

EARTH DAY: MAKE AN EARTH DAY RESOLUTION



BECKY POLLOCK
Column

Earth Day is a chance to make resolutions, just like New Year's Day. The best part is that positive actions have a ripple effect — better planet, better health, better future. While we urgently need more action from governments, industry and the investment sector, I still believe individual actions make a difference and I am inspired by social movements in history that have changed the world.

Climate change is changing the world in the

worst way, with extreme heat, food shortages, rising oceans, loss of species and human suffering. Canada has some of the highest per capita emissions but has done less than many other nations for clean energy, either by phasing out dirty fuel or creating more resilient communities that can handle extreme impacts.

My kids are passionate about taking action on climate change — it's their future. They want our family to watch how much we drive or bike, how much energy we use, how much we buy new and how much plastic we use. Thinking about how much consumption there is in our society, our wants versus needs, has made us feel a responsibility to make our environmental footprint smaller.



After asking about it, my kids found that washing in cold water saves half a ton of carbon dioxide emissions. Using a drying rack in winter and a clothesline at other times of the year is less convenient, but saves another half-ton. We don't think about how it has created new habits or saves money on energy — we just notice the smell of sunshine!

Our kids asked us to order an electric vehicle for Christmas instead of presents and so we are saving by making holidays simpler, avoiding purchasing things that we don't really need and lowering our energy bills with smart meters and the efficient use of appliances, lights and the

furnace. The electric car will save five tons of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and will become a new normal within a generation.

Running a gas-powered lawn mower for an hour emits the same GHGs as driving 550 kilometres and more toxic pollution than idling 40 new cars for an hour. We now use an electric mower and leave half our yard unmowed for bees and butterflies.

Some of the hardest habits to change are about food. Hundreds of studies confirm that the impacts of clearing land, raising, packaging and shipping meat globally has a massive impact on our planet. Beef, dairy and other foods we love are now looked at in a new way. Can we buy less, buy local? Budget to buy organic? Can beef become an exception, like my kids ask for their birthday dinners? While we have added vegetarian recipes, more fish and low-meat dishes, our culture pushes

convenience foods with major health consequences. By shifting how we look at these "treats" and thinking about gourmet, local or homemade foods in new ways, we are helping the earth. If 60 per cent of food produced is wasted in homes, restaurants and grocery stores, shouldn't we just buy less, eat what we buy and compost scraps into soil?

Making resolutions once a year makes every day Earth Day. Our actions show governments and companies that we want a better planet and are willing to change. What we buy and how we live is all part of the global ripple effect.

Dr. Becky Pollock, executive director of the Georgian Bay Mnidoo Gamii Biosphere, works with partners in eastern Georgian Bay to uphold the UNESCO designation for the region with programs for education, conservation, climate and culture. Visit gbr.ca to learn more.

TIPS FROM THE DAVID SUZUKI FOUNDATION

- A house with a furnace is like a car that idles all day. Swap your furnace for a heat pump, which works by extracting heat from one location and transferring it to another.
- Install a programmable thermostat.
- Swap your gas stove for an electric stove, which will also lower indoor air pollution.
- Unplug computers, TVs and other electronics when you're not using them.
- Wash clothes in cold water. Hang-dry your clothes when you can and use dryer balls when you can't.
- Look for the Energy Star label when buying new appliances.
- Winterize your home to prevent heat from escaping and try to keep it cool in the summer without an air conditioner.
- Change to energy-efficient light bulbs.
- Get a home or workplace energy audit to identify where you can make the most energy-saving gains.



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"Give Where You Live"

It is April and time for the "Give Where You Live" campaign in support of Cancer Assistance Services of Halton Hills (CAShh).

Please help us to continue to provide our vital services to those dealing with a cancer diagnosis in the community of Halton Hills.

You can donate in a number of ways;

- On line 'single' or 'monthly' donations through our website at www.cancerassistance.org/donate/
- Mail a cheque to the CAShh office
- Donation drop off at the CAShh Office Mailbox (contact the office for location)

Did you know?

- CAShh provides free transportation and practical home care support to our clients.
- We do not receive any government funding nor are we associated with any cancer organization.
- We rely on our April Campaign to generate a large portion of our income for the year.

Thank you to all of the wonderful volunteers and generous donors in the community of Halton Hills. We cannot do what we do without you!

DONATE TODAY

www.cancerassistance.org

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