

2002 Annual Report



Labour
Environmental
Alliance
Society



DIRECTORS 2002-2003

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*Thanks to outgoing board members John Fitzpatrick
(VDLC), Judy Parkman (CUPE) and Loretta Woodcock
(CAW 2002) for their contribution to LEAS' work.*

From the executive director

Dear friends and supporters of LEAS:

his past year has been one of tremendous growth and change for our five-year-old organization. Our leading-edge work is being widely recognized and we are now seen in various communities as experts in eliminating toxins from the workplace. As well as our Cleaners, Toxins and the Ecosystem project, which we pushed to heightened levels of activity in 2002, we've got some new and exciting projects on the go.

Building coalitions and creating partnerships is the way LEAS finds solutions. Last year we engaged over 500 people in our workshops, as we worked with a broad range of partners in labour, environmental and social justice sectors. We're working with scientists, technicians, environmentalists and unions to promote whistle-blower protection for employees who feel the need to alert the public that government is not protecting human health and the environment. We also moved back into the forest — our origin during the war in the woods — to work with tree planters who face health risks from pesticides used in reforestation, community forest advocates and log salvagers on the Fraser River. And we became involved in the big issue of

proportional representation, so that labour, environmental and social justice issues will receive a fairer hearing in government. We were shocked by the extent of cancer-causing substances in workplaces and in the community, and so last year we launched CancerSmart: A prevention Initiative, to link health and the environment more directly in the minds of workers, consumers, employers, and the public.

My greatest satisfaction is that LEAS is making a difference. We are bridging health and environmental issues in a concrete way and, best of all, we are finding common ground with many people and organizations and working together in a way that benefit us all.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mae Burrows". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mae Burrows, Executive Director



TOXINS IN THE WORKPLACE

Environmentalism at work

The Cleaners, Toxins and the Ecosystem project continues to be the signature program for the Labour Environmental Alliance. Millions of litres of cleaning products are used every year in the workplace and then dumped into sewer systems across the province. The impact is significant — cleaning products are the largest single source of endocrine disrupting nonyl phenols entering the environment, for example.

By working with health and safety committees to identify toxic ingredients in cleaning products and then substitute environmentally preferable products, LEAS has developed an effective initiative that links human health and environment and takes environmental research directly into the workplace.

The work in 2002 has also demonstrated that the project has expanded well beyond just cleaning products and we are dealing with the broader issue of toxins in the workplace. Much of that has come about through our cooperation with the B.C. Federation of Labour in presenting advanced training workshops of Toxins in the Workplace. They're part of the federation's health and safety training, funded by the WCB.

We kicked off the New Year in 2002 with a successful invitational workshop in January that brought together environmen-

talists, local unions, and health and safety committee as well as representatives from cleaning supply and manufacturing companies, Environment and Health Canada and the B.C. Buildings Corporation. BCBC has developed a strict high environmental standard for contractors cleaning its buildings and its work has been of great assistance to LEAS.

Also early in the year, we launched the project in Burnaby schools, working with Local 379 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Burnaby School Board and local parents groups. With LEAS assistance, the district health and safety committee was successful in replacing all the toxic cleaning products in use, including one containing the potent carcinogen methylene chloride.

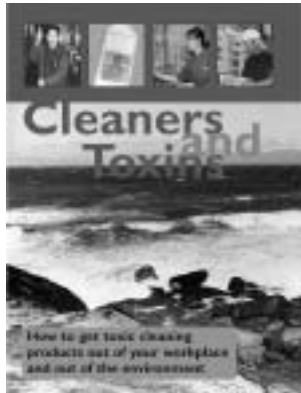
We worked successfully with the Langley School District and CUPE Local 1851 to get toxic cleaning products out of Langley schools as well. There, the school district has moved to establish a common purchasing policy to ensure that the standards set are maintained.

In conjunction with the Canadian Auto Workers and the Hotel, Restaurant Employees Local 40, we also began moving the projects into major hotels as part of a concerted effort to put the



Cleaners project and its environmental benefits into sites where the public is directly affected. We began the first reviews of the hotels' Material Safety Data Sheets and expect to be chalking up results in the first half of 2003. Eliminating toxic cleaning products in the hotel sector is particularly important because many of the products used contain nonyl phenols that have widespread adverse effects on the environment.

The 24-page Cleaners and Toxins guide that we produced in late 2001 has been a key part of the success in schools, hotels and



the many other project sites, providing both an introduction to the project and a ready handbook that committees can use to check ingredients as new products are ordered. Nearly all of the 4,000 copies printed have been distributed to health and safety committee members and are in regular use in worksites around the province. Funding is being sought to publish a new, updated edition.

LEAS has also taken the research and the methods used in the project and developed educational, action-oriented workshops on toxins elimination. We first presented them to CUPE and the Hospital Employees Union. Then B.C. Federation of Labour Health and Safety director Lynn Bueckert and education project coordinator Sheila Moir began working with us to incorporate them into the federation's advanced safety training program.

LEAS staff members Mae Burrows and Sean Griffin and board member Larry Stoffman have delivered more than a dozen workshops and more are scheduled for 2003. The workshops are a valuable way to promote toxins elimination at the workplace level and also provide LEAS with a way to generate some revenue through fee for service.

The project has been showcased in a number of union and environmental newsletters, although we haven't as yet been able to capture mainstream media coverage. Still, we have commanded some attention — because of the Cleaners and Toxins project, LEAS has been nominated, with Environment Canada's support, for one of five awards given annually by the Canadian Council of Environment Ministers (CCME). The winners are to be announced in April, 2003.



WHISTLE-BLOWERS' RIGHTS

Upholding right to know

The screening of *The Insider*, the Hollywood drama about the tobacco industry executive who released damning documents about the industry's terrible health and environmental record, certainly highlighted the importance of whistle-blowers in our society. But the role hasn't necessarily become any easier for those in government departments who do not want to stand by while environmental standards and regulations are being violated. Too often, they risk losing their jobs and careers if they try to uphold the law and the public's right to know.

Last year saw the establishment of Public Servants for Environmental Ethics (PSE), a new organization of scientists and government employees dedicated to making the public aware of the consequences of government environmental policies and ensuring that governments themselves are held fully accountable for those policies. LEAS helped bring the new organization into being and continues to sit on the board and work with PSE in protecting whistle-blowers who are striving to ensure that there is environmental accountability and full public disclosure in our province.

In June, LEAS sponsored an invitational workshop on the issue, bringing LEAS, PSE and West Coast Environmental Law

together with unions from both the public and private sector, public interest groups and lawyers who work on public interest and environmental issues.

As a result of that workshop, we developed a discussion paper entitled "Whistle-Blower Protection: Strategies for B.C."

The discussion paper proposes some legislative, regulatory and collective bargaining strategies to engage the public and as well as workers and unions.

In conjunction with PSE and WCEL, we have also developed:

- A set of principles that can be used by unions in drafting collective agreement language to protect workers who blow the whistle on environmental and other violations.
- A proposal for training and guidelines for union-based "ethics stewards" who would be watch out for environmental violations, ensure information is disclosed to the public where required and protect the rights of whistle-blowers, just as union stewards currently monitor the union's collective agreement;
- Guidelines to assist potential whistle-blowers and help them work their way through the process of making information public.

ALLIANCES, COALITIONS

Cooperation for change

The events of 2002 pushed new labour-environmental issues on to the stage, creating some new potential for coalition-building.

Early in the year, we joined with the Canadian Autoworkers, West Coast Environmental Law and Airspace in campaigning around the provincial cabinet's decision to strike down the long-awaited Workers' Compensation Board ban on second-hand smoke in the workplace. In a joint LEAS-CAW news release, we pointed out that the provincial government's action in replacing the ban with ventilated smoking rooms effectively gave bars and casinos "a permit to pollute" and put the health of thousands of hospitality workers at risk.

LEAS arranged with West Coast Environmental Law to produce an extensive report outlining various options, including litigation, available to environmentalists and workers seeking protection from second-hand smoke. We coordinated a meeting with WCEL, the Clean Air Coalition, Airspace, various union representatives and environmentalists to review the report.

When Fraser Valley health authorities proposed contracting out hospital laundry — and hospital workers jobs — hundreds of miles to Alberta, we organized Environmentalists for Local



Laundry, working with environmentalists, a local physician and the Hospital Employees' Union to oppose the move.

Out in the forest cutblock, tree planters are front-line environmentalists who also face health risks from pesticides used in reforestation. LEAS is working with the Canadian Restoration and Environmental Workers (CREWS) on pesticide research that will benefit workers' health and reduce pesticide pollution in our forests. Similarly, we're working on Vancouver Island with the Youbou Timberless Society, a group of former forest industry workers who are striving to establish sustainable forestry based on community control.

We also took the first steps on an initiative with the Transboundary Water Alliance that will see us working to protect pristine wilderness in the Iskut River watershed from proposed road-building and mine development.

Demonstrating that coalition-building makes a difference, the Western Canada Wilderness Committee honoured LEAS executive director Mae Burrows in 2002 with its Eugene Rogers award. The annual award cited Burrows for "her efforts in bringing workers, environmentalists and social activists together in defence of the environment."



LEAS FORUMS

Dialogue, common action

n 1957, B.C. sports and commercial fishermen, campaigning to protect the salmon resource, may have been among the first to bridge the “jobs versus the environment” debate when they successfully blocked plans for massive dam construction and power generation at Moran Canyon on the Fraser River. It may have been 45 years ago but that debate continues to reverberate in a new century — and reaffirms the need for the labour environmental dialogue that LEAS has pioneered.

The new government in Victoria put a hard edge on that debate with its active promotion of privatization and de-regulation as the favoured policies to reduce costs, even if they come at the expense of environmental standards.

In March, we joined the Council of Canadians and the Office and technical Employees Union to sponsor a well-attended forum on the proposed privatization of B.C. Hydro. It brought together leading economists, trade unionists and environmentalists to make the case that splitting up the power utility and selling it to private owners would reduce environmental accountability, cost jobs and undermine conservation initiatives.

A forum the following month on environmental and health issues related to public transit highlighted the efforts of bus rid-

ers, the Canadian Auto Workers — representing bus drivers and mechanics — and LEAS to improve the Lower Mainland’s public transit system and reduce pollution from diesel buses. That campaign, has also paid off —Translink moved in October to stop using dirty number 2 diesel for its buses and shift to the cleaner Number 1 fuel, acknowledging that it was necessary environmentally even if the cost was higher.

LEAS has also helped open a dialogue on proportional representation, and has worked to bridge the debate between traditional trade union supporters of the NDP and many environmentalists who want to see a more representative system in the wake of the last election. The issue was on the table at a well-received LEAS forum in June and we continue to participate in a committee that is exploring new initiatives.

The Canadian Labour Congress provided a prominent stage for labour and environmentalists in June when it held a special environmental forum in conjunction with the CLC convention in Vancouver. LEAS executive director Mae Burrows was one of three panelists that included Mike Harcourt from the Roundtable on the Environment and Gerry Scott from the David Suzuki Foundation.

Moving on prevention

CancerSmart

With every passing week, there is a new finding about the damaging effect that endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) are having on fish and marine and aquatic species in the Pacific Northwest. New medical research is also linking EDCs to cancer, adding a new dimension to the list of occupational and environmental carcinogens.

As we carried out our workplace toxins project, we found we were encountering numerous carcinogens and EDCs in cleaning and other products — and were able to work with health and safety committees to get rid of them. So why not focus on primary cancer prevention, especially if we could put household products under scrutiny as well?

That's the thinking behind the CancerSmart project, LEAS newest initiative that makes the link between health and the environment.

We'll be researching the ingredients in dozens of household cleaners and encouraging people to look under their sinks and replace products that contain carcinogens and EDCs. We'll be expanding the workplace toxins work into more high profile sectors, including schools, hospitals and hotels. We'll also be working with the Canadian Labour Congress, the CAW and other

unions that have Prevent Cancer campaigns.

Although the project work is not set to begin until 2003, we have already assembled a strong advisory committee, made up of leading epidemiologists, health and safety professionals and environmental researchers. We have approached cancer agencies to ask for their cooperation and we have begun looking for funding and donor support.

The initial stages of the project will launch next spring with assistance from the Health and Environment Canada's Community Animation Program. We'll be conducting community forums and producing and distributing materials on carcinogens in household products. Providing information about toxins and making a link between health and the environment can create tremendous potential for positive change.

The cancer-environment link will also be an important part of new educational work that we propose to do in 2003 in support of the objectives of the Kyoto Accord on climate change. Diesel exhaust emissions not only contribute to global warming, they also load our atmosphere with carcinogens. Educating people about the impact on their health and the environment can help move us towards cleaner alternatives.

Financial statements *for the year ending December 31, 2002*

Income

Foundation grants	\$55,645.00
Government programs	\$22,000.00
Union donations	\$18,443.00
Workshop fees	\$4,597.00
Interest, rebates	\$809.89
Toxins booklet sales	<u>\$1,863.00</u>
Total income	\$103,353.24

Expenses

Wages, benefits	\$94,575.52
Project research	\$21,945.00
Website	\$2,868.19
Meetings, forums, travel	\$7,622.41
Accounting	\$3,000.00
Office rent	\$3,600.00
Printing	\$2,672.48
Office supplies, expenses	<u>\$7,694.66</u>
Total expenses	\$143,978.06
Net income	(\$40,624.82)
Carried over from 2001	\$69,784.44
Available funds	\$29,159.62

Balance sheet

Assets

Cash and cheques	\$3162.00
VanCity Savings-Chequing	\$33,909.07
VanCity shares	\$55.61
GFFG chequing	\$55.27
Total cash	\$37,181.95
Accounts receivable	\$400.00
Total current assets	\$37,581.95

Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$3,422.33
Prepaid income	\$5,000.00
Total liabilities	\$8,422.33

Equity

Retained earnings	\$69,784.44
Current earnings	\$40,624.82
Total equity	\$29,159.62
Total liabilities and equity	\$37,581.95

Funders and donors 2002

We gratefully acknowledge the financial and organizational support received from the following foundations, agencies, organizations and unions in 2002:

Bullitt Foundation

Columbia Foundation

Endswell Foundation

George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation

Tides Foundation

VanCity EnviroFund

Community Animation Program *(a joint initiative of Health and Environment Canada)*

Environment Canada

Canadian Auto Workers

Canadian Union of Public Employees

Communications, Energy, Paperworkers

Forest Futures

Greater Vancouver Regional

District Employees Union

Hospital Employees Union

International Longshore and Warehouse Union-Canada Local 400

Kamloops and District Labour Council

Prince George and District Labour Council

Sierra Legal Defence Fund

United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners Local 1995

Training Resources for the Environmental Community

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 832 and 1518

...and our thanks to the many individual supporters who made donations to promote the work of LEAS in 2002



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