

# ECOVOYAGEURS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR CANADIAN TEACHERS

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## It's Better to do One Thing than Nothing at All

This month, I read the Greenpeace Living Guide. I decided to review the book for this month's newsletter, and borrow my favourite line from its pages for my editorial: **It's Better to do One Thing than Nothing at All.**

That sentiment neatly captures the message of the EcoVoyageurs and EcoVoyageurs Junior programs – simple actions by thousands of people can, and do, add up to significant change.

A few days ago, I got into a heated discussion with a friend who likes to shout me down when I suggest things like turning off power bars, hang drying clothes or buying local foods. He tells me that every minute I speak, there are four refrigerators being plugged in in China or another car has been purchased in India. I don't know if his statistics are accurate, but I get the idea. Why do anything, when the world's population continues to grow and developing nations continue to use increasing amounts of energy and buy more and more consumer goods. Within this plaintive cry is also a faint whiff of the philosophy "why should I do anything if everyone isn't sharing the pain"? Three thoughts spring to mind.



**Millions of people around the world live on less than 3 gallons (11.4 L) of water a day. [View a slideshow on water.](#)**

**1<sup>st</sup>** I do not believe that turning off the lights, hang drying your laundry or using public transit constitutes pain or sacrifice. Living on 10 L of water a day constitutes sacrifice. Not having access to healthcare or energy is painful.

**2<sup>nd</sup>** My second thought is why we constantly shift responsibility for pollution and consumerism away from us, the world's energy hog, to developing nations where the standard of living is far below what we would consider acceptable for the poorest Canadian. We need to face up to the fact that North Americans (that includes us) consume most of the world's energy, and have been doing so for a long time. I think that makes it our obligation to reduce.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Finally, both China and India will be major contributors to world energy consumption. About twenty-five years ago, China and India accounted for less than 8 percent of the world's total energy consumption; that grew to 18 percent in 2005. It will continue to grow. Get used to it.

Since there are no alternative energy technologies to replace our current use of fossil fuels, we must change our behaviours -- one at a time if need be -- to achieve a sustainable lifestyle. We really have no choice.

I urge you and your students to record the actions you have

taken to reduce your Ecological Footprint (energy, food, garbage, transportation and water) through the [Count Yourself In](#) section of [Ecovoyageurs.ca](#).



[Lisa Kelly](#)

## Count Yourself In!

Change the world one action at a time! [More info.](#)

Energy		
Action	I'm In	Total
Replace 5 incandescent lightbulbs with 5 CFL light bulbs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	570
Turn stuff off when you leave the room.	<input type="checkbox"/>	695
Unplug or turn off the power bar	<input type="checkbox"/>	336
Reduce your television time by 25%.	<input type="checkbox"/>	404

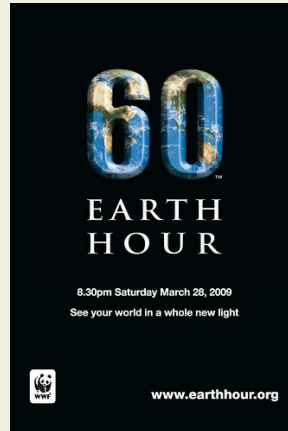
# Earth Hour

## 8:30 p.m. March 28, 2009

I spent Earth Hour in Toronto with friends and family. Our intent was to send a powerful message to the federal, provincial and municipal governments that it is time to take climate change seriously. Toronto was just one of the 3,937 towns/cities in 88 countries that turned out their lights on March 28, 2009. I was delighted to learn that Canada was once again among the leading countries participating in Earth Hour.

According to the WWF, Canadian cities experienced the following energy drops:

Calgary	10 MW	1 %	
Edmonton		5.2%	
Victoria		3.1%	
Vancouver		1.3%	
Toronto	455 MW	15 %	
Mississauga		10 %	
Ottawa		6 %	
Oakville		13.3%	
Peterborough		10 %	
<b>Richmond Hill</b>	<b>43 MW</b>	<b>27 %</b>	<b>WOW!</b>
Saskatoon		1.2%	



The provinces of New Brunswick reduced energy use by 20 MW, Newfoundland and Labrador by 1% , Nova Scotia by 15 MW (1%), **Prince Edward Island (9.7%)**, Quebec by 150 MW (5%) and Ontario by 920 MW (6%).

A special nod to Richmond Hill Ontario and Prince Edward Island.

What do these numbers mean? For Toronto, these savings are the equivalent of 81,900 kg of CO<sup>2</sup> **not** going into our atmosphere. Or put another way, it is the same as taking 13.65 cars off the road for a year, or 273,000 km not driven in a vehicle. It only costs one hour out of the 8,760 potential hours in just one year. I think that it was better to turn off those lights than do nothing at all. Imagine that reduction on a monthly basis? A weekly basis? Or even a daily basis? It boggles the mind. Visit <http://wwf.ca/earthhour/> to calculate the CO<sup>2</sup> savings for your province or city.

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# Earth Day 2009

## What Will Your School Do?

Looking for some inspiration for Earth Day? Visit [The Earth Day Network](http://The Earth Day Network) for a feature on 2008 Earth Day green makeovers.



You can also visit [www.ecovoyageurs.ca](http://www.ecovoyageurs.ca) for ideas for your school.



**Review** some excellent eco-projects undertaken by classes and schools across the country in [The EcoSchools section](http://The EcoSchools section).

**Express** your eco-message through free *Walking Wednesday* stickers, *Turn off the tap/lights* signs, *No Junk* mail signs and mini posters available through [The Downloads section](http://The Downloads section).

**Sign up your class or school** in the [Count Yourself In](http://Count Yourself In) school section to record your efforts in reducing your Ecological Footprint. Count Yourself In is a Web-based tracking tool that provides actionable steps to reduce your impact of the environment. Pick one or two actions in the water, transportation, energy, food, and garbage areas and commit your class to reducing their ecological footprints. Over 57,316 actions have been taken by schools across Canada. [Join now](http://Join now) and take one action to change the world.



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## Book Beat

### The Greenpeace Living Guide



There are a lot of guides out there on what we can do, or should not do, to reduce our Ecological Footprint. I recently came across a really excellent one. The Greenpeace Living Guide is divided into clean living, big issues and resources. In the words of Stephen Lewis "a guide for all of us who want to take small, deliberate steps to change the world."

[The Greenpeace Living Guide](http://The Greenpeace Living Guide), Greenpeace Canada, Edited by Amy Katz, 2008, ISBN 978-0-9732337-3-5



**EcoVoyageurs** is a series of free teaching resources based on the Ecological Footprint concept. All focus on our ability to live within the limits of the Earth's resources. Materials include the [intermediate print kit](#) (classroom posters and teachers' guide with lesson plans and student worksheets) and its companion [Web site; Count Yourself In](#) (a Web-based tracking tool that provides actionable steps to reduce your impact of the environment) and coming soon: junior materials.

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