

RCEN Annual Report
Health Caucus Activities from April 1, 2007 – March 31, 2008

by Sarah Heiberg

1. Health Caucus

Health Caucus Steering Committee Skype Teleconferencing Pilot Project

As part of this year's workplan, the Health Caucus Steering Committee (HC SC) decided to launch a pilot project to use Skype for our teleconferencing. At the Annual Conference on the Environment from 2-4 November 2008, all HC SC members were given headsets and the RCEN Systems Administrator gave a presentation to steering committee members on how to install and use Skype. As yet, the HC SC is still working out some technical difficulties with using Skype for its teleconferences, though a few members are now regularly calling in to teleconferences using Skype.

Workshop on a Proposed Regulatory Framework for Nanomaterials under CEPA

Environment Canada and Health Canada sought stakeholder input on their suggested approach to developing a regulatory framework to assess and manage the risks that nanomaterials may present to human health and the environment. A workshop was held on 27 September 2008 to solicit input from stakeholders involved in the manufacture, use or sale of nanomaterials, undertaking nanomaterials research, or concerned with the potential health or environmental impacts of nanomaterials.

The two selected ENGO delegates for the multi-stakeholder workshop were Maureen Carter-Whitney (CIELAP) and Maria Castro (Beyond Factory Farming Coalition). Fe de Leon (CELA) and Sandra Madray (Chemical Sensitivities Manitoba) also attended the workshop as independent participants. Further to the delegate report submitted by Maureen and Maria, CIELAP and CELA prepared a more detailed and expansive report that they submitted to government.

Nanotechnology development is becoming increasingly lucrative and the Canadian government is investing heavily in research, development and commercialization. It is important to educate the wider ENGO community and the general public about the swift development and commercialization of nanomaterials. It is also vital that ENGOs continue to participate actively in the process of developing a regulatory framework.

UN-HABITAT's Fourth World Urban Forum

As a continuation of the Roundtable on the Environment hosted by the RCEN Health Caucus at the third World Urban Forum from 19-23 June 2006 in Vancouver, the Health Caucus submitted an application to UN-HABITAT on 31 March 2008 to lead a Networking Session at the fourth World Urban Forum (WUF4) taking place in Nanjing, China from 3-7 November 2008. We have also been in contact with Dr. Marco Keiner, Chief, Urban Environment Section – UN-HABITAT, to explore how the "Harmonizing the Built and Natural Environments" dialogue session Dr. Keiner is organizing at WUF4 and the Health Caucus Networking session might complement each other. Upon approval to host our networking event, the Health Caucus will proceed to seek funding support for travel to, and participation in, WUF4.