

# York leads Canadian environmental study

By JACOB KATSMAN

Will we all die 40 years from now? Our environment is being shredded every day by pollutants thrown into the air. Natural pollutants are always present, but people have knowingly been adding pollutants into the atmosphere since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

According to scientific research, our health is undoubtedly being affected with every breath. York Centre for Atmospheric Chemistry (CAC) scientists Paul Shepson, Harold Schiff, and Diethard Bohme confirmed that emissions of nitrogen and sulphur oxides lead to the acidification of lakes, and are implicated in damage to forests, building materials, and humans.

Just as a car needs gasoline to run, humans need air to live. Putting diesel fuel in an unleaded-only car will ruin the engine. But this is what we're doing everyday — by breathing polluted air we're ruining our own engines.

With upcoming elections in Canada and the US the environment has become an important issue. The public is becoming more aware about the devastating effects of acid rain and the "greenhouse effect" — a global warming resulting from fossil fuel combustion and deforestation.

Acid rain has sterilized most of our lakes, killing fish and vegetation. The major impurities leading to acids in the atmosphere are sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen.

Dr. Jack Calvert, a world-renowned expert in atmospheric chemistry, lectured on acid rain last Wednesday at Osgoode Hall. Calvert said that politicians are largely responsible for delaying the legisla-



**"We have tremendous potential to improve."**

Hiromi Niki

tion and implementation of pollution controls.

"Laws are written by people who are not scientists. They are written by people who have yes and no answers to everything," Calvert said.

While there are no easy answers to environmental problems, Calvert said there are models to be tested. We've already found ways to burn coal safely, but he added that industry pressure on politicians is preventing the testing of other models.

"In order for politicians to initiate any significant legislation, the public must support these changes," said York Chemistry professor Paul Shepson. "Human nature, in itself, presents a danger to the environment."

Shepson said that everyday activities, such as heating and cooling our homes, driving an automobile, require energy from burning coal and oil. By burning coal we produce more sulphur dioxide, which reacts with other chemicals to cause acid rain; and by burning fossil fuels we produce carbon dioxide which contributes to the greenhouse effect.

"There are alternative sources of energy which, in time, could be implemented in everyday use," he said. "General Motors, for example, could start producing electrically-powered automobiles."

However, Shepson said that people have to be willing to accept a different standard of transportation — electric cars mean lower speeds, and the inconvenience of recharging the battery.

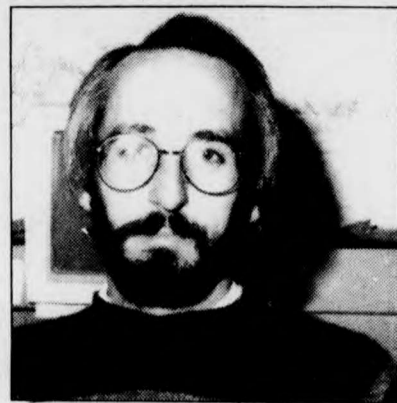
"The public tends to be shortsighted and concerned with immediate problems only," Shepson said. He added that the environmental problems need a long-term solution, but that people don't want to deal with something that may happen 100 years from now.

"Maybe I'm a pessimist," he said, "but unfortunately, I think that we'll only start implementing radical measures when it may already be too late."

Chemistry professor Hiromi Niki, another York faculty member, was more optimistic.

"We have tremendous potential to improve," he said. "Unfortunately, we have to face a few mishaps to learn our lesson. This is why we are adopting all these research projects at York."

York University's Chemistry Department has taken initiative in research-



JACOB KATSMAN

**"Human nature, in itself, presents a danger to the environment"**

Paul Shepson

ing environmental problems; in fact, York is Canada's leading university in atmospheric chemistry, and offers

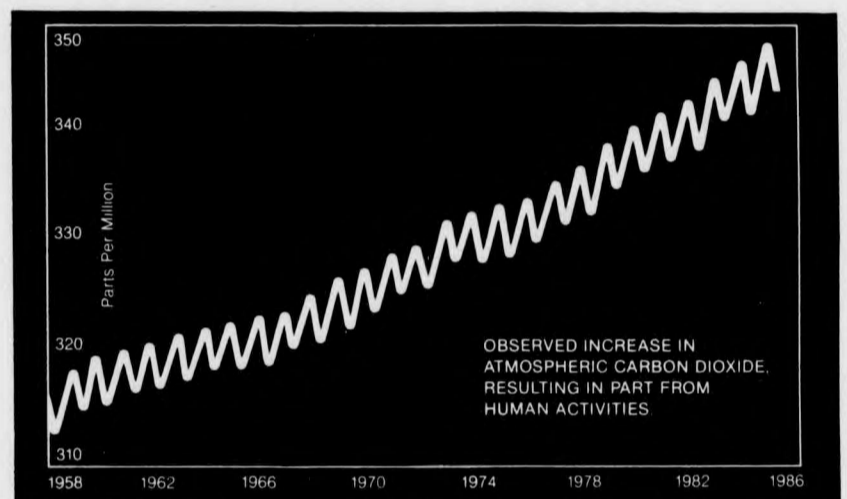
the only graduate programme in the country.

This year, York established the Centre of Atmospheric Chemistry (CAC) to co-ordinate research in atmospheric chemistry with other departments. CAC will be a key member of the Canadian Institute for Research in Atmospheric Chemistry (CIRAC), a non-profit organization launched this year by the federal government. CIRAC combines the environmental interests of universities, government agencies, and industry.

The headquarters of CIRAC is collocated with York's Centre for Atmospheric Chemistry.

"What we need is co-operation and good communication between different departments." Niki said that only through team work will we be able to deal with this large and complex problem.

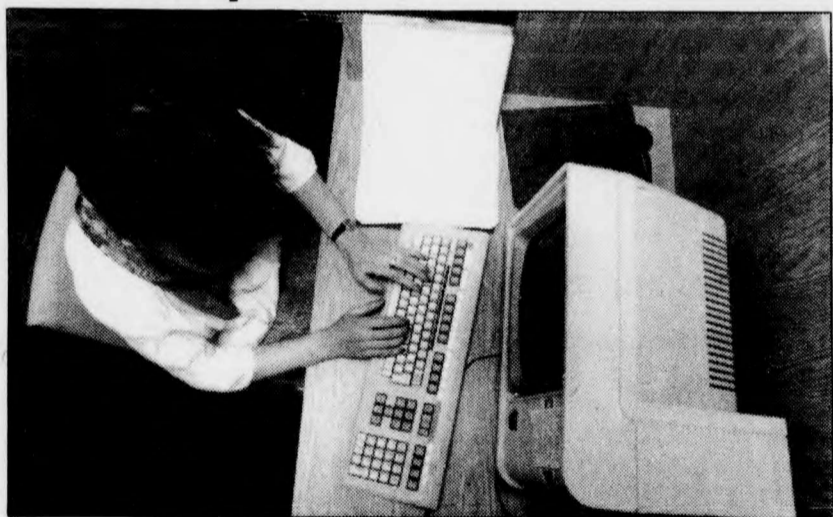
"There is no quick fix. We all live on this mothership called Earth, and we must take care of it."



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# Computer centre improves quality of writing

By JESSICA RUDOLPH



BARAK AMIRFEIZ

A STUDENT diligently types away at one of the Computer-Assisted writing centre's 55 computer terminals. Many of the Centre's users said that computers improved the quality of their writing.

Can a computer help you improve the quality of your writing?

Eighty-six per cent of 200 Computer-Assisted writing centre users surveyed last year said it can.

The two year-old Centre, located on the fifth floor of Scott Library, helped thousands of students improve their writing skills. The exact number of students and faculty members using the facility is impossible to calculate accurately, as new accounts are opened daily.

Services offered include programmes which teach typing, reference citation, proper essay format, and spelling and style checkers. One service allows a student to send a rough draft via electronic mail to a

tutor, and receive constructive feedback the following day.

Undergraduates access is restricted to students enrolled in designated courses, and already courses are on a waiting list for next year.

For a course to be affiliated with the Centre must have a heavy emphasis on writing. Additionally, the Centre suggests that course directors rethink assignments to enable students to make the best use of computers.

Director Mary-Louise Craven admits that it is disheartening to turn away students want to use the Centre but are prevented from doing so because their courses are not affiliated with it. But she said it is important to stress that the Computer-Assisted Writing Centre is not merely a typing room, and limiting access is a way to ensure that stu-

dents who need the Centre most are able to get the help they need.

The Centre is especially busy before winter and summer breaks, when term papers are due. But because the Centre is in high demand all year, the facilities may only be used for course-related work.

At present, almost all of the Writing Centre's 55 computer terminals are at Scott Library. However, long-range plans would offer greater access to terminals by placing them in colleges and dormitories.

Calumet is the first of "satellites." While the college has a handful of terminals, students must go to the main location at Scott Library to have anything printed.

For more information contact the Centre at 736-5376

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