



# ECO-NEWS

September 2008

**EcoSuperior**  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

## It's Back – Energywise Tour 2008

Wouldn't it be nice to check the mailbox and know for a fact you'll never see another electric bill? Or perhaps find a notice from the gas company that your gas bill seems too low and an inspector will be out to check your meter. It's not just wishful thinking—it's reality for some residents in the Thunder Bay area. Want to see how they did it? Plan to participate in the Energywise Tour 2008 hosted by Superior Renewable Energy Cooperative.

Saturday, October 4, you'll be able to meet the people who live and work in homes and green buildings that utilize today's technology to reduce those monthly bills from major headaches to minor annoyances. Tour stops include an old home renovated to include passive solar, off-grid homes with solar and wind power, a home that incorporates a new solar collector on the wall, a green school that surpasses the national energy code by 60%, and a local business using solar power.

The EnergyWise Tour is not just houses anymore! This year's tour also includes a vehicle showcase where you can view hybrids and smart cars in action with performance data from the City of Thunder



Bay and the Ministry of Transportation — real fuel consumption figures for our local climate. Four local auto dealerships will be introducing tour participants to the new fuel-efficient and emission-reducing vehicles now available.

So if you're looking for ideas on making your life more energy efficient, or just interested in a fun day out and about, pick up your passport now for EnergyWise Tour 2008. Passports are available at EcoSuperior, 212 Miles Street East or Maier Hardware, 183 Algoma St. South, cash or cheque only. It's an affordable event—just \$10 per person (children 5 and under free). That includes a free Thunder Bay Transit pass so you can save gas by busing to the in-city tour stops and save your car for the rural stops. Don't wait — a limited number of passports are available.

For additional cost, you may choose a guided bus tour with full transportation



*SREC chair Charles Campbell (left) and La Verendrye principal Denis Malette inside the school's light-filled stairway. The "green" school building is one of 7 stops on the EnergyWise Tour.*

(thanks to our sponsor, Superior Credit Union), or add a pre-paid lunch option. For more information on other tour options please visit [www.srecwind.ca](http://www.srecwind.ca) or any of the

ticket sellers. We are grateful for the support of the volunteers who help make this tour possible, and all of the participating homeowners, businesses & organizations.

## A Well Aware Story

Last fall, Heather attended an open house event at the Nolalu Eco Centre where she noticed a display for EcoSuperior's Well Aware Program. After talking to Jane, our Well Aware water guide, she realized a Well Aware home visit might provide some useful information for her rural property.

She called the office, made an appointment and welcomed Jane to her home on a sunny morning. The visit began with a walk around the well area and septic field.



Jane pointed out that the slope behind the well could cause problems because the well cap was not far enough above grade to prevent runoff from entering the well. After discussing some issues around well and septic maintenance, they removed the well cover for a look inside.

"It was amazing how Jane recognized one of our problems right away," says Heather. "She noticed that the top tile on the well looked larger than the one below. She also pointed out the water stains on the inside of the tiles, showing us where surface water had been able to filter down and run into the well, bringing bacteria with it."

Jane provided her with a list of licensed contractors and advised that the well should be repaired in order to ensure a safe supply of drinking water.

When water samples revealed a bacteria problem, Heather and her partner first considered installing a treatment system. "But Jane made us realize that a treatment system just treats the problem—it doesn't fix it."

A contractor completed a well upgrade this summer, and Heather continues to monitor their water quality. As a result of the Well Aware program, this rural resident has taken steps to improve the well and knows what to watch for to avoid future problems.

"It was a really impressive assessment of all the issues about our well," says Heather, "and the report Jane sent after the visit was very comprehensive—provided so much information."

Well Aware visits are still available this fall to residents with a well in the City of Thunder Bay or surrounding townships. The service is free, but due to rising gas prices, we do request a \$10.00 donation for mileage. You can learn more about the Well Aware program at [www.wellaware.ca](http://www.wellaware.ca) or call us at 624-2140.

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## Community Partners

The many community programs and projects that you will read about in this newsletter would not be possible without the efforts of those who finance and contribute to EcoSuperior's activities. Through contributions of ideas, connections, expertise and financial support, the following organizations have played a major role in our success. We extend our sincere gratitude to the individuals within these organizations that have helped us along the way.

- City of Thunder Bay
- Environment Canada
- Litterfree Thunder Bay
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- Ontario Ministry of the Environment
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ontario Power Authority
- Ontario Ministry of Energy
- Ontario Power Generation
- Green Communities Canada
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Union Gas
- AbitibiBowater
- Chronicle Journal
- Dougall Media
- Newcap Media
- Zero Waste Action Team
- ReCool Canada
- Shell Environment Fund
- EarthWise Thunder Bay
- Volunteer Thunder Bay
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- North Shore Steelhead Association

In addition to the list above, we must thank the many local businesses who make it possible for people to make the right choices; the local media that help us spread the word, and many volunteer and committee members who provide invaluable assistance.

## About Eco-News

EcoNews is produced by EcoSuperior Environmental Programs. Look for our regular editions in your Chronicle Journal every spring and fall. All the articles are written by EcoSuperior staff unless otherwise credited. We are a non-profit organization, providing public education in the areas of water and energy conservation, waste reduction, pollution prevention and urban greenspaces. Our program area includes the city of Thunder Bay and the Lake Superior Basin. If you would like to comment on our programs, please contact us: **212 Miles Street East, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7C 1J6 • Telephone: 807-624-2140 • Facsimile: 807-622-0005 • www.ecosuperior.org • info@ecosuperior.org**



## Local Homeowners Earn Grants for Renovating

Here's a great example of a home that has benefited from the ecoEnergy Retrofit program offered by the federal government & EcoSuperior.

This older urban home was drafty and cold in the winter. The homeowner contacted EcoSuperior for a home energy evaluation. She paid \$300 for the initial testing of the home, which included a full report of recommended improvements and the total amount of grants that would be available to her. She went ahead with most of the recommendations, including insulating the unfinished basement, adding blown-in insulation to all exterior walls, and adding insulation to the eave area, raising it from R-8 to R-50. Some strategic caulking and weatherstripping reduced air leakage by about 30%. One basement window was also replaced.

As a result of these improvements, the homeowner received two cheques (one from the federal government, one from the provincial government) totaling \$4222. In addition, the homeowner should also be enjoying a reduction of nearly 40% in natural gas consumption this winter. She can also feel good about reducing the home's annual greenhouse gas emissions by 6.7 tonnes.

EcoSuperior is the area's only locally owned service provider for the ecoEnergy program. Revenues from our home evaluation service help support the environmental work we do in this community. If you are considering any renovations or furnace upgrade, call our office before you start the work. Grants are only available if the home evaluation is completed before any renovations are made. To find out more, or to book an appointment, call us at 624-2140.



*The Home Energy Evaluation service offered by EcoSuperior helped this homeowner pay for renovations.*

## Rainbarrel Reminder

Your rain barrel has served you well all season long, taking care of your plants with healthy chlorine-free rainwater. Now it's time for you to take care of your rain barrel: be sure to turn your barrels upside down or take them inside for storage over the winter. Any water left inside could cause the barrel to freeze and split! Don't take a chance — put your rain barrels away before freeze-up!



***The paper you are reading is manufactured by your friends and neighbours who work at AbitibiBowater Inc. – Thunder Bay Operations***  
***It contains 30% recycled content.***

# What Not To Wear

Television's Stacey and Clinton can remodel your wardrobe, but EcoSuperior is here to help you change what's in your makeup bag and on your bathroom shelf. Take a moment to think about all the personal care products you currently use—soaps and bodywashes, toothpaste and mouthwash, deodorants, lotion and moisturizers, eye shadow, lip gloss, aftershave, perfume, sunscreen, hair colouring—an astonishing mix of chemicals that we smooth, pat, slosh, dab, spray and brush onto ourselves every day.

Now think about your skin—the body's largest organ, an amazing two-way membrane that can flush out toxins through perspiration and sebaceous glands, as well as absorb nutrients and transfer them into the bloodstream. In every square inch of skin, there are about 65 hairs, 100 sebaceous glands and 650 sweat glands.

All those pores give skin the ability to absorb what we put on it. When you rub lotion on your hands, that gooey slickness takes just a few minutes to disappear, some through evaporation, but some is absorbed. The smoker determined to quit gets a doctor to prescribe a nicotine patch which, when placed on the skin of the upper arm, delivers a consistent dose of nicotine. Personal care products enter our bodies through routes other than the skin as well—aerosol sprays are hard to avoid inhaling, and that flavourful lip balm tastes so good you have to keep reapplying it! All of this leads us to the conclusion that a certain amount of the substances we put on the outside is going to end up on the inside.

When it comes to personal care products, less is best. Consider using fewer products, in smaller amounts and/or less often thereby reducing your chemical exposure.

The next step is to read the list of ingredients in your favourite cosmetic products. Don't be surprised if it's a very long list of substances you may not recognize or even be able to pronounce. By law, the label must list ingredients in descending order according to the amount of the ingredient contained in the product. A good rule of thumb is to divide the list of ingredients into thirds: the first third of the list generally makes up 90-95% of the product, the next third about 5 to 8% and the last third 1 – 3%.

It's a daunting task to research each ingredient to find out what it is and where it comes from, but the internet offers many resources to help you. You might also want to choose products with fewer ingredients. By cutting down on the number of chemicals contacting your skin every day, you may reduce potential health risks—such as allergies—associated with your products.

When it comes to labeling, words like “natural” and “organic” don't always mean what they should. You probably assume that “organic” means an ingredient is grown and cultivated without pesticides, but some companies



*Start reading the labels on your cosmetics & personal care products.*

assume the chemical definition of “organic” (as opposed to inorganic), which includes any compound containing a carbon atom. If you want to ensure truly organic (pesticide-free) ingredients, you must look for the words “certified organic.” And even then, only 95% of the ingredients need to be organically grown for multi-ingredient products like cosmetics. The last third of the ingredient list can be synthetic products, yet the product can be ‘certified organic’.

Health Canada does not regulate the use of words such as “natural” or “hypoallergenic.” “Fragrance-free” often means that a product has no perceptible odour, but synthetic ingredients may have been added to mask odours.

In addition to possible impacts on our own health, personal care products can take a toll on the environment. Packaging and manufacturing are two areas where cosmetic and personal care product manufacturers often fall short on environmental stewardship. Very few products come in refillable or recyclable containers, with the exception of some soap and shampoo bottles. Many are sold in boxes and wraps that are clearly not recycled fibre. The manufacture and production of some of the chemical ingredients used can also result in environmental impacts. The more we use, the more washes down the drain into streams and rivers where they affect fish and other creatures. And think about the chemical soup contributed to the local landfill every time you clean up your cosmetic supply cupboard.

So here are your new rules when shopping for personal care products:

1. Read the label.
2. Use fewer products in smaller amounts.
3. Choose products with fewer ingredients.
4. Consider products from companies that have signed the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics Compact.
5. Limit children's use of cosmetics.

## New Green Business Ventures

### Earthworks

Most of us are familiar with the 3R's which stand for Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, but how about Replenish? According to Leslie Kirkby owner/operator of Earthworks, this is an added benefit of vermicomposting.

Vermicomposting is composting with the help of Redworms. It's simple, doesn't require a lot of space, is very efficient and like regular composting, helps reduce household waste. It can be done inside or outside using a small transportable bin. In our cold climate this method allows us to compost year round. The worms can also be added to outside composters which can cut composting time in half.

EarthWorks supplies indoor composting kits in a variety of sizes, Red Worms, Compost Tea for watering plants and compost (worm castings). EarthWorks also provides in-home and workplace consultations, compost parties and workshops, and school and club visits.

*For more information call (807) 476-0928 or [earthworksecosystems@gmail.com](mailto:earthworksecosystems@gmail.com)*

### DTP

A pair of local entrepreneurs are doing their part to help Thunder Bay go green. Greg Smith and Jason McKee plan to provide a fleet of waste collection bins here in Thunder Bay, and sell advertising on the sides of the bins. The mission of the venture is to demote litter, and promote recycling. The bins are a new way for businesses, charities, and city programs to get their message out to the community, while also promoting the cleanliness of the city. Their idea is to recycle, re-use, and compost everything possible from the collected rubbish to reduce the volume of waste that would normally be destined for the landfill.

The plan calls for increased convenience of public waste disposal, with a goal of “always a can in sight.” With bright and attractive advertisements on all the bins, people should be able to spot them with no trouble at all. Moreover, the advertising covers the cost of waste collection, making their business plan self-sustaining. The business name is DTP, which is short for Destroy the Pollution. They aim to launch their program in April 2009.

*To find out more, go to [www.greenopolis.com/ecoteams/climate-action-network/destroy-pollution](http://www.greenopolis.com/ecoteams/climate-action-network/destroy-pollution)*

## Keen On Green @ Your Library

Make tracks to any location of your Thunder Bay Public Library this fall and pick up a special “footprint” card (also available at EcoSuperior's office). When you borrow books or participate in any of the “green” activities listed, you'll receive a stamp on your card. When your card is full, it becomes your ballot for great monthly prizes and the grand prize of an Energy Star laptop computer. The Grand Prize draw takes place December 18.

Use your public library to help reduce the size of your carbon footprint. The library is a huge recycler—by borrowing books, you save paper by eliminating the production of paper required if everyone bought their own books. To encourage more book recycling, the Library is also working with Thunder Bay Transit—you'll find a box full of books for passengers to borrow free of charge on every city bus!

It is estimated that the production of an average paperback has a carbon equivalent of 2.5 kg. Visit the library regularly instead of purchasing new books and you are reducing your greenhouse gas emissions. Good for your brain and good for the environment!

# Waste Reduction Week: October 19-25, 2008



Thunder Bay will once again be a part of the nation-wide celebration to raise awareness of waste reduction. The City of Thunder Bay Transportation & Works Department, EcoSuperior, Zero Waste Action Team and our community partners will be coordinating a wide range of activities, so plan to participate!

## Waste Reduction Fair

Intercity Shopping Centre will host this information fair on Saturday, October 18th. Learn what you can do to reduce your “waste-line” by the food court from 9:30am to 6pm. Bring your questions and prepare to be inspired!

## Household Hazardous Waste Depot

Old gas drained from the boat and lawnmower, used motor oil, empty propane tanks, dead batteries, leftover paint and stain—lots of household hazardous waste items accumulate over the summer. This is a great time to safely dispose of all these things before winter! The Household Hazardous Waste Depot

at the John Street Landfill Site is free of charge for city residents, and you can drop off items all year round.

## School Programs

EcoSuperior and Lakehead University Education students will be visiting classrooms during Waste Reduction Week, sharing practical ideas on how to reduce waste. Several schools will also participate in a Battery Round Up program, where students can bring dead batteries to school to be collected for safe disposal.

## Recycling Guide for Schools

We are excited to launch a comprehensive guide to help schools set up recycling programs, as well as other initiatives for a greener school.

## Take an Old Bag Shopping

Plastic shopping bags use an exceptional amount of resources and energy to produce, and then they create litter, garbage in the landfill, and are a hazard to wildlife. The provincial government has set a target of

50% reduction in the use of plastic bags by 2012. EcoSuperior and the Zero Waste Action Team remind you to bring your reusable bag to the store with you and watch for special promotions by local retailers who support plastic bag reduction.

## Radio Promotions

Stay tuned to your favourite local radio stations for tips on how to reduce waste and win great prizes.

## Great Pumpkin Compost Collection

Residents are encouraged to put Jack in the Box, not in the trash. Since the collection began in 1995, over 224 metric tonnes of pumpkins have been diverted from the landfill to the municipal composting facility. Bins for Halloween Pumpkins will be set up from November 1st – 10th at the Lakehead Labour Centre, County Fair Plaza and the Westfort Playfield. Remember—no plastic bags, no candles, and no trash—pumpkins and other organic décor (cornstalks, straw) only please!

Sponsored by ReCool Canada Inc. and Print Pros Plus.

## Don't forget to check out Mr. Green's Guide:

*Re-Use it! Recycle it! Reduce Waste*  
Ever wonder what to do with old computers, printer cartridges, or other items that you no longer have use for, but you know don't belong in the landfill? Check out this comprehensive guide for local recycling and re-use solutions. It is available on-line at [www.ecosuperior.org](http://www.ecosuperior.org) and also at [www.thunderbay.ca](http://www.thunderbay.ca), or pick up a hard copy at the Thunder Bay Public Library or EcoSuperior office.

For more information on any of these programs visit [www.ecosuperior.org](http://www.ecosuperior.org) and click on the Waste Reduction Week link, or call EcoSuperior at 624-2148.

*This waste reduction program is funded by the City of Thunder Bay's Transportation & Works Department and delivered by EcoSuperior Environmental Programs.*



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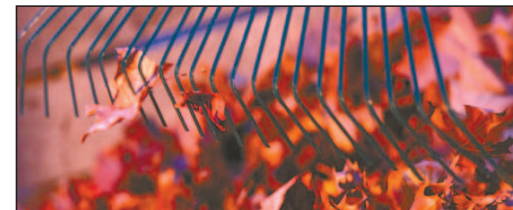
## Invitation to Businesses and Organizations

The City of Thunder Bay, EcoSuperior and the Zero Waste Action Team invite your workplace to take part in Waste Reduction Week this year. Getting involved is easy & free!

1. Make a special promotion of waste-reducing products or services that your business sells or provides during that week (October 19 – 25). This can be as simple as setting up a display in a highly visible location, or even offering discounts on these items. We will provide a promotional poster to go with your display.
2. Let us know what waste reduction initiatives you are implementing at your workplace. Are you recycling cardboard or other resources? Are you using recycled paper? Do you provide recycling and/or composting options in your lunch room? How are you saving energy? We want to know.

Take part in either or both of the above options and we will post your promotions and/or initiatives on the EcoSuperior website. Please contact Karen at 624-2148 or [karen@ecosuperior.org](mailto:karen@ecosuperior.org) to take part, or for more information.

## Fall Leaf & Yard Waste Collection



Keep organic yard waste out of the landfill, so it can be made into compost. The City of Thunder Bay provides collection of lawn and garden waste between November 4th and 14th. Look for the Leaf symbol on your Waste Collection Calendar for your leaf & yard waste collection date. Place leaves and organic garden waste at the curb in kraft (brown) paper bags, available at many grocery and hardware stores, or use clear plastic bags. There is no limit on organic garden waste, except no grass clippings please. For more information about the fall Leaf and Yard Waste Curbside Collection contact RECOOL at 577-0411.



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# Life Without Plastic Bags

It's hard to believe that plastic shopping bags have only been in widespread use in supermarkets for just over 30 years, and already we have forgotten how to live without them. We use them for all sorts of things (besides carrying our groceries)... from kitchen catchers to lunch bags and for picking up doggie doo.

Now we are learning that plastic bags, besides being quite handy, are actually taking a huge toll on our environment, wildlife, and infrastructures.

## Did you know...?

- The US EPA estimates that between 500 billion and 1 trillion plastic bags are consumed each year. (National Geographic News Sept 2003)
- Less than 1% of plastic bags are recycled. It costs more to recycle a bag than to make a new one. (Christian Science Monitor News Paper)
- Over time, plastic bags photodegrade, breaking down into smaller, more toxic petro-polymers which eventually contaminate soils and waterways, entering the food chain. (CNN.com/technology Nov 07)
- According to the World Wildlife Fund 2005 Report, nearly 200 different species of sea life, including whales, dolphins, seals and turtles die due to plastic bags. Some are entangled in the bags, while others ingest them. (there are estimates that tens of thousands of animal deaths are attributed to plastic bags each year).
- Bags are made from polyethylene: a thermoplastic made from oil. China will save an estimated 37 million barrels of oil each year due to their ban of free plastic bags. (CNN.com/asia Jan 9/08)

So it seems to be a good time to ask ourselves "Is all of this harm worth the convenience we have become accustomed to?"

Two of the most frequent concerns we hear about when it comes to reducing or eliminating the use of plastic bags are what to do for collecting waste throughout the house, and what to use to pick up after pets. Here are some ideas to help.

**Household waste baskets:** With the exception of the kitchen, most household waste is fairly dry (tissues, packaging etc.) and so there is no need to line wastebaskets with a bag. Just dump the contents into a larger bag and rinse the container if necessary. A great waste receptacle for the kitchen is a free-standing bin with a foot



Look for more eco-friendly "doggie-do" options.

pedal opener and a removable bucket inside. These also make great compost collectors. When full, the liner bucket can easily be pulled out and dumped into that same single garbage bag that is collecting the rest of your household waste. Of course any old bucket would do as well, as long as it can be conveniently washed out as needed. By recycling and composting, you will further reduce the need for garbage bags. If you keep your larger bags from dog food, garden soil amendments, etc., you can use these instead of new garbage bags as well.

**Pet waste:** It's great to see that most people seem to be picking up after their pets these days, which makes life much better for anyone who likes to walk. Not only is pet waste a drag to step in, it is also a health hazard to both humans and pets.

So what kinds of collection options are there? Well, the market has certainly responded to this need. There is quite a variety of doo-doo collectors out there, including some with long handles and compostable bags, available at several pet stores and some veterinary clinics. These are the best options we have seen so far. However, if you are not willing or able to pay for these bags, there are still alternatives to shopping bags, considering all the items we buy that come wrapped in plastic. Instead of just throwing out bags from bread, milk, produce, frozen vegetables or any other plastic bags, try giving them one more job before they hit the landfill. If you don't have enough, ask your dog-less friends and neighbours to save theirs for you.

*Do you have other ideas for living without plastic bags? If so, please let us know. Contact karen@ecosuperior.org or call 624-2148.*

# Waste Words

There are some great things about our modern curbside waste disposal systems. It reduces the health risks associated with having garbage lying around, and it is very convenient. The trouble with this convenience, however, is that once we take the trash to the curb we tend to forget about it. It goes "away". Unfortunately, "away" is only as far as the ever-growing landfill sites within our own communities.

As long as we view our unwanted items as "trash", we will be missing the point. The City of Guelph recently adopted a zero waste strategy and changed the word "waste" to the term "resource". Our trash cans are full of potential resources. Many items can be recycled to create new items; organic matter can be composted to create fertilizer for plants. Finally, our purchasing decisions can have a huge effect on what we throw out. Heavily packaged and single-use (disposable) items create a lot more waste than their convenience is worth, and they generally cost more.

Zero Waste proponents regard waste as an indicator of inefficiency, and attempt to approach every stage of a product's life cycle to see where improvements may be made to reduce energy and resource requirements, and eliminate waste, including toxins. The goal is a closed loop system where resources cycle around with minimal inputs and outputs, as happens in natural ecosystems. While much of this level of change happens at the manufacturing level, how we choose our purchases and what we do with our leftovers are important parts of the loop.

It is estimated that, on average, every Canadian produces approximately one tonne of waste each year. Just imagine if we had to keep all that trash in our own back yards instead of throwing it "away." Then there would be a much greater incentive to reduce that amount as much as possible, before our homes were buried! About 30% of our waste is compostable. Another 40% is recyclable. That leaves a final 30%, which in some ways is the toughest segment to minimize, since it involves thinking in a much broader sense as we make our lifestyle and purchasing decisions. In a time of dwindling resources and an excess of trash, we can all do something positive by diverting as many potential resources as possible from our "trash"...make that "resource" bins. As ethical stewards of this lovely planet, it is prudent that we remember there is no "away". We're all in this together.

If you have items you no longer need but are not sure what to do with, check out Thunder Bay's Mr. Green's Guide at [www.ecosuperior.org](http://www.ecosuperior.org) or [www.thunderbay.ca](http://www.thunderbay.ca), or pick up a copy at your local library or the EcoSuperior office.

## Family of 4 = 2 Shopping Boxes

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# Are You an Eco-Driver?

Driving is bad for the environment—we know that already! The harmful chemicals spewed out of the tailpipe, the greenhouse gas emissions, the fuel consumption, not to mention the ridiculous amounts of money our cars and trucks require to purchase and maintain. But the sad thing is, despite all the known impacts of vehicles, most of us just can't live without them. Location, convenience, comfort and sometimes our jobs dictate our vehicle needs. What are the alternatives? Don't even suggest biking in to work from Murillo in November. And if you're looking for the nearest bus stop in Lappe—well, you'll be looking for a long time. Isn't there anything we can do as drivers to clean up our act?

Well here's how--participate in EcoSuperior's newest project. EcoDriver is a program launched by Green Communities Canada and funded by the Ontario Ministry of Environment's Community Go Green Fund. You may think "eco-driver" sounds like an oxymoron but the truth is, if you must drive, you CAN drive in more environmentally friendly ways. The fact is, we can't all afford a new hybrid car, nor can we all fit our families into a "smart" car.

This program is designed with drivers in mind. We understand that you can't live without a vehicle but you'd like to know what you can do to reduce the environmental impacts of your vehicle. This program invites you to "shift gears" in three main ways:

- 1) Drive in fuel-efficient ways. There are many simple techniques you can adopt which will improve your fuel efficiency. You not only reduce your emissions but also reduce your stops at the local gas station by paying attention to how and where you're driving.
- 2) Maintain and Save. Just one under-inflated tire can increase your fuel consumption—tire pressure should be checked once a month. Pay attention to regular oil changes and check your air filter too. These habits as well as regular tune-ups guarantee better mileage.
- 3) Drive Less. A simple idea—just think about how often you jump in the car just to whip down to the corner store. Lots of options here, including trip planning to combine errands, ride sharing, using alternative transportation for short trips and giving public transit a try where possible.

To get more information on becoming an EcoDriver, please visit [www.ecosuperior.org](http://www.ecosuperior.org) and invite us to bring an EcoDriver presentation to your group or workplace. You can also take our driver survey for a chance to win a monthly prize, or use our on-line calculator to figure out your vehicle's current fuel efficiency. For more information, contact Derek at 624-2655.



Better driving habits can reduce your time spent at the gas station!

## Take Your Medicine... back to the Pharmacy!

Have you looked in your medicine cabinet lately? If you check the fine print on the label of your over-the-counter medications like headache tablets or cough syrup, you may find that some drugs have passed their expiration date. Or perhaps you'll find a partially-filled bottle from a prescription that you didn't quite finish taking, or medicated patches that you no longer need lurking in the far corners of your cabinet. How do you dispose of those unwanted medications?

You are not alone- 63% of Canadians disposed of medications in 2003 because of a change in dosage or prescription, or perhaps because they felt better. However, only 17% disposed of their unwanted medicines correctly by returning them to their pharmacies for safe disposal. Unfortunately, many people threw their medications in the toilet or down the sink, flushing them into sewers. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to completely capture medications from sewage, so these pharmaceuticals will find their way into water bodies.

All sorts of human pharmaceuticals have been found in water samples from streams and rivers, including hormones, antibiotics, tranquilizers, pain killers and anti-depressants. These drugs can affect aquatic organisms like fish. Not only can they create physical malformations or changes in fish behaviour, but there is evidence that some of these compounds are affecting the development of their reproductive systems leading to feminization and even reproductive failure. Pharmaceuticals in our environment and water supply may also be affecting human health.

So do the right thing- gather up all your expired and unused medications, including over-the-counter drugs, and bring them to your pharmacy for safe disposal. You'll feel a lot better for it!



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(807) 623-2141 Fax: (807) 622-1282

[www.fitzpatrickandpartners.com](http://www.fitzpatrickandpartners.com) email: [infor@fitzpatrickandpartners.com](mailto:infor@fitzpatrickandpartners.com)

Paul Fitzpatrick, CA\*

Rick Trochimchuk, CA\*

Moe Siemieniuk, CA • CBV\* Tammy Wylie, CGA CA\*

\*Professional Corporation

Marcel Gagnon, CA\*

Steve Blazino, CA\*

Shelly Gaudreau, CA\*

# EcoSuperior and the Lake Superior Binational Forum

EcoSuperior has been involved in efforts to meet the objectives of the Lake Superior Binational Program for many years. The aim of this program is the restoration and protection of Lake Superior. Program partners are comprised of government agencies like Minnesota Pollution Control, the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Environment Canada. These organizations work together on environmental actions, as if there were no international boundary through Lake Superior.

A central component of the Binational Program is the involvement of a group of interested individuals from around the lake who participate in the Lake Superior Binational Forum. The Forum is a mix of industry, municipal, sport fishing, academic, small business and First Nations' representatives from all geographic areas around both sides of Lake Superior. The Forum has provided recommendations to government about lakewide environmental management plans and also carried out many projects such as a public input session on the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area, education sessions about toxic substances like mercury, presentation of environmental stewardship awards, and the annual Lake Superior Day event in communities around the lake. These positive environmental efforts are aimed at raising awareness about Lake Superior in order to protect its splendid, unique character. The Forum is sponsored by Environment Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Forum meets on a regular basis in communities around Lake Superior and area residents are always invited to raise concerns. At its meeting in Nipigon this year, the Forum brought together a large gathering of individuals from several communities along the North Shore and senior Great Lakes officials from Environment Canada. One question asked, in no uncertain terms, was when secondary sewage treatment would be put in place in Nipigon to remove Nipigon Bay from the list of environmental areas of concern on the Great Lakes. This question was emphasized due to the town's position next to the largest freshwater marine conservation area in the world.

In July 2008, EcoSuperior entered into a contract with Environment Canada to provide coordination and administrative services for the Binational Forum, replacing Lakehead University in this role. EcoSuperior has a solid record of community engagement and years of experience turning small environmental initiatives into sustainable, ongoing practices within the industrial, municipal and residential sectors. We are excited about applying our expertise to support the Forum in its work to restore and protect Lake Superior.

For more information, visit the forum's website at [www.superiorforum.info](http://www.superiorforum.info)



*Nipigon Mayor Richard Harvey discussing the National Marine Conservation Area at the June 2008 Forum meeting held in Nipigon.*

## Reader's Forum

### The RANT

Visit our website and click on the RANT link in the lower right corner to voice your opinion on issues relating to the environment. Go ahead — let us know what's bugging you. We can't solve every problem, but it'll make you feel better! Here's an example of a recent post:

Reusable Coffee Cups..... Whatever!!  
by Reusable on Wed Jul 16, 2008 4:11 pm

Reusable cups, are you kidding me?

Ok having seen the information about using reusable cups for my morning coffee and how it will save me a few cents from some of the local coffee shops I decided to get myself a mug. I am happy to reduce the garbage caused by disposable cups and save some money as well but that is not what has happened. Many coffee shops I go to are unsure what to charge for filling the container. This confusion results in the company filling a paper cup, dumping it into my reusable container and then throwing out the disposable. Ack!! where's my reduction in garbage? Not only am I now promoting more plastic, I'm causing the same amount of garbage from before. The best abuse of the system is for giveaway events I receive a perfectly clean disposable cup in order to receive my chance to "win". Again I brought my reusable mug to avoid making garbage and once again it is not doing its job!! What is going on. We need the coffee shops to get together, maybe create a generic mug that each company can stick their logo on, all know the sizes and go from there. Have contests available through small stickers rather than cups. Cause right now a reusable cup doesn't actually seem to be doing anything other than creating an increase in plastic cup demand.

### Q&A

When I throw a pop bottle or jar into the recycling bag, why do I have to throw the plastic lid in the garbage?

The lids are made of injection molded plastic. This plastic is a different grade; it is nice when the lids are removed, however it is not mandatory. We would not tag a bag because the lids were still on a water or pop bottle.

Hope this helps.

**Steve Kozak**  
**RECOOL CANADA INC.**  
**General Manager**

*If you have a question that you would like to see answered in the next issue of EcoNews or on our website, please drop us a line at [info@ecosuperior.org](mailto:info@ecosuperior.org)*

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# Fluorescent Light Recycling Begins in Nipigon

The Township of Nipigon, Ontario Power Generation and EcoSuperior are offering Nipigon and area residents a convenient drop-off point for spent fluorescent lights up to 4 ft. in length. This includes compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) which have become popular recently due to their energy savings.

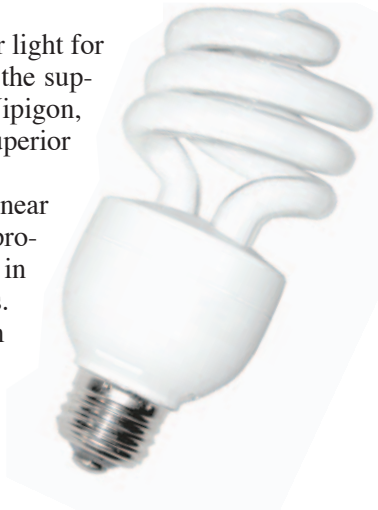
Fluorescent lights should not be put out with the regular garbage but should instead be brought to the Nipigon Public Works Yard on Wadsworth Drive. The collection depot is open weekdays from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. Lights are best packed and transported in their original cardboard packing or can be bundled with elastic bands. Broken lights or lights which have been taped together will not be accepted. Cardboard packaging should be taken away and lights only left in the collection bin.

Fluorescent lights are very energy efficient, but all types, including compacts, contain mercury. This toxic substance is harmful to the health of both people and wildlife. Hundreds of millions of spent fluorescent tubes are landfilled annually in North America allowing mercury to escape into the atmosphere or leach into groundwater, streams and lakes.

Costs for recycling fluorescent lights are substantial – about 50 cents per light for a standard 4-foot fluorescent tube, plus transportation to the recycler. It is the support of Ontario Power Generation in co-operation with the Township of Nipigon, the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Environment Canada and EcoSuperior which allows the program to be offered at no charge for residential lights.

Ontario has proposed plans to ban traditional, incandescent bulbs in the near future. The Nipigon program, an extension of the successful Thunder Bay program supported by OPG since 2004, makes the community one of the few in Ontario with a practical, municipal program to deal with spent fluorescents.

Nipigon's lamp recycling program is aimed at diverting mercury from both the landfill and the environment. One hundred percent of the light is recycled including glass, phosphor powder and metal end caps. Most importantly, the mercury is reclaimed and recycled, rather than being landfilled.



## Save with a Block Heater Timer

It's minus 35 again, & after pushing all the snow off the car and scraping the windshield, you finally slip into the driver's seat. You turn the key and you're greeted by the dying whine of a frozen battery as it tries desperately to bring the engine to life.

For those of us without a garage, the only option is a block heater. They work, but they also add a drain on the electricity bill. For convenience, lots of people plug the car in when they get home from work and leave it till next morning — that's a lot of electricity wasted keeping that oil warm all night.

The average block heater sucks up about 450 W of electricity and costs you 4¢ for every hour you leave it plugged in. It may not sound like much but if you plug in when you get home at 6 p.m. and

leave it till you head out for work at 8 a.m., that's 14 hours a day—now you're up to more than \$11 a month.

The engine only requires heat for about 2 hours before you depart, so if you'd rather not run outside in your pj's at 6 a.m. to plug it in, your best bet is a block heater timer. It's an easy-to-program device that's an easy way to cut your electricity bill. Set it for the time you want it to come on, and then you can plug in your car whenever its convenient.

The average retail cost of a block heater timer is \$20-\$25 but with the generous support of the Ministry of Energy's Community Conservation Initiatives Fund, EcoSuperior will be offering the timers this winter for only \$5. At that price, the timer can pay for itself in the very first month! For more information on the Block Heater Timer Project and distribution events coming in November, check our website at [www.ecosuperior.org](http://www.ecosuperior.org)

## Coming Events

### September 30

Citizens Concerned About Pesticides (CCAP) presents a public information session.

**Pesticide Bylaws: Why we are not yet being protected**  
7:00 p.m. at Waverley Resource Library, 285 Red River Rd.  
Contact: [pesticidefreetbay@shaw.ca](mailto:pesticidefreetbay@shaw.ca)

### October 4

Superior Renewable Energy Co-op and EcoSuperior present **The EnergyWise Tour**, Saturday, October 4 from 10 a.m to 4 p.m.

Opening of the downtown Artisans & Farmers Market, Victoria St. between May and Brodie, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### October 6

The Community Environmental Action Plan is on the agenda for City Council. Come out and show your support at the Community Auditorium, 6:30 p.m.

### October 8

Official Launch of the Nipigon Fluorescent Light Recycling Depot – sponsored by Ontario Power Generation.

### October 18 - 19

Health & Wellness Expo at the Valhalla Inn, presented by the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce. Look for EcoSuperior's booth!

### October 19 - 25

Waste Reduction Week in Canada. Join us for displays at Intercity Shopping Centre on Saturday, Oct. 18 in the food court area.

### October 23

EarthWise Thunder Bay presents a short film *The Story of Stuff* at Waverley Library, 7 p.m.

### November 1

Gammondale Farm presents a Pumpkin-Smashing Day — return your pumpkin to the earth and have fun too!  
([www.gammondalefarm.com](http://www.gammondalefarm.com))

### November 6

**Powering Down** – Join Thunder Bay's Municipal Energy Conservation Officer and EarthWise Thunder Bay at Waverly Library, 7 p.m. to learn more about energy conservation initiatives in our community.

### November 1 - 10

The Great Pumpkin Compost Collection bins are available at the Lakehead Labour Centre (Ft. William Road), Neebing Playfield (off Neebing Avenue) and County Fair Mall (Dawson Road).

### November 7 - 8

Lake Superior Binational Forum meeting in Thunder Bay. See details at [www.superiorforum.info](http://www.superiorforum.info)

### November 29

Global Buy Nothing Day – a global holiday from consumerism. Spend a day without spending! For more info, see [www.buynothingday.co.uk](http://www.buynothingday.co.uk)

### December 4

**Green Christmas** – EarthWise volunteers discuss and demonstrate environmentally friendly Christmas ideas at Waverley Library, 7 p.m.