion of paper in the GTA.—\$15.00

##### The Green Grocer's Guide to Waste Reduction

How to conduct a waste audit, practice source reduction and establish re-use and recycling measures.—\$15.00

### BE A FRIEND OF TEA'S... help us fight for the environment

You can contribute to TEA's work, and the environment by making a donation. And because we are largely a volunteer organization, every dollar goes a long way. TEA will keep you up-to-date on our accomplishments through your subscription to *Tea Leaves*, free with every donation.

Please mail your cheque to

**The Toronto Environmental Alliance**  
 122 St. Patrick Street, Suite 209  
 Toronto, ON  
 M5T 2X8

**Thank You for Your Support**

I would like to donate:

\_\_\_\$20\_\_\_\$50\_\_\_\$75\_\_\_\$150\_\_\_\$200\_\_\_\$\_\_\_

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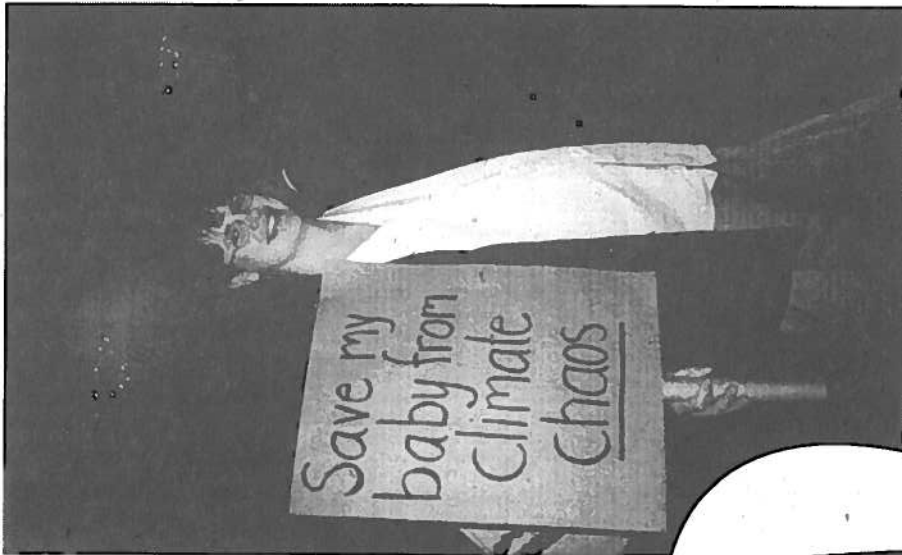
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the Newsletter of the Toronto Environmental Alliance



**MORE  
INSIDE**

**TEA  
Campaigns  
Heat up for  
Summer**

**New City  
Council**

**TEA  
Turns  
Ten!**



Toronto Environmental Alliance



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