



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Keswick's Prince of Peace Catholic Elementary School was ranked as the second best energy-efficient school in North America because of its energy conservation. Alex Pugliese, 6 (from front), Vincent Squires, 11, principal Janis Scully and head custodian Darren Peters all do their part to help make the school green. Harry Bowes Public School was tops in Stouffville.

# York schools among continent's greenest

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York Region schools don't mind being in the dark — literally — when it comes to energy conservation.

The York Catholic District School Board has eight schools and the York Region District School Board, four, in Sustainable Schools' recently released list of the top 20 energy performing schools in North America.

Taking second place this year is Keswick's Prince of Peace Catholic Elementary School, which was 0.27 Watts of total energy intensity behind the top school.

Principal Janis Scully attributed the success to her students and staff who are environmentally minded.

The school follows the bricks and mortar policies set out by the school board, including temperature limits for classrooms, maintenance and installing features such as its geothermal ground source unit, which sends liquid through an underground pipe to be heated, then run through coils in the school to preheat the air, meaning less energy from an electrical or gas heating source is required, she said.

However, the big difference is the human factor, having staff and students work together to reduce the school's energy consumption, Ms Scully said.

The student-led and staff-supervised eco club is active in spreading word about any initiatives at the school.

Every classroom has student eco monitor who turns off lights and computer monitors and records any initiatives completed that day.

"The key is to have students and staff involved or it just wouldn't work," Ms Scully said.

Having so many schools in the top 20 validates the conservation efforts of the school board and individual schools, York Catholic environmental and office services senior manager Norm Vezina said.

There are three branches to energy management: design and construction, operation and maintenance and occupant behaviour.

The school board uses LEED silver standards in new schools.

It installed automated systems such as timers that shut off lights and heat when the building is not occupied, conducts preventative maintenance and ensures the schools are clean.

The biggest challenge is altering

behaviour. The entire school has to buy into the plan to make a difference, not just one staff member or student, Mr. Vezina said.

The board began a campaign to raise awareness about energy conservation.

It implemented real-time electricity data system that shows schools how much energy they are using at any given time and built the data into lessons.

The first monitor was installed in Richmond Hill's Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Elementary School, where its use resulted in a 10-per-cent energy use reduction in one year.

The initiatives haven't stopped since energy consumption became an official priority in 2000.

Next, the school board plans to revisit older schools and ensure system components are working properly and efficiently and there are plans to launch a lunchtime energy reduction challenge.

"We want to promote turning the lights off in the classroom if they are not needed and they really aren't needed at lunch time," Mr. Vezina said.

The real-time monitoring system will examine energy consumption from 9 to 11:30 a.m. and

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., compare the two periods and calculate the difference.

All elementary schools will be informed of the 10 schools with the greatest reduction to create a friendly competition.

Markham's Sir Wilfrid Laurier Public School ranked fourth on the top 20 list but received special mention for being the most energy-efficient school with conventional heating, high efficiency natural gas boilers and energy recovery ventilation system.

Woodbridge's Immaculate Conception Catholic Elementary School received a shout out for being the most improved school and St. Emily Catholic Elementary School in Woodbridge coming third of five on the same list.

Aurora's Cardinal Carter Catholic High School made the top five energy-conserving secondary schools.

Sustainable Schools offers benchmarking, performance monitoring and training in best practices to help school boards set and achieve energy conservation goals.

For more information, visit [trca.on.ca/sus](http://trca.on.ca/sus)

## YORK'S BEST

- ▶ 2. Prince of Peace Catholic Elementary School, Keswick
- ▶ 3. Immaculate Conception Catholic Elementary School, Woodbridge
- ▶ 4. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Markham
- ▶ 9. Sir Richard W. Scott Catholic Elementary School, Markham
- ▶ 10. St. Anne Catholic Elementary School, Richmond Hill
- ▶ 12. Rogers, Newmarket
- ▶ 14. St. Clare Catholic Elementary School, Woodbridge
- ▶ 15. Christ the King Catholic Elementary School, Richmond Hill
- ▶ 17. King City Public School, King
- ▶ 18. Herbert Carnegie Public School, Maple
- ▶ 19. Harry Bowes Public School, Stouffville
- ▶ 20. St. Clement Catholic Elementary School, Woodbridge