

ECONEWS #194

A monthly newsletter funded by your donations that dreams of a world blessed by the harmony of nature, the pleasures of community, and the joys of personal fulfillment, guided and protected by our active citizenship.

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*Accounts correction - the bank is unusually empty!

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By email: www.earthfuture.com/econews

THE ECO-PERSONALS

\$1 a word. Max 5 lines, non-profits, low-income free. 1" box ad \$50

* **Charming guest room**, \$30/night.

Cook St Village, ocean. 250-361-3102

* **Lovely room to rent**, close to ocean, downtown, \$30/night, 250-382-3810.

COHOUSING IN NANAIMO

Imagine a sustainable, resident-planned development in a beautiful location with an emphasis on community, cooperation and quality of life. Many people's dream, yes? After many years of persistence, that's what's happening in Nanaimo at the new Pacific Gardens Cohousing Community. Sitting in a natural setting with 4 acres of organic orchards and gardens, the 25-unit project has been built to LEED environmental standards. As well as a large community kitchen and dining hall, its residents will enjoy the use of a woodworking shop, wet crafts room, music/meditation room, guest rooms, and children's play area. It has all been designed for pedestrian friendliness, and its members get to participate in the Nanaimo car-sharing coop. If this has you interested, there's a potluck every Thursday night and ribbon-cutting on Sept 22nd. Congratulations, everyone! See <http://www.pacificgardens.ca>

LONG LIVE TLC

After a long and difficult spring and summer, when Bill Turner was forced out of his job, The Land Conservancy (TLC) is back in strong hands following a clear mandate from 3,000 members who voted in a 55% majority to elect all of the "Save TLC" candidates to the new Board - Briony Penn, Kenneth Millard, Frances Pugh, Carol Pickup, Elspeth McVeigh, Cheryl Bryce, Barry Glickman, Alastair Craighead, Magnus Bein, David Merner, and Todd Wong. The new board has moved quickly to reinstate Bill Turner and Ian Fawcett, set up an Audit Committee, and made a commitment to transparency and greater involvement by staff and members. They have also got an independent legal and accounting opinion confirming that TLC's debts were not crippling, that they were being paid down at a healthy rate, and that independent audits and Revenue Canada had given TLC a clean bill of financial health. Good relationships are also being built with retiring members of the old board. So now it's back to the business that matters of saving land and special places. There are three projects that need your help: The Sooke Potholes needs just \$37,000 to clear its debt; Merv Wilkinson's ecoforestry legacy Wildwood Forest needs \$250,000 to finalize its protection; and Keating Farm, in the Cowichan Valley, needs \$275,000. To donate, call 250-485-2422 or go to <http://www.conservancy.bc.ca>.

THE GREEN SCREEN

Calling all environmental film-makers - MediaNet has created a 3-week eco-doc program especially for you from Sept 12th - Oct 4th, partnering with ekosTV, Open Cinema, the Dogwood Initiative and the Community Arts Council. You'll benefit from the mentorship of film-makers such as Richard Boyce and Rick Searle and receive help and advice while you go about making an environmental video, with filmmakers and editors on hand to help. The cost is \$150. <http://www.media-net.bc.ca>

MOBILE PHONE DANGER

They're everywhere, and while many want them banned from use while driving, we seem to think they are otherwise OK, and that it's fine for teenagers to walk around with one glued to the ear. In an adult, the radiation from the phone only penetrates a small area around the ear, but children's skulls are

thinner. In a 10 to 15 year old year old, the radiation permeates 30% of the way into the brain on the side where the phone is held (50% for five year olds).

So - does it matter? If you want your children to not suffer from brain cancer, the answer is an enormous YES. In a recent study a team led by Dr. Lennart Hardell, a leading oncologist at Sweden's University Hospital, found that among people who begin using mobile phones before they turn 20, the risk of brain cancer after one or more years of cell phone use is 5.2 times greater than for the general population. For those who begin after the age of 20, the risk is 1.4 times greater.

Just because we're asleep to the danger, don't think everyone is. In Britain, the Chief Medical Officers want to see no child under 16 using a cell phone except in emergencies. In France, cell phones have just been banned in all primary schools, and cellphone advertising aimed at children will soon be banned. The campaigners were furious, since they wanted the ban to extend to all 13 year-olds, combined with drastic measures to limit the power and location of transmitter masts. Studies funded by the cellphone industry throw doubt on the concerns, but every independently funded study has found an association between long-term use (over ten years) and brain tumours. Since we only started using cell phones in the late 1990s, this should have every parent alarmed. See <http://www.wiredchild.org>

THE CARDINAL DIVIDE

Q: How do you combine eco-activism, a hammock, and a darned good crime-thriller? A: You put Victoria local author Stephen Legault on your radar as a hot new crime writer, put on your grey raincoat and dark glasses, and hotfoot it to Munro's or Bolen Books to buy a copy of his new book, *The Cardinal Divide*. His hero Cole Blackwater is a murky and confused environmental activist who - as well as heavy drinking and bar-brawling - loves the grizzly bears and wild open space of Alberta's Rocky Mountain foothills. When he is invited to help a conservation group save the Cardinal Divide from being strip-mined for its coal, and the mine's boss is suddenly murdered, he is forced to turn detective while confronting his past. Stephen is a pioneer in a new genre of crime-writing which has a host

of themes to offer. As I dug in, the plot ceased to be fiction, and my pleasure increased. His next book, due out in the spring, is set among the fish farms of the Broughton Archipelago. *Stop Press*: Stephen is doing a public reading of his book on Thur Sept 10. See Green Diary.

WHAT'S CAUSING AUTISM?

Autism is a tragic brain development disorder that causes much distress and suffering to both parents and children. In California, the number of cases being reported increased sevenfold in the 16 years between 1990 and 2006. Increased reporting and changes in the method of reporting may account for a 1.7-fold increase, but that still leaves a 5-fold increase to be explained. Genes can not change this fast, so there must be something harmful in the environment that is interfering with a baby's brain development during pregnancy or early childhood. For a while, people suspected a mercury compound used in vaccines - but that ended in 1999, and the autism rate is still rising. Attention is now turning to the hundreds of neuro-developmental toxins that mothers and babies are exposed to. The evidence so far shows that mothers with autism spectrum children were twice as likely to have used pet shampoos containing organophosphates or pyrethrins as mothers of healthy children. (Scientific American, Jan 9 2009). This should send an urgent signal to stop using the products, and to pet shops and vets to stop selling them. Another study found a link between autism and phthalates, commonly used in cosmetics. Antibacterial soaps could also contain ingredients that harm the brain. Until the suspect is nailed down and banned, pregnant mothers should avoid all artificial chemicals including things like air fresheners, all pesticides and all cosmetics. Until we have cleansed our environment of toxic chemicals, we need to treat pregnancy as a time of simple purity, with lots of contact with nature and none with modern chemicals.

THE SEASON OF FOOD

Tis the season of homegrown tomatoes, beans and mellow fruitfulness - and there are courses galore if you want to learn the skills of growing, gathering, bottling, canning, and seed-saving that our grandparents took for granted (see Green Diary). How many times do we need to say it? Locally grown organic food tastes better, is better for our

health, has a lower carbon footprint, and stores more carbon in the soil. We can all make a difference, either by growing the food ourselves or by buying it from farmers markets, pocket markets or chain stores that stock local produce.

This is an important area where governments can play a role. This summer, Chicago became the first city in North America to pass a Green Food Resolution specifically linking climate change with our food choices and production systems. New York was quick to follow with a resolution calling for the immediate implementation of a citywide initiative to establish climate-friendly food policies and programs, financial and technical support, a public awareness campaign, and greater access to local, fresh, healthy food. (See www/bit.ly/1QHTPE).



Fall Harvest, by Molly Brett

Hospitals and schools can get involved too. In August, Stanford Hospital and Clinics in Palo Alto, California, announced the launch of a new inpatient menu that features organic, locally grown ingredients from within a 200-mile radius. In London, UK, a two-year project is aiming to increase the amount of local and/or organic food to 10% of the catering in four London hospitals. In Rome, 92% of the food served in the city's schools is now organic, seasonal, and cooked from scratch. When might the Legislature here in Victoria offer its first menu of local, organic food, and its first all-vegetarian menu?

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION of BC

Are you among the many who suffer from environmental sensitivity, as described in the cover story? If so, you might want to join the Environmental Health Association of BC, which works as a self-help organization to raise awareness of the condition in the medical community and the general public, and provide support and help to those who want to help themselves. Their newsletter contains details of safe products such as EMF-free phones

made in Germany, healing recipes, and people's personal stories. This fall, they are starting to run support meetings in Victoria (Wed Sept 23rd, 1:30pm, at the Church of Truth, 111 Superior St.) See <http://www.ehabc.org>, and see also Nova Scotia's Guide to Less Toxic Products <http://www.lesstoxicguide.ca>.

THE WATERSHED SENTINEL

If you enjoy reading EcoNews, you will enjoy our sister publication, The Watershed Sentinel, a magazine published 5 times a year by Delores Broten, with 36 pages full of insight and inspiration. A subscription is just \$25 a year from Box 1270, Comox, BC V9M 7Z8, and you can find it online at <http://www.watershedsentinel.ca>.

ACTION OF THE MONTH CANADA'S ASBESTOS EXPORTS

This is one of Canada's most shameful secrets, which successive Liberal and Conservative governments have pushed under the carpet. Thetford Mines, in Quebec, has been producing asbestos for over 100 years. We have banned its use in Canada since it is such a lethal carcinogen, but we still allow - and encourage - its export, with the government giving a big annual cheque to the Crysolite Institute to help them promote its sale overseas.

The Institute pretends that it is safe to use, provided people take precautions, but Canada sells 95% of its asbestos to poor countries where protection is non-existent. The CBC did us a huge service recently by showing terrible footage of young asbestos workers in India being covered in asbestos dust - all heading for a painful and early death.

The Green Party and the NDP both support a ban; the Conservatives support the industry line; the Liberals, believe it or not, have yet to support a ban, despite MPs like Hedy Fry, Dr. Carolyn Bennett and Dr. Keith Martin calling for one. After years of neglect, there is critical chance to end this awful shame if we act now, in the run-up to a likely federal election.

Action: Write to [Stephen Harper](mailto:Stephen_Harper@pm.gc.ca) (pm@pm.gc.ca), [Michael Ignatieff](mailto:Michael_Ignatieff@parl.gc.ca) (IgnatM@parl.gc.ca), or [Gilles Duceppe](mailto:Gilles_Duceppe@parl.gc.ca) (DucepG@parl.gc.ca), urging that they end Canada's shame. There is a form letter here <http://bit.ly/RJ1G9>, or you can use your own words. For letters, the address is House of Parliament, Ottawa K1A 0A6. For the background details, see <http://www.preventcancerow.ca>