



The Environmental Advocate

www.conservorsociety.ca

A New Model of Human Settlement (Part 1 of a 3 Part Series)

Any of us would be hard pressed to name a single major system of our complex industrial society that is sustainable - one that uses less material resources than are annually produced by natural systems. Our transport, industrial and food systems, for example, are all reliant on enormous material and energy inputs that cannot endure for much longer. Even our debt based money system is unsustainable, dependent as it is on continuous economic growth.

Current patterns of human settlement are the most significant examples of these unsustainable levels of consumption. Globally, we are becoming an urban species, each dense population nodule ever more dependent on remote production of basic necessities, and further removed from the natural surroundings of which we are an integral part. The larger the metropolitan area, the larger and the more dispersed is the hinterland required to support it. The industrial and commercial systems for sup-

plying the needs of large metropolitan areas are multiple and ingenious. They are also complex and vulnerable to such issues as climate change and energy descent.

Given the lack of effective government action in dealing with these looming challenges the future of cities as desirable places of human settlement has to be questioned. How will basic infrastructure such as water and sewerage systems, for example, be maintained when per capita energy availability is significantly reduced due to fossil fuel depletion? How will basic goods such as food be transported thousands of miles to feed urban dwellers? How will electric power be generated to provide lighting and essential equipment? Where will the energy come from to transport people and goods over long distances? How much energy will be needed to transform our cities into sustainable settlements?

The techno-optimists believe that increased efficiencies and renewable energy sources will allow for a smooth transition away from fossil fuels. However, the potential for alternative energy sources is questionable (Heinberg, 2009*). Conservation will be the most important response to the decline of fossil fuels, even with increased efficiencies and improved technologies. But can modern cities be re-designed to function with significantly reduced amounts of energy and materials?

The lack of attention to these questions by politicians should be raising alarm bells. Governments at all levels remain focused on continued economic growth rather than grappling with these more fundamental issues

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October 2009

**Conservor
Society
of
Hamilton
and
District**

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A New Model of Human Settlement , continued

of sustainability. Educational and lobbying efforts to change this outdated paradigm of economic growth are important; but they may not be effective quickly enough. It may be time to also begin building an alternative society that allows for living well sustainably.

It is unclear whether cities, especially large cities, can be modified to meet the constraints of a low energy lifestyle. The next parts to this series will examine two approaches to this question – transforming existing cities within the Transition Town initiative, and building new kinds of human settlements – a sustainable village.

Jack Santa Barbara has been a member of the Conserver Society for a number of years before moving to NZ to become involved in designing and developing a sustainable village – the project described in Part 3 of this three part series. He and his wife, Joanna, are also involved in the Transition Towns Initiative described in Part 2 of this series.

**Heinberg, R. Searching for a Miracle: "Net Energy" Limits and the Fate of Industrial Society, to be published by the Post Carbon Institute and the International Forum on Globalization, 2009.*

Call for Action: Pleasant View

Dear Conservers,

As the Pleasant View issue is once again in front of OMB as part of the developers appeals of the new City Rural Official Plan (OP), PLEASE take the time to send letters for this very important issue of continued protection of Pleasant View in Dundas.

We suggest you use your own words to make letters as personal as possible...suggested points are listed below. The same letter can be addressed to the various decision makers below - if possible send one at a time:

City Council:

Mayor Fred Eisenberger: mayorfred@hamilton.ca
 Brian McHattie: bmchattie@hamilton.ca
 Russ Powers: rpowers@hamilton.ca
 Bob Bratina: bbratina@hamilton.ca
 Margaret McCarthy: mmccarthy@hamilton.ca
 Rob Pasuta: rpasuta@hamilton.ca
 Lloyd Ferguson: lferguson@hamilton.ca
 David Mitchell: david.mitchell@hamilton.ca
 Maria Pearson: mpearson@hamilton.ca
 Brad Clark: bclark@hamilton.ca
 Terry Whitehead: twhitehead@hamilton.ca
 Scott Duvall: sduvall@hamilton.ca
 Tom Jackson: tjackson@hamilton.ca
 Chad Collins: ccollins@hamilton.ca
 Sam Merrulla: smerulla@hamilton.ca
 Bernie Morrelli: bmorelli@hamilton.ca

At the Province:

1. Donna Cansfield, Minister, MNR
 minister.mnr@ontario.ca
 cc her policy advisor: Colin MacDonald:
 Colin.Macdonald@ontario.ca
 cc Ted McMeekin:
 tmcmeekin.mpp@liberal.ola.org

2. Victor Doyle, Manager, Community P&D -
 Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
 Victor.Doyle@ontario.ca

Talking Points:

1. Pleasant View in Dundas is a very important piece of land that needs continued protection from development. Pleasant View's 800 acres are in the middle of Cootes Paradise (Class 1 Wetland), the Niagara Escarpment and RBG lands. Maintaining the integrity of Pleasant View is vital to the maintaining the integrity of the very sensitive lands around it. As shown in the OMB hearing and decision of 1995, it makes no economic, planning or environmental sense to develop Pleasant View.

2. Any change to allow development in Pleasant View is contrary to the Hamilton City Council's decision in its March 2009 resolution (McHattie/Powers) stating that:

–Council does not support amendment to the Parkway Belt West Plan to permit increased

"If we had to pay
for services
provided by
ecosystems - we
might value
them more."

development in Pleasant View;

--The City reaffirms its April 25, 2007 decision that it has no objection to the inclusion of Pleasant View within the proposed expansion of the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

3. The City of Hamilton placed Pleasant View in the Rural Official Plan, not its Urban Official Plan.

4. The Province, through its 1995 OMB decision continued a virtual freeze from development in Pleasant View, keeping with the previous intention of the Province which included Pleasant View in its restrictive Parkway Belt West Plan.

5. Pleasant View has been placed in the Greenbelt by the province of Ontario.

6. The Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) has asked the Province to include Pleasant View in the Niagara Escarpment Plan, a move which Hamilton City Council has officially supported.

Trying to Improve Public Transit

The Conserver Society and the Hamilton Transit Users Group are seeking public input on how to improve public transit. The project is generously funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation and includes meeting with neighbourhood organizations and community groups and an interactive website.

The centrepiece is a detailed survey that can be completed on-line at <http://hamiltontug.com/vision/survey/>. The Transit Vision Survey is a way for Hamiltonians to share their ideas of what public transit could be in this city. It has attracted over 200 respondents, many of whom have voluntarily provided their contact information so they can be more involved in local transit advocacy.

Surveys are being collected until early in the new year with a report will be delivered to council and the community on January 12. An interim report to the end of October is available on the website. Conserver members should all fill out the survey and encourage others to do so as well.

The city is formally committed to raising transit use to an average of 100 rides per person by 2020. That commitment was made in 1994 as part of Vision 2020, but there's little progress to show for it. Even when rural residents who live outside the transit service area are excluded, the current level is less than half that target. And over the last year ridership has actually gone down – leading city staff to recommend raising fares again to cover the shortfall.

A major problem is funding. Under amalgamation, the former suburbs continue to pay far lower taxes for the HSR than residents of the former city of Hamilton. A \$300,000 home there pays \$266 a year on their tax bill, while similar valued homes in Ancaster pay \$58, in Waterdown \$60, Dundas \$63 and Stoney Creek \$85.

Suburban councillors have repeatedly blocked any change to this system – even though Hamilton is the only city in Ontario where urban residents pay variable transit taxes. This area-rating system makes it more difficult to increase tax support of transit.

TUG was established several years ago and has led several battles to keep down transit fares, improve routes, and make the bus more affordable for low-income Hamiltonians. It continues to press city council for appropriate action on these issues.



"Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist."
— Kenneth Boulding

350 Climate Action

The Conservers played a role in the very successful climate action on October 24 that saw over 350 people demonstrating at the federal building and participating in workshops and other activities in and around Gore Park.

The majority of the funding for the Hamilton 350 Committee has been provided by the Conservers and Environment Hamilton. The committee has been chaired by Don McLean, a director of both organizations, and includes representatives from a dozen local organizations.

The October 24 action was one of over 5000 that took place on the same day in 178 countries coordinated by the 350.org group, and is being described as the largest climate action in history.

Climate scientists now believe that we have exceeded the safe level of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, and must lower atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide to no more than 350 parts per million. The level is currently 387 and rising two to three parts per year.

The Hamilton 350 Committee is continuing to organize local climate actions. Contact them at info@hamilton350.com or visit their website at www.hamilton350.com.



"That's the thing
about Mother
Nature, she
really doesn't
care what
economic
bracket you're
in."

- Whoopi
Goldberg

Greening Schools

An Environment Hamilton project co-sponsored by the Conservers is making things happen in local schools. The work began two years ago with a huge success at Woodward Avenue elementary school where monthly garbage output was cut from 95 bags to four – mainly through a litterless lunch project that actively engaged the students.

The approach has since been shared with numerous other schools, and has opened the door to a number of other school-based initiatives. Project leader Brenda Johnson sits down with teachers and staff to find out what environmental project they want to tackle and to give them suggestions and contacts to help make it happen.

An example is a recent visit to Earl Kitchener elementary in the Kirkendall neighbourhood at the request of one of their teachers. Project staff sat down with him for about an hour, obtained clear plastic bags for the school to ensure recyclables don't end up in the landfill, and arranged for councillor Brian McHattie and city staff to provide a coloured wall map showing all the streets and homes in the

school catchment area.

The 33" by 36" laminated map has become the centrepiece of environmental programs for every classroom in the school. The map can be used by different grades for teaching curriculum expectations. For example, the Grades 1, 2, and 3 social studies curriculum explores the communities that they live in (i.e. their neighbourhood environment). These grades can use the map to identify streets, places of interest, residential, commercial and industrial zones.

Brenda has also pulled together environmental fairs at several schools, where community groups and city departments present information on actions that students and their parents can take.

While most Catholic schools in the city are already working to obtain Eco-School status, some of the Public board schools don't even have recycling programs in place. Brenda has succeeded in bringing representatives of the two boards together to share experiences and ideas.

The project is funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation.

Fruits of Our Trees

The Hamilton Fruit Tree project is celebrating another record year of rescuing unused fruit from backyards and putting it to good use. Volunteers led by Juby Lee of Environment Hamilton collected about 5300 pounds of fruit (up from 4900 last year). That's similar to a long-standing Vancouver project and quite a bit more than a similar one operating in Toronto.

The 2009 program has held seven canning workshops including at the Eva Rothwell Centre on Wentworth North and with a boys cooking club organized by the Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO). The sessions preserved sour cherry jam, apple sauce, pear slices and beets.

A special event at Dundurn Castle on September 27 involved over 100 people and harvested over a thousand pounds of apples for the program.

A recent meeting between SISO and project coordinator Juby Lee has opened up the possibilities of large SISO youth groups providing the volunteers needed

for large harvesting efforts such as at local farms with excess fruit.

Most of the fruit that the project collects is given to food banks and social service agencies, providing fresh locally-grown organic produce to some of the most vulnerable people in our community. Other fruit is canned and the preserves sold to help with project costs.

This project is funded through the Conservers by the Hamilton Community Foundation.



What Needs to be Done for the Environment?

Do you have an answer to this question?

Is there an environmental project that you think needs doing – and more importantly, that you are willing to help make happen?

The Conserver Society may be interested in providing at least some of the necessary funds.

We would like to expand the work of the Conservers in the community.

Contact us with your ideas and concerns. We will give them careful consideration.

**Funding Available
For Environmental
Activities!**

2008–2009

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Vice-Chair

Vacant

Treasurer

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**Conserving the environment for
over 22 years in Hamilton.**

The Environmental Advocate is published 2 or more times a year by the **Conserver Society of Hamilton and District Inc.**, a non-profit, non-partisan citizen organization concerned with the environment in the region at the western end of Lake Ontario.

Editor: Pete Wobschall

Submissions for the Newsletter are invited and should be sent to the mailing address or to the editor at contact@conserver society.ca (Email submissions preferred, please)

The **Conserver Society of Hamilton & District Inc** is a registered Charitable Organization. Tax receipts are available.

Basic membership fees are \$20 for an individual, \$30 for a family, (half price for low-income) and \$40 for an organization.

We welcome donations in addition to the basic membership fee.

There is a 2009 membership form included with this newsletter in the case that you wish to renew, join, or pass onto a friend.

Appeal for Board Members

According to the Conservers' By-Laws the affairs of the Conservers' Society shall be managed by a Board of **at least twelve Directors**, who must be members in good standing.

As of October 2009, the Board consists of **six members**, four of whom are Officers: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Membership Director. This leaves only two directors at large and we are in desperate need of volunteers to serve on the Board any time soon.

Amongst other functions the Board provides leadership for the Society and formulates policies and facilitates their implementation. Please give serious thought to serving on the Board and contact one of the present members if you wish to know more about the Society and the important role played by the Board.

Before the AGM in April 2010 a Nominating Committee will receive nominations for new Board members, and hopefully there will be several candidates offering their services between now and then.

Welcome Laurel Harrison: New Board Member

The Conservers Society would like to welcome Laurel Harrison to our board. Thank you for your dedication and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

Here are some facts you may not have known about Laurel:

- Born in Hamilton an indeterminate number of years ago.
- Moved to Ancaster when she was an adolescent.
- Graduate of University of Guelph
- Mother jumped on the recycling bandwagon early on, and father was big into reuse.
- Older sister (one of the original members of the Conserver Society) opened her eyes to environmental issues.
- Volunteered across many sectors

most of her adult life.

- One of the founding members of the Ancaster Citizens for Alternatives to Pesticides; subsequently becoming an active member of the Hamilton Coalition on Pesticide Issues after amalgamation with Hamilton.
- Formerly Coordinator of Hamilton Area Eco-Network, now serving as a volunteer Coordinator of Communications
- Organizer of Green Drinks Hamilton, now in its 3rd year. Philosophy: "who needs to have a drink more than an environmentalist?"
- Event organizer for the Upwind Downwind Conference's Green Marketplace.
- Currently Coordinator for Earth Day Hamilton-Burlington.

Conservor Society of Hamilton & District

2009 Membership Application or Renewal Form

Your membership fee enables us to be an effective voice for a healthy, sustainable environment in Hamilton and the surrounding area. As a member in good standing, you will be entitled to receive the Environmental Advocate (our newsletter), participate in projects and activities of the Society and its chapters and vote at our Annual General Meeting.

The Conservor Society is a non-partisan, registered charitable organization. We gratefully accept donations above the basic membership fee. You will receive a tax receipt for the amount of your membership fee and any donations you choose to make.

Please print this form, fill it out and return it with your cheque to:

Membership Director

Conservor Society of Hamilton & District

Box 89002, 991 King St. West

Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 4R5

Yearly (2009) Membership Fee Individual ____ \$20 Family ____ \$30 Organization ____ \$40

(Individuals or families on low incomes are entitled to request a 50% reduction in fees.)

I would like to make an additional tax-deductible donation of \$ ____

.

I am submitting a total of: \$ ____

Cheques should be made payable to Conservor Society of Hamilton & District.

Member Information

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Date: _____ Check here if this is a membership renewal: ____

Please direct the chapter portion of my membership fee to the following chapter:

____ Ancaster ____ Dundas ____ Hamilton

If you do not specify a chapter, your entire fee will be directed to the parent body and allocated to Conservor Society activities as needed.

Thank you!