



The Daily Gleaner

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Got an Hour to Spare for the Earth?

The day has arrived. I'm sure you have heard the ads on radio, or seen them on TV, the internet and in the newspapers - March 28th is the day the World Wildlife Federation (WWF) asks the world to share in a global movement known as Earth Hour.

I must admit, when I first heard about this event, I wasn't sold on the idea immediately. The light finally turned *on* for me when I realized that this event wasn't about saving the earth in one hour, but instead creating shared climate change awareness around the world. A call to action for citizens around the globe to turn off their lights for one hour between 8:30 and 9:30pm on Saturday, March 28th to understand the impact that one small gesture can make when made by many people together.

Here in Fredericton many businesses have pledged to take part in this movement. Locally, we are also asking Frederictonians to go one step further and turn off non-essential electronic devices such as televisions and computers, in addition to lighting. Several businesses are even hosting special events.

To start the day off, Green Matters and the Royal Astronomical Society (RASC) will be at the Boyce Farmers Market from 7am to 12 noon encouraging market-goers to participate in Earth Hour. Then later that day we will be set up at Regent Mall from 2 to 4pm - you won't miss us, as Science East will have their incredible planetarium there. Everyone is welcome to experience all the wonders of the universe: explore planets, constellations, galaxies, nebulae and star clusters through images from the Hubble telescope and see the affects of light pollution on the night sky. You can also learn more about Earth Hour and green lighting solutions.

For the evening events, I suggest turning out your lights and taking a walk around town at 8:30pm. Many businesses throughout the city have pledged their participation in Earth Hour. Downtown, buildings including City Hall, the Library and Government House will be dark. Throughout the city, Police and Fire Stations will be participating as well. For a full list of participating organizations check out www.greenmattersfredericton.com.

If you don't want to spend Earth Hour alone, head on down to the Grill on York where a group of UNB students are hosting an "Earth Hour Coffee House" from 8 to 11pm featuring performances by local musicians all by candlelight. Or head down to DJ Purdy's at the Delta Hotel where they are hosting their second annual Earth Hour "Cocktails by Candlelight" from 8:30pm to 9:30pm.

District 18 is encouraging students and their families to participate in Earth Hour as well. This reminds me of another environmental activity currently taking place - the Green Matters Essay Contest. The essay contest is sponsored by Brian Jones and TD Financial Group and is open to students currently attending Fredericton area schools in Districts 1 and 18. There are four categories: 1) Elementary school - grades K-2; 2) Elementary school - grades 3-5; 3) Middle school; and 4) High school.

The topic of the essay contest is **A Letter to the Prime Minister**. So, given the chance to speak with the Prime Minister, what would you say about your ideas and dreams for a greener, more environmentally-friendly Canada? Students can also feel free to draw a picture to go along with your submission.

At contest completion, Green Matters will be sending the essays to the Prime Minister's Office, to show him how committed Fredericton students are to protecting our environment.

For full contest details and to find some great web links to help students with research go to www.greenmattersfredericton.com and click on 2009 Green Matters Essay Writing Contest. Deadline for all submissions is 4:30 p.m. on Friday, April 3, 2009

Remember this Saturday, March 28, **VOTE Earth**, turn off your lights from 8:30 to 9:30pm and start some new earth-awareness habits.

Valerie Hillier will be 'Voting Earth' on Saturday evening as she makes her way around town witnessing the darkness. For more information on Green Matters events go to www.greenmattersfredericton.com.