



The Daily Gleaner

It's About One Step at a Time

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Does green matter? I think it does and according to polls, so do most Canadians. I often hear people expressing concern about the state of our environment. Unfortunately, many Canadians feel the problems facing us are simply too complex and overwhelming for them to do anything about. Perhaps individually we just don't realize how much we can do to impede global warming and create real environmental change.

In February 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released an assessment report, which included the input of more than 1,200 authors and 2,500 scientific expert reviewers from more than 130 countries. The report concludes that it is now "unequivocal" that the planet is heating up. The report finds that it is "very likely" that emissions of heat-trapping gases from human activities have caused "most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century."

The good news is that taking action to change the current situation really isn't that difficult though perhaps a little inconvenient at times. My thinking has always been that if we created the problem then surely we have the know-how and tools to fix it.

For years now, I have changed the way I do so many things, and am continually searching for new ways to conserve energy, waste less and do more for the health of the environment. Approximately ten months ago, I watched the now widely recognized climate change wake-up call film by Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth*. After seeing the movie, like so many people, I was inspired to do even more.

That night, I thought about all the things I incorporated into my life: walking to work, composting, hanging clothes to dry, etc. Wondering what more I could do, I decided to share those aspects of my life with other people. In September 2006, I sent out my first e-newsletter, *A Challenge to Inconvenience Yourself*. Every week since, I send out challenges to a list of people including friends, family, and colleagues and now, a few people I have never met. My challenges are basically lifestyle tips on how to make changes to regular everyday habits, which in some way compromise the health of the earth. The list of recipients has more than doubled since sending out my first challenge and people from all over the country tell me they are changing the way they live their lives.

Many of the comments I received in the beginning were, "this is the kind of kick in the butt I needed" and "I've always wanted to do more but just didn't know how to start". Nowadays, I am receiving funny anecdotal stories about "being the talk of the neighbourhood with a manual push mower" or hearing about personal initiatives such as an anti-idling campaign for cars. It has been very rewarding to hear how so many people are creating real change.

The *Green Matters* campaign recently launched by the City of Fredericton is an effort to reduce both corporate and community greenhouse gas emissions in order to be the first city in Canada to meet the Kyoto greenhouse gas reduction targets. I have no doubt that this is a realistic goal and one that can be achieved by making very simple changes in our everyday lives

Here's an idea to get you started today. Go to your local grocery or department store and buy a handful of reusable cloth bags. Take them with you on every trip you make to the grocery store instead of using grocer supplied plastic bags. I have been it for more than 13 years now. How hard can that be? Like me, I think you will find that first step is the beginning of a journey you'll never regret embarking upon.

To sign up for Valerie's challenges newsletter, visit www.greenmattersfredericton.com and check out the Green Matters Heroes section.