



vol. 24:1 winter/spring 2006

BETWEEN THE
issues

BETWEEN THE COVERS:
Green Renovation Realities
Paint and Plaster
Just Chocolate



Fern Lane Reconstruction
www.ecologyaction/
newhome



Fern Lane construction illustrations
donated by Michael Fuller

letterstothecentre

Sable Island

I've read the newsletter from EAC on Sable Island and I think EAC should request a "buffer zone" on Sable Island, something like 50 miles, so as to block any development from happening near Sable Island that would destroy or damage the island ecology. If there was a drilling area near Sable Island, the animals might get affected by the pollution released from the oil rig, such as fumes or the burning of wasted fuel, etc. Accordingly, the water pollution may also damage shellfish habitats surrounding Sable Island. I think placing a buffer zone around Sable Island, by law, would be the safest way to protect it. The buffer zone would not be on the Island itself but out from the Island.

Allister Marshall, Chapel Island, NS.

Dear EAC and TRAX

I remember five years ago, meeting in the basement of the Dalhousie School of Resource and Environmental Studies building to discuss implementation of the UPASS. At the time, it seemed such an impossible and far off goal. Now, in 2006, the UPASS comes with a student card at St. Mary's and Dalhousie Universities. As a Dal student, I got my UPASS in January and every time I get on the bus, that Tracy Chapman song comes into my head – the She's Got a Ticket one. This is a true victory for sustainable transportation in HRM, and I wanted to thank TRAX for all the work that has gone into meeting with student unions, university representatives and Metro Transit over the years.

A UPASS fan

To Fern Lane

My Other Valentine

When I am staring up at the ceiling in the middle of the night, I am thinking of you
The unexplained purchases at Piercey's, they are all for you
The long absences on the weekend, I am with you
That musty smell on my clothes, the smudges on my face, they are from you
The disputes at home about repairs to this or that, they are because of you
The arguments with friends, they are all about you
The gordian ethical knots that I tie myself into, all because of you
The clandestine googles searches, they are all for you

So my other Valentine, you who stole my heart one sunny summer day
Be there for me when I need you

Mark Butler is EAC's Managing Director, a budding poet, and is learning that renovations are sometimes more challenging than working towards sustainable fisheries.

BETWEEN THE ISSUES

VOL. 24 NO. 1

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EAC and HelioTrust thank everyone who participated in the extremely successful and fun Harvest Festival 2005. Special thanks to Harvest Festival Coordinator, Julia Kemp, for a fantastic job. Thanks to the Food Action Committee for their dedication and hard work. The Festival would not be a success without the following sponsors:
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Hope to see you on September 10th for Harvest Festival 2006.

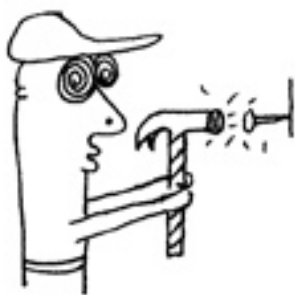
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editorial

This year, EAC enters its 35th year of working on behalf of our membership, to protect and sustain the Nova Scotian environment. In the last decade, EAC has grown and matured, in numbers of projects, breadth of issues and credibility. And, as if there were not enough challenges ahead of us, the Centre decided that part of its growth was to find another home – a home of its own. A space where the Centre can finally express its values, projects and initiatives; a place to walk the talk. Picture it: on site composting, bicycle parking for all staff, energy efficient lighting, green space and a kitchen (finally, a place to do the dishes!); a structure that demonstrates green technologies, creates an energy efficient work place, and a healthy work environment. In many ways, the purchase and ongoing renovations of 2705 Fern Lane is our most complex and largest project to date.

True to our unconventional structure, we have a large volunteer committee to guide the process by researching, debating, researching some more, weighing the pros and cons of each renovation decision. Some days, we have been overwhelmed by the multitude of decisions required to make the best of a 100 plus year old building while incorporating environmental considerations at every step. Other days, the excitement of finding new ways to do things, meeting local suppliers and learning about innovative materials counterbalances the many decisions to be made. Like



michael fuller

every home owner, we are dealing with the financial bottom line – but, more importantly we always consider the environmental bottom line. Sometimes the two go hand in hand – like reusing lumber, using less material overall, but other times it is clear that making the right choice will cost more than the mainstream, and generally less environmentally friendly choice.

This issue of BTI is the last one that will be put together out of our Argyle Street location, which we vacate with some reluctance at leaving the downtown core but with lots of excitement at finally being in a place of our own, and becoming part of a new neighborhood. In this issue, board member Caley McLellan outlines the trials and tribulations of green renovations and Kelly Smith and Heather McKibbon help solve the mystery behind all those insulation products. Kelly also writes on the joys of natural plasters, some of which will be demonstrated in EAC's new home. Corey Toews reminds us that not just renovations, but urban planning are key to a sustainable city. If you are wondering what your next, environmental good deed should be, Suki Starfish provides astrological guidance through her eco-horoscopes. Come visit us at our new home, where we will be having many kitchen parties to celebrate the successes in our 35th year and beyond.

Susanna Fuller
BTI Editor

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actionisourmiddlename

we stand on guard for thee (Wilderness Committee / Forestry Campaign) The Standing Tall Campaign for Environmentally Responsible Forestry is on a roll! In October 2005, in alliance with the Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners and Operators Association, we released our major report on silviculture funding delivered via provincial Forest Sustainability Regulations. Since then, we've met with the Minister and Deputy Minister of Natural Resources; presented to the Legislature's Standing Committee on Resources, and pushed the issue of sustainable forestry in the media. Our sustained pressure on DNR for broad public involvement in the development of the new provincial forest strategy is making an impact, with the Department moving toward independent facilitation. We've published a new forest sector fact sheet on the forest sector in Nova Scotia and have contracted a research report on industry subsidies. We're addressing issues like biomass burning, pesticide spraying and riparian buffers. We have presentations in the works to groups, councils and HRDAs across the province and welcome invitations to talk about our campaign to diversify our forest economy and restore our Acadian Forest. Call us at 429-1335 or go to www.novascotiaforests.ca where you can sign up online for our Forests Alerts email list, and endorse our position statement.



lighting the way forward (Energy Issues Committee) The EIC has written an action plan for the Atlantic Canada Sustainable Energy Coalition (ACSEC), submitted to the Henry P. Kendall Foundation for long-term seed and leverage funding. Through ACSEC, each Atlantic Province will have funding for staff dedicated to energy, climate change, and economic development as well as resources for project development and implementation. Each province is currently gearing-up to undertake a participatory strategic planning process, promoting sustainable energy as an economic development strategy. The active involvement of the Energy Issues Committee will be essential to track energy and climate change issues, identify Nova Scotia leaders in sustainable energy policy, and engage in new projects. EIC is currently working on projects and campaigns for energy efficiency and renewable energy with a variety of partners. Please contact energy coordinator Brendan Haley at energy@ecologyaction.ca if you would like to get involved.

getting up, out and moving (ASRTS, Transportation Issues Committee) International Walk to School Week (October 3 to 7, 2005) was our biggest yet – with 137 schools and ~30,000 students participating. In addition, Pictou Elementary and Portland Estates Elementary in Dartmouth launched weekly Walking School Buses. October also saw the launch of our Making Tracks project, with the goal to make Active & Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) more effective in Nova Scotia. Making Tracks is supported by Transport Canada, the IWK Health Centre Foundation and Nova Scotia Health Promotion. Aimee Poole was hired to coordinate Making Tracks and will be researching barriers to active transportation, using a community-based social marketing approach to redesign the ASRTS program. Aimee is a community health researcher and holds a BA (Psychology) and a Masters Degree in Community Health. ASRTS also formed a partnership with Clean Air Champions, for the 2005/06 school year. Together, we bring respected athletes into Halifax junior and senior high schools to motivate and educate on clean air, health, active transportation and climate change.

reaping the rewards (Coastal Issues Committee) On January 10, 2006 the EAC's Saltmarsh Restoration Project in Cheverie Creek, Hants County, was awarded the "Visionary Group Award" by the Gulf of Maine Council. Awards were presented by Provincial Ministers Kerry Morash (Environment and Labour) and Chris d'Entremont (Aquaculture and Fisheries). The Cheverie Creek culvert was replaced in December 2005 to restore tidal flow to the saltmarsh. Check out before and after photos at www.ecologyaction.ca. From this success, we have learned that the key to maintaining a healthy Nova Scotian coastline is increasing innovative coastal planning at all levels of government. To this end, CIC and the Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia are working with Dalhousie students to demonstrate progressive approaches to working and living on our coast. Using the Musquodoboit River Watershed as a case study, the project will include a community consultation and development of innovative design ideas.



events

Local Exchange Trading Festival

March 11th, 11-2 pm
St. Matthews United Hall
Barrington St, Halifax

Seedy Saturday

March 11th, 2-4 pm
Emmanuel Anglican Church Hall,
322 Herring Cove Rd.

EAC New Volunteer Evening

March 15th, 5:30 pm
At EAC Argyle Offices 5:30pm
Call 429-2202 for details

Standing Tall exhibits at Eastern Woodlot Owners Conference

March 25th
Wycocomagh,
plus: NS Anglers and Hunters AGM, Truro,
and NS Woodlot Owners and Operators Association AGM,
Great Village.

Earth Day

April 22
www.earthday.ca and stay tuned for local events.

TRAX Open Streets Event

April 23rd
www.trax.ns.ca or call 429-0924 for details.

Registration for International Walk to School Week

May 2006 (for October 2 to 6, 2006).
See <http://www.goforgreen.ca/walktoschool/reg/step1.aro> or e-mail asrts@ecologyaction.ca.

'open' for business (Transportation Issues Committee and TRAX) Spring into action this spring! The first of a soon-to-be weekly "street closure" is coming to HRM April 2006. This community-building festival involves "closing" a street to motorized vehicles in order to "open" it to Active Transportation. The Open Streets Festival, an initiative of EAC's Open Streets Project is inspired by the maxim, "We are not blocking traffic, we are traffic!" This family oriented event will provide the only temporary space in HRM long enough, wide enough, flat enough, straight enough and safe enough to accommodate bicycles, wheel chairs, pedestrians, runners, scooters, skate boards, roller bladers, inline cross-country skiers, stilt walkers, life-sized puppeters and other non-motorized movers, who are generally unable to come together in the same place at the same time. Not only will this event be good for physical health, but it will add to our sense of community, as the object will not be simply moving from A to B, but to enjoy the journey together. There will be activities, races, educational booths and puppet performances set up to foster interaction of all ages and all modes of Active Transportation. Support Active Transportation in HRM, by sending your event ideas or by offering your time as a volunteer! Contact Aliza Weller at streetopening@ecologyaction.ca.

trax Thanks to MEC funding, a bicycle rack with the ADAPT (Association of Doctors for the Advancement of Physically Active Transportation) name and logo, will be purchased and installed in HRM. Location ideas welcome! For the next few months, TRAX has two new student interns - Jennifer Kay (Dalhousie Environmental Studies) is researching legal barriers to rollerblading in HRM, and Sarah Flynn (Dalhousie Health and Human Performance) is researching and developing a presentation promoting ADAPT. TRAX also welcomes Sarah Johnston, our Katimavik volunteer. She is collaborating with Aliza Weller on TRAX's Street Opening Project. TRAX said goodbye to Philana Dollin, our Trip Reduction Program Coordinator, as she accepted a position at Environment Canada organizing a climate change workshop for the Gulf of Maine Council. TRAX welcomes Peter Zimmer to continue the TRP work. Transit: EcoPASS surveys have been completed at two workplaces and plans for the May 18th EcoPASS workshop are underway - a representative of the Federal Transit Pass program will be presenting. The U-PASS began at Dalhousie on January 1st and the Sackville MetroLink route starts on February 19th TRAX met with a representative of the NS Community College to discuss transportation options for the new campus. Trip Reduction Program: Environment Canada's commuting survey is complete and TRAX is developing a workplace commuting plan for the Department.

riding high - regulation for atv's (Wilderness Committee) EAC was front and center during the great ATV debate of '05, ensuring environmental issues were not forgotten. In December 2005, the NS Government passed Bill 275 amending the Off Highways Vehicle (OHV) Act which comes into force on April 1, 2006. Although most of the attention focused on age restrictions and youth safety, there are some important new rules to protect the environment and private property from ATV impacts. These include:

- Prohibition of ATV/OHV use in parks, protected areas and nature reserves and in sensitive ecosystems including wetlands, beaches, sand dunes, streams and lakeshores and in core habitat for endangered species;
- Limited ATVs/OHVs use on Crown land to a designate network of use-approved trails (TBD);
- Requirement of written permission from private landowners to use their property;
- Mandatory registration and display of new, highly-visible license plates;
- Fines and vehicle seizure penalties for those who break the law.

The Province has a toll free line - 1-800-565-2224 - for people to report OHV violations. This is the same central dispatch number to report wildlife poaching and other violations. It will be staffed 24/7 365 days a year. These new regulations are much needed and long overdue. Well done Nova Scotia!

ecobriefs

by June Hall, Illustrations by Janet Wilson

Down the drain

Italians drink at least two 8-ounce glasses (of what!) water per person per day, Americans about one (recommended is 6-8!). Globally, consumption of bottled water is rising rapidly – tripling in India in the last five years, and more than doubling in China. Drinking bottled water is understandable where the local water is contaminated not potable, but not where it's potable water quality is fine.

Fossil fuels are used to both transport and package bottled water. Though much of the product sold in the U.S. comes from local sources, it's also “chic” to drink water shipped from such exotic places as Fiji. Making the bottles consumes crude oil — more than 1.5 million barrels annually in the U.S. alone, “enough to fuel some 100,000 cars for a year.”

The 2.7 million tons of plastic used worldwide, annually to bottle water must then be disposed of. In the U.S., an estimated 86% of water bottles become garbage or litter. Incinerating them produces toxic byproducts, and buried in a landfill, they'll take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade. Incredibly, “almost 40% of the PET bottles deposited for recycling in the United States in 2004 were actually exported, sometimes as far away as China.” And then there are water shortages reported from some areas where water is extracted. How about a glass of good old tap water, anyone?

Source: www.earth-policy.org/Updates/2006/Update51.htm

Deforestation writ large

In 1995, fuelled by hyperinflation, destruction of the Amazon rainforest reached an all-time high - 3 million ha. Media at-

tention drifted away, as the situation supposedly improved after 1995, but recent studies reveal an appalling situation. Indeed, the most sustained assault ever on the rainforest occurred between 2002- 2004, when an average of 2.4 million ha/year were cleared.

Forest destruction in Brazil has had roots in government policies from the 1960s on, in attempts to open up the area to economic development, solidify the country's claim to the region, and provide a relief valve for population pressures elsewhere. Today, < 20 million mostly impoverished people make the region their home - a tenfold increase since 1960.

Major factors in forest clearance are declining currency and the subsequent need to increase exports to help pay down the country's foreign debt. The Amazon cattle herd has grown from 20 million head in 1990 to 60 million in 2006, making it the largest herd in the world; twenty million ha are now devoted to growing soya, much of it destined for China; and timber-cutting - at least 80% of which is illegal - continues to grow “exponentially.” Ambitious infrastructure projects are also in the works, including roads opening up new areas to landless peasants and others. Attempts by President Lula da Silva to reign in some of the worst excesses are stymied by a degree of lawlessness and corruption unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

New Scientist, 15 Oct. '05

Big brother?

Five or so years ago, Decode Genetics, an Icelandic company, was given the green light “to commandeer the genetic, medical and family histories of the entire population” of the country. Although individual details in

this gigantic database would supposedly be encrypted, uproar ensued, and the project was halted. Since then, however, more than half of Icelanders have voluntarily contributed DNA or family histories in a search for genes linked to specific diseases. As a result, several promising new drugs are in the works.

In the coming months, two far more ambitious studies, each hoping to recruit half a million healthy volunteers, are expected to get underway. In both projects - one British, one American - volunteers donate DNA samples and describe their diet, exercise regime, chemical exposure, and so on. Their health is then tracked over a number of years. The aim is to uncover links between genes, environmental factors, and disease.

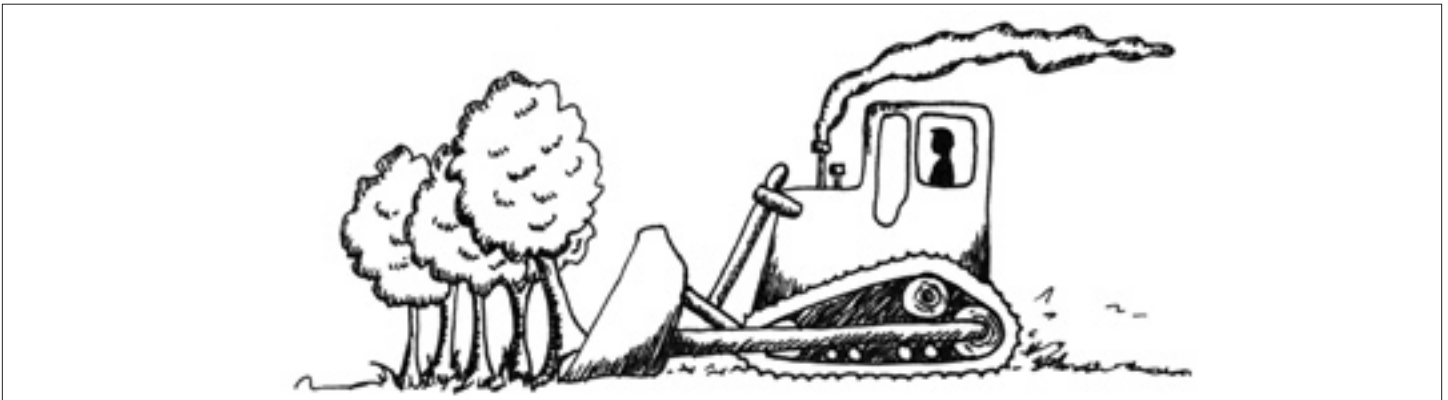
Biobank, the U.K. effort, will rely heavily on health data provided by family physicians, but the U.S. project is considering the use of microchip-based devices to keep a continuous check on heart rate, blood oxygen, and much, much more. Too little detail and the projects will fail. More... and you're into big brother. Critics think it unlikely that much of value will be learned.

New Scientist, 21 Jan. '06

“Recycling” computers

You've heard it before: whole villages in China (and other developing countries) devoted to the business of dismantling electronic equipment, much of it from North America, and salvaging whatever can be used again. Think mountains of hazardous waste, health problems galore, and few if any safeguards.

A recent report from the Basel Action Network (named for the Basel Convention, which seeks cleaner production of and con-



trols on the movement of hazardous material) describes how some North American recycling companies are dodging the expense of proper recycling methods by donating or selling used computer equipment to developing countries. The report focuses on Nigeria, but is widely applicable across the South.

Each month, roughly 400,000 used computers are unloaded at the port of Lagos. About 75% of the equipment, says the report, is junk that is neither repairable nor resalable. As Nigeria lacks the capacity to recycle computers, the imports often end up in landfills. An average monitor, "can contain as much as eight pounds of lead, along with plastics laden with flame retardants and cadmium" — hardly a healthy mixture.

One problem is the lack of recycling industry certification — a clear map of where it's all going. The U.S. EPA has been working with the OECD to develop a program that will hopefully provide a better outcome.

N.Y. Times, 24 Oct. '05

Great apes face extinction

As if they weren't already under extreme threat from hunting, deforestation and more, Africa's great apes are facing an even greater catastrophe. The Ebola virus, which can kill more than 90% of a population, is heading towards the densest population of apes in the world, in Odzala National Park, Republic of the Congo.

Ebola came to public attention in 1976, when the first human cases were reported from Yambuku, in what was then Zaire. Since then there have been sporadic outbreaks across central Africa, leading epidemiologists to suspect that the virus is lurking between outbreaks in some unidentified species — a "reservoir." A recent study, however, refutes this hypothesis. Studying the genetic makeup of the strain of virus causing each outbreak, Peter Walsh, of the Max Planck Institute for Anthropology, in Germany, and his colleagues have demonstrated how the infection has moved outwards at a steady 50 km/year from the original cases in Yambuku. It is, they believe, a new infection in the region, and there is no reservoir.

The international community has worked hard to contain human outbreaks. Walsh believes it may be possible to vaccinate apes in the national park to save them while the wave passes them by. But who would pay for such a complex undertaking?

New Scientist, 5 Nov. '05



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EAC volunteers Jeff Brown and John Paczkowski hard at work in the demolition process at Fern Lane. *Anonymous*



Natural Plaster and Paint Finishes: A Sensory Experience

by Kelly Smith

Do you remember childhood delights of playing in the mud? Earthen plasters and natural paint finishes will bring you back to your unimpeded days of childhood and allow you to ‘play’ right in your own living room. Whether you have a straw bale home or want to give your walls an eco-friendly new look, earthen plasters add a new dimension to giving a room a facelift or in new construction. The clay-plaster mixture draws from an ancient artisan technique, tried and true for centuries, and is easily applied using hands or trowels. The plaster can then be manipulated to be smooth or textured, and personalized in a variety of ways. Mosaic tiles can be inserted to highlight niches or a shallow relief can be sculpted around a window or door.

Using earthen plasters has a low environmental impact, both inside and outside your home. They provide beauty without the toxic fumes of paints and synthetic plasters. Clay is naturally free of volatile organic compounds and will not off gas. Their application produces little on-site waste and surfaces are easy to maintain and repair. Clay is naturally mold resistant and breathes, allowing it to respond to environmental changes by absorbing and releasing moisture. These plasters offer additional masonry mass, absorb sound, and create a healthy home environment. The materials can be locally harvested and do not require a lengthy manufacturing process.

Natural earth plasters are generally a combination of a binder, aggregate and a fibre. For example, clay could be the binder, sand the aggregate and chopped straw the fibre. Thousands of variations exist, depending on the site, climate and application technique. Common additives may include wheat paste, paper pulp, cattail fibres or hemp. With most recipes, the clay is essential for stickiness. A simple shake test can reveal clay content, by placing the dirt sample in a jar of water and salt. Thoroughly shake the jar and allow the particles to settle. If there is any clay it will separate to the top, silt will be in the middle and the heavy sand particles will have sunk to the bottom. The sample is suitable plaster dirt if at least 20% of the mixture is clay. Test patches are invaluable when experimenting with consistency. Even if a suitable percentage of clay is revealed, the recipe may need further manipulation to yield the best mix for the application. Keep in mind that working with Mother Nature is not a standardized process and each batch of each recipe will have its own personality.

In addition to textures, a wide palette of colours is also achievable. Mineral-based pigments can be added to create bold colours such as Tuscan gold, terracotta red or olive green, all in varying intensities. Tiny mica flakes can be mixed in with the plaster to give the walls a delicate shimmer.

Projects can start small, allowing you become more comfortable with the variety of techniques, colours and finish possibilities. Perhaps a few trowel patterns around a window or an impression of your child’s handprints in your bedroom. You may choose to personalize a stairwell by adding favourite found objects like shells and colourful pieces of glass. As materials are locally available, experimentation and environmental costs can be kept low. Plastering the exterior of your home is also possible with some modifications to the recipe.

If the thought of searching for the correct clay consistency is daunting but you still long for allure of a natural paint finish,

earthen plasters can be ordered in a powder form from a healthy building supplier. You can even hire a professional to apply the plaster (remember the pre-drywall plaster and lath?).

There is no substitute for the satisfaction of rubbing mud all over your walls and the joy of bringing a personal artistic flair to your home. Once your friends and family see how therapeutic playing in the mud can be, it won't be long before you have extra help. We can continue to enjoy the sensual experience of mud at any age through natural paint finishes and barefoot walks with mud oozing between our toes.

Kelly Smith has a Bachelor of Environmental Design Studies Degree from Dalhousie and an interest in environmentally responsible architecture. Natural plasters and clay based paints will be used on some walls in the new EAC Home. For an excellent how to book, see: C. Chiras and D Guelberth *The Natural Plaster Book: Earth, Lime and Gypsum Plasters for Natural Homes. The Healthiest Home* (www.thehealthiesthome.com) also gives ideas and product lists for clay paints and plasters.

Natural muds and plaster samples are tested by Kim Thompson of Straw Bale Projects, on a wall at EAC's new home. Doug Murphy, Apex Photography



michael fuller

EAC and the Green Renovation Realities

by Caley MacLellan

As our city grows, the finite real estate market dramatically increases in worth and with rents skyrocketing, many Halifaxians are considering buying property. Often, property not only represents a stable investment but can also reduce monthly bills. In 2001, and like many 30 year olds, the Ecology Action Centre, began the search for a permanent home. The motivation was to have monthly bills contribute to a permanent home, and to provide adequate space for staff and volunteers.

Thanks to a generous bequest to the Centre, some careful number juggling, and the luck of finding an affordable building on the peninsula, the Centre was able to finance the purchase of 2705 Fern Lane in its 35th year. The Board of Directors and the Home Committee arrived at an affordable closing price and realistic renovation budget. The building represents an investment in the long-term sustainability of the organization. In addition, the Centre gains control of its heating source, electricity use, building materials, composting, bicycle parking, water use and more, to demonstrate and encourage sustainable practices.

Following the purchase in July 2005, the Home Committee began the task of solidifying renovation plans with the priority of using the most progressive methods of green building and design. Thanks to years of hard work and outreach EAC has the benefit of a volunteer base highly educated in sustainable alternatives for construction, and architects were hired to transform the existing building into a functional office space for the Centre's staff. We have the money (at least some of it!), we have the experts; Fern Lane should be nothing but a shining example of what can be done here in Nova Scotia, right?

The process of forging reality from dreams has one certain byproduct: compromise. As our project unfolds, new needs and opportunities arise, budgets expand, and compromises have become more substantial. While the Fern Lane site will one day be a showcase for green renovations, we have realized the need for long-term planning, and the limitations of the existing building in becoming a paragon of sustainable design.

Hours of discussion, number crunching, and technology sourcing have been spent during the renovation and planning process. Making the "right" ecological choice is never as simple as it sounds! Imagine finding the lowest "footprint" option, and then discovering that they have to come from Tennessee, well – that doesn't fit into our goal of using local products, does it? Having to ship green products in some cases doubles and triples the cost of the material. How important is fossil fuel used in transportation of material vs fossil fuel used in its manufacturing? What if the financial cost of sticking to your principles in one area will force a compromise in another? The challenges sometimes seem endless. For example, we are committed to using Forest Stewardship Certified (FSC) lumber, locally grown and harvested in an ecologically sustainable manner. While we found a source, it was not stamped by the Maritime Lumber Bureau (hence not up to HRM building code) so extra effort had to be made to ensure a lumber grader came to the site upon delivery and stamped the lumber.

Strict time constraints also present challenges for making the most ecological choices. A green roof is likely beyond our budget for the first phase of renovations at Fern Lane. We initially opted to patch the problem areas, while researching the most environmentally friendly roofing materials, but ever changing leaks have forced us to make a quick decision and rapidly source the material needed. And we may be forced to make compromises if the material we prefer to use cannot be obtained in a timely manner.

If informed volunteers encounter such exasperating hurdles, how can Jane Homeowner expect to renovate using green technologies and materials? The more time spent in the planning stage of a renovation, the more successful the project. Researching available technologies prior to the design stage will make it easier to incorporating green methods. And of course, we hope that no green renovation planning will be complete without a visit to the new EAC. When completed, the Fern Lane site promises to be a resource for sustainable building ideas and demonstration for green renovations and technologies. The Centre will illustrate the possibility of conducting an eco-friendly renovation project here in Nova Scotia. You can find out how EAC renovated the building with

local and reused materials. In addition, you can contribute to future plans for the building site and find out how you can help make these plans become a reality.

If you are planning your own renovation and are interested in a low renovation "footprint", local carpenters and building centres are aware of some of the existing technologies. Books like *The Natural House Catalog* and *Green Remodeling* are a great first start. Their formats allow for a quick survey of the many alternatives available. Once you have narrowed your search to appropriate green solutions, websites such as www.greenbuilder.com offer more in-depth information, links and potential suppliers. Healthy paints and wood finishes, recycled blown-in insulation, recycled fiberboard trim and compost toilets are stocked in local outlets. Sometimes it is just knowing what to ask for. For example, the Valhalla Wood Treatment, a natural alternative to arsenic-laden wolmanized decking (likely the next asbestos), is available over the counter from Piercey's.

One thing we have learned is that while green building materials ARE available, lack of local supply (or even continental supply) is a real barrier to environmentally friendly renovations. Armed with a detailed lexicon of green alternatives, demand greener products from your contractor and the building supply centre. Even if you know they will not necessarily obtain these products for you, your request gets the ball rolling on creating a market demand that will ultimately be supplied. Why should a person have to do so much extra work? Why should employing progressive, green technologies be such a struggle? We would not have the option of buying organic food in local superstores if there had not been consumer pressure for many years. The building industry is slow to accept new ideas, especially those that require technologies not sold by companies with major market share. It is going to take the power of people requesting and purchasing green products en masse for the market to shift. And because we buy houses less often than apples - changing the construction world, so that green materials are affordable and available, is going to require serious commitment by many dedicated folks. As the new EAC building evolves, let's hope the Nova Scotian housing industry evolves with it.

One thing we have learned is that while green building materials ARE available, lack of local supply (or even continental supply) is a real barrier to environmentally friendly renovations. Armed with a detailed lexicon of green alternatives, demand greener products from your contractor and the building supply centre. Even if you know they will not necessarily obtain these products for you, your request gets the ball rolling on creating a market demand that will ultimately be supplied. Why should a person have to do so much extra work? Why should employing progressive, green technologies be such a struggle? We would not have the option of buying organic food in local superstores if there had not been consumer pressure for many years. The building industry is slow to accept new ideas, especially those that require technologies not sold by companies with major market share. It is going to take the power of people requesting and purchasing green products en masse for the market to shift. And because we buy houses less often than apples - changing the construction world, so that green materials are affordable and available, is going to require serious commitment by many dedicated folks. As the new EAC building evolves, let's hope the Nova Scotian housing industry evolves with it.

Caley MacLellan is an EAC Board Member and a carpenter.



michael fuller

michael fuller



Exert your consumer power. A few tips on what to ask for:

- Plan your renovation to use as little material as possible.
- If renovating, reuse wood as much as possible. It may take some denailing, but it will save \$ and forests. If buying new wood, ask where it was cut and if the supply centre carries FSC wood. If they don't know what it is, explain and keep asking for it. (To find out more about FSC, see our Standing Tall Campaign website).
- When purchasing paint, ask for low VOC (volatile organic carbon) paint, or use Boomerang (or other brands) of recycled paint. Natural paints are available (clay, silica and milk based). For local supply of some products, see ww.eco-house.com based in New Brunswick.
- If replacing a roof, ask for bitumen containing recycled tires. If your roofer does not know about any available products, do some research and present them with alternatives.
- When insulating, ask for recycled cotton bats. They are available, but must be shipped from the US. If using rigid board insulation, ask for a brand that does not use CFCs or HCFCs.
- If replacing interior walls, consider using strawboard. Ask local building centers if they carry such products. (A Canadian company making Isoboard out of straw recently closed because of lack of demand, but many people don't know the alternatives to studs and drywall).
- If you are redoing a bathroom, install a dual flush toilet (3L/6L) and spend the money you save on water for a good one.
- Use eastern white cedar (find out where and how it was cut) if building decks, steps, etc. Never use treated (wolmanized) wood.
- Do your research, and help educate the building supply companies.

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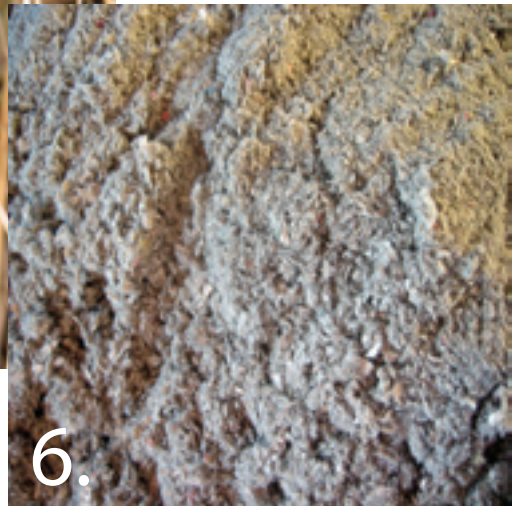
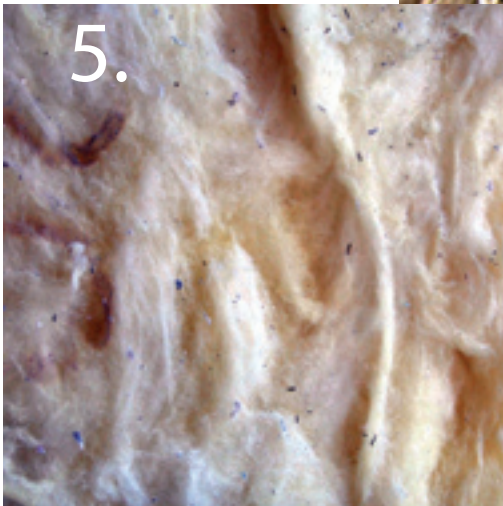
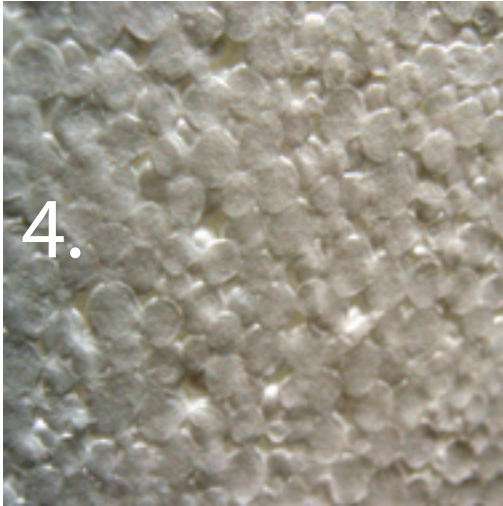
Insulation Options

In the process of renovating and decreasing the heat loss of the building, the EAC Home Committee has researched many options for insulation. When choosing insulation - there are many considerations, including R-value (thermal resistance), environmental impact of manufacturing, local availability, toxicity, impacts on air quality and ability to be reused or recycled must all be considered. In the table on the right we list some insulation choices the EAC is considering.

Up close and personal with the EAC.

Below are construction photos of some of the materials used at our new home.

Things seem to be warming up at Fern Lane.



Can you identify these winter warmers?

1. It's like wrapping Fern Lane in a giant sweater.
2. The EAC is harvesting for the future.
3. All aboard! The EAC is pickin' the cream of the crop.
4. The EAC sure can 'pack' some heat.
5. Ever seen a hot pink flamingo in the North End of Halifax?
6. The EAC is strengthening our home in a green way.

1. Wool Batts
2. Strawboard
3. Cotton Batts
4. Expanded Polystyrene
5. Fiberglass Batts
6. Cellulose

| Type of Insulation | *R-value per in ² | Supplier | Availability/Options | \$ / ft ² | Environmental Considerations |
|--|------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| BATTS | | | | | |
| Fiberglass | Standard: 3.2 | Many suppliers. | Available in Atlantic Provinces at Hardware Stores. Ask for formaldehyde. | \$0.55-\$0.65 | Energy intensive production process, but low density product. Zero formaldehyde brands, most companies use partially recycled products. Chemical products can off gas. Can be reused. |
| | Hi-density: 3.8 | John Mansville www.jm.com (No formaldehyde) | Standard 3.5": R12 Standard 5.5": R20 Hi-density 3.5": R14 Hi-density 5.5": R22 | | |
| Cotton | 3.5 | Innotherm www.innotherm.com, North Carolina, USA or Bonded Logic www.bondedlogic.com, Arizona USA | Not locally available. Order from US based supplier (Insultech in Tennessee or The Healthiest Home) 3.5" : R11 or R13 5.5" : R19 | \$1.00 & \$3.00 shipped | 85% recycled cotton, no IAQ problems, treated with fire retardant. Non-toxic. Can be reused. |
| Sheep Wool | ~3.3 | Good Shepherd www.goodshepherdwool.com Alberta, Canada | Not locally available. Order from manufacturer 2" blankets; also rolls used for insulating log homes. | ~\$5.50 shipped | Renewable natural resource. Non-toxic. Can be reused. |
| Mineral Wool | 2.2-2.9 | Roxul www.roxul.com | Limited availability. Acadia Drywall in HRM. 2": R 4.5 -6 and 4.5": R 10-15 | 2": \$0.42 4.5": 1.18 | Made from steel slag, energy intensive process. More fire resistant than other products. No off gassing. Can be reused. |
| RIGID BOARD | | | | | |
| Straw board | 1.4 | Prestowall available from Affordable Building Systems www.affordablebuildingsystems.com | Not locally available. Order from manufacturer in Whiteright, Texas. 2" sheets: R 2.8 4" sheets: R 5.6 | 2" : ~\$4.50 shipped | Made from straw. Renewable resource. Low insulating value, replaces insulation and drywall. Non-toxic. Can be reused. Low R value. |
| Extruded Polystyrene (EPS) | 5 | Styrofoam SM from Dow Chemical www.dow.com | Locally available. 1"x2"x8': R 5 2"x2"x8': R 10 | \$2.62 for R19 equivalent | Expanded with HCFC-142b (to be phased out in US by 2010). Petroleum based. Off gasses. High R value. Can be reused. Use for exterior applications and basements. |
| Expanded polystyrene (XPS) (pearl board) | 3.8 | True Foam, True Wall www.truefoam.com | Available at Pierceys and other home hardware stores. Manufactured in Dartmouth 2"x4'x8' sheet: R 7.6 | \$1.56 for R19 equivalent | Expanded with pentane, no CFC's or HCFCs. Petroleum based. Limited off-gassing. Can be reused. (interior use). |
| Poly-isocyanurate | 5.6-7 | Dyplast www.dyplast.com and John Mansville www.jm.com | Locally, but not consistently, available. 2"x4"x8' sheet: R 12-14 | ~ \$2.50 | Expanded with hydrocarbon mix. Low off gassing. Can be reused. Frequently used in roofing applications. |
| LOOSE FILL | | | | | |
| Cellulose | 3.1-3.7 | Several Cdn manufactures | Available locally, can rent machines to blow in or installers such as Home Tite, will install. | Varies with installer, comparable to fiberglass batts. | 80% recycled. Low energy process. Fire retardants and mold inhibitors added. Used dust mask when installing. Difficult to reuse, but possible. High R-value. |

*R-value refers to thermal resistance.
Table information compiled by EAC Home Committee, from web sources, local sources and relevant articles and books.



A New Relationship for the HRM; We're in this together so let's make it work

by Corey Toews

Imagine entering into a new working relationship with 200 of your closest friends each with different interests, expectations, and future goals. Seem reasonable? This is the challenge before Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The first ever Regional Plan for HRM, will require cooperation of 200 communities in the most diverse municipality in Nova Scotia. Covering an area larger than PEI, HRM is proposing a new relationship for towns and cities across this region.

Despite arguments that have been made over the development of HRM's Planning Strategy, all agree - the HRM needs a plan. Over the next 25 years, 100,000 more people could be calling this region home. A more crowded region will result in more traffic on our roads, more students in our schools, and more pressure on our sewer and water systems. Where we live, how we get to and from work, what our towns and cities will look like in the future are regional issues that affect all of us.

The HRM is special – the natural environment, vibrant communities, and high quality of life cannot be taken for granted. Citizens from Hubbards to Moser River are well aware of just how amazing this region is. It just so happens that the Regional Planners, those responsible for putting in writing the plan for the region for the next 25 years, are aware of this too. We should all rejoice right? Well...maybe not just yet.

In May of this year, Regional Planning released the first draft of HRM's Regional Plan. The draft was the result of a two-year process that included much public comment. Now we have learned of changes made to the Draft Plan through a series of Community Council meetings held throughout the region over the past few weeks. These changes are a preview of the final version of the Plan that Regional Council will vote on in January 2006.

The Ecology Action Centre has been one of many organizations that have worked with Regional Planning staff to ensure social and environmental interests have been given a voice in the planning process. We support the adoption of a strong regional plan for the HRM. While the Plan, in its current state, is a step in the right direction it falls short of advancing a new dynamic vision for the HRM.

We feel the proposed Regional Plan continues to give priority to road expansion and the use of private cars. This will contribute to suburban sprawl, further fragment wilderness areas, and make it difficult to provide an efficient public transit system for the HRM.

We are at a crossroad, and together we can make significant changes in how the HRM will develop. A strong Regional Plan will not limit future growth but direct it to where it is most effective. A strong plan benefits everyone. More effective planning means we'll spend less time in the rain waiting for a bus; have fewer problems with our septic systems; have more parks within easy reach of our doorsteps; enjoy homes and rents we can afford; have fewer traffic jams, and lower taxes.

Every large city in Canada has some type of planning strategy. While planning for a region is difficult, it is not impossible. We need only look to British Columbia to see the success achieved through the Livable Region Strategy for the Greater Vancouver Region. The Livable Region Strategy covers 21 municipalities and close to 2 million people. Since it was implemented in 1996 it has helped protect the quality of life in the Greater Vancouver Region. The Livable Region Strategy has made issues such as transportation, the environment, and community design into regional concerns that have helped make the Greater Vancouver area one of the most livable in the world.

HRM's proposed Regional Plan is a relationship worth fighting for. Like any relationship, there will be good times and bad – winners and losers. For this relationship to succeed there must be compromise and flexibility.

Flexibility, however, must not occur at the expense of ensuring a more sustainable approach to regional development. After all, this was what the relationship was founded on. Protecting coastal access, reducing land consumption and the impacts of sprawl, improving transit service, and investing in rural communities have been acknowledged throughout the regional planning process. HRM citizens identified these issues as important ones. A strong Regional Plan – one that is protective of these interests – is crucial for the long-term viability of the HRM in environmental, social, and economic terms.

The Regional Plan is not about building another level of government, but about improving relationships. This relationship depends on all of us working together to improve our home – HRM – and the quality of life it provides for us. We encourage you to call your councilor and let them know you support a strong Regional Plan for the HRM.

Corey Toews is EAC's Regional Plan Coordinator.

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Going Green with Cocoa Beans

by Catherine Joudrey

Imagine biting into a delicious piece of chocolate, knowing the environment is benefiting from your enjoyment. With the advent of organic cocoa farms, environmentally sustainable chocolate products are making this a reality.

Chocolate has a long reputation of being a healing and nourishing food. Little wonder it is one of the world's favourite flavours! Since its discovery several thousand years ago by Mexican and Central American peoples, chocolate has undergone significant changes. The first chocolate product was a spicy, bitter chocolate drink created by mixing ground cacao seed with a variety of spices. Early Spanish explorers transported the secret of chocolate back to Europe, and through experimentation and technological advances, traditional recipes developed into the variety of chocolate products we enjoy today.

The cocoa tree grows in warm and humid environments between 20°N and 20°S of the Equator. Since cocoa trees require shade from intense sunshine, they typically grow in the shady tropical understory. Cocoa bean farmers use traditional techniques to process cocoa beans for sale to producers. With increased demand in chocolate production, farmers have been clear cutting forests to plant more cocoa trees. These intensive farms require more fertilizers and pesticides, and in the long term leave the soil drained of nutrients.

But (like coffee!) there is good news for chocolate lovers. Organic and fair trade chocolate production has begun to make its mark on the world. And, now you can buy locally processed (not grown!), fair trade chocolate. Hantsport's Just Us! is home to Nova Scotia's first organic, fair-trade chocolate production facility. Opened in October 2005, the factory produces a variety of handcrafted chocolates, from truffles to milk and dark chocolates. Kevin Gauthier, the Just Us! chocolatier, took time from his busy Valentine's Day preparations to discuss the world of organic chocolate with me.

Chocolate used in Just Us! production originates from farming co-operatives in Bolivia and Dominican Republic. "[Organic] cocoa bean plantations are smaller scale [and] ecologically diverse" Gauthier explains, "[farmers] don't just clear a space and plant".

These farmers plant cocoa trees in the understory of the rainforest along with other crops, such as bananas. Farmers can make more money for their families when they plant a variety of crops and fair trade agreements mean that financial benefit goes directly to the farmers. Such agreements allow chocolate producers to buy cocoa beans directly from the farmer at a guaranteed price per pound.

Fair trade agreements, Gauthier says, "Empower people to make their own decisions and have control over what they [are growing]". Fair trade co-operatives ensure the long-term sustainability of cocoa farms. To learn more about farming co-operatives and chocolate making, Gauthier will travel to Ecuador this month. With his return, we expect to see the Just Us! chocolate factory develop new chocolate products, create public education programs, and offer chocolate factory tours.


Chocolate has inspired and delighted people of all ages for thousands of years. With sustainable farming practices and fair trade organizations, chocolate will be enjoyed for years to come. Why not enjoy a guilt free piece of organic chocolate; after all, it's good for the environment. And that's a good enough excuse for me!

Catherine Joudrey is a journalism student and likes to eat chocolate!



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artandtheenvironment

Are We Listening? A reflection on tourism through the ears of Eleanor King

by Heather McKibbin

Idea of North is a three part exhibition of contemporary audio and media art that addresses the concept of local sound. The installations are available for listening at the Dalhousie Art Gallery, St. Mary's University Art Gallery, Eyelevel Gallery, and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia until February 22nd, 2006.

Local artists Eleanor King and Steven Kelly are among the exhibitors. Eleanor was born and raised in Halifax and has been a fixture in the contemporary Nova Scotian art scene for nearly a decade. In the past, Eleanor has concentrated on sculpture, and media and has recently delved into the world of sound, where she enjoys taking art to a new form with friend Steven Kelly. In Idea of North, artists from northern countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Iceland have embodied how our sense of place is often mused by our senses, specifically what we hear. Eleanor and Steven's creation is an audio tour of the Halifax waterfront, where participants experience the juxtaposition of the sounds of summer in Norway with the empty winter-scape of the Halifax docks, walkways and tourist services, shuttered closed for the winter.

Walking in to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, cold nosed and wind swept on a snowy day, I am close to understanding my idea of north. Eleanor and Steven have compiled audio recordings in both Halifax and Moss, Norway to create Soundroam. They have edited and transposed the mixed sounds resulting in an appropriate listening experience in the counter part country. The Norwegian recordings are available as portable listening devices at the AGNS and are accompanied by a map to which the sounds are set.

The contrast of the summer sounds amongst the winter setting is indeed a confusion of the senses. "We chose the Halifax waterfront location intentionally for our Norwegian sounds to display the summer sounds of tourism against the desolate winter canvas" says Eleanor. "The water front area should be activated by the local people, and enjoyed by local people, but there is nothing there for them. Seasonal kiosks are closed, museums cater to primarily to visitors, restaurants are closed. There is nothing [for the local people]."

Tourism in Nova Scotia not new, but shifts in tourist activities and practices in the past decade have begun to effect our province. With over 2 million visitors to Nova Scotia annually, impact is inevitable to both culture and the environment. With the cultivation of the cruise ship industry and coastal development - often seasonal and rental based - we are seeing both an increase in environmental impact and a corresponding concern regarding such impacts. The parallels between the corrosion of culture and environmental degradation are represented in the sound bites delivered to my ears in Soundroam. The post-industrial, mechanized and manipulated sounds of arcades and casino bells, side-by-side, reverberations of ocean waves and peepers are examples of our segregation from nature. Similarly noted by a norwegian critique after listening to a segment of King and Kelly's work of the Halifax soundscape that "it's obvious that these people are segregated from their culture". Perhaps we should take the time to ask ourselves if we're listening to the signs of change and if we've taken proper measures to plan for the shifts.

Both Eleanor and Steve have witnessed the effect of tourist trends on Nova Scotia's cultural and environmental landscape. In part, this has motivated Eleanor's determination to foster and be part of a rich local arts community. In the future she hopes to use mixed media pieces to expose our consumer culture and will continue her fight for "democratic media free from ties to consumerism and commercialism".

beinggreen

Halifax LETS - Bringing the Economy Back to the Grassroots

The pinnacle of power in today's world is the power to issue money. If that power can be democratized and focused in a direction which gives social and ecological concerns top priority, then there may yet be hope for saving the world.

-Thomas Greco, New Money for Healthy Communities

The Halifax Local Exchange Trading System, or LETS, is part of a growing movement to encourage a sustainable way of life by keeping economic transactions within the communities in which we live. Halifax LETS believes there is an alternative to the accepted economic system, which can benefit both people and the planet. A sustainable economy, based on principles such as local self-sufficiency, cooperation and simplicity is one that allows people, and the planet, to thrive. Striving for local self-sufficiency reduces energy use and materials needed and makes locally-controlled economies possible. By connecting an economy, once again, to the grass roots that nourish it, LET systems can avoid many pitfalls of the modern economy. On LETS, no one buys a chair made by unknown, underpaid hands from over-forested tropical wood in a factory overseas. Instead, we are given the opportunity to meet local craftspeople at a potluck and get to know their work.

LETS restores money to local, democratic control, bypassing greed, scarcity and disconnection. LETS extends credit to all members, allowing them to 'purchase' goods and services without the worry of how to pay for it. There are no rich or poor members, and no-ones talents are outside another's reach. All members have value (their skills, time and talent) to contribute, and all can receive this value. Many similar systems ("Hours" "Time -Dollars" and more) operate throughout the world. All of them try to restore the familiarity, solidarity and social responsibility that have characterized trade in the past.

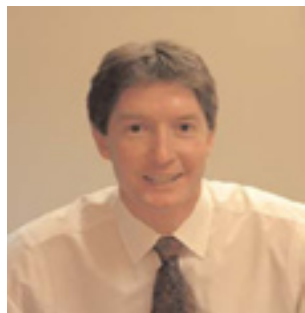
An excellent example of this kind of economic give-or-take comes from a sister system, Northumberland Notes, operating near Tatamagouche. Operating completely within the system, a local baker discovered the only flour he could purchase for Notes came from the organic grocery – this means the bread he's producing to sell for more Notes is also organic. Now both members and non-members are eating organic bread! With 30 members operating on 100% local currency, the Northumberland Notes system is ticking along nicely, and they hope to double their membership through events planned for spring 2006.

While LETS members don't expect LETS to fully replace the dominant economic system, or start a revolution, they are planting the seeds that will give fruit in the future. LETS is making a difference, and more importantly, they are having fun and making some good trades at the same time. For more information on alternative economies or to get involved, visit <http://www.halifaxlets.com>, call 422 2772 or email halifaxlets@care2.com.

Dave Aalders – The quiet activist

Many organizations have a few people who quietly and unobtrusively, go about getting things done. They are effective, hardworking and perceptive. They work diligently on immediate details yet keep abreast of the broad picture and look ahead to the future.

Dave Aalders, the past chair of EAC's Urban Issues Committee (UIC), is one such person. He had a knack of drawing out ideas, options and direction from his committee. In a sense he led by getting the committee to lead itself, producing policies and statements that truly reflected consensus. Although he has left UIC and has scaled back his activism for now, we will continue to see him at future public meetings, discussion groups and conferences, helping us all to plan for a better future.



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by Suki Starfish

ARIES (March 21-April 19): It's not surprising that two of the EAC's three core staff members are Aries. Mark "Champion of Fish" Butler and Heather "Powerhouse" McKibbin exude many qualities that your sign is known for: leadership, boundless energy and a fiery desire to work for positive change. You are happiest when fighting for a cause you are passionate about. From April 16 to May 5, when loquacious Mercury is in Aries, speak up for what you believe in. Write a letter to the editor, phone a politician, speak at a rally or hold a stimulating conversation with friends.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): When someone calls you a Tree-Hugger, you always take it as a compliment whether it was meant as one or not. You're an earthy person, and feel a special affinity with trees. This June, EAC will be launching its second annual Native Tree Spree, selling trees that are of species native to Nova Scotia. This is one of EAC's major fundraisers and is also a great chance to learn more about our native trees. Tree Spree information will appear magically at www.ecologyaction.ca closer to the date or call (902) 429-2202 to get involved today.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21): Around May 15 you will find yourself chatting with a friend (you will probably be doing this whilst speaking to another pal on the phone, instant messaging your mom and emailing your cousin - after all, you are a Gemini) when you will suddenly feel inspired to wax poetic on how important it is that everyone becomes a member of a great organization like EAC. The more members EAC has, the greater its voice. We now have over 900 members - help to make history and push it over 1000!

CANCER (June 22-July 22): Have you been spending the winter hibernating, patiently awaiting spring? April 14, as energetic Mars enters your sign, is a perfect time for active outdoor fun whilst cutting your carbon emissions. Leave the car and bike, walk or rollerblade to work or school instead. You might feel so much happier and healthier that you get rid of the car altogether. If you have an old car, it may qualify for EAC's Steer Clean program, where old cars are scrapped in exchange for great incentives like "Active Living" packages, bikes and Metro Transit passes. Visit www.steerclean.ca or call (902) 442-0202.



Capricorn



Aquarius



Pisces



Aries



Taurus



Gemini



Cancer



Leo



Virgo



Libra



Scorpio



Sagittarius

LEO (July 23-August 22): You are a kitten at heart and have a special rapport with cats. Take care of your cat and protect birds outside, by keeping him indoors. Entertain Fluffball by giving her access to a sunny window and safe climbing areas. Or build a cat enclosure for outside play without the bird deaths and danger to Kitty! Explore enclosures at www.cd pets.com and make your Schnookums the envy of the neighbourhood cats. To read more about why you should keep cats indoors, visit www.abcbirds.org/cats. Now, look over there, Leo! A shiny thing! Go on, play with it!

VIRGO (August 23-September 22): Take time this spring to learn more about the Acadian Forest. Did you know that most of our province's forests were once ancient old growth? Or that the Acadian Forest is rated as amongst the most endangered forests in North America? Find all kinds of great information about our Acadian forests at www.novascotiaforests.ca as well as learn about EAC's Standing Tall campaign. They work to promote environmentally responsible forestry practices so that these forests can be protected while still providing a livelihood to foresters.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22): It's always nice to meet other environmentalists. If you live in the HRM, take advantage of the networking opportunities regularly happening in the city. Green Drinks, a global movement that started in London, England, provides an opportunity for environmentally-minded folks to meet, socialize and discuss sustainability issues. Visit www.greendrinks.org to find out when and where they convene. Solar Nova Scotia (www.solarns.ca) meets Fridays at Maxwell's Plum and newcomers with an interest in solar energy are always welcome. If you don't live in Halifax, well, who better to start an event in your area than you?

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21): Like a desert scorpion, you're a natural warm weather creature. In the winter months you can often be found hiding under dark rocks, sulking, and stinging any well-meaning person who tries to cheer you up. But now it is almost spring, and time to dig yourself out of your rut. Do this by surprising your best Pisces bud with a home-cooked birthday dinner of sustainable seafood delights. It's a perfect gift to share between you two water signs. Stop by www.ecologyaction.ca/marine_issues/mic_sust_seafood.shtm to find out what you can do to support sustainable fisheries.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21): I see you taking a long journey sometime in the near future. If this should involve some heavily carbon-emitting plane travel, check out www.offsetters.org to learn how to balance your ecological footprint. Use the flight calculator to determine how much carbon your flight will emit, and offset it by donating to one of their projects – rainforest restoration in Uganda, efficient light installation in South Africa, or the construction of efficient cooking stoves in Bangladesh. Of course, nothing is a replacement for reducing your overall carbon emissions. Visit www.davidsuzuki.org/Climate_Change/What_You_Can_Do to get ideas on how to do that.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19): You're one of those beautiful people that folks talk about. Although too humble to admit it, you pride yourself on looking good and taking care of your health, and secretly enjoy the compliments. This spring start the organic veggie garden you've always wanted. You'll get extra exercise, deepen your connection with the earth, and reap the benefits of knowing exactly what goes into your food. To learn how your food choices affect the world environmentally and socially, visit www.ecologyaction.ca/food_action/food_action.shtm or attend an EAC Food Action Committee meeting on the third Monday of this month at 5:30.

Winter Cycling Tips

Given the relative lack of snow and ice on the roads this winter, many cyclists are choosing to ride through the winter months. Riding in the winter requires extra care. Bike Again volunteers, and winter cyclists Camille Dumond and Michael Barton have a little advice:

- Ride a half-decent bike that you don't care a lot about (if you have a bike you love then buy/build up another one for winter!).
- Almost any bike can be winterized, but avoid steel rims and coaster brakes (pedal brakes) as they make the rear wheel skid.
- The best winter cycling bike is a hybrid with 700C rims (usually have good brakes, are stable and solid, can mount a variety of tires). Good mountain bikes are suitable too, but they can be "nervy" (made to be very maneuverable in the woods).
- Store the bike indoors if you can and hose/wash it down if you have a place to do that (lube it after!).
- Forget the fancy lube, and use (often!) Vaseline or white grease to prevent corrosion and frozen cables. Use motor oil for the chain. Cleanliness is not an issue - grease will prevent seized cables and protect bearings from salt. Oil your lock as well, and in all cases avoid spilling the oil as it is not environmentally friendly.
- Get stainless steel cables for gears and brakes.
- Flashing lights and visible clothing are your best defense. Winter days are short and visibility poor.
- Wear layers. In Halifax, waterproof gloves, coat and pants are critical (big enough to layer underneath!) but don't overdress, especially under rain gear, as you will cook first then slowly freeze...

For more excellent winter cycling tips, see the Edmonton Bicycle Commuters web site (<http://edmontonbicyclecommuters.ca/cgi-bin/content/content.cgi?action=winter>) (where they have real winters!)

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18): Isn't it nice when things that you do just to be you, also benefit the environment? Like, when you buy your clothes at a local second hand store because you are the hippest kid on the block, you are also re-using items that would otherwise go to landfills. This spring, try some new ways to acquire great stuff second hand. Throw a party where each guest brings used clothes, books or CDs to trade. Or become a member of Freecycle (www.freecycle.org) to find a loving home for everything from furniture to electronics to books and clothes.

PISCES (February 19-March 20): Fellow fish, you are probably concerned about the many threats to our oceans. The hard working members of EAC's Marine Issues Committee, educate people on impacts of destructive fishing, support sustainable fisheries, help protect the unique ecosystem that is Sable Island, and much more. Happily, the committee has, for the first time ever, hired a full-time staff member to coordinate its activities. What an exciting time to get involved in the Marine Issues Committee! Check out a meeting on the last Wednesday of the month at 5:30.

Suki Starfish, a Northern Sea Star (Asterias vulgaris), lives in the waters off Nova Scotia and is a long-time supporter of the EAC. When not working as the EAC's resident astrologer, she can be found munching on molluscs or growing back the odd limb that gets damaged by predators.

Your New Hardwood Floor Does Not Have to Destroy Nova Scotia's Forests

There is an alternative to damaging forestry practices, and you can be part of the solution. Your beautiful flooring can be made from wood CERTIFIED by Nagaya and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to have come from sustainably harvested woodlands. Now you can have it both ways:

1. The finest natural solid wood products, and
2. Protection of Nova Scotia's forests.

Flooring: traditional tongue and groove as well as old-fashioned wide plank.

Specialty Hardwood Lumber: 12 species

Environmentally Friendly Decking

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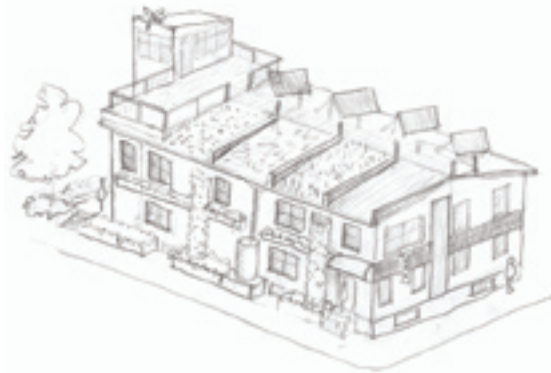
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Call today for your FREE REPORT on how wood products can sustain Nova Scotia's forest environment.

Windhorse Farm 902-543-6955
jim@windhorsefarm.org

FERN LANE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN



The Ecology Action Centre would like to extend a hearty thank you to the generous individuals who have donated to our Capital Campaign for a new EAC home! Your contribution is supporting an increasingly sustainable future for the EAC.

Thanks to Mik Owen for his artistic rendering of our new home.

Action is our middle name and EAC is particularly active these days. Our new home in the North End of Halifax will be a demonstration project for a range of green technologies and a better space for our hard working staff and volunteers.

For this phase of building renovations we plan to raise \$140,000 and we are off to an inspiring start. We need your help to make it happen.



For more information or to donate contact:

Maggy Burns, Campaign Co-chair
(902) 442-0202
steerclean@ecologyaction.ca

EAC Fern Lane Index

Number of volunteer hours spent on Fern Lane building planning and renovations since October 2005: ~ 1850hrs

Highest number of volunteers at Fern Lane on a Sunday Workday: 32

Tonnes of plaster removed from ceilings and walls: 9.3

Number of nails pulled from 2*4's, floors and lathe: countless

Current number of parking spots at 2705 Fern Lane: 4

Planned number of parking spots: 1

Current bicycle parking: 0

Number of bicycles that will fit on new bike racks: at least 20

2705 Fern Lane rating on the Energuide building test: 16 out of 100

Amount of initial bequest that enabled EAC to purchase a building: ~\$85,000.00

Amount raised to date in EAC's capital campaign for its new home: \$10,500.00

Recent NS Successes:

- New provincial regulations for ATVs including increased environmental protection
- Successful launch of UPASS at Dalhousie in January
- Release of Standing Tall's Forestry Report
- Steer Clean Program removes over 90 cars from the road
- Atlantic Canada Energy Coalition established
- Culvert replaced at Cheverie Creek, restoring salt marsh habitat

The Ecology Action Centre Needs Your Help



Please fill out this membership form and return to the EAC.

CONTACT INFO:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email (for monthly e-newsletter): _____

Memberships and donations are tax deductible.

Thank you for your support.

Mail to: 1568 Argyle Street, Suite 31, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 2B3

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP:

Monthly Contribution:

\$5 \$10 \$20 Other: \$ _____

Annual Contribution:

\$40 Regular \$60 Contributing/Family

\$120 Supporting/Sustaining

\$20 Student/Senior/Unwaged Other \$ _____

PAYMENT METHOD:

Cash Cheque VISA Mastercard

Name on the card: _____

Card #: _____

Expiry Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____