

ENVIR ACTION

Winter/Spring 2007

Kids' posters remind us that every day is **Earth Day**

Winners are:

British Columbia

Emmy
Sam
Sarah
Stephanie

Alberta

Collin (shown)
Connor
Davin

Saskatchewan

Shania

Ontario

Samuel
Vanessa

Nova Scotia

Brian



Eleven children have won cool environment-friendly flashlights and backpacks for their creative efforts in CUPE's 2006 annual Earth Day poster contest for kids.

The winners come from across the country and range in age from six to 13. Their posters, which tackled everything from climate change to endangered species to waste reduction and recycling, celebrated Earth Day, April 22.

"Walk don't drive," said 10-year-old Stephanie's poster on climate change. Eight-year-old Vanessa's poster urged actions we can all take: use water saving showerheads, collect water in rain barrels and plant trees every Spring.

The contest is sponsored by CUPE's National Environment Committee through the work of the Health and Safety Branch in Ottawa.

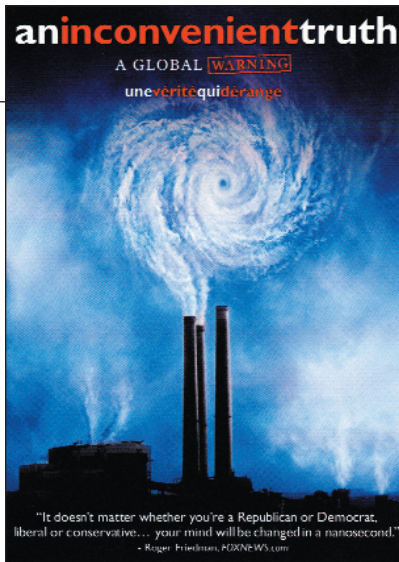
New ad hoc energy committee

The first meeting of CUPE's new Ad Hoc Energy Committee was held in Ottawa in November 2006. The group included invited members from the energy sector, National Environment Committee members, CUPE National President Paul Moist and involved staff. The new committee's tasks are to discuss energy issues, examine how energy sources are likely to change in the future and draft a sustainable energy policy for our union.

The meeting featured a presentation from Glen Murray, chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE), a federal government advisory body. Murray focused on climate change. He urged CUPE to form its energy policy in step with advancements that are required to redress climate change.

Outstanding energy resolutions from the 2005 National Convention were also addressed at the meeting. While there was no agreement on what forms of energy CUPE should support in the coming years, debate was informative. A second meeting of the ad hoc group is planned for this Spring.





An Inconvenient Truth

Each member of CUPE's National Environment Committee has received a copy of Al Gore's documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* for showings in their regions. The film is a brilliant introduction to climate change. It lays out the science in clear language and talks about the consequences if climate change is not addressed. Gore argues that this is the single most significant societal issue facing all citizens of the world. He says action must be taken now to cut greenhouse gases to keep our planet liveable.

CUPE Environment Committee members plan to screen the DVD at upcoming events. Look for it in your region or contact your division office if your local is interested in borrowing the DVD for a film night and discussion on climate change.

New CUPE environment materials

CUPE will publish new environment materials this Fall for members' use. The materials will include two new fact sheets on climate change and a new booklet on greening workplaces. They will focus on actions locals and members can take on today's most pressing environmental problems. Look for these documents to be ready in time for National Convention in October 2007 in Toronto.

Climate change hot facts – human health



- More frequent and severe heat waves will contribute to more human deaths. The World Health Organization estimates that by 2020 annual heat-related deaths in Montreal will rise from the current average of 70 to 460 and from 20 to 290 in Toronto.
- Globally, hotter temperatures will contribute to more illnesses and death from malaria, malnutrition and diarrhea because of more heat waves, droughts, flooding and storms. The old, young, ill and socially disadvantaged will suffer the most.
- Rising temperatures are extending the ranges of disease-carrying organisms, such as mosquitoes, rodents and bats:
 - Dengue Fever is a possibly lethal infection carried by mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are now carrying the disease at higher elevations and further north, due to warmer conditions.
 - Hantavirus is a life-threatening disease spread by contact with infected rodent feces and urine. Increasing droughts are killing off the predators that feed on mice that carry the disease.
 - West Nile virus has spread quickly across North America from contact with infected mosquitoes that are active longer due to global warming. The disease ranges from mild to potentially fatal outcomes.
- With climate change, severe smog and its related health effects will increase. Burning fossil fuels produces pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, ozone, sulphur dioxide, volatile organic compounds and airborne particulates. These pollutants contribute to impaired lung function, shortness of breath, asthma attacks, and premature death.
- The increasing impact on peoples' health will result in huge jumps in health care costs. For example, a World Bank study estimated China's health care costs related to fossil fuel consumption would rise from the current cost of \$32 billion to \$390 billion by 2020. This translates into 600,000 premature deaths, 5.5 million cases of chronic bronchitis, and 20 million cases of respiratory illness each year in China alone.