

Annual report 2007



Labour
Environmental
Alliance
Society

Our mission

LEAS works to create alliances and initiatives that promote healthy workplaces, healthy homes and communities and a healthy environment.

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from the Executive Director

In 2007 our presence was increasingly felt across the country as we worked to make environmental and occupational exposures into a national issue. We played a more prominent role in the National Committee on Environmental and Occupational Exposures — now a part of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer — where LEAS director Larry Stoffman is chair and Mae Burrows a member. LEAS moved to a leadership role in the national coalition for right-to-know labelling. As well, four LEAS members — Jackie Larkin, Sean Griffin, Carolynne Fardy and myself — gave presentations at the Prevent Cancer Now conference in Ottawa.



We continued the theme of building a national organization as we worked to create a French translation of the CancerSmart Guide and to build a relationship with Option Consommateurs, the Quebec consumer advocacy group that will be distributing the guide in Quebec. Our work publicizing the threats from toxic toys and plastic water bottles was featured in the Toronto Star, Globe and Mail, CBC TV and radio, plus regional and local media.

Partnerships have always been the social fabric that has woven the many parts of our work together. In 2007, we added a new dimension to our partnerships as we began work at Seton Lake in B.C. with the Seton Lake Indian Band, a member community of the St'at'imc First Nation. Working with us were the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and several departments at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops as we set out to identify environmental sources for the high incidence of cancer and other environmental diseases that plague the local community.

We've continued our trademark Toxins in the Workplace initiative through ongoing workplace workshops and audits. I want to especially recognize Sean Griffin's WorkSafe study that demonstrated convincingly that building awareness about chemical exposures on the worksite can lead to deep changes in attitudes towards safer and more environmentally conscious practices.

In summary, our work in 2007 — a greater national presence and strengthened partnerships — laid the foundation for our planned rebranding and our revitalized and refocused mission in 2008. Our work

would not be possible without the participation of our donors, funders, volunteers, allies and the active and committed members of our board. To all of you a heart-felt thank you.

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

Mae Burrows, Executive Director

LEAS in media

Creating national profile, making headlines

Driven by new consumer awareness, both the federal government and the media pushed the issue of toxic chemicals in the environment higher up on the public agenda in 2007. And for both broadcast and print media, going green at home became the how-to piece for the year.

Setting a green trend

For many reporters, the CancerSmart Guide was a good starting point in directing consumers towards healthier, environmentally preferable products. In March the Globe and Mail ran a two-page spread on Spring Greening that opened with comments from a homemaker who had switched to green cleaning and household products after reading the CancerSmart Guide. Later in the year, national CBC reporter Ian Hanomansing echoed the theme in his new summer radio show, *Feeling the Heat*, which featured one show with LEAS discussing household products, toxic ingredients and the link to global warming.

Also in March, journalist Wendy Mesley picked up the still powerful reverberations from her 2006 *Chasing the Cancer Answer* documentary and followed many of those who had been in the original show. Prominent among them were LEAS executive director Mae Burrows and the CancerSmart Guide, which prompted a renewed flurry of attention on our website and our work.

The new edition of CancerSmart 3.0

was the focus of an intensive media spotlight when it came off the press in the fall, as LEAS appeared on Global TV, CBC Almanac, the Bill Good Show and union print and broadcast media.

Local media in Burnaby paid special attention to LEAS work in curbing toxic pesticides as it covered the growing campaign in the municipality for a local pesticide bylaw and provincial regulation.

LEAS' strong advocacy of right to know caught the attention of the media, not only on the labelling issue, but also community right to know. Local media in particular picked up LEAS' call for the community's right to know the toxic effects of a crude oil spill in Burnaby. CBC's *On the Coast* featured LEAS on right to know labelling for consumer products in August, opening the door of wider coverage of the issue in November following the introduction of Vancouver Fairview MLA Gregor Robertson's Right to Know Act in the B.C. Legislature.

Toxic toys

Just weeks before Christmas, LEAS was headline news across the country, together with the Steelworkers on the *Get the Lead Out*, a campaign targeted at lead in children's toys. Reporters from more than 20 national, regional and ethnic media jammed a LEAS-Steelworkers' news conference Nov. 29 as LEAS explained the toxic health effects of lead while Steelworkers' staff members tested children's products.

Right to know

Consumer labelling becomes a national issue

Nearly 20 years ago, with the establishment of the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), workers won the right to know what hazardous chemicals they might be exposed to in the workplace and their long-term health effects. Yet consumers still don't have that same right when it comes to household products.

Extending the right to know to consumers has always been an important message in our work. But the campaign took centre stage in 2007.



Clearly right-to-know labelling of hazardous ingredients in consumer products is an important issue for Canadians. Early

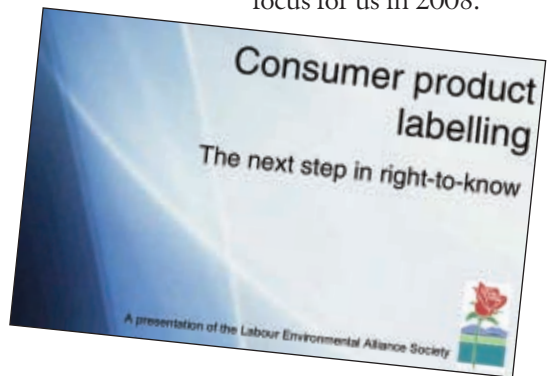
in the year, we commissioned Strategic Communications to conduct a poll on the issue in B.C. The poll showed 93 per cent of consumers supported "mandatory labelling of carcinogens and toxic chemicals in household and consumer chemicals."

In May LEAS executive director Mae Burrows also represented public interest groups along with other stakeholders in a Health Canada consultation on labelling. As the consultation wound up in May, we issued a consensus paper together with other groups, urging the adoption of a hazard-based labelling system that would disclose ingredients in consumer products and identify

hazardous ingredients, such as carcinogens and reproductive toxins, in the product. Among the groups signing the letter were the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and Breast Cancer Action Montreal. The Canadian Cancer Society added its own letter to the paper, endorsing the position in principle.

We circulated a discussion paper on right to know labelling and made it the focus of presentations at events across the country, including the Prevent Cancer Now conference in May and a symposium in Montreal in November.

LEAS educational work helped provide the framework for B.C. MLA Gregor Robertson's private member's bill on right to know introduced into the legislature in October. Although Robertson's bill, and a similar one introduced in Ontario by MPP Peter Tabuns, didn't win legislative support, they clearly demonstrated that right to know labelling is on the public agenda and is likely to move into the federal arena. It promises to be a continuing focus for us in 2008.





Cancer prevention

Bringing environmental carcinogens into the spotlight

When the first edition of the CancerSmart Consumer Guide came off the press in 2004, it was a groundbreaking work in a landscape not yet familiar with the idea that toxic chemicals and environmental contaminants could be significant factors in rising rates of cancer. The first

of its kind in Canada, the Guide quickly found an audience by word of mouth.

But the link between the occupational and environmental factors and cancer was still not a common topic in the media or the country's cancer agencies.

But that has changed profoundly

over the past three years. Now news reports about the connection between

chemicals to cancer and other disorders are an everyday feature. The media now regularly follow stories on bisphenol-A and its link to breast and prostate cancer, on lead contamination in children's toys, and the connections between childhood cancer and pesticides. Cancer prevention based on reducing exposure to occupational and environmental carcinogens — while still a tiny part of budgets — has even made its way on to government and cancer agencies' agendas.

Moving the agenda

A big contributor to that change has been LEAS' cancer prevention work, including the CancerSmart Guide, which came out in a brand new expanded edition in 2007, with funding support from the J.W. McConnell Foundation and many unions.

The new, third edition of the Guide — called CancerSmart 3.0 The Consumer Guide — was launched in September and immediately caught the attention of the media. At 52 pages, the Guide is the largest ever and includes a new special focus chapter on breast cancer as well as new sections on phthalates in plastics, "Teflon's toxic cousins", water bottles,



The landscape on cancer prevention has changed significantly — and LEAS has helped create that shift

lead and asbestos. The tables on cleaning products, pesticides and food, which were a popular feature of the first editions, have all been updated.

By the end of the year, more than 35,000 copies of the Guide had been sold across the country. More important, informal surveys have shown that buyers of the Guide change one or more of the products they use as a result of the information they obtained from the Guide. LEAS will be following up next year with a formal survey to be conducted by a consumer research firm.

Even as the new Guide was coming off the press, LEAS Research Coordinator Sean Griffin, the author of the Guide, was at work with Quebec translator Margaret Whyte on a French-language CancerSmart Guide, which will also include a new section on Quebec's Pesticide Code.

LEAS established a new partnership with Quebec consumer advocacy group Option Consommateurs to bring out the French version, which will carry the title *Diminuez les risques de cancer: guide du consommateur averti*. It is slated for publication in April 2008.

Prevention coalition

A new emerging partnership of cancer prevention groups across the country became a full-fledged coalition in May at the Prevent Cancer Now conference held at the University of Ottawa. More than 200 researchers, health and environmental activists representing



organizations across the country took part in the three-day event, which also heard from such leading figures as Devra Davis, author of *The Secret History of the War on Cancer* and Sandra Steingraber, author of *Living Downstream*. LEAS president Jackie Larkin, executive director Mae Burrows and research coordinator Sean Griffin were among the conference keynote speakers and workshop presenters and joined other participants in bringing the new coalition into being.

The growing demand for action on cancer was also reflected in a new federal initiative announced that 2007 to establish the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC), with \$250 million in funding. One of the components of CPAC is the National Committee on Environmental and Occupational Exposures, which is chaired by LEAS director Larry Stoffman and includes Mae Burrows as a committee member.

LEAS also began the year working with the B.C. and Yukon chapter of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation in presenting a series of noon-hour workplace workshops on consumer product toxins. We also continued the joint work we began in 2006 with the Canadian Cancer Society, in presenting community forums on pesticide use in support of municipal pesticide bylaws.

Aboriginal health

Looking at environmental links to disease

This year we took our toxin-reduction work to a new arena, the Seton Lake Indian Reserve, located near Lillooet, B.C. After reading our CancerSmart Consumer Guide, members of the Band asked LEAS to work with them to discover why Band members in Seton Lake and Shalath suffer from high rates of cancer and other illnesses with possible environmental causes.

This environmental and aboriginal justice project is a partnership of LEAS, Seton Lake Indian Band, Wilderness Committee and faculty members at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops. We held several successful community meetings and used the participatory research model of body and community mapping to shape the discussion around health and environmental concerns. Information from the meetings was used to develop and administer a health survey.

Several possible sources of environmental contamination are being examined: arsenic leaching into Carpenter and Seton lakes from tailings

dumps at the upstream Bralorne Gold Mine, high-voltage power lines that criss-cross the reserve, possible buried PCB-laden transformers, and pesticide spraying along BC Hydro and BC Rail rights-of-way. Efforts have been made to obtain information about pesticide spraying under B.C.'s Freedom of Information Act. The project is quickly turning into a community right-to-know issue. We prepared a state of evidence report based on what we know and what we still need to find out. We plan to build on this document and make it available to other First Nations as a resource for understanding environmental contaminants, health effects and community right to know.

The work has been made possible by grants from McConnell, Catherine Donnelly and Vancouver foundations, plus contributions from WMAN Foundation and the Wilderness Committee, as well as in-kind contributions board members Stuart Rush, Larry Stoffman and Cathy Walker and doctors Jim Brophy and Margaret Keith, who have been working with the Aamjiwnaang First Nation in Sarnia, Ontario. We want to thank William Alexander (Beej), who was designated by the Band Council to coordinate the project.

The work will continue in 2008 with soil and water testing by scientists from Thompson Rivers University, assisted by funding from Health Canada's First Nations Environmental Contaminants Program.



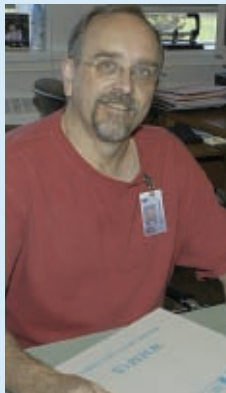
Workplace

Schools and environment winners in toxins reduction

Custodians, students and staff in two major B.C. school districts will now benefit from cleaning programs using environmentally-certified products thanks to the our project work in 2007, part of a our ongoing workplace programs.

Creating a healthier workplace environment continued to be a prominent part of LEAS work in 2007 as we teamed with employers and unions in toxics use reduction and took our innovative approach on health-environment action to union audiences across the country.

Our Training for a Non-Toxic Workplace project, supported by funding from WorkSafeBC's Innovations at Work program, was initially launched in the fall of 2006 but the project work was focussed in 2007. Joint occupational health and safety committees from three school districts — one of them a First Nations district — and two destination hotels in Vancouver and Victoria were involved in the 15-month project. The objective was to bring our health-environmental research and collaborative approach into the workplace and determine if we could create positive change — by working with committees



to eliminate toxic cleaning products and replace them safer, environmentally-preferable substitutes.

The results were solid. Not only did all project sites make product substitutions, but two of the school districts, Burnaby and New Westminster, made the decision in light of the project, to make the switch to a line of Environmental Choice-certified products. Significantly, that major shift came in the two districts where, in addition to OH&S committee members, virtually all custodial staff were directly involved in LEAS-led education and training workshops.

With its unique way of linking health and the environment and popular education style, LEAS facilitators were in demand throughout the year for a variety of workshops and presentations, ranging from noon-hour workplace workshops for B.C. Hydro employees to keynote presentations at union conferences. Among those unions that featured LEAS prominently in their 2007 regional conferences were the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the B.C. Government and Service Employees Union, where vice-president Darryl Walker, a LEAS director, has helped make the environment a union priority.

We also continue to deliver one-day Toxins in the Workplace workshops for the B.C. Federation of Labour Occupational Health and Safety Centre.

Partnerships

Achieving results by widening the circle

From its inception, LEAS' mission has been to create alliances that can leverage greater movement in social change and we continued that approach with new — and renewed — partnerships in 2007.

We began a new collaboration with the Seton Lake Indian Band, working with the band and scientists to identify sources of contamination on their land.

Promoting pesticide bylaws

We continued to work with the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) and the Canadian Association of Physicians on the Environment (CAPE) — a three-way partnership we helped establish in 2006 — to provide education on the health and environmental impact of pesticides and to promote regulation of cosmetic pesticides at both the municipal and provincial level. The three organizations worked with local groups that hosted forums in numerous communities in B.C. and generated supportive media in many of those communities, demonstrating that the effectiveness of a coalition is often much more than the sum of its parts.

Quebec partners

In the same spirit of cooperation and coalition, we even stepped across the language divide between French and English Canada as we looked for a French-language partner to collaborate on a translation of the CancerSmart Guide. We found that partner in Option Consommateurs, an organization with

deep community roots and a well-established record of social justice and consumer advocacy. It has been a learning curve for both organizations trying to produce a publication that works equally well in both languages, but even before the final publication date, the result has shown it has been worth the effort. And the additional areas of collaboration also established — around right to know labelling, for example — demonstrate once again the promise that coalitions offer.

Workplace cooperation

Our partnership at the workplace level and with unions were again a hallmark of our work in 2007. Our work with forward-looking school districts and hotel management made possible the move to greener cleaning, creating a wave of change that is pushing forward even those who have resisted environmental protection as a priority. Unions are moving more into the environmental arena, both in collaboration with LEAS and with their own independent initiatives. Many new unions stepped forward in 2007 to offer sponsorships for the CancerSmart Guide, providing funding, promoting the Guide throughout their media and making copies available for hundreds of their members. We also saw new partnership initiatives, such as the Toxic Toys campaign with the Steelworkers and regional workshops with the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Federation of Post Secondary Educators.

Operating statement

Project work expands as revenue increases

REVENUE

Foundations	\$326,300.00
Environment Canada	\$10,000.00
WorkSafeBC	\$13,518.00
Donations	\$35,004.40
Workshop fees	\$4,669.57
CancerSmart Guide sales	\$46,601.44
Interest, rebates	\$245.51
Total	\$436,338.92

EXPENSES

Wages, benefits	\$205,237.73
Media, training, special projects	\$12,540.78
Membership and donor development	\$27,833.04
Website maintenance	\$846.04
Publications, printing	\$29,105.38
Meetings, forums, workshops	\$9,420.81
Office, rent, services, supplies	\$32,256.68
Insurance	\$6,312.50
CancerSmart publishing, marketing	\$29,237.11
Travel	\$9,789.36
Accounting services, audit	\$5,162.50
Deferred income to 2007	\$68,596.99
Total	\$436,338.92

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