

tea leaves

the newsletter of the toronto environmental alliance

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20 Years of Success

It began over a beer. It was early 1987. A small group of environmentalists, led by Jim Savage of Pollution Probe, had organized a ground-breaking conference on Green Cities in east-end Toronto. There were stories from around the world, about local initiatives that were making a difference in people's homes and lives, from guerilla gardening projects to radical new ideas for urban design and development.

"It was the end of the conference, after three days of inspiring stories of people overcoming challenges far greater than those we faced," recalls Vanessa Alexander, an early TEA activist. "A bunch of people were at the local pub lamenting the fact that far from being a green city, Toronto was filling up with toxic emissions, dirty air, and garbage and toxic waste.

"To make matters worse," Alexander continues, "no existing environmental group was focusing on Toronto issues and opportunities, from a city-wide perspective. People decided that what Toronto needed was to create some stories of our own. What we needed was an alliance of groups and individuals who would work with people from across the city, from all walks of life. And so TEA was conceived."

"TORONTO WAS FILLING UP WITH TOXIC EMISSIONS, DIRTY AIR AND GARBAGE."

Little did Alexander and her fellow environmentalists know that by 2008 Canada's largest city would be well on the road to actually building a green city, thanks to the efforts of engaged Torontonians and a fairly small environmental group.

To understand how far we've come, it's important to remember where we were. Back in 1988, the first year volunteers met under the TEA name:

- Most of Toronto's garbage was going to landfill and incinerators were still operating.
- Both the Metro and city governments (the old North York, Etobicoke, York, East York, Scarborough and Toronto) were regularly spraying pesticides on city parks.
- Public concern about pollutants going into our sewers and ending up in the lake had faded, after reaching a high in the 1970s.
- Smog was largely ignored, except for a small group of citizens who realized exposure to cigarette smoke and smog weren't that different.
- Energy conservation was seen as a dying idea, left over from the 1973 oil crisis that was too expensive and frankly unnecessary.
- Torontonians knew little about what pollutants are in their neighbourhood.

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Some of the 1,700 silhouettes at TEA's first Smog Hike

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The TEA team



TEA Team from left to right: Katrina Miller, Kristen Howe, Asumani Serugendo, Lina Cino, Franz Hartmann, Louise Pilfold and Heather Marshall

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The last year has been the best birthday gift TEA could have asked for to celebrate its 20th anniversary!

As you'll see in the Campaigns Update section, years of campaigning finally paid off in 2007 when Toronto City Hall adopted a number of major green initiatives. We've also launched an exciting new campaign called Greenbelting Toronto.

And, we've got some new, energetic people at TEA who are busy working on the next generation of ideas and campaigns to help green Toronto.

Below are short bios of TEA's staff team. Feel free to visit our website at www.torontoenvironment.org to learn more about us.

The TEA team also includes Elaine Whittaker, our bookkeeper, Harry Pilfold and Shaine Macleod our canvass managers, and Marcia Peralta and Val Osadec, our data entry staff. Their tireless efforts are very much appreciated. We also want to thank our 2007 University of Toronto nursing interns, Jennifer Little, Lisa Hubscher and Kim Aitkens. Finally, there are a large number of other people who have helped us throughout the year. You know who you are and we thank you!

A special thanks to our door canvassers Gary Connolly, David Findlay, Bernard McCarthy, Rob Roy and Joe Smiley. Almost every day of the year these TEA ambassadors talk with Torontonians about what TEA is up to. As importantly, they make sure your ideas and concerns get to us here at the TEA office.

Finally, it's an exciting time to be at TEA. Thanks to the energy of our members across the city and the wonderful TEA team, the dream of a truly green Toronto is finally becoming a reality.

Franz Hartmann, *Executive Director*

THE TEA STAFF TEAM

Katrina Miller, Campaigns Director

Katrina has been with TEA since 2000. She was the lead campaigner responsible for Toronto adopting the Pesticides Bylaw in 2003. She has also managed the Community Right to Know Campaign since 2004. Katrina became Campaigns Director in 2007.

Louise Pilfold, Office Manager

Louise has had a lifelong passion for the environment and social justice causes. Now, she ensures TEA operations, data management and computers run smoothly.

Asumani Serugendo, Food Campaigner

Originally from Rwanda, Asumani has worked extensively on food security issues, mostly in Africa. He now heads up TEA's campaign to promote fresh, locally grown cultural foods for new Canadians.

Lina Cino, Toxics Campaigner

Lina joined TEA after a career behind the camera producing TV programming. Lina now heads up the Community Right to Know Campaign, which allows her to pursue her passion to work with the community to reduce industrial toxins and pollution.

Franz Hartmann, Executive Director

Franz first volunteered with TEA in 1990 while doing his PhD at York University. He became Executive Director in April 2007, after 10 years of working at the municipal and federal levels advocating for green urban policies.

Kristen Howe, Greenbelt Campaigner

Kristen joined TEA after working for the Sustainability Office at the University of Toronto. Helping the Greenbelt fits in with her desire to support local food and preserve the natural spaces she enjoyed so much when growing up.

Heather Marshall, Community Campaigner

Heather joined TEA after working at Cancer Care Ontario, and has a degree from the University of Toronto. Heather works with community members to turn green policies into green actions.

What others say about TEA

“Toronto needs the Toronto Environmental Alliance. Thanks to TEA, Canada’s biggest city has the green bin, went pesticide free, and has the country’s best smog and climate change plan. And now they’re working hard to get Canada’s first community right to know bylaw passed. Every Torontonian who cares about a green Toronto should be supporting TEA.” - **Dr. David Suzuki**

“...the city’s most credible environmental group...”

- John Barber, *Globe and Mail*

“TEA's tireless advocacy on behalf of environmental issues has helped Toronto become a greener and healthier city. Their work with city government, residents, community organizations, businesses and labour to bring their issues to the forefront has made a real difference.”

- **Mayor David Miller**

“It’s important to highlight the really reputable groups...On my personal checklist?...**Toronto Environmental Alliance.**” - Michelle Landsberg, *Toronto Star*



“We’d hate to imagine what this city would look like if the Toronto Environmental Alliance hadn’t

been formed back in ’88. Its heavy-hitting research and persuasive lobbying efforts helped stop the dumping of toxic chemicals down our drains, ban pesticides on lawns and put green bins on every doorstep.” - *NOW Magazine*

“Toronto's most successful environmental activist group.” - *Eye Weekly*

Action centre

Our success is thanks to you. Throughout the past 20 years, we've called on our members and Torontonians committed to building a green Toronto to help us advocate for a green Toronto. Your tens of thousands of phone calls and letters to politicians plus the thousands of other actions you've taken to support our campaigns have been the key to TEA's success.

Here are five actions you can take today to help us build a green Toronto.

1. Worried about toxic chemicals polluting your neighbourhood?

Tell us your story and we'll post it on our campaign website www.secrecystoxic.ca! Take a tour of your neighbourhood and document your toxic concerns. Send them to us and we'll help you get answers. In turn, you'll help us show City Hall that Torontonians want the right to know who is polluting their neighbourhoods.

2. Request and buy local food, preferably grown in the Greenbelt.

Every dollar spent on local food saves having to import food from far-away. That's because bringing the food these long distances burns fossil fuels and causes smog and greenhouse gas emissions. As well, buying local means your food dollars help our farming neighbours.

3. Save money by leaving product packaging at the store.

New rules at the City means residents have to pay directly for the city to pick up their garbage. These days, most household trash is packaging we throw away as soon as we get home. Save yourself some money and send a signal to retailers and producers: leave the product packaging at the store and tell the manager it's time producers take responsibility for their trash!



“TELL US YOUR STORY ABOUT TOXICS IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, AND WE'LL POST IT ON OUR WEBSITE WWW.SECRECYISTOXIC.CA”



Top: TEA activists advocate for a green Toronto
Above: Act locally and change the world!

4. Visit www.torontoenvironment.org.

Our newly renovated, expanded website has lots of information about what you can do to help build a green Toronto. It also lets you sign up to receive our electronic newsletters to keep you up-to-date on TEA's various campaigns.

5. Get your kids involved (it's never too early to become a TEA activist!).

Kids, send us a picture with words and images that show what you think Toronto needs to do to cut the pollution that causes smog. We'll pass on your pictures, or even better, images from your whole class, directly to the Councillors who represent you and your family.

Fast forward to 2008

- Toronto is on track to divert 70 percent of its waste by 2010, thanks to composting and aggressive recycling.
- There is a city-wide ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides on all public and private property.
- A sewer use bylaw has reduced the toxic substances going into Lake Ontario.
- Smog and climate change are top-of-mind issues at City Hall: Toronto has an aggressive Smog and Climate Change Plan designed to cut smog emissions by 20 percent by 2012 and greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2020; the City has committed to expanding the TTC, the so-called Transit City Plan, to ensure all Torontonians have access to fast, reliable service.
- The City is working on a Community Right To Know bylaw that would let Torontonians know what pollutants are released in their neighbourhoods.

These successes could not have happened without the tens of thousands of Torontonians who worked together to advocate for a green Toronto.

TEA's role, as conceived back in 1987, was a simple one: provide a meeting place and a voice for Torontonians. Twenty years later, we're proud to say this great idea became a reality.



“THAT’S WHY WE’RE ACTIVELY WORKING TO ENSURE OUR CAMPAIGNS AND ADVOCACY REACH OUT TO AND INCLUDE TORONTO’S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES.”

The next 20 years

Toronto has changed since 1988. Increasingly, we are a microcosm of the world. This multicultural Toronto creates an incredible opportunity for TEA as it continues to build a green Toronto. To tap into the community energy and networks of a multicultural Toronto, TEA must turn itself into a meeting place and a voice for all Torontonians. That's why we're actively working to ensure our campaigns and advocacy work reach out to, and include Toronto's diverse communities.

While we're well on the road to becoming a green city, there's still lots to do. We now face the overarching threat of global warming, which will affect every aspect of the urban environment. We still have some ways to go to clean the air. And we've just begun to rid ourselves of the dangerous toxics that are all around us.

Our hope is that in the next 20 years we will fulfill the vision that gave birth to TEA in 1987: working together with all Torontonians to build a truly green city.



Help TEA build a green Toronto



20 YEARS OF BUILDING A GREEN TORONTO

Province wants to burn garbage. TEA says No!

1994: TEA has active campaigns to: reduce garbage, clean up city sewage, reduce pesticide use, develop a green local economy and work with a local environmental group in Ecuador to share knowledge about how to green cities.

1988

1990

1992

~

1998



TEA holds first EcoBunk Awards for advertising excellence in confusing the public and compromising the environment.

TEA is born

City adopts TEA plan to reduce

TEA plays key role in developing the City's first environmental plan.

TEA organizes activists in Toronto and Kirkland Lake to defeat City plan to ship garbage to Adams Mine.

City develops Community Right to Know bylaw.



City finally implements TEA plan for green bins!

TTC starts increasing ridership and expands transit service

2000

2002

2004

2006

2008

First Smog Report Card issued by TEA, rating the City's actions to reduce smog.

TEA succeeds in getting the City to pass a pesticides ban.

Smog and Climate Change plan adopted unanimously by City Hall.

A's smog.

TEA organizes the city's first-ever Smog Hike to honour the 1,700 people who die prematurely every year because of smog-related illnesses.



September 2007 Smog Hike

Campaign updates

CITY POISED TO GIVE TORONTONIANS THE RIGHT TO KNOW ABOUT TOXICS

It took four years of active campaigning. Now, Toronto is on a cusp of a truly great accomplishment – adopting a precedent-setting Community Right to Know (CRTK) bylaw. In early 2008, the City released a draft CRTK bylaw that will let you know what toxic chemicals are being used and released in your neighbourhood.

During the first half of 2008, TEA will work with Torontonians across the city to make sure City Council knows Torontonians fully support the City's CRTK bylaw. And, if all goes as planned, by Summer 2008 Toronto City Council will make history by becoming the first municipality in Canada to track toxic pollutants and provide public disclosure.

Why do we need a bylaw?

Right now, most pollution releases in Toronto go unreported. Only three percent of polluters have to report their toxic releases to the public. As a result, over 80 percent of toxic air emissions are not reported. Many of these emissions come from local businesses such as dry cleaners, auto body shops and printing companies. Torontonians have a right to know who is polluting their communities so that they can make informed choices about what pollution risks are acceptable and how to avoid those that aren't.

What will the bylaw do?

Toronto's CRTK bylaw will require businesses of all sizes to annually report their use and release of 25 toxic substances. These are chemicals that are already in Toronto's air at unhealthy levels and include powerful carcinogens like cadmium, perchloroethylene and formaldehyde.

Experience shows that when industries are transparent about the chemicals they use and release, they work harder to reduce and eliminate their pollution. These voluntary reductions often translate into significant cost savings for the facility.

What you can do:

Pick up the phone today and contact your City Councillor and the Mayor and let them know you fully support the City's CRTK bylaw! Success in getting the bylaw passed and implemented depends on you.

And finally, thank you!!

TEA's CRTK campaign has evolved into one of the strongest and most respected community initiatives in Toronto and has had a tremendous impact in the community and at City Hall.

We could not have gone this far without you. The level of support from our TEA members has been exceptional and your efforts in this campaign have made all the difference!

Find out how to support the bylaw, and how you can address your local toxic concerns at www.secrecyistoxic.ca.



Tell City Hall you support CRTK!



SUPPORT

Find out how to support the bylaw, and how you can address your local toxic concerns at www.secrecyistoxic.ca.

SUPPORT

Contact your City Councillor and the Mayor and let them know you support a moratorium on further TTC fare increases.

TRANSIT UPDATE

The TTC has set a bold new vision for expansion with its new Transit City Plan. The plan proposes building seven new light rail rapid transit routes, namely streetcar lines with dedicated lanes. In total, 120 km of service will be added over the entire city. By 2021, the new lines would carry 175 million riders per year.

The report answers a call TEA has been making for years, to strengthen the system with cost effective surface routes before building capital intensive subways. Most of the new lines will run through areas TEA has found to be poorly served by transit now, such as Etobicoke, Scarborough and East York.

The estimated cost of building the Transit City routes is \$6 billion. The province has committed to significant funding through its "MoveOntario 2020" plan, and Toronto is developing a financial plan for the remaining portion. But questions still remain about how Toronto will pay for operating these new lines when it can barely afford to run the system it has today.

Historically Toronto and the province split the cost of running the TTC, while keeping fares low. Now the province pays only a fraction of what it used to and often only in one-time grants that the city has to renegotiate every year. Toronto's overall budget woes have brought on skyrocketing fares and major delays in service improvements. The result is an overcrowded transit system with the highest fares among comparable cities in North America.



"THE REPORT ANSWERS A CALL TEA HAS BEEN MAKING FOR YEARS, TO STRENGTHEN THE SYSTEM WITH COST EFFECTIVE SURFACE ROUTES BEFORE BUILDING CAPITAL INTENSIVE SUBWAYS."

Transit funding fix needed

We've finally got the right transit plan in place. Now, we'll focus on getting the right funding in place to make the Transit City plan a reality.

TEA believes the funding model for the TTC is broken at both the provincial and city level. It must be fixed. The province must honour the tradition of funding 50 percent of our transit operations. Good public transit is essential to the provincial government's commitments to improving air quality, reducing traffic congestion and curbing urban sprawl. The City must put a moratorium on further fare increases. The TTC's own survey indicates that one in four riders would consider switching to using a car if fares go up. Just imagine the effect that could have on our city – more smog days, even worse traffic congestion. It is much more appropriate to fund additional TTC costs and service improvements through general tax revenue since all Torontonians benefit from an affordable and efficient transit system.

What you can do:

1. Contact your City Councillor and the Mayor and let them know you support a moratorium on further TTC fare increases.
2. Contact your MPP and the Premier and demand that the Province fund 50 percent of the TTC's operating costs.



Top: TEA fights for a better TTC
Above: New City plan will see more streetcar lines.

Campaign updates

SMOG AND CLIMATE CHANGE CAMPAIGN

It took 10 years of campaigning. Finally, Toronto has a comprehensive plan to clean the air and curb global warming.

In early July 2007, Toronto City Council passed a smog and climate change plan called “Change is in the Air.” The plan includes a wide range of policies to help Torontonians reduce energy use at home, at work and as they move, and switch to green power.

If all goes as planned, Toronto will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by six percent below 1990 levels by 2012 and 30 percent below 1990 levels by 2020. Equally important, smog pollution will drop by 20 percent from 2004 levels by 2012.

Ten years ago, TEA began its campaign by focusing on the newly formed City of Toronto. We asked the new Council to adopt a smog response plan designed to reduce pollution created by city services on smog days. They did. We then spent the next eight years advocating for a whole set of comprehensive strategies designed to clean the air.

In early 2007, shortly after the newly elected Mayor announced that global warming was the most important issue of our time, TEA once again asked for a set of comprehensive measures designed to help all Toronto residents and businesses save the air. This time, Council listened.

We now have a plan that, if implemented, will transform the city. Which means our focus shifts to making sure this plan is implemented effectively and quickly.

Over the next year, TEA will:

- Monitor the City’s implementation process and issue our annual Smog Report Card that grades how well the City is doing
- Work with Torontonians to turn policies into actual actions.



GREENBELTING TORONTO CAMPAIGN

Fresh apples, fresh bok choy, fresh water and clean air. This just some of the bounty Torontonians enjoy from that wonderful band of land that surrounds Toronto.

Known as the Greenbelt, this land is full of diverse forests, farmland, rivers, heritage sites and vibrant communities.

The Greenbelt is vital to the health of the region, and to the population of Toronto. But, residents and lands in the Greenbelt area still face many threats from encroaching development.

As the largest neighbouring city to the Greenbelt, Toronto’s actions have huge impacts on the region. TEA’s Greenbelting Toronto campaign is working to help Torontonians help the Greenbelt and its communities by advocating for key Greenbelt-friendly policies at the City and other levels of government.

Since Spring 2007, the campaign has focused on City Hall. Working with a coalition of farmers, local food advocates and Greenbelt supporters, we’ve called on City Hall to buy local food. That’s because buying local food reduces emissions generated from long distance travel, secures income for Greenbelt farmers, and helps strengthen the supply of local food for the future.

And we’ve also been focusing on helping Toronto’s diverse communities get access to fresh, Greenbelt-grown food that meets their cultural needs.

Promoting Greenbelt-grown Cultural Food

When Asumani Serugendo, TEA’s Food Campaigner, arrived in Toronto in 2005, it took more than a month before he found the staple foods he ate in Rwanda. “I just didn’t know where to look”, he says, “and my family and I missed them so much!” Through suggestions from a friend and much time spent searching on foot, he began to find ingredients for his favourite dishes like calaloo, a green leafy vegetable, and sweet potatoes. But few of them were really fresh.

Now Asumani is coordinating the development of cultural food guides for diverse communities in Toronto which list stores selling their foods ‘from back home’ that are fresh and grown in the Greenbelt area. The guides, currently being developed for Chinese, South Asian, Caribbean and Sub-Saharan African cuisines, will be distributed widely to help consumers access these foods grown on our prime farm land, instead of those imported from afar. This campaign also creates opportunities to help connect local retailers and farmers with new crop and market opportunities.

As the first year of our campaign wraps up, TEA will now focus our efforts on other ways Torontonians and the City of Toronto can help the Greenbelt. We’ll be looking at Greenbelt-friendly procurement policies, land use issues and other ways we can support the ecological and economic vitality of the Greenbelt.

What you can do:

Join the Toronto Friends of the Greenbelt Coalition to receive our e-newsletter and be notified of important upcoming events. You can join the coalition and find out the latest news on the campaign on our website:
www.torontoenvironment.org/greenbelt

Fundraising

THANK YOU!

We have a membership base of thousands who donate every year. These unrestricted public donations allow us to pursue our core mandate to promote a greener Toronto by enabling us to spend time talking to City Councillors and engage residents in public policy debates. To all our members and donors, we say thank you!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR DEEP GREEN DONORS!

We want to say a special thank you to our Deep Green Donors who have contributed \$1,000 or more in 2007.

Bob Fugere *Canadian Autoworkers*
Steve Neil *Genuine Health*
Susan and Joe Salek *Top Drawer Creative*
Toronto Hydro Corporation *United Steelworkers*
Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE ORGANIZATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS WHO SUPPORTED OUR WORK IN 2007:

Foundations and other organizations play a vital role in helping TEA advocate for a green Toronto. Without their support, it would be much more difficult for TEA and our members to be as effective as we are. We would like to say a special thank you to:

Cancer Care Ontario *Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation*
EJLB Foundation *Helen McCrea Peacock Foundation*
Laidlaw Foundation *McLean Foundation*
Ontario Trillium Foundation

MAKE A SPECIAL 20TH ANNIVERSARY GIFT: JOIN THE TEA "DEEP GREEN" TEAM

Every donation, regardless of the amount, is deeply appreciated. But the bigger the donation, the more work we can do advocating for a green Toronto.

We're looking for a select few Deep Green Donors who understand that their one major donation (greater than \$1,000) can go a very long way toward helping TEA build a green Toronto. If you or anyone you know would like to become a Deep Green Donor, let us know.

"Every Torontonian who cares about a green Toronto should be supporting TEA."

- Dr. David Suzuki



A very special thank you to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for their support



HELP MAKE TORONTO GREEN!



You can contribute to TEA's work and the environment by making a donation. Help us get a community right to know bylaw, fight smog, support the Greenbelt, stop incineration and get better public transit!

- \$500
- \$300
- \$100
- \$75
- Other \$ _____
- Monthly \$ _____
(requires credit card or void cheque)

Name	Address	
City & Province	Postal Code	Phone
E-mail	Area of Interest	
Visa/MasterCard #	Expiry Date	

Please mail your cheque to: TEA, 30 Duncan Street, Suite 201, Toronto ON M5V 2C3 or call us at: 416 596 0660

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



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30 Duncan Street, Suite 201
Toronto, ON M5V 2C3

TEL: 416 596 0660
FAX: 416 596 0345
EMAIL: tea@torontoenvironment.org

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Dr. David Suzuki and TEA's Katrina Miller call on City Hall to adopt the CRTK bylaw.
Photo appeared in *The Globe & Mail* on February 16, 2007, credit Jim Ross.

INSIDE

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FSC logo here