

In the dark

Although the challenge to have our entire town turn off its lights for one hour tomorrow (Saturday), starting at 8 p.m., is largely a symbolic gesture, the idea is to spread the message about the importance of reducing our carbon footprint.

Last year, in Australia, more than two million homeowners and businesses in Sydney—including the world-famous Sydney Opera House—turned off their lights for one hour.

The gesture created a 10 per cent reduction in hydro use while preventing about 25,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide—about the equivalent of taking 50,000 cars off the road for one hour—from being released into the atmosphere.

This year's World Wildlife event is expected to see as many as 20 major cities across six continents helping to spread the message that we can all impact climate change in some way. The objectives of Earth Hour are simple:

- Get as many individuals, households and businesses as possible to turn off their lights as a symbolic statement that now is the time to take action on climate change
- Educate the community on the threat of climate change and what each individual and business can do to make a difference every day
- Get corporate participants to commit to turning off their lights and communicate Earth Hour through internal and external communications channels
- Measure the change in energy and greenhouse gas savings

As we said, this is largely a symbolic gesture—you certainly won't notice any improvement in the quality of air you breathe nor will there be an immediate difference when it comes to climate change. This exercise is designed to get more people thinking about ways they can lessen their dependency on electricity and ways to cut down on wasting power.

So don't forget, it's lights out for an hour at 8 p.m. tomorrow night.

What do you think?

Below are the results of our most recent online poll. For the current poll go to www.independentfreepress.com

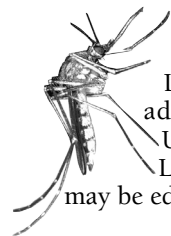
Was Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan right to focus on jobs training in this week's provincial budget or should he have cut business taxes as suggested by federal finance minister Jim Flaherty?

Focus on jobs training 16%

Cut business taxes (84%)

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited for content and/or length.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POWER against naming school after trustee

(This letter was sent to Halton District School Board trustees. A copy was made available for publication.)

Dear Trustees,

"A school should be named after Ethel Gardiner but not THIS school." This comment, by one of Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources (P.O.W.E.R.)'s directors, sums up the feeling of our organization.

Ethel Gardiner was a great person, and a fine trustee, and naming a school after her is an honour that is well deserved. But she has no association with the new school and does not reflect the significance of what this school name should symbolize. We believe that Ms. Gardiner taught at Pineview and Centennial and that the renaming of one of these schools

would be a better reflection of her contribution.

Since this school is being built to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards, and will have an environmental focus, we believe the name should not only reflect this positive direction but also serve as an encouragement to young learners. We recommend the name for our new Halton Hills school will illustrate the school's direction and serve as a stimulus to our youth and to help shape their view of the future.

There are many, noted Canadians who could better reflect the vision for the new school. Environmental activist David Suzuki; broadcaster and Greenpeace founder Bob Hunter; William Rees, originator of the

Ecological Footprint; singer/songwriter Sarah Harmer, who founded Protecting Escarpment Rural Land (PERL); Nobel Peace Prize winner Gordon McBean; CBC science host Bob McDonald; Canadian artist and naturalist Robert Bateman, and others such as Gord Miller, Monte Hummel, Farley Mowat, Margaret Atwood or Maurice Strong.

It could also be a name that helps focus on the need to learn about, and take action for, ecological security. Here the options are many: Eco; EcoFutures; Ecologica; Sustainable Future; Pangaea (whole world being one); Footprint; Gaia; Diversity or Next Generation are just a few of the many options.

Leslie Adams, president (P.O.W.E.R.)

Stores should carry more locally-grown food—group

(This letter was sent to Loblaw's Executive chairman Galen Weston. A copy was made available for publication.)

Dear Mr. Weston,

We observe with dismay that it is becoming harder and harder to find locally grown produce in our grocery stores. Growers in Ontario and across Canada grow foods we would buy, but instead we see them displaced by fruits and vegetables from California, Peru and China.

Even in the summer, when we know they're available on local farms, we find foreign produce in the stores. This is wrong!

If we're going to save the planet for our grandchildren, we can't keep shipping food across the continent in refrigerated trucks powered by fossil fuels. We watch farmers around us sell out to developers and feel ourselves falling into a trap. Just when we begin to understand the value of "eating local" we see grocery stores refusing to stock local food.

Mr. Weston we think you're missing a huge potential market in consumers who actively look for local meats and produce. Imagine a special display in each of your stores featuring just Ontario produce—whatever happens to be available at the time.

A beef grower in our congregation is delighted to be selling their grainfed beef to Loblaw's through a co-operative. We hope you expand and promote this initiative.

To celebrate Earth Hour tomorrow we're going to dine together, with our husbands and friends. It will be a candlelit meal and will be a feast of Ontario-grown foods. We would be delighted if you could make it easier for us to find and enjoy local meats, and produce, every week in every one of your stores.

Tri S group of St. John's United Church, Georgetown