



## Newsflash

**Business Achievement Award - The Canadian American Business Council has selected Virox Technologies Inc. and JohnsonDiversey Inc. to be awarded the prestigious Business Achievement Award for their collaboration in developing and distributing a safe and environmentally-friendly hydrogen peroxide based disinfectant.**

**50th Business Anniversary - S.K. Sanitary Specialties, Vancouver, British Columbia, has reached their 50th business anniversary. " This is a landmark Anniversary that will never come again. We intend to celebrate it with**

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A Persistent Problem

### A Persistent Problem

Some issues in our industry come and go just like the seasons. Love 'em or hate 'em, they'll be back. A few years back, for instance, ergonomic cleaning tools and equipment seemed to be on everyone's mind. Debates about the effectiveness of Day Cleaning and its future impact on the future of the industry also glides on and off centre stage.

Other issues, although they may not always be on the front page of industry trade publications, are eternal. The more directly an

**pride."  
Congratulations !**

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WFIM - Entrepreneur of the Year Award - **Debra Bradshaw**, technical consultant at Zep Manufacturing, has been presented with the Woman in Food Industry Management's (WFIM) Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

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Scott Paper Renamed to Kruger Products -

**Kruger Inc.**, with operations across North America and more than 10,000 employees has announced that it will be re-naming its Scott Paper division to Kruger Products. The announcement is the culminating highlight of a three year, re-branding initiative conceived to create an entirely new and all Canadian banner - Kruger Products.

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CanClean 2007 (May 2-3) - **CanClean 2007**, at the **Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place, Toronto**, will attract professional cleaners, facility managers, health care, hospitality and institution

issue connects with core universal values – notably health, children and money – the more likely they’ll be an industry constant. Let’s look at one of these – the ongoing problem of improving indoor air quality (IAQ), especially in schools.

According to the **Asthma Society of Canada**, more than half a million school-age children in Canada have asthma or have had at least one asthma attack. The Society also reports that childhood asthma is the most common long-term respiratory disease and accounts for more hospitalizations than any other chronic health issue.

The problem is even more prevalent in the United States, where the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 6.3 million children are afflicted by the disease. In 2000, EPA reported that some 14 million school days were missed each year because of asthma. And some studies indicate that asthma attacks among school-age children in Chicago are up nearly 160 per cent since 1980.

Must this be an eternal

personal to two day trade show." Educational seminars are going to be outstanding "says Diane Gosling, Show organizer and Executive Director of the Canadian Sanitation Supply Association. Mark you calendars - MAY 2 & 3. On line info at [cssa@cssa.com](mailto:cssa@cssa.com) or call 416 620-9320

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challenge for the cleaning community? Can't we find a final answer?

It appears that environmental conditions, many relating to the structure of the school itself, are at the top of the list of threats to IAQ. For instance, many schools in North America are plagued with mould growth, often the result of water leaks that have not been attended to or properly corrected.

Along with this, the presence of insects and pests such as cockroaches, as well as the pesticides used to eradicate them, can trigger an asthma attack. Inadequate HVAC systems are another factor, as are the conventional cleaning products used to maintain many facilities.

### **Building an IAQ- Management System**

However, we are seeing school districts successfully address poor IAQ problems, and some have made remarkable progress. For instance, the Portland, Oreg., school system developed an IAQ-

management system a few years ago. The system provides school administrators and facility managers with information so that they can easily monitor IAQ. It also gives them procedures to incorporate so that they can respond to problems as soon as they are detected.

The EPA says that from 2004 to 2006, the Portland district showed a 43 per cent decrease in the number of IAQ complaints. Because of this, the EPA awarded the district its Indoor Air Quality Tools for School 2006 Excellence Award.

This shows what can be done when parents, teachers and school administrators unite and decide to find ways to eradicate the problems that harm IAQ. But the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) warns, in a recent report, that too few school districts are addressing the problem of poor IAQ, and fewer still are doing so as decisively as Portland.

“Unhealthy school conditions make it difficult for students to concentrate, teachers to teach, and for school staff to do their jobs,”

says the report. “Such conditions lead to lower student attendance, and reduced teacher and staff retention at a time when [increased] testing requirements make attendance more important than ever and retain[ing] good teachers is viewed as a key ingredient in raising student achievement.”

### **Recommendations to Make Schools Healthy**

The Asthma Society of Canada has developed and made available an asthma-awareness program that addresses some of the IAQ problems triggering asthma and what parents, teachers, school administrators and health officials can do about the problems. Similarly, the AFT has made several recommendations that parents, teachers and school officials can follow to improve IAQ in North American schools, and it has offered specific steps the cleaning industry can take to make schools healthier. For instance, among the recommendations:

- Parents and teachers should work with

government officials to help them realize a problem exists and that it will require increased levels of funding and assistance to renovate, build and modernize schools.

- Officials should develop a “learning environment index” that would help identify conditions that contribute to increased student achievement and require schools that fail to make adequate progress in improving IAQ to take steps to improve their results.
- Government bodies should develop and enforce environmental and safety inspections of school buildings, and schools should be inspected while classes are in session.
- Governments should provide guidelines for schools on “best practices” to clean, operate and maintain healthy

facilities. This would also address the implementation of pest-management systems that minimize the use of chemicals and pesticides.

### **Cleaning Under Greater Scrutiny**

Based on recommendations like those described above, school and government officials are focusing on the ways schools are cleaned, including who does the cleaning, and what chemicals and products are employed to perform cleaning tasks.

According to an April 2006 study,\* U.S. school districts spent 7.8 per cent of their budgets on cleaning and maintenance in 2006. Although this is up slightly from the previous year, the long-term trend shows districts spending (itals)less(enditals) on cleaning in years to come. In fact, in 1997, schools were spending nearly 10 per cent of their operating budget on school cleaning, which is an indication of the

decline.

In an attempt to cut costs and possibly improve cleaning and maintenance, some school districts have outsourced their cleaning to private companies. It appears that in some situations, outsourcing has been successful in saving money, improving the appearance of schools, and, more important, making them healthier.

However, it does not always work. There are some school districts that have outsourced their cleaning but after two or three years decided to terminate their contracts and return to in-house operations. Either the quality of service was inadequate or the cost savings the districts were hoping for, simply never materialized.

Whether districts decide to outsource or hire their own cleaning crews, a significant step that can be implemented to improve IAQ and reduce asthma attacks is to transfer from conventional to certified environmentally preferable cleaning products. Many school districts around North America are now requiring the use of

Green cleaning products because they have been proven to reduce cleaning's impact on IAQ, health and the environment.

Additionally, because of new technologies, they do this effectively and cost efficiently.

Indeed, in many situations, switching to environmentally preferable cleaning products can actually improve funding for school districts. In many areas of North America, schools receive funding based on student attendance. If attendance goes up because the Green cleaning products have helped reduce the number of asthma attacks and other health problems, the schools' budgets are increased. This in turn allows more funds to be available to improve learning and make schools even healthier facilities – synergy at its best.

*Scott McDougall is president of EcoLogo, North America's leading Green certification and marketing organization.*

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