

Taking Steps . . .

towards a more



Number 6

January 2005

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The following article by Stan Cox, appeared in [Alternet](#) in December, and is reprinted by permission. It further supports the concerns about Edmonton's ecological footprint presented in our last issue.

The gap between Delhi and Dallas

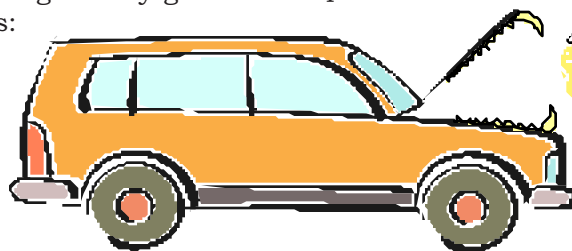
There are too many of us and some of us consume far too much. The solution will require us to cut overall consumption and close the gap between rich and poor.

In October, just in time for Halloween, the World Wildlife Fund issued its frightening [Living Planet Report](#), which shows that humanity continues to consume resources and destroy ecosystems at a rate that overshoots Earth's ability to produce and restore. And the gap is widening.

This deficit spending cannot last; it will be brought to a halt either by self-restraint or by catastrophe.

The problem, of course, is that international negotiations meant to address the problem generally go something like this:

"You've got too many cars!" say poor countries.
"Oh yeah? Well, you've got too many people!" say the rich ones.



Rich nations will have to get by on a lot less.

Energy consumption is perhaps the most divisive issue. The United States, the United Kingdom and Australia together consume more energy each year than India, Pakistan, Japan, China, the Koreas, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands combined. Those Asian-Pacific nations have more than 10 times as many people as we do in the U.S., U.K., and Australia, and we use almost 10 times as much energy per head as they do.

History shows that lower population growth usually results from an improved standard of living. But the Wildlife Fund says overall resource consumption must be cut almost in half for the planet to have a fighting chance. Humans are now spending natural resources at a rate equal to 120 percent of Earth's biological capacity. The Wildlife Fund says that we must gradually reduce that figure to about 67 percent by 2050, or risk piling up an "ecological debt" big enough to bankrupt the planet.

Global consumption must be reduced sharply. At the same time, poor nations need to become better off if they're to check their population growth. The implication:


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A 2003 study by Melanie Moses and James Brown in the scientific journal *Ecology Letters* sharpens the horns of this dilemma. They analyzed data from more than 100 countries and concluded that humans are far from unique among mammals. In fact, we obey a general biological law: The greater the energy consumption by individual animals of a species, the fewer offspring they will produce and raise.

From little monkeys to big apes to prehistoric humans to subsistence farmers to commuters in their SUVs, increases in energy consumption lead to smaller families. (For you math fans, the decline in fertility is proportional to the cube root of per-animal energy consumption.)

A blue whale needs a much bigger vascular system and a lot more energy than does a rabbit to deliver nutrients and oxygen throughout its body. An American toddler, in turn, is hooked up to a support system that dwarfs that of the blue whale: a planet-wide industrial infrastructure.

We humans have the unique ability to extend our “energy networks” far beyond our physical bodies. As we’ve drawn upon greater quantities of fossil fuels and other resources, we have built societies in which people have education, contraceptives and pension plans, all of which encourage smaller families.

The people of rich nations might like to believe that high consumption has thereby freed them from the laws of nature. But Moses and Brown’s analysis says the lunch isn’t free: “We hypothesize that parents face a tradeoff between the number of offspring and the energetic investment in each offspring ... the perceived energetic investment (including material goods and education) required for a child to be competitive in a given society is greater in more consumptive societies.”

Of course, in biology, no mathematical relationship is absolute. Looking at those nations that deviate from the overall trend can be as instructive as studying those that follow it. For example, birth rates in 10 oil-producing nations whose citizens have unfettered access to fossil fuels are much higher than would be predicted by Moses and Brown’s equations. Meanwhile, Cuba, when compared with Central America and the larger nations of the Caribbean, has similar per capita energy consumption but only half the birth rate. Cuba’s lower rate of population increase is generally attributed to its high degree of economic equality, a rarity in Latin America.

The generally close relationship between energy consumption and fertility decline, however, suggests that people, like members of all species, tend to keep consuming until, inevitably, they hit a limit. That limit is miserably low if you’re a parent living in a Delhi slum; in a Dallas suburb, it’s far too high.

If we put these hefty brains of ours to good use, we could become the first species to find a way around Moses and Brown’s equations – to restrain both our numbers and our consumption. But on an already battered planet, the solution will require more equality, not more growth.

Stan Cox is senior research scientist at the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas and a member of the Institute’s Prairie Writers Circle.

Creative thinking dept.


New Jersey Bill: Tax Deduction for Bike Commuting

The NJ Assembly has introduced a bill that would allow a 10 cents/mile income tax deduction for commuting to and from work by bicycle. As stated in the bill, “This deduction will provide an incentive to encourage bicycle commuting and reduce the large number of short, single occupancy vehicle trips that many New Jerseyans engage in to get to and from work. This deduction provides a potential means to increase the numbers of bicycle commuters in the State, which would help reduce the numbers of trips made by automobiles.”

The bill acknowledges a recent transportation survey the federal Bureau of Transportation Statistics and states that, “bicycling is the second most preferred form of transportation after the automobile, ahead of public transportation. Several findings from the study indicate a growing concern among Americans with the impact of transportation choices on the quality of life. 38% of all Americans feel that the availability of bikeways, walking paths, and sidewalks for getting to work, shopping, and recreation is very important in choosing where to live.”



Neighbourhood design charrette being planned for April

Thanks to grant support from Canada's **Go for Green**  and funding from the City of Edmonton Transportation & Streets, Planning & Development and Community Services departments, Walkable Edmonton is planning a neighbourhood design charrette for early April.



While details are still being worked out, the planning team hopes to bring **Dan Burden** back to lead the charrette process. Those readers who were able to take in some of the presentations Dan gave here last April know we can look forward to an enthusiastic, challenging and productive session.

While the charrette sessions will not be open to the general public, we will report on the outcomes and recommendations of the sessions in an upcoming issue of *Taking Steps*.

Once the area and dates are confirmed, the team will be looking for a few committed persons willing to be trained in helping run and facilitate neighbourhood charrettes. It *will* be hard work, but it also means you will have the opportunity to help develop the design charrette process to be used for other projects in Edmonton. We will be asking volunteer trainees to commit to also helping with at least one future charrette. If you are interested, please contact Kate Gunn at 496-4889.

The *Show Me* state shows everyone else how to plan for walkability

Kansas City, Missouri is the 20th most dangerous large metropolitan area in the United States for

pedestrians; the number of people killed while walking in Kansas City increased from 19 in 2000 to 27 in 2001. The city is also third from the bottom of large American metropolitan areas in terms of the number of commuters that walk to work. In response to these problems, the city prepared a walkability plan that addresses:

- Location of pedestrian demand;
- Effectiveness of the current pedestrian system;
- Recommended pedestrian improvements for the community;
- Budget required to build the desired pedestrian network;
- Prioritization of the limited number of dollars available; and
- Recommendations for changes to current codes, ordinances, standards, and policies.

The plan is available online as PDF documents; they can be downloaded from:

<http://www.kcmo.org/planning.nsf/plnpres/walkability?opendocument>

Share your favourite walk

We'd like to hear about your favourite place(s) to walk.

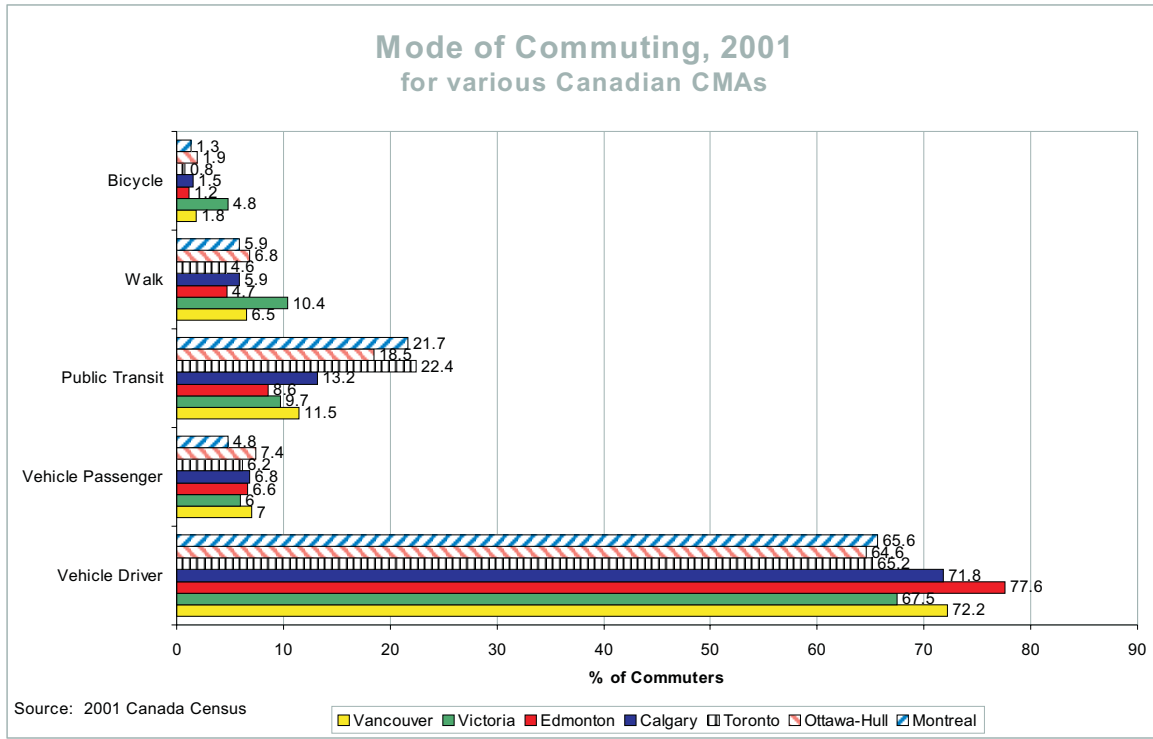
Tell us in 100 words or less about a great walk that you enjoy, and what you like about the the place or the feelings you have when you are there. A photo would be great too! Our email and postal addresses are on the last page.

Send us your submission by **February 25**, and we'll include it in the March or subsequent issue(s). We'll award a **free pedometer** to the top 3 suggestions.

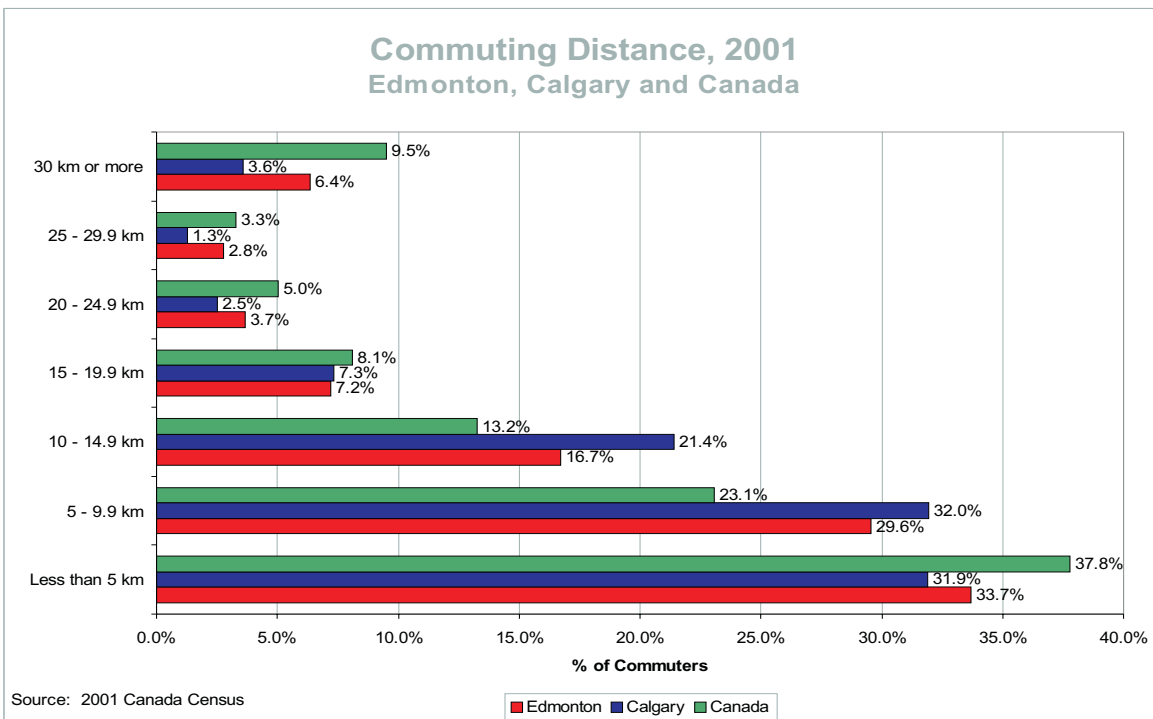


How Edmontonians get to work

The 2001 Census of Canada reveals some important information about how Edmontonians commute to work. Among residents of the seven largest Census Metropolitan Areas in Canada, Edmontonians are the most reliant on private vehicles for getting to work. In addition, they are among the lowest users of



alternate, more active modes of transportation — public transit, walking and cycling. Calgaryans, who face relatively similar conditions, make less use of private vehicles and more use of active alternate modes. The fact that Calgary enjoys more frequent winter chinooks and is more often without snow during the winter months may explain part of the differences for walking and cycling. Commuting distance — as shown in the following chart — does not really explain the differences between Edmonton and Calgary, since many Edmontonians live closer to their workplace.



Our intent here is not to knock Edmontonians for being lazy or callous about the environment, etc. Rather, we think it is important to clearly understand where we are right now. That should better help us develop plans and priorities for making Edmonton a more walkable city.

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Doing more with less . . . /2

In the last issue we showed a Dutch bike/pedestrian pathway separated from the vehicular traffic by a rough brick strip. The following photo shows separate, coloured bike lanes completely integrated into the traffic flow in Deventer, a smaller Dutch city. The bike lanes even flow around the roundabout in the foreground.

Despite the apparent busyness of the street, traffic flows well and cyclists feel safe and confident. Of course, pedestrians occasionally have to *portage* around delivery vans parked on the sidewalk!



June 5-8, 2005, **Canadian Institute of Transportation Engineers annual conference**, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Info: <http://www.cite7.org/saskatoon/>

July 18-21, 2005, **Towards Carfree Cities V**, Budapest, Hungary. Info: Judit Madarassy,

email: madarassy@levego.hu

(put "TCFC V" in subject line)

<http://www.worldcarfree.net/>

September 22-23, 2005, **Walk 21 (VI) - The 6th International Conference on Walking in the 21st Century**, Zurich, Switzerland. Info: Walk21, Diddington

House, Main Road, Bredon, Tewkesbury,

Gloucestershire, GL20 7LX, United Kingdom; phone: 00 44 (0) 1684 773 94; email: info@walk21.co

<http://www.walk21.com/>

Upcoming events

February 25-26, 2005, **2nd Annual Active Living Research Conference**, San Diego CA.

Info: Kevin Reese, Active Living Research, phone:

(619) 260-5538; email: kreese@projects.sdsu.edu

<http://www.activelivingresearch.org/index.php/Conference/7>

March 14-15, 2005, **Solving Neighborhood Traffic Problems**, Madison, WI. Info: Keith Knapp, Program Director, University of

Wisconsin-Madison, 432 N. Lake Street,

Madison, WI 53706; phone: (608) 263-6314; fax: (608) 263-3160;

e-mail: knapp@epd.engr.wisc.edu

<http://epdweb.engr.wisc.edu/emaG138>

New Urbanist ideas -- such as creating walkable places in which residential, retail, and other activities inter-mingle -- generate a distinctiveness and local flavor that conventional development typically lacks.

Philip Langdon

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If you do not have an email connection we can send you copies by mail. Please drop us a line at:

Walkable Edmonton, c/o Kate Gunn

Edmonton Community Services

P.O. Box 2359

Edmonton, AB

T5J 2R7

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