

CAG Award for Geography in the Service of Government or Business

Quentin Chiotti

Quentin Chiotti is currently the Air Programme Director and Senior Scientist for Pollution Probe, a post he has held since 2002. At Pollution Probe he is responsible for directing their initiatives and providing scientific advice on the linkages between climate change, air quality, acid rain and a range of key environmental health policy issues. He has been engaged in various aspects of the climate change debate for a decade and a half now, and has contributed to this discussion through scholarly papers, research reports, conference and public presentations, participation in special panels and task forces, and an unknown but remarkable number of media interviews.

As a measure of his knowledge and expertise, he currently sits as Pollution Probe's representative on a number of high-profile committees. These include the Canadian Climate Impacts and Adaptation Research Network (Ontario), the Clean Air Foundation, the Laidlaw Foundation, the Advisory Committee to Transport Canada's Sustainable Transportation Strategy, and the Management Committee to the National Air Quality Health Index. The list of his previous board, committee and task-force appointments is even longer. A partial list includes participation in the Ad Hoc Panel to the Joint Federal-Provincial Air Management Committee (a group that reported to the Canadian Council of Environmental Ministers), the Air Quality and Atmospheric Conditions Cluster Group for the Environmental and Sustainable Development Initiative of the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy, and the Advisory Board for Environment Canada's multi-stakeholder study on Atmospheric Change in the Toronto-Niagara Region.

Prior to joining Pollution Probe and following his graduation from the University of Western Ontario, where he studied for his Ph.D. with the late Michael Troughton, Quentin held appointments at various Canadian universities. He taught on a limited-term contract in the Geography Department at the University of Guelph and then completed post-doctoral fellowships at Carleton, Lethbridge and Toronto. As a measure of his remarkable versatility, his first post-doc was funded through SSHRC, his second through an Alberta-based foundation, the Nat Christie Foundation, and the third through NSERC.

It was during this period in his career that in addition to working on an admirable number and range of research publications, Quentin came to be recognized as a natural in the classroom. Highly regarded by both students and colleagues, Quentin combines a love of his subject, with a delivery style that is, simultaneously, informative and attention grabbing. Before the invention and wide-spread adoption of computer-based presentation software, and the establishment of multi-media educational offices, Quentin was seamlessly incorporating a range of materials and media into his lectures, embracing teaching techniques that didn't replace the traditional lecture but rather complemented this approach.

Quentin is, without a single doubt, a classic geographer. In both his scholarly work and environmental advocacy, he brings an impressive understanding of the connections between the physical and human dimensions of the climate change debate. And once he has linked the human and the physical, he repackages this information using a writing style that is both compelling and accessible. Quentin is not only actively engaged in doing real geography outside the post-secondary system, but the issues he tackles on a daily basis really matter!

Since immersing himself into the climate change and air quality debate nearly a decade and a half ago, Quentin has amassed an impressive record of accomplishments. But what is truly remarkable about Quentin Chiotti is that despite operating at the interface between leading-edge science and policy, and interacting on a regular basis with business leaders, highly-placed bureaucrats and elected officials, he remains very much his own person, in touch with his core values and the ideals that brought him to the environmental movement in the first place. He is overtly aware of his own ecological footprint and has organized his life (e.g., he uses public transit daily) in accordance with his environmental principles. Not only does he "talk the talk", but he "walks the walk" too!

We live in a time characterized by many big problems and, seemingly, not enough good answers. It is a time when, according to some commentators, we face an "ingenuity gap". And even though scholarship and politics may well occupy separate domains, there is much value to be gained by inserting not just geographical perspectives into political and policy debates, but geographers too. That is what Dr. Quentin Chiotti does on a daily basis. It is with great pleasure that we honour him and his contributions with the CAG Award for Geography in the Service of Government or Business.