

February 2009 Newsletter from the Society for a GE Free BC,

Hi friends for a GE Free BC!

2009 has already proven to be a busy year for the society. GE Free BC and Canadian Biotech Action Network (CBAN) AGM have reinvigorated our already close relationship by collaborating on two national campaigns; GM Free alfalfa and GM Free sugar beet. Please see the articles below for more about these issues!

GE Free BC would like to thank you for your continued support, interest and generous donations for this work. We continue to expose the environmental, ethical and health concerns as well as the threats to small scale farming that this very questionable technology poses.

In 2008 the Society was able to raise over \$5,000, from passing the hat and from online donations. That, combined with a \$5,000 grant from Mountain Equipment Coop meant that we could organize the GE Free Speakers' Tour where Percy Schmeiser shared his experiences fighting Monsanto, Tom Rudge discussed the process of trying to establish the Yukon as a GE Free zone and Josh Brandon from Greenpeace talked about the labelling campaign. On Vancouver Island Colin Palmer also spoke on the process Powell River engaged in to become the first GE Free zone in Canada.

The tour supported GE Free Kootenays' successful campaigns to pass municipal resolutions making both Nelson and Kaslo GE Free Zones. (There is more below on Kaslo's recent success!)

Your donations in addition funded a staff person and covered the cost of conference calling, both of which have helped the Society keep in touch with active community groups.

2009 looks to be a promising year and we'd like to pass the hat again. Please make your online at, <http://www.GEFreeBC.org> and keep the momentum going for another year. To augment your donations we are applying for more grants. One event we are already co-organizing is another Speakers' Tour for September of this year.

To keep you up-to-date, here is the newsletter table of contents for February 2009:

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- 1) Will you be my GM Free Valentine?

Sugar processing company Rogers/Lantic is about to decide if they will accept GM sugar beet from Alberta farmers this growing season. Help GE Free BC encourage Rogers to only process Non-GMO sugar beet. The sugar beet has been genetically modified to resist Monsanto's herbicide Roundup. The wind-pollinated GM sugar beets will inevitably cross-pollinate with related crops grown close by, contaminating conventional sugar beets, organic chard and the table beets we love so much.

Tell Rogers why GMO-Free sugar is *sweeter* in a personal valentine to their CEO, Edward Makin.

Go to www.cban.ca/sugarbeet where you can either download a GM Free Valentine to fax or mail, or send a Valentine letter right from the site. Tell Rogers/Lantic why they should stay GM Free. Here are a few Valentine greetings to be creative with:

- ♥ Sweet love is GE Free! ♥ Keep Canadian Sugar GE-Free! ♥ Rogers Sugar, Don't Break My Heart!
- ♥ Will my Chocolates be GM-Free or Sugar Free? ♥

NOTE: GE Free BC will have valentines on Feb 14th and 15 at the World Community Film Festival at Langara College in Vancouver, where the World According to Monsanto and Silent Forest (a film on GM trees) will be showing. Go to <http://www.codev.org/filmfest/films.cfm> for more information.

2) Campaign for GM Free Alfalfa

Dairies, honey producers, alfalfa farmers and organic certifiers from coast to coast are being contacted to write letters in support of Non-GMO Alfalfa. The campaign was initiated by the SOD OAPF Committee: The Saskatchewan Organic Directorate is the umbrella group for the organic sector in Saskatchewan. The letter is available online at, <http://www.cban.ca/NoGMOAlfalfa>

Next steps include striking a National NO to GMO Alfalfa Coalition or Campaign Team to further develop the strategies to launch the campaign, publicize the list of groups that have signed the above statement, and methods to engage the public and farmers in further action as part of the national campaign. Signatories to this letter will be contacted to discuss how they may like to be involved in the NO to GMO Alfalfa campaign.

3) The Non GMO Project

As we all know the public's push for mandatory labelling of genetically engineered/modified ingredients hasn't led to any changes with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency labelling requirements. The result is that we still don't know what we are eating! The solution? Voluntary labelling. In September industry leaders, including Whole Foods and Nature's Path, will launch The Non-GMO Project. Products that are GMO free will be labelled with the Non-GMO Project's butterfly logo. Watch for it in the natural foods stores. For more information go to <http://www.nongmoproject.org>

3) Kaslo - BC's latest GE Free Zone

'On January 13, 2009, the Village of Kaslo, British Columbia took leadership on a controversial food issue. Through the efforts of the regional G.E.-Free Kootenays campaign, Kaslo's Village Council voted in favor of a resolution to oppose the cultivation of genetically engineered plants and trees.

Aimee Watson of the Kaslo Food Security Project attended the meeting in support. Watson was able to report that "even though we may not have any known commercially grown G.E. crops within Kaslo's Village boundaries, this is an opportunity to highlight that G.E. has gone beyond it's intended borders. It's also not unfounded to expect that G.E. plants and trees may one day be widely accessible to the home gardener".

Watson also noted that due to its direct conflict with sustainable and diverse food systems, G.E. is a concern for Kaslo residents. "Our recently adopted food charter highlighted our community's concern and commitment to a food shed that is healthy, sustainable, independent and supportive of small scale farming," says Watson. "The actions that are being carried out by the proponents of G.E. as well as the technology itself goes against all of the principles important to many residents within our community." ' Quoted from information provided by GE Free Kootenays.

Other areas in the Kootenays are slated for campaigns supporting municipal resolutions for GE Free zones. Great work is being done all over Canada by creative people. To see what you can do in your daily life go to, http://www.gefreebc.org/gefree_tpl.php?content=what_you_can_do