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A photo from Woodstock, Ontario wins our cover position, joined by some great honourable mentions from across the county.

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On the cover: *Mrs. Lightbody, of Woodstock, Ontario, has been decorating her small but lovely property for over 40 years and was one of the city's first recipients of the "Award of Excellence" for continuous lighting each season. This photo by Ann Keeley-Meloche, Chairperson of the Woodstock WinterLights Committee, was the winning entry in our annual WinterLights photo contest. See story and other photos on page 4.*

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CLIMATE CHANGE

The Rising Tides of 2007

David Noble, Trevor Dixon Bennett and Aiden Abram

The past year or so has been quite notable for those working on issues related to the climate change. The environment is on the tips of tongues every-

and Henriette made landfall on the same day back in August – the first time twin Atlantic and Pacific hurricanes made landfall on the same day. The year saw

global warming now tops the list of environmental concerns. An August poll found that half of Canadians would consider donating 10 percent of their

Here in Canada, the environment topped the polls as the country's most pressing issue, eclipsing the economy and even health care, and global warming now tops the list of environmental concerns.

where. Science, politics, business, pop culture, religion – in 2007, climate change pervaded them all. Climate change has arrived, and its effects are rippling all around.

Not Just the Climate Changing

If it wasn't already clear that climate change is real and serious, it should be now.

The February release of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report laid out the startling science of climate change, painting a more certain and more serious picture than ever before.

We had another year of wild weather: Vancouver's Stanley Park took a beating, Toronto had its driest summer in nearly 50 years and hurricanes Felix

a new record set for the lowest amount of sea ice ever recorded. This was made worse in September, when arctic ice the size of Florida melted away in just six days. England received more rain than it knew what to do with, causing flooding in southern England that was the worst in at least 100 years. Damages were estimated at more than £2-billion (more than \$4.2-billion). In Greece, forest fires burned uncontrollably across the country, killing more than 60 and threatening some of the country's (and humanity's) historical treasures.

Climate change became the issue for Canadians. Here in Canada, the environment topped the polls as the country's most pressing issue, eclipsing the economy and even health care, and

paycheques for a healthier environment for their grandchildren.

The federal government has taken note (although perhaps not to the extent that many would like). It made an about-face on the environment early in the year, changed environment ministers, and drafted a *Clean Air Act* that failed miserably in Parliament (it was a weak effort, but baby steps, baby steps ...). Time will tell if the government re-invests in climate change after its massive program cuts in 2006 (and if it does, it will be like two steps forward after last year's three steps back).

Climate change was tops on the international agenda, too. It was a major focus at the G8 summit in June and the APEC forum in September. It was at front and centre at the World Economic Forum back in January. The forum participants identified climate change as

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the issue that will have the greatest world impact in the coming years.

Perhaps the business and political communities are coming to grips with the economics of climate change – that tackling it now will be much less costly than dealing with it later. That was a key conclusion for Sir Nicholas Stern's 700-page assessment in 2006.

Pervasive Issue

Green marketing went mainstream in 2007, as businesses tried to tap into consumer demand for environmental improvement. Green markets continue to grow – for example, wind energy is the fastest growing energy sector right now, even though buyers often pay a small premium for clean energy. Air Canada passengers now have the option of using their Carbon Offset Program to offset

ence institutions, indicated in its statement on climate change: "The time is now. We must rise to the challenge. We owe this to future generations." This is a marked shift from the value-neutral stance traditional to the science institution.

Religious and faith leaders, too, are on board. The Pope joined in on an eco-festival in September, telling the crowd it was up to them to save the planet from development that would upset nature's delicate equilibrium. (Apparently he is practising what he preaches, by installing solar panels on the roof of the Vatican and purchasing carbon credits to offset the Vatican's emissions.) Days later, Christian, Jewish and Islamic faith leaders from around the world met in Greenland, at the mouth of a melting glacier, to pray

ing cities have developed quite ambitious plans to address climate change related sustainability issues. For instance, the City of Guelph adopted a comprehensive community energy plan that sets out to reduce per capita energy use and resulting GHG emissions to less than the current global average – this would require emission reductions to approximately one-third of the current Guelph per capita average and to about one-fifth of the Canadian per capita average. The City of Calgary has developed a 50-year climate change corporate and community action plan that incorporates strong sustainability objectives, including a corporate GHG emission reduction target of 50 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. (Canada, by way of contrast, is committed to reducing GHG emissions to six percent

Green markets continue to grow – for example, wind energy is the fastest growing energy sector right now, even though buyers often pay a small premium for clean energy.

their personal portion of emissions. A one-way flight from Vancouver to Halifax will cost a passenger \$16 to offset their one tonne of CO₂. More and more, "going green" is a consumer choice.

Climate change seems to have penetrated into popular culture. Vanity Fair produced a "going green" issue back in April, and building on the success of his award-winning documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore helped lead the nine Live Earth concerts held in July that attracted an estimated two billion people worldwide.

More and more, climate change is penetrating deeply into professional cultures. For example, this year, two health professional associations – Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors and the International Union for Health Promotion and Education – both passed resolutions to take action on climate change. In February, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, one of the world's premiere sci-

ence institutions, indicated in its statement on climate change: "The time is now. We must rise to the challenge. We owe this to future generations." This is a marked shift from the value-neutral stance traditional to the science institution.

Taken together, these developments make for a real change in climate – and not just the physical climate. We are also talking about the social, political and business climates. Wherever we look, climate change is a top of mind issue. It is no longer something that may be happening, and if so, to be dealt with in two years or 10 years or 30 years. In one way or other (and likely in more ways than one), climate change is here, and to be dealt with now.

And In Our Cities ...

Climate change is quickly becoming a reality in our cities. Again this year, there was no shortage of weather events that impacted our infrastructure, services and daily lives. Several lead-

ing cities have developed quite ambitious plans to address climate change related sustainability issues. For instance, the City of Guelph adopted a comprehensive community energy plan that sets out to reduce per capita energy use and resulting GHG emissions to less than the current global average – this would require emission reductions to approximately one-third of the current Guelph per capita average and to about one-fifth of the Canadian per capita average. The City of Calgary has developed a 50-year climate change corporate and community action plan that incorporates strong sustainability objectives, including a corporate GHG emission reduction target of 50 percent below 1990 levels by 2012. (Canada, by way of contrast, is committed to reducing GHG emissions to six percent

below 1990 levels by 2012.) City of Toronto Council unanimously approved the first phase of its climate change plan, which it calls the most ambitious environmental plan in North America. Examples like these are popping up more and more. Gas tax transfers continued in 2007, contributing to much needed investments in environmentally sustainable public infrastructure, and the 2007 federal budget committed to extending the transfers until 2013-2014. The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, which includes Toronto and 39 other large cities, got a boost from the Clinton Climate Initiative, which helped mobilize commitments of US\$5-billion for municipal building energy efficiency retrofits. This will double the total global market for energy saving retrofits in buildings.

At last count, 152 Canadian local governments and 600 US mayors have

committed to climate protection goals. Indeed, climate change seems to be pervading cities too.

Going Into 2008

As this issue goes to press, many eyes are turned to Bali, where the annual United Nations climate change meetings are taking place. All of the

UN meetings are important, but this one is especially so – on the agenda is the issue of post-Kyoto emission reduction targets. The results will have implications on global policy and markets for years to come.

In the meantime, our environments are changing – be they the climate, policy or business environments, societal

expectations, and others – and climate change is a driving force. Many local governments have taken note, are exploring the potential implications of climate change for them, and are taking action. Those who haven't, should. The train is leaving the station, and if they aren't on board, they will be left behind ("out in the cold," so to speak). *MW*

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