



# The Daily Gleaner

## Let's Start a Christmas 'Green' Revolution!

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Many of us cringe when retailers and advertisers 'push' Christmas even before we've had a chance to take our Halloween pumpkins from the front step to the composter. But this is life in our 'era of consumption'. And November means that Christmas shopping is ramping up and party planning is underway. So I thought I would get a jump on 'pushing' a green revolution this Christmas!

This column focuses on two areas impacting our city's greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) – 1) curbside waste; and 2) energy use. If we all make just a few 'green' changes to our Christmas practices and habits we will have contributed to reducing our city's annual GHG emissions. Yes – they are being measured, and yes, it matters! Fredericton's goal is to be the first city in Canada to reach Kyoto GHG reduction targets by 2010.

So how does one begin? First, let's start with waste. I challenge you to re-think your typical buying patterns when it comes to Christmas gifts. Here are a few suggestions to consider:

- Be creative with Christmas greeting cards. Many people are sending digital/e-mail cards, but if you prefer the 'old-fashioned' way, make sure your cards are recyclable and are made of recycled paper. And to save an envelope, consider sending greeting cards in 'postcard' format with the mailing address on the other side of the picture and greeting.
- Choose gifts with minimal packaging that ultimately ends up curbside or in your recycling bin (YES, recycling is good – but reducing waste takes priority as significant energy is consumed transporting and processing recycling!). This is particularly important when it comes to children's toys – note the bulky packaging and choose toys with less!
- Challenge your family to use 'creative' wrapping techniques that will save buying and disposing of wrapping paper. Use gift bags, boxes, baskets or containers that can be reused, or wrap gifts in newsprint and use a cloth ribbon.
- Have you thought about cutting down on the quantity of gifts given? Maybe it is time to start exchanging names in your family – give one 'quality' gift to one person, versus many gifts to many! This reduces your family's carbon footprint for the long term.
- Finally, when you are out shopping – take your own carry bags and decline the plastic bag from the store – this is a great contribution to waste reduction in the city. Many of us, together, can start a 'plastic bag revolt' this Christmas!!

Now let's talk energy. The City's Green Matters campaign is running a seasonal Energy campaign to inform and encourage Frederictonians to reduce energy consumption this

fall and winter. In the spirit of the campaign, let's consider how we can reduce excessive energy use this Christmas season:

- Use LED for indoor and outdoor Christmas lights. This doesn't mean tossing your old lights in the garbage (that wouldn't contribute to our waste reduction effort)! Start by replacing all broken sets with LED, and collect your broken sets in your garage or basement until our region is mobilized to recycle them. Also, watch for newspaper ads from local stores with special days where you can take in your old lights and get a coupon towards a new set of LED lights.
- Put Christmas lights on a timer so they don't stay on all night.
- Give compact fluorescent bulbs or a programmable thermostat for a gift. Of course, not everyone is going to welcome a new thermostat as their Christmas gift! Have fun with it and wrap it in a cozy blanket or a sweater from one of Fredericton's great outdoor shops! This will support your cause to keep the heat turned down a few degrees in your home this winter.

I challenge you to shape your Christmas celebrations with the environment in mind. Encourage friends and family to do the same, and Christmas may no longer seem so wasteful. Who knows, as you 'tread more lightly on the earth' this season, you may feel just a little more peace and contentment as a result. In our age of stress and over commitment, it's certainly worth a try!

Sonya Hull is project manager for the City's *Green Matters* greenhouse gas reduction campaign. For more ways to celebrate Christmas with the earth in mind check out [www.greenmattersfredericton.com](http://www.greenmattersfredericton.com) in the coming weeks. And later in the month watch for Valerie Hillier's column on 'green' Christmas party planning.