

# 3 of a kind

From food to fashion,  
it's easy being green

by Cynthia Brouse

The relationship between environmentalism and commerce has never been an easy one, but the idea that no eco-friendly citizen worth his or her compost would have any truck with business died in the '70s. We all make financial choices that can either harm or help the planet (and therefore, us). And it's good to know there are choices out there, as well as entrepreneurs willing to gamble on making a buck by providing us with healthy food, chemical-free clothing or renewable energy. "Social entrepreneurs tend to do well over the long term," says Professor Tima Bansal of the Richard Ivey School of Business at London's University of Western Ontario, "because their customers are not as price-sensitive as they are values-sensitive." And since they're more closely connected to their community, she adds, they're more likely to survive short-term downturns. Here are three diverse Canadian companies that have taken on the eco-friendly business challenge.



So you've changed all your incandescent light-bulbs to compact fluorescents, you don't start the dishwasher until you're ready to watch Jon Stewart and the lines of caulking you've laid down in your house would reach the Panama Canal. But nothing you can do or buy will change the fact that most of your electricity comes from noxious nuclear, coal- or gas-fired facilities — right? Wrong. If you pay your own electricity bill, you or your business can sign up for Bullfrog Power, Ontario's first 100 percent green electricity retailer.

Bullfrog Power, which launched last September, takes advantage of Ontario's deregulated electricity market by allowing consumers to direct their dollars towards clean, renewable energy. There's no special equipment or service call required. You simply go to [www.bullfrogpower.com](http://www.bullfrogpower.com) and fill out a form, and you'll draw electricity from the Ontario power grid as usual. But when you pay your Bullfrog bill, all of the money goes to buy wind and low-impact water power, not electricity from non-renewable sources. (Other retailers offer a green option, but only a small percentage of their packages is green.)

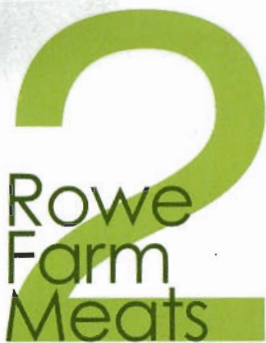
It'll cost more (you can lock in for one year at 8.3 cents per kilowatt hour; Toronto Hydro currently charges between 5 and 5.8 cents, and it's going up), which may be one reason Bullfrog's customer list includes high-profile people such as Margaret Atwood, The Tragically Hip's Gord Downie, photographer Edward Burtynsky, restaurateur Jamie Kennedy, University of Toronto prof Thomas Homer-Dixon and Steven Page of the Barenaked Ladies. But Leandra and Vance MacDonald, both in their fourth year at McMaster University in Hamilton, signed up last December (and — full disclosure — so did I), even though

they're on a student's income. "It seemed like the responsible thing to do, kind of a no-brainer," explains Leandra. "We were concerned at first, because we have electric heating, but we calculated it would just mean about one dinner a month that we can't eat out."

"There are only so many decisions you can take at a household level to reduce your environmental footprint," says Bullfrog president Tom Heintzman, 42, a former environmental lawyer and energy consultant. "This is a powerful new choice." Bullfrog is partnering with Sky Generation to add two new turbines to the Sky wind farm on the Bruce Peninsula. Wind power makes up 20 percent of Bullfrog's mix (compared with less than one percent at your regular Ontario utility) and 80 percent is derived from hydro (compared to two percent). All Bullfrog's sources are certified by the federal government's EcoLogo standard for renewable power — hydro installations, for instance, must not be disruptive to fish or other wildlife habitats.

Heintzman has been pleasantly surprised by the positive response from businesses and non-profits. RBC Financial Group switched eight bank branches and an office over to Bullfrog Power, and Upper Canada College, Hidden Bench Vineyards & Winery, the Kortright Centre for Conservation and Key Publishers/Green Living Enterprises, the publisher of this magazine, are among those sporting the "Bullfrogpowered" logo. Bullfrog is busily penning agreements with the nearly 100 electrical utilities in the province, and customers can now sign up throughout most of Ontario.

"Ultimately, the success or failure of Bullfrog depends on the citizens of Ontario," says Heintzman. "The more people who want to support renewable electricity, the more will get built."



# ROWE FARM MEATS™

When Costco, Wal-Mart and a Japanese trade delegation came calling at Rowe Farm Meats, owner John Rowe sent them away. He couldn't possibly fill such large orders for Rowe Farm's antibiotic- and hormone-free meats in any case, but fast growth is not his style, and neither is widening the gap between consumer and farmer. Rowe is all about education.

After growing up in Guelph, the son of a vet who bought a hobby farm later in life, Rowe taught elementary school for five years, specializing in rescuing kids who were falling behind. One day he read an article about the connection between growth hormones fed to cows and the incidence of cervical and vaginal cancer. "I thought if I ever got married," he says, "I didn't want my wife or daughters having to face that."

So he became a farmer, and he and his wife raised three daughters by producing and selling meat using methods that emphasized sound land stewardship, free-range, humane animal husbandry and zero use of chemicals or animal byproducts as feed. Rowe started a butcher shop in the basement of his ranch-style farmhouse and began to buy meat from other local farmers, many of them Mennonites, eventually establishing an informal

co-op that today boasts 30 farms in Waterloo and Wellington counties. The butcher shop is now in a nondescript building on the fringes of Guelph, but Rowe, 59, still farms. On a Monday afternoon you'll find him driving the tractor out to feed the cows the home-grown perennial grasses nature intended them to eat (they don't get any high-carb corn, even organic corn, which depletes the land and upsets cows' stomachs). Rowe Farm chickens eat soy protein and flax and aren't caged as they are in egg factories, though the Canadian climate and, now, the threat of avian flu prevent them from running around outside. Rowe and his supplier farms follow a detailed protocol audited by the Guelph Food Technology Centre.

Customers flock to the Rowe Farm stall at the St. Lawrence Farmers' Market in Toronto on Saturday mornings to get fresh, cured and frozen beef, chicken, pork, lamb and eggs, as well as to a couple of dozen natural-food stores from Windsor to Ottawa and some Fortino's supermarkets in Hamilton and Toronto. (After a cautious test in one store, Rowe agreed to try a bigger venue; Rowe Farm eggs can also be found in Loblaws, Whole Foods, Sobeys and A&P.) Rowe, who displays a quirky blend of strongly held opinion and openness to ideas that contradict his beliefs, seems satisfied with the steady growth rate his business has seen. "On average," he says, "you make more money farming the conventional way. That's why it's the conventional way." But he challenges the view that our primary goal should be to make food more abundant and cheaper if it means harming it or the soil it comes from. He doesn't believe his way is the only way — as long as people are trying to educate consumers to feel a connection to what they eat and where it comes from, that's enough for him. "It's about evolution," he says, "not revolution."



# 3 l i l e o

Organic Mongolian wool scarves, anyone? Or maybe you'd like a Tibetan goji-berry antioxidant shake while you're picking up a Stella McCartney Adidas totebag? This eclectic range of goods is the stock-in-trade of Lileo, a clothing emporium/art gallery/juice bar that occupies an airy, light-filled 7,000 square feet in Toronto's Distillery District, where the old brick and cobbled streets hearken back to a simpler time. But Lileo's proprietors aim to tread more lightly on the earth than Victorian industry did, while selling beautiful things to their customers. As the people who brought Lululemon yoga fashions to Eastern Canada, Syd Beder and Alexandra Morgan (who have two other Lileo partners, Braden Bennett and Arlene Pastor) know what they're doing. The tone here is seriously stylish.

"We searched for a name for three months," says Beder. "We wanted something that emphasized light and discovery." They chose Lileo as a homage to Galileo; the juice bar is called Livia after one of the Italian astronomer's daughters. In addition to the usual vegetarian fare, Livia sells a variety of health supplements, from Maca Power ("The Inca Superfood") to E3 Live blue-green algae and raw cacao.

While not all of the clothing at Lileo is made of natural or organic fibres, you can find a range of ecologically conscious but high-fashion items, like the award-winning Nike Considered line of shoes, made from recycled waste rubber and leather and fewer glues and solvents than regular shoes. ("Nike's really cleaned up its act," says Beder. "Did you know it's the largest user of organic cotton in the world?") If you can't afford the \$560 Japanese jeans made by Kato from organic Zimbabwe cotton and hand-dyed with real (i.e. non-chemical) indigo, there are organic denim

jeans from Loomstate at \$250, or try a Stewart Brown T-shirt in feather-soft organic cotton (\$70). The Mongolian cashmere sweaters, scarves and throws beg to be touched, and you can also soothe yourself with natural cosmetics and remedies from Neal's Yard of London, England, and California's ErbaViva.

There's lots to look at in Lileo. The interactive light fountain by 3rd Uncle Design and Gorbet Design sends out ripples of light when you move rocks around its surface. Books on green cleaning and Woody Harrelson's *How to Go Further* are strewn among the clothes. Last winter, the store was hung with huge colour photographs that Canadian filmmaker Paul Saltzman took during his time in India in 1968 when he learned meditation from the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi with the Beatles and Mia Farrow. A sprawling shot of John Lennon that greeted customers at the door fits the ethos of Lileo — both idealistic and trendy, this is a store that imagines on a big scale. ■

