



The Daily Gleaner

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Hope over the Holidays

HOPE: defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary as: *to desire with expectation of obtainment.*

Whenever I think that people might be losing hope for the environment, I simply look around and am quickly reminded that they are not. How do I know this? Everywhere I go there is evidence that people still believe there is something they can contribute to reducing the effects of climate change and create a healthy planet. Five years ago, there were perhaps only a handful of people using their own bags at grocery stores, but while standing in line the other day I didn't see one person or family *without* their own reusable bags. And though there continues to be regular weekly pickup at the big blue recycling containers (like the one on the FREX grounds) they seem to always be full. I see more and more people walking and even cycling to work all year round. What does this tell me? It tells me that people have hope.

So what is it exactly that we are hopeful for? And with all of the discouraging news coming out of the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference this past week, why are they hopeful?

I feel that hope is intrinsic to our nature; it is a basic human survival tool. The interesting thing about hope, is that by having it, we are prompted to take some sort of action. It is a bit of a revolving door actually: hope encourages action, which in turn encourages more hope. This leads me to believe that the more action we take the more hope there will be, and therefore, we will create positive change with respect to environment issues.

Last week, a friend's status on Facebook read "Hopenhagen". I thought this was very clever, so I went online and see what more I could find out about this description of the current talks in Denmark. I quickly found the Hopenhagen website (www.hopenhagen.org) and discovered that Hopenhagen is a movement, a moment, and a chance at a new beginning. The hope that in Copenhagen, during the United Nations Climate Change Conference – we can build a better future for our planet and a more sustainable way of life. It is the hope that we can create a global community that will push our leaders into making the right decisions. The promise that by solving our environmental crisis, we can solve our economic crisis at the same time. "Hopenhagen is change – and that change will be powered by all of us."

With respect to the environment, I truly believe that change is not only possible, but also, completely doable. The technology and the know-how already exists throughout the world to obtain aggressive greenhouse gas reduction targets, if so chosen. However, what it takes to implement and use that technology is strong public and political will. If you hope for a better tomorrow, whether it be less pollution, less waste, less consumption or fewer hungry people – believe, have hope, and take action now in your own life.

It is around this time each year when we hear the word HOPE more than at other times of the year. This is quite appropriate considering the end of the year is a time to reflect and set new goals for the New Year. The truly wonderful thing about hope is that it is free - no matter where you are in the world, no matter who you are, you can still have HOPE and that is my Christmas wish for the planet. And in 2010 I challenge you to back your hope up with action – both in your own life, and by encouraging others to join you in living differently for the sake of the environment.

Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian who has great hope for citizens' capacity to make change on behalf of the planet. She turns her hope into large and small actions each day and urges you to do the same. For some ways to change check out www.greenmattersfredericton.com.