



SPEC

Society Promoting Environmental Conservation

Healthy Cities
Are
Our Future



2008 Annual Report



Educate, Activate and Empower Citizens to build Healthy, Livable Cities

Message from the President



It has been my pleasure to once again serve as President and Chair of SPEC, working with Board colleagues and staff to enhance our focus on urban sustainability. As you will see in the following report, it has been another busy year at SPEC.

Food security was once again high on our agenda. We partnered with the BC Government Employee's Union to question municipal candidates throughout the province on food security issues and worked with local schools to bring food security to the classrooms, and the classrooms to SPEC and our beautiful roof-top garden. The Cambie Street garden was also a big hit with City

Hall day care children. Our safe disposal of pesticides project was also expanded this year with our displays in 25 stores around the city and at several major conferences.

Once again we worked hard on our energy conservation and renewable energy program. We continued our efforts to improve our Sustainability Demonstration Centre at the SPEC building in order to reduce our energy footprint even more and to look to the future by examining the potential for wind generation on the roof.

On the waste management front we continued our battery recycling program and challenged the City of Vancouver to prepare a plan to remove batteries from the waste stream. We will continue to press for a province-wide recycling program.

Transportation was a major focus for SPEC again this year. The Gateway program, the Burrard street bridge, Vancouver car free day, Rail for the Valley and numerous rallies and events were highlights.

To top it all off we had many visitors to our building, a successful open house and numerous outreach events. Thanks particularly to all our funders for keeping us going in difficult times. None of this would be possible without the many volunteers that give their time and energy to SPEC. Thanks especially to Jess Metter, our Board Director and office volunteer for keeping the records together. Last, but not least, many thanks to our indefatigable Executive Director, Karen Wristen, and to our administrator Ilse Sarady - SPEC would not function on a daily basis without her.

Best wishes from all of us for a happy and sustainable 2009.

Gerry Thorne

President

From the Desk of the Executive Director

This year we saw some wonderful successes—like the Campbell government taking the first small step toward slowing the rate of climate change, and promising to spend \$14 billion over the next decade on transportation. There is a great deal of work to be done to turn that latter promise into a transportation policy that makes sense in a changing climate and shrinking economy.



Over the past twelve months, our transportation campaign exposed the misleading and inaccurate reports that have been used to paper over the Gateway Project, unquestionably the most backward and ill-advised of transportation plans currently on the Provincial books. SPEC's own reports documented miscalculated greenhouse gas emissions; misleading attempts to discredit cost-effective solutions like buses and light rapid transit and federal regulators' concerns obtained under Access to Information requests.

SPEC focused 2008 programmes clearly on adaptation strategies: the things people will need to have and to know, to be able to cope with impacts of a changing climate. We worked on food safety and security, to ensure that Vancouver will continue to have an abundant supply of affordable food. We developed our renewable energy technology demonstration capacity and did a great deal more outreach and education in this area. And we refocused on recycling, which is going to become a greater challenge in the immediate future, as commodity prices fall and the economy shrinks.

Shrinking economies always pose challenges for non-profits, as the funding available from philanthropic foundations begins to dry up. We expect the year ahead of us to be exceptionally difficult, as the need for clear, unequivocal advocacy for climate change solutions has never been greater, while the funding available to undertake this work will be less than it has ever been in SPEC's history.

Today, more than ever before, we need our members' support. We sincerely thank those of you who have donated generously, to see us into our 40th year of service.

Sincerely,



Karen G. Wristen

Executive Director

A Heartfelt Thanks...

...to all of our 2008 volunteers. Without the hours of work that you did, we could never have pulled off the successes of this year!

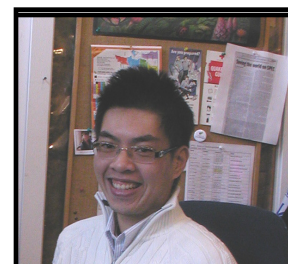
Adam Sealy	DJ Mackinnon	Mark Grimsrod
Amanda McCuaig	Duran Cheung	Max Weinstein
Ann Grant	Emily	Mitra Mansour
Anna	Eric	Nancy MacPherson
Anneke Muir-Owens	Evelyn Teichman	Penny Coupland
Arthur Ovisni	Fred Bass	Philipa
Bill Hamilton	Guy Fanber	Rachelle
Birchana Caldwell	Harvey Larochelle	Sarah Blyth
Bob MacGregor	Hayley Newell	Stan Otiz
Cam	Heather Eggleston	Stephanie Woo
Cap	Heidi Xu	Steve
Carrie Walker	Jacob Christian Ginj	Tom Baker
Cecile Helten	James Cowan	Tondela Myles
		Vanessa
Claris Figueira	Jasper Shore	Bittermann
	Jay Fox	Vickie Knowles
Clayton Mollica	Jennifer Bobroff	Vicky Baker
Corine Signfield	Jennifer Lewis	Zlatko
Corine Singz	Laura Gosset	Zorka
Danny Wong	Laura Lam	
Deming Smith	Liz Overton	

We also want to take the opportunity to give an extra **BIG THANK YOU** to our volunteers **Vicky Baker and Danny Wong!**



Vicky Baker is a member of our food committee and helped establish our demonstration garden, operated in co-operation with the City Hall Daycare Centre and has been making improvements to it every year. Vicky also established an early relationship with Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, to ensure that our surplus produce from the gardens went to help feed people in need. This year, she is eager to start another community garden at the school attended by her children.

Danny Wong started to volunteer in 2008 and has since his first day tirelessly supported our organisation in so many ways! Danny has assisted at outreach events, researched for our website, helped at the roof top garden and designed water conservation education material.



Transportation

Port Mann/Highway 1

Opposition to the Province's controversial highway development scheme continued to grow throughout the year, while Provincial officials went silent for large stretches of that time. SPEC and our Livable Region Coalition partners had successfully positioned the Gateway scheme as being 'on a collision course' with the provincial greenhouse gas emissions targets. That collision course, we believe, is being quietly corrected behind closed doors, by a combination of market forces and pre-election jitters.

Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon occasionally reappears in the media to reassure everyone that the project is going ahead and some preparatory construction has begun on either side of the proposed new bridge deck— but there is still no federal environmental approval for the project itself.

Meanwhile, Surrey residents who will be most impacted by the construction phase and by the increased traffic volumes to follow, have joined the ranks of the opposition, realizing which neighborhoods and parks will be torn up to make way for new asphalt.

While the Province attempted, in early 2008, to deflect criticism of its record on transit by announcing a 'new' funding package of \$14 billion over 10 years, it proved to be a fairly vague promise. The package in-

cludes projected federal funding which is far from assured, and included local government contributions that have not been negotiated.

Livable Region polling results released May 7, 2008 showed Metro Vancouver residents choose transit before freeways by 2 to 1.

Left with no assurance of Provincial funding, Translink was forced by the new legislation governing it to come up with a 10-year plan based on known revenues. That plan actually erodes the capital reserve fund, eliminating Translink's ability to finance the purchase of new equipment. After 3 years, the fund is virtually exhausted, so in year 4, the current plan provides for service cuts!

This plan was clearly made to highlight the fact that assured funding sources for Translink are essential to meeting our greenhouse gas reduction targets--we know we need to double ridership by 2020 in order to meet targets.

SPEC continues to urge the Province to adopt cost-effective measures essential to provide the transit infrastructure needed by our region. We have asked the Province to address the chronic shortfall in transit funding by allocating \$500 million in the 2009 budget to Translink, in order that it can create a new 10-year

plan that actually doubles transit ridership by 2020.

Below, some of the highlights of last year's campaign.

Come Clean on Gateway

SPEC's better transit not freeways campaign took to the streets in April to build pressure on the Premier to finally Come Clean on Gateway and put Transit First.



A team of 20 volunteers used a pressure washer and stencils to etch "clean graffiti" onto sidewalks approaching the Premier's office, at transit hubs and freeway overpasses.

We also took the opportunity to speak with the public and collect more signatures for the ever growing petition to stop freeway expansion in the Lower Mainland and make transit the priority.

Surrey Rally

"No Truckin' Freeways" was the chant that went up at a Surrey rally against the Port Mann/Highway 1 project in September.

Over 150 Surrey supporters turned out on a frosty Saturday to voice their rejection of the Province's plan to twin the Port Mann Bridge and expand Highway 1. Northern Surrey will arguably experience the most dramatic traffic impacts from Port Mann expansion, as more cars are expected to try to take advantage of the increased road space.

Despite evidence that the number of cars crossing into the City of Vancouver is actually declining, and predictions that a combination of recession and peak oil will further reduce the number of cars on the road over the next decade, the Province refuses to re-examine its controversial Gateway project.

The economic downturn in North America is merely the thin edge of the wedge here: we could be left holding the bag for a number of extremely expensive infrastructure projects that were poorly conceived and make less sense with every passing day.



Delta Port expansion, for example, went on hold in October in anticipation of a cease and desist order from Environment Canada for exceeding its ocean dumping permit. This may

prove fortuitous, as overall shipping tonnage was down 5% over 2007 by mid-2008. Even this figure is somewhat misleading—coal and potash (fertilizer) exports are actually increasing, masking more dramatic decreases in forest products, wheat, chemicals, metals and minerals. The current news is even less promising:

"Needless to say, the second half of this year isn't as good as the first half, and we expect easing off as we head toward Christmas, particularly in the container business," said Christopher Badger, chief operating officer of Port Metro Vancouver. ... The latest figures for ports across North America already show container traffic sliding. The amount of electronics arriving in October was down 9.6 per cent from a year ago and clothing was down 7.8 per cent "

(DAVID EBNER, Globe and Mail, November 7, 2008)

Since amalgamation of Vancouver's various ports in January, 2008, positive steps have been taken to improve goods movement. In September, the Port of Metro Vancouver announced a short-sea shipping initiative that will take 650 trucks per day off the road, shifting goods to much more efficient water transport.

Despite decreasing shipping volumes and the advent of more efficient goods movement initiatives, the Province continues to insist on its Gateway highways. Preparations are underway on both sides of the Port Mann Bridge for the widening of Highway 1, in advance of the environmental approval of the bridge itself. The government is actively so-

liciting bids for both that and the South Fraser Perimeter Road.

SPEC continues to fight the project with your support—over 8000 people have signed our petition to date. We continue to monitor developments and work with Vancouver Peak Oil to re-envision the project.

You can help: sign the online Petition, write to Gordon Campbell and pick up your FREE lawn sign from SPEC.

Rail for the Valley

Abbotsford City Council has joined the growing number of Fraser Valley communities voting to move forward on revitalizing the Interurban passenger rail line. Change is in the air, and it is not blowing in favor of cars, highways or bridges.

As Brian Lewis, writing in the Province November 4, said, "The B.C. government continues to miss the train when it comes to transit planning south of the Fraser River because it [has] failed to accommodate the... pronounced public opinion shift toward light rail as a viable transit alternative."

The vote by Abbotsford Council is a rejection of the master plan of the Campbell government for transit, which promised rapid buses for the Valley—by 2020. The Inter-Regional Transportation Select Committee appointed by Abbotsford Council wants to see the line up and running as a demonstration project before the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

Surrey municipal candidate Paul Hillsdon is campaigning on a light rail solution for his City. Hillsdon points out that the Transit Plan released by Transportation Minister Falcon would see 6 kilometers of new SkyTrain line built in Surrey. For the same price, Hillsdon says, we could build over 40 kilometers of light rail. The price for new light rail service is, he estimates, in the range of \$27 million per kilometer, while the new Surrey SkyTrain extension is estimated at \$183 million per kilometer.

Restoration of the Interurban line could be accomplished for even less money, because the rail and electrical lines are already in place. The Interurban passenger rail train was operated by BC Hydro from 1910 to 1950 and since that time, the rail network on which it operated has been in consistent use for freight service.

John Buker, founder of the Rail for the Valley advocacy group, estimates the cost per kilometer to upgrade the line between Abbotsford and Chilliwack at about \$100,000. While additional upgrades and track re-alignments will no doubt be required, it is clear that restoring the Interurban is the fiscally responsible approach.

For more information, check the Rail for the Valley [website](#).

Burrard Street Bridge

This summer SPEC collected petition signatures supporting improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and public transit on the Burrard Street Bridge. The petition was a joint effort with the

West End Resident Association (WERA). It's clear that times are changing; increased fuel prices and climate concerns have lead to changed travel behaviors. The car traffic volumes over the Burrard Bridge have decreased while transit riders, cyclists and pedestrians all increased. There is not enough room for both pedestrians and cyclists on the current sidewalk. Safety improvements on the Burrard Street Bridge are necessary as many cyclists are reluctant to use the bridge due to the risk of being tripped off into fast moving traffic. A lane allocation would also not only improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists but also encourages more people to start cycling.

Vancouver Car Free Day

June 15th Marked Vancouver's first ever, city-wide, Car-Free Vancouver Day. Evolving out of the past three summers' wildly successful Car-Free Commercial Drive Days, Car-Free Vancouver Day featured four simultaneous car-free festivals in –Kitsilano, the West End, Main Street and Commercial Drive.



During this sunny and hot June day people cycled and walked around the

City to visit all the car-free party locations, enjoying car-free streets and a vibrant community. SPEC had information booths at Commercial Drive and at the West End. SPEC was also the key organizer of the Maple and 5th Ave Block Party together with our neighbours Adam Sealy and James Cowan. After plenty of positive feedback from our neighbours SPEC will definitely be partaking in future car-free block parties!



SPEC neighbours James Cowan, Adam Sealy and SPEC volunteer Bob MacGregor prepare a locally grown community salad

"On June 15, the usual exhaust that fills Denman Street gave way to pure enjoyment--Music, Food, and Revelry. On this Sunday cars were given second priority on the streets, and pedestrians got first-class treatment"

By Clayton Mollica, SPEC Volunteer

Food Safety & Security

SPEC works on food issues because we know that both the production and the distribution of food in the world today must change radically in order for us, here in Vancouver, to continue to enjoy the variety of low-cost food that we have come to expect. Food security is no longer an issue of the "third world": in a shrinking economy, with the twin realities of climate change and fossil fuel resource depletion upon us, we need to re-examine everything about the way food is produced and distributed in the world.

It has been calculated that the average North American family dinner has travelled 2,500 kilometers to get to the plate. It will also have consumed enormous amounts of fossil fuel in the form of fertilizers, fuel for farm vehicles, and transportation. The greenhouse gas footprint of the food we have become accustomed to eating during the past 50 years is enormous, and we have to change it.

Devising food policy for today's reality is work that requires the cooperation of every level of government. At the federal level, the regulation of trade, agriculture and pesticides need to change to recognize that local, organic agriculture is our best assurance of food security. Provincially, there is a need to re-inforce the protection of agricultural lands and reclaim much of what has been lost in British Columbia's most productive farmlands. And locally, it is imperative that we stop land use decision-making that ignores the

need to produce food close to major urban centers.

SPEC is working at each of these levels to try to raise awareness with the public and to raise the bar on government decision-making. Following are a few of the projects we undertook or continued this year.

Laura Gosset joined our team this summer thanks to the support of Canada Summer Jobs (HRSDC). Laura is an undergraduate student in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems at UBC and has a particular interest in food security issues. Laura helped to prepare the groundwork for the Square Foot Garden Schools Project, cared for our rooftop container garden and developed, managed and distributed SPEC's Safe Disposal of Pesticide brochure

SPEC Partners with BCGEU on Food Security

We were very pleased to be able to assist the BC Government Employees' Union with its latest initiative in food security, raising the issue in the context of the municipal elections throughout the province.

Leading a collaborative effort of all of the groups working on food security for our region, SPEC and the BCGEU created an extensive questionnaire for candidates, which was sent to everyone seeking office in the province.

Fully 65 per cent of those who responded to our questionnaire positively were elected to office! This means that, in the year to come, we have perhaps the best chance ever of influencing local governments to make room for urban agriculture and

to protect the green zones around their communities.

Land use decisions of local governments rank high among the challenges to regional food security: far too often, local governments support the removal of lands from the ALR or green zone to permit development.

SPEC wants to see the ALR strengthened and urges local governments to zone for urban agriculture, as well. "The essence of good food policy is to ensure that land is protected for the production of food in and near major centers of population," said SPEC Director Carole Christopher, who also co-chairs the Vancouver Food Policy Council. "Both local and provincial governments have a role to play here."

SPEC's Safe Disposal of Pesticides project

This project builds on SPEC'S previous education and outreach efforts to reduce pesticide use in the Lower Mainland. Concerned by human health and environmental impacts of pesticides, we undertook to raise public awareness of Vancouver's pesticide bylaw restrictions and disposal sites for pesticide containers.

Pesticides that are restricted by bylaw are still sold in many stores in Vancouver, and SPEC intern Laura Gossett tracked them all down over



SPEC's Safe Disposal of Pesticides brochure

the summer. With the support of the City of Vancouver and Spectra Energy, we created new materials explaining the issues, alternatives to pesticides, and safe disposal sites. Laura convinced store managers to place the displays in 25 stores in the City.

We also took the project to the BC Food Security Network (BCFSN) Conference and Science World, and distributed brochures at venues such as 'FarmAde', a yearly fundraising event at the UBC Farm.

The use of pesticides for purely cosmetic reasons has been illegal in Vancouver since January, 2006. Pesticides were restricted because of a growing body of scientific evidence that some cancers and neurological deficits in children are linked with the compound 2-4D, used in most weed-killing preparations.

SPEC continues efforts to persuade more municipalities to restrict pesticide use, in coalition with the Canadian Cancer Society and New West Environmental Partners.

Food Security in classrooms

The Vancouver Foundation generously agreed to support our "Square Foot Garden Schools Project" with a grant of \$30,000. This pilot project will see us working far more closely with our local schools to deliver quality programming integrated with the school curriculum. "Engaging

children, youth and their families in learning about the importance of buying locally and growing your own food, this project will offer important skills for an uncertain future" said SPEC Director Joanna Robinson.

Biodiversity in the food supply, protection of farmland and food processing capacity and organic growing will form part of the classroom experience, while hands-on gardening, supported by family workshops and take-home gardens will literally 'bring the lesson home.' Families will be invited to attend workshops at SPEC throughout the school year, learning about container and small-space gardens; planning the garden; making innovative planters and attractive garden ornaments, and more. Summer programming will include support for gardeners and family excursions to local growers and processors.



SPEC Roof Top Garden

Container gardening is far more complex than in-ground gardening when it comes to food. Some plants just refuse to produce unless their roots have room. In this, our third season of container gardening on SPEC's rooftop; we had great success with herbs, lettuces of all varieties, beans, peas, root crops and some tomatoes. We experimented with a number of different planters and shared our conclusions with touring members of the public.



SPEC director Tara Moreau, SPEC staff Ilse Sarady, SPEC director Joanna Robinson and summer intern Laura Gosset displaying carrots grown on the roof top.

"Our aim," said Tara Moreau, co-chair of the Committee, "is to produce as much food as possible from the reasonably limited space we have. This involves making some choices about what does and does not do well in particular containers." Next year's planting will include many heritage or rare varieties of vegetables and fruits not commonly grown by commercial operations.

"Maintaining the biodiversity of the food supply is one of the challenges we want to help meet," said Executive Director Karen Wristen. "There are literally thousands of varieties that will grow well in our di-

Daycare Days

SPEC Directors Carole Christopher and Tara Moreau visited our local daycares and helped the children with their own container gardens.



Executive Director Karen Wristen and the Kitsilano Daycare harvest worm compost from SPEC's vermiculture bins.



mate but that we never see in stores. Preserving these plants by growing and sharing seed will provide

resilience in the food system.” It is widely expected that new pests and diseases will affect agriculture as the climate warms.

When the summer turned in to fall SPEC decided it was time to give our roof top a major facelift. With the support of TD Friends of the Environment, we replaced the old, rotting deck and built new, larger planters that will give us more flexibility in our choice of plants.

(We used new cedar for the deck to ensure it a long life, but purchased it from a specialty mill that optimizes value added by milling each log individually. And the old spruce that we salvaged is seeing new life in the raised beds at the Cambie garden, and the planters on the rooftop.)

Cambie Street garden

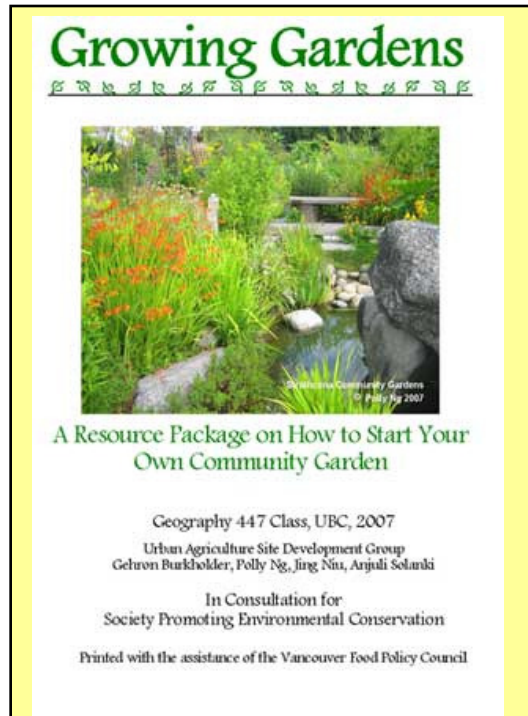
Thanks to a donation of tools, hoses and other materials from the Home Depot on Cambie Street, we were able to water the whole length of our long Cambie Street garden for the first time this year. Planting was so much easier with the right tools at hand.



Young gardeners from the Children at City Hall Daycare Centre helping out at the Cambie Street garden.

Children at City Hall Daycare Centre planted with us this year and helped tend the gardens throughout the season.

Volunteer extraordinaire Vicky Baker co-ordinated efforts at the garden again this year, finishing the season by setting up raised beds and demonstrating layering (or, as she



This handbook for community gardeners in Vancouver was developed by UBC Geography students working in conjunction with SPEC. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the manual you can download it from our website, purchase a hard copy from SPEC for \$20 or get it from the local libraries in Vancouver.



From left: Student authors Anjali Solanki and Polly Ng; Dr. Graeme Wynn, Prof. Katherine Richardson and SPEC ED Karen Wristen at the launch

calls it, "the lasagna technique") for weed control and soil enhancement.

Gardens for small space workshop

The Food Gardens for Small Spaces workshops offered last spring proved to be hugely successful. We had three times as many registration requests as we could accommodate.



Participants in the workshop received a gardening tutorial, a square food garden container with their own plants and the promise of some good "zero-mile" eating this season.

SPEC Open House

We had lovely weather for our festive SPEC Open House on May 24 with 100 guests who toured our gardens and solar installations, learned about our transportation and battery campaigns, and enjoyed local food and drink provided by board members and local businesses.

Energy Conservation & Renewable Energy

Solar Tours

SPEC's solar tours proved very popular this year and SPEC hosted over ten of them on our roof top. Conducted by SPEC Director Rob Baxter who is also a principal of Vancouver Renewable Energy Co-op), tour registrants included members of the general public, students, contractors and architects keen on seeing photovoltaic and solar hot water panels in action! We re-open for solar tours after the New Year (check our website for upcoming tour dates).



SPEC Director Rob Baxter explains how PV panels work to visitors at the SPEC Open House

SPEC reduces its own Energy Footprint even more!

The SPEC Sustainability Demonstration Centre is a City-owned building that we renovated extensively in 1984, employing all the best practices and technology of the time. Since then, we have added renewable energy resources to further reduce our footprint. But now, it is time to look to newer technologies and greater efficiencies.

An audit of our building disclosed that, while we were already using fluorescent and compact fluorescent lighting almost everywhere, even those fixtures were not the most efficient available. Our old T-12 fixtures have now been replaced by T-8's, the new industry standard, at a savings of 17% of the electricity! In addition, the new 'soft white' tubes provide a much more attractive light.

We also discovered that our exit signs were still using incandescent bulbs. Because they are illuminated all the time, even those tiny bulbs drew so much power that, by replacing them with LEDs, we will save over \$50 per year on our hydro bill.

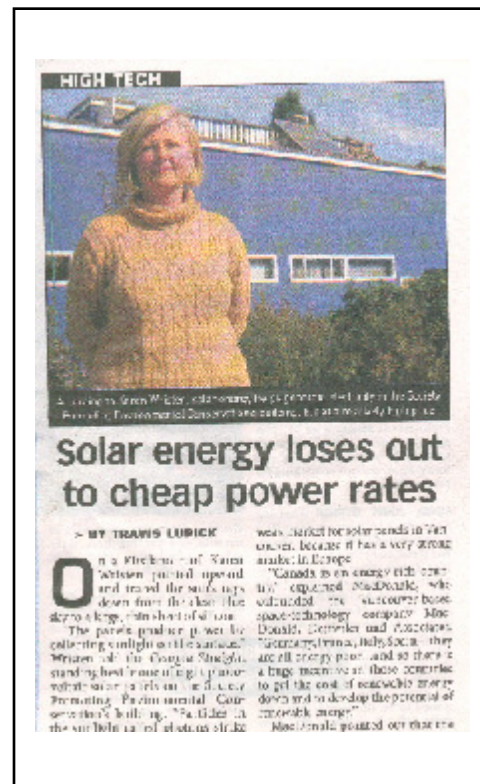
Thanks to SPEC volunteer Laura Lam for helping us calculate the energy savings we will enjoy as a result of our lighting project.

Next up for examination is the building's heating system, which is notorious for not providing heat! Terasen Gas has agreed to work with us to

help finance the installation of a new, high-efficiency furnace. We are also exploring how we could use additional solar hot water to provide heat to the greenhouse and basement, which are always cold in winter.

Finally, we've begun discussions with the City of Vancouver on cost-sharing a study of the wind energy potential of our building. The SPEC rooftop is windy enough to challenge our gardeners and we hope to find it is windy enough to run a small, domestic-sized wind turbine as well.

With these upgrades, we look forward to becoming a net producer of energy rather than a consumer.



SPEC's Executive Director featured in the Georgia Straight

Nukes and Tarsands: Dirty, dirty energy

One of the many challenges faced by all of us today is figuring out which “climate change solutions” have real potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and which ones are the same bad, old ideas wearing new greenwash.

The nuclear energy industry has lost no opportunity to promote nuclear reactors as a climate change solution and there are those who believe we may have to accept the proliferation of reactors in order to slow the rate of climate change.

But what is the real story on nukes and greenhouse gases? As we look to make a conscious transformation of the energy sources that will sustain us for centuries to come, it's important to look at the greenhouse gas emissions picture for each sector of the energy industry, analysing its technology from cradle to grave.

Stanford University's Dr. Mark Z. Jacobson has done just that. This fall, he published a “Review of Global Warming Solutions,” comparing the lifetime CO₂-equivalent emissions of energy sources. Rex Wyler, writing in his column “Deep Green”¹, summarized Dr. Jacobson's findings:

“Wind and concentrated solar emit between about 3 to 11 grams of CO₂ per kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity. Geothermal and conventional solar emit between 16 and 64 grams; wave, tidal and hydro power emit 34 to 71 grams. Nuclear electricity emits

between 68 and 180 grams per kWh.”

Even leaving aside vexing, unanswered questions like, “What to do with all that deadly toxic waste for 24,000 years?”, it would appear that nuclear power is just about the worst solution to climate change we could come up with. It isn't even a renewable energy: global reserves of uranium are depleting and without it, all we will have left of the nuclear industry is a staggering bill for waste storage and plant decommissioning.

Considering the cost to build, repair and decommission, money spent on nuclear power stations represents a lost opportunity to invest in much more benign, renewable technologies. And among all the options analysed by Dr. Jacobsen, nuclear alone carries with it the completely unfunded liability for catastrophic accident.

Nuclear proponents often argue that renewable energy technologies could not possibly replace all the energy we currently derive from fossil fuels. Wyler estimates that it would take 1400 nuclear power generating stations to replace one-quarter of our current coal and oil electricity generating capacity—at a cost of \$10-20 trillion dollars. And those would exhaust all known supplies of uranium.

Meanwhile in Alberta, it seems Bruce Power is “running a full-on communications campaign to convince people up north to accept [nuclear power]”, according to the Edmonton Sun, Nov 25, 2008. “NDP MLA Rachel Notley presented a 1,243 signature petition

of northern Alberta residents against nuclear energy to the legislature”, the Sun reports. “The Liberals have compiled a similar 1,239 signature petition of southern Albertans. Notley is calling on the government to release a task force report on nuclear energy in Alberta, which Energy Minister Mel Knight promised Albertans by this autumn. Everytime someone tries to raise nuclear concerns, Notley said, the government uses its unreleased task force report as a wall to block any questions. Government politicians and officials refuse to answer any questions until the report is released.”

It was Ralph Klein who first threatened that, if aboriginal and environmental groups succeeded in blocking the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline proposal, denying the tarsands a ready source of natural gas for processing viscous bitumen into diesel fuel, he would simply build a reactor. Looks like the industry was listening, and is now up in tarsands country playing the old ‘jobs vs. environment’ card.

The tarsands were already the dirtiest energy project in North America and it looks like they could get even worse.

1. Published by Greenpeace International on its website at <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/about/deep-green>

Meeting Space at the SPEC Building

Meeting Room

The meeting room is approximately 22ft by 30ft and is suitable for bigger meetings or for various smaller exercise groups like yoga/ qigong groups. The room can seat 60-70 people theatre-style, and 50 in meeting-style. The Meeting Room is \$75 for a full day and \$50 for half a day or evening.

Board Room

The Board room is meant for smaller meetings, it measures 11ft by 16ft and seats 12 around a large table

The meeting and board rooms are available 7 days a week. For more information visit our [website](#).

New Resources at the SPEC Building!

Meeting rooms now offer PowerPoint Projector

The SPEC building offers public meeting space in two rooms, days and evenings, seven days a week. We recently added to our inventory of audio-visual equipment by purchasing an LED projector which may be rented for \$65/day. For more information on our room rental services visit [our website](#).

Waste Management

Vancouver's New Council Challenged to Respond on Battery Recycling

SPEC asked municipal candidates in Vancouver to let voters know if they would "instruct City staff to prepare a plan to remove all types of batteries from our waste stream." For years now, we have been calling for a province-wide programme for non-rechargeable batteries, which are presently landfilled. Provincial authorities failed to include batteries in last year's electronics producer stewardship programme, leaving thousands of tonnes of these hazardous products in the waste stream.



Batteries recycled at SPEC

SPEC decided it was time for action closer to home, and challenged Vancouver to take the initiative at the City level. Burnaby and Bowen Island already offer depot-dropoff recycling for batteries. In Vancouver, SPEC's own recycling depot and a few retailers handle non-rechargeable batteries.

Among those elected to Council, Andrea Reimer was the most emphatic: "Absolutely - not just to create a plan but to act on it." Geoff Meggs, also of Vision Vancouver, replied, "Yes, I would take the steps you propose and hold back my batteries for return to SPEC at the moment." (Points for the plug, Geoff.) Kerry Jang wrote, "Hi, Karen, The answer is yes and absolutely, and look at and promote other ways of making recycling easier."

COPE's response also positive: "David Cadman and Ellen Woodsworth share your concern about toxic material such as batteries ending up in solid waste landfills. If elected they will explore with city engineers the possibility of removing batteries from Vancouver's waste stream."

Mayor Gregor Robertson did not respond personally, but we received the following on behalf of Vision Vancouver: "Hello Karen: on behalf of Vision Vancouver I am responding to SPEC's question on disposal of batteries. Vision's response is "Yes, a Vision led City would follow the lead of San Francisco and take steps to remove all types of batteries from the waste stream."

Suzanne Anton is the only elected councilor from whom we did not hear, but her NPA colleague Peter Ladner replied that he wouldn't want to duplicate anything that might be done by Metro in its Zero Waste Challenge and, fair enough, if Metro should surprise us all by setting up region-wide facilities well, wonderful!

In the meantime, SPEC will be preparing a brief for the new Council, elaborating options for recycling that the City could consider.

Find out [how your candidates responded on our SPEC website](#). Tell them what you think by [signing our online petition](#).

SPEC's battery recycling depot and Executive Director Karen Wristen were featured on CBC Television on Nov 5th, in a news special devoted to the recycling issue. SPEC's historic role in starting the blue box programme in Vancouver was noted.

Compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) will soon replace incandescent bulbs in the marketplace and, on balance, the change will be positive. They require considerably less energy (66 percent less) than incandescent bulbs, meaning an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from their operation. They last 10 times longer than incandescent, so the impact of their production is lower, too.

However, much greater care needs to be taken with CFLs when they ultimately quit. They contain a small amount of mercury—about 3-5 milligrams—in vapour form. If the bulb is broken, this mercury is released.

Mercury is a powerful neurotoxin and it also bioaccumulates in the environment. Neither you, nor the landfill, should be exposed to a broken CFL.

Why deliberately choose to use a product containing mercury, especially when it will be so widely distributed and liable to breakage? In fact, the amount of mercury potentially released by bulb breakage is more than offset by reduced mercury emissions from coal-burning power plants, North America-wide. And if we all dispose of our CFLs properly, there will be very little chance of emissions.

Visit our website at www.spec.bc.ca for approved recycling facilities and information on how to deal with a broken CFL.



Outreach events & School tours at the SPEC building

It has been a busy year for SPEC! We have visited a wide range of outreach events and have had numerous schools visiting us to learn about food safety, sustainable transportation, battery recycling and solar en-

ergy. Thanks to our newly purchased roll-up display (which fits in our bike trailer) SPEC's outreach work can now be totally pedal-powered!



Claris Figueira, Karen Wristen and Danny Wong at Burnaby Discovery Day

SPEC's Commitment to Education

Outreach events and conferences that SPEC attended in 2008:

- Burnaby Discovery Day
- UBC FarmAde,
- Salmon Celebration in Vanier Park,
- Teacher Orientation Evening at the Space Centre,
- Farmers Markets at the West End, Kitsilano and Trout Lake.
- Sustainability Expo at the West End BIA
- BC Food Systems Network Conference in Sorrento
- Metro's Board of Directors Meeting on October 31
- EPIC

SPEC is committed to working with students at all stages of their education. In addition to our work with UBC's Department of Geography on the community gardening manual, we hosted groups of students for workshops on all of our programmes, helping them to understand how SPEC works to educate, activate and empower citizens to build healthy cities. Last year, our workshops ranged from the post-graduate to the daycare level!

Some of the schools that came to learn from SPEC, or invited us to visit them, included:

- Saint Francis Academy , Portland
- Augsbug College, Portland
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- University of British Columbia
- Langara College
- Malaspina College
- Kwantlen College
- Prince of Wales High School
- Lord Tennyson Elementary School
- Kitsilano Daycare
- Montessori Daycare

Thanks to Our Funders!

SPEC would like to gratefully acknowledge the following funders who supported us in 2008:

- Tides Canada
- Endswell Foundation
- The Underdog Foundation
- HRSSDC -Canada Summer Jobs
- Direct Access Gaming
- Mountain Equipment Co-op
- Vancouver Foundation

Special thanks to SPEC Director Carole Christopher and husband Rick Pollay for their most generous gift in memory of Carole's mother, Marian Wheeler Christopher

We gratefully acknowledge donations in Kind from:

Lee Valley, Home Depot, Home Hardware, City Farmer, Lululemon

SPEC Board of Directors - 2008

Gerry Thorne,	President
Carole Christopher	Vice President
Joanna Robinson	Vice President
John Whistler	Treasurer
Tara Moreau	Secretary
Jess Metter	Director
Larry Fast	Director
Dan Rogers	Director
Ndonodji Djerambete	Director
Rob Baxter	Director
Eric Doherty	Director
Paul Hundal	Director
John Irwin	Director
Bill Hopwood	Director
Sara Muir-Owen	Director
Lucy Pearson	Director

A fond farewell...

Eric Doherty

SPEC would like to acknowledge and thank Eric Doherty for his enthusiastic contributions to SPEC's board and transportation campaign for many years. Eric's research projects for SPEC and the Livable Region Coalition include the reports Transportation for a Livable Region; Taken for a Ride; and Cooking The Books, Cooking the Planet.

John Whistler

John has been with SPEC off and on for over a decade, serving as a treasurer for most of that time and playing an active role in our transportation campaign and as a cycling advocate.

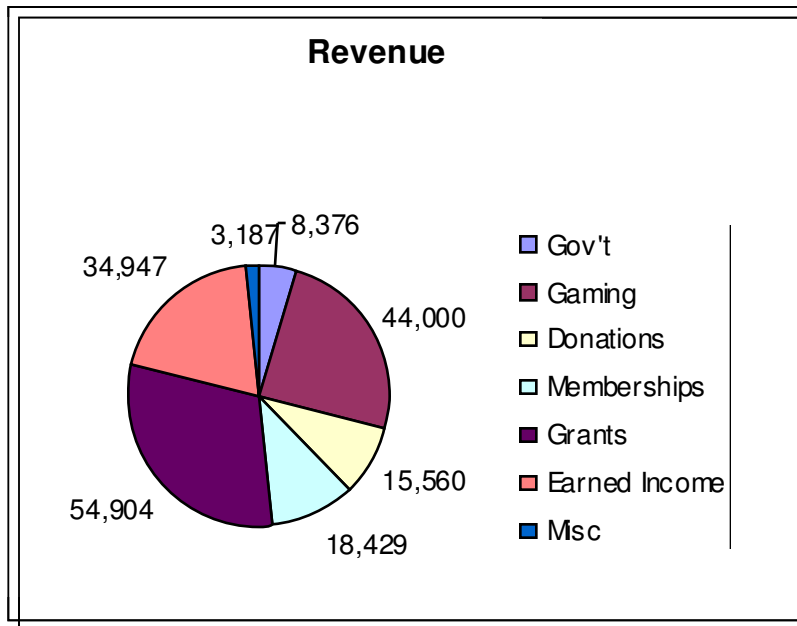
Bill Hopwood

Came to SPEC as a volunteer in 2006 to help with car-free day and later joined the board in 2007 to work on the transportation campaign.

Sara Muir-Owen

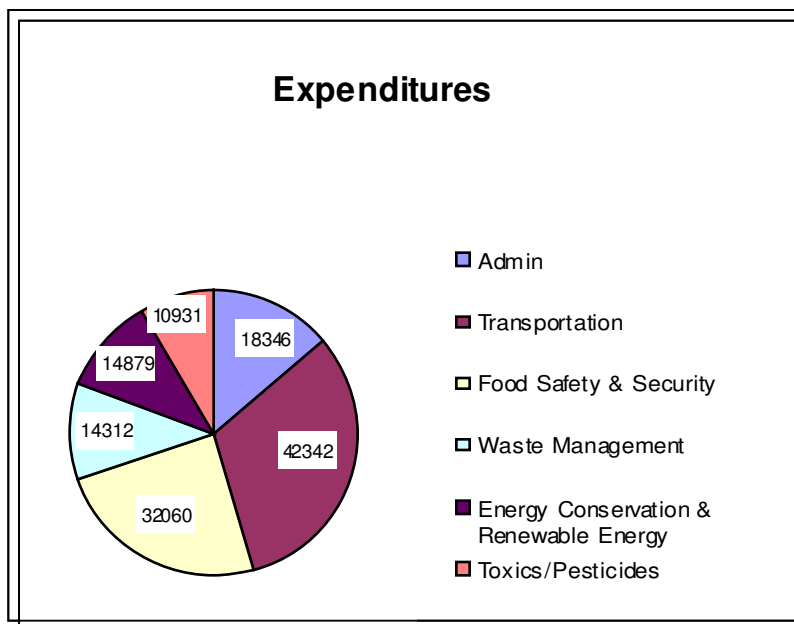
Sara came to us in 2006 shortly after taking up new responsibilities at the UBC Design Centre for Sustainability. That and parenting a small child have caused Sara to have to leave the Board, temporarily we hope! She will continue to assist with the Food Security campaign.

Financial Highlights 2008



Things remained lean for SPEC in 2008, with total revenues of just under \$180,000. With very careful management, we were able to finish the year with a small surplus, which will go toward replenishing our reserve fund.

SPEC continues to reflect diverse sources of income, without undue reliance on any one sector.



Transportation was our largest campaign in 2008, with Food Security following close behind. Administrative expense represents about 11% of the total, \$166,390.