Lakeshore Eco-Network

MAKE THE PLANET GREAT AGAIN!



Letting the Sun Shine In

In an era of political uncertainty around climate policy and shifting energy markets, it's easy to feel powerless. A talk presented by John Watson on March 7 promises to cut through the noise to focus on what's actually happening—and what you can actually do.

Watson will share the real story of energy transformation: from global progress in renewable deployment to Ontario's changing electricity landscape, including the recent 30% rate increase and what it signals for the future. Says Watson, "Rather than doom and gloom, this is a practical look at how individual homeowners are taking control through solar energy, battery storage, and smart electrification strategies."

You'll learn:

- Why renewable energy keeps advancing globally despite political headwinds
- How Ontario's electricity market is changing and what it means for your bills
- The four pillars of home energy resilience: rate protection, backup power, energy arbitrage, and smart electrification
- Real stories from local homeowners who've achieved energy independence
- Creative approaches to solar investment, including intergenerational wealth transfer strategies

"It's an honest conversation about energy reality and practical options for Southwestern Ontario homeowners," says Watson. "Whether you're planning to stay in your home for decades or thinking about your legacy for the next generation, you'll leave with clarity about your energy future."

John Watson is a Renewable Energy Sales Representative with Bluewater Energy Inc., specializing in residential and commercial solar installations, energy storage solutions, and electrification strategies across Southwestern Ontario. Beyond his work with Bluewater John has contributed to integrated design processes for net-zero home construction, and has been actively involved with climate action networks including eMerge Guelph and Guelph Climate Action Network.

Upcoming Events







Heritage Tree Project Launched

by Janet Kurasz

At the heart of LEN's mandate is the recognition that trees are vital to protecting biodiversity and ensuring the health of our natural world, ourselves and our communities. There is a biological process by which organisms modify the environment, making it suitable for succession. The types of species (plant and animal communities) that exist in an area over time move from simple pioneer species, like grasses, to more complex, stable species known as climax species. Through this natural process of ecological succession, simple pioneer species eventually give way to complex, stable "Climax Communities" dominated by mature, shade-tolerant trees.

The importance of these trees cannot be overstated. Recognizing their value, many Canadian municipalities now include trees in their Asset Management Plans. This protection begins with identifying Heritage Trees—specimens of significant size, age, or historical and cultural value.

Through our Heritage Tree Project, LEN will profile trees of interest right here on our website. While we prioritize native species, we welcome submissions for any tree with unique characteristics or cultural significance.

What we look for:

- ***Size and Age: Massive or ancient specimens.***
- ***Historical Significance: Trees connected to local heritage or culture.***
- ***Unique Features: Rare species or unusual growth patterns.***
- ***Native Species: Priority is given to trees indigenous to the region.***

Visit our website, http://lakeshoreeconetwork.ca to see our first inductees. Please contact LEN if you know of a tree that you would like included in our Heritage Tree Project.



Looking for Climate Solutions that work? Check out Drawdown Explorer

Project Drawdown, the science-based climate solutions organization, has launched the Drawdown Explorer. Built on trillions of data points and thousands of hours of analysis by scientific experts from around the world, Explorer provides decision-makers and concerned citizens with key insights and intelligence on the most effective climate solutions and highlights powerful opportunities for scaling them globally

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“Climate action to date has been largely too small and too ineffective,” Project Drawdown Executive Director Dr. Jon Foley says. “We need to focus on the most effective, science-based solutions that truly move the needle on climate change. We built the Drawdown Explorer to provide the insights necessary for better, smarter climate action, ensuring every dollar, every resource, and every moment brings us closer to a world without a climate crisis.”

When fully completed this year, the Drawdown Explorer will provide detailed, up-to-date information on more than 140 climate solutions that, if scaled, can stop climate change. All of the solutions are regularly updated as better data become available.
Here are the top ten “Highly Recommended” solutions from Drawdown, ranked by CO2 equivalence:

· ***Deploy on-shore wind turbines***
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· ***Improve diets***
· ***Deploy alternative refrigerants***
· ***Improve windows and glass***
· ***Reduce food waste and loss***
· ***Protect forests***
· ***Mobilize electric cars***
· ***Increase recycling***
· ***Improve non-motorized transportation***



A Big Plastics Win

(from the Environmental Defence website)

Canada's Federal Court of Appeal has confirmed that the federal government can act to stop plastic pollution. This is a major victory for turtles and fish – and for all of us. It means the federal bans on harmful and unnecessary plastic items such as checkout bags and six-pack rings stand. It also means there is no excuse for the government to hold back: now is the time for bold and ambitious federal action to protect people and the environment from plastic.

The court rejected arguments made by Big Plastic that sadly managed to convince a federal court judge back in 2023. This new decision erases the doubt and confirms that the companies fighting to keep profiting from plastic have no ground to stand on.

We feel vindicated, and so should you! People across Canada have been telling the government for years that they want action to stop plastic pollution, and they don't believe that the plastics industry's ability to make a profit should trump protection of our health and the environment.

The court confirmed it was reasonable for the government to declare plastic manufactured items toxic under the law after seeing the evidence of what plastic items do in the environment. Plastics choke and strangle animals and ruin their habitats.

There's so much plastic sold every year that even a small percentage of it tossed in the environment causes deadly harm. Big Plastic tried to downplay these impacts – pointing out that the government believes only one per cent of plastic ends up littered. But the court wasn't having it. That one per cent amounts to about 29,000 tonnes of plastic tossed into the environment every year. And that tsunami of trashy plastic never goes away … it just breaks up into tinier and tinier pieces that end up in our rivers, lakes, oceans and drinking water. Small organisms even mistake these fragments as food.

So, what's next? After we enjoy a well-deserved celebration of this win, we have to step up our efforts to make sure the government acts on this good news.

We need strong rules to prevent greenwashing claims that garbage plastic can actually be recycled. We need a plan to reduce plastic packaging at the grocery store. We need corporate investments in convenient and affordable systems to reuse and refill containers instead of throwing them away after a brief use. At the same time, the government needs to phase out harmful chemicals that are used in plastic products—toxic additives that leach into our food and drink, or slough off our clothing and products, and end up in our bodies.

The world needs less plastic. In Canada, we have a clear path to making that a reality.

Help with Invasives

by Renee Sandelowsky & Helen Varekamp, Volunteers for Canadian Coalition for Invasive Plant Regulation

Are you aware of one or more invasive species, such as English Ivy, Periwinkle, Buckthorn or Phragmites, that have taken over your property? Do you feel overwhelmed by the sheer size of it and need help? You are not alone! Help is available through two programs being offered in Huron County.

Huron Clean Water Project celebrates 20 years of providing property owners with financial and technical assistance with numerous water protection projects. They have recently added Invasive Species Management – control of invasive species that negatively affect important ecosystems and water quality. They will pay 50% of the costs with a maximum grant of $3,000 for eligible projects. Service delivery is provided by Ausable Bayfield and Maitland Valley Conservation Authorities. For more information, visit www.HuronCleanWaterProject.ca or contact Ben VanDieten at Maitland Valley Conservation Authority – bvandieten@mvca.on.ca or Nathan Schoelier at Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority – nschoelier@abca.ca.

The Ontario Phragmites Action program has funding available to eradicate Ontario's most invasive plant. Phragmites Australis is an aggressive, perennial, towering grass that can grow taller than humans, while taking over wetlands and out-competing native plants. It spreads rapidly through seeds and root fragments, which can be transported by wind, water, vehicles, machinery and human activity. Once established, Phragmites forms dense stands, reducing biodiversity.

Addressing this invasive species proactively helps avoid substantial costs, including reduced agricultural yields, obstructed access to waterways, increased flooding, higher roadside maintenance expenses and lost tourism revenue. Since 2019, the Invasive Phragmites Control Fund has funded more than 130 projects that help protect natural spaces from the impacts of Phragmites. To learn more, visit www.ontariophragmitesaction.ca. The program is locally administered by Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority. Support for private landowners in Huron County is available by contacting ABCA at 1-888-2610 or by emailing Brooklyn Rau – brau@abca.ca.

Yes, Our Voices Matter!

On Sunday, February 1, Lynn Tremain was at the main beach in Grand Bend, preparing to enjoy a glorious winter sunset, when her phone rang. The name that came up was Todd McCarthy, Ontario's Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. He was calling to personally thank her for the book on climate change, the Ontario Nature magazine, and the letter she had sent him before Christmas.

Tremain was amazed. "Five p.m. on a Sunday-- I did not see that coming!" she says with a laugh. "I've been told a number of times that phone calls and emails are important. That day I gained a little bit of hope that being persistent has the potential to be noticed. Whether or not it makes a difference, let's believe that maybe it does."

