

## **Pollution Probe builds on its past**

Pollution Probe looks to itself for what it should be rather than looking to other organizations, says executive director Ken Ogilvie.

“We have had 35 years to change models and develop policy,” Ogilvie says. “We have been breaking new ground from the beginning. We learn from our mistakes, modify our approach and develop a new model if needed.”

A donor-based Canadian organization with about 7,000 active members, Pollution Probe has a staff of 18 and does its own research on environmental issues concentrating on air pollution, water pollution and climate change.

Pollution Probe’s advocacy includes hard-hitting confrontation and coalition building, Ogilvie says.

There are a few issues where confrontation is good but more and more, the organization is involved in coalition building involving industry, government and other organizations, he says. Pollution Probe has been working with industry in several areas to define a problem and work towards a solution.

A major focus is on trying to make sure products that cause environmental damage are not put on the market, Ogilvie says. That means controlling chemicals used and design of products, but governments have great difficulty monitoring this, he says.

“Pollution Probe has to deal with industry because industry is the source of innovations,” Ogilvie points out. “You can’t keep calling for regulatory standards.”

Social pressure from consumers has become an effective way of getting the attention of businesses regarding pollution-causing products, Ogilvie point out. “The cracks are showing and industry leaders see business advantages in becoming more socially and environmentally responsible.”

Pollution Probe is a leader in calling for fuel efficiency standards for motor vehicles, to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions.

The process has involved Pollution Probe's design and promotion of a fuel-efficiency standard for Canada and building an alliance to work with the government and others to move policy.

Among Pollution Probe's allies on this issue is the Canadian Automobile Association, representing 4.5 million drivers.

Pollution Probe prepared an in-depth report on the issue. Experts in Canada and the United States reviewed that report and their comments were included in a final report.

The report was presented to every auto making company as well as to the Canadian Auto Workers Union, government representatives and other stakeholders.

"We have talked to the auto sector and they don't agree with standards but we need a fuel efficiency standard for Canada," Ogilvie says. Standards have been adopted or are being studied in several states in the United States and Canada has to be positioned to parallel what the U.S. might do, with its own standard, he says.

After publishing and circulating the report, Pollution Probe organized a conference, bringing together representatives of the auto industry, other business people, provincial and federal ministries and other organizations to discuss what needed to be done, with 10 recommendations coming out of that conference.

"We've done a lot of the groundwork and the job now is to make it policy," Ogilvie says.