

The Daily Gleaner

Green Matters for the Daily Gleaner

April 11, 2011

By Peter Corbyn

Thing Global, Act Local: Green Your Spring Clean Up!

I recently finished instructing an online course at UCLA for people interested in teaching high school students about climate change. There was definitely a common theme amongst my online students with regards to how best to teach about climate change and other environmental issues: give them an experience!

It is one thing to tell students and the public about the plight of polar bears, or flooding in other countries, but it is entirely another thing to see it and live it firsthand. However, we cannot all go to the North Pole to see what is happening to the polar bears, or to other countries to experience devastating floods. But wait, we are experiencing more dramatic and frequent flooding right here in New Brunswick, right? So the lesson is that we should pay heed to climate change experiential learning opportunities right here in our own backyards (literally), and in our greater backyards (our community, our province, our region, and our country).

Most homeowners in Fredericton will go outside in the next few weeks to clean up our properties. We will pick up broken branches, dust off our driveways, and clean our yards, gardens, patios and decks. All of these activities are done out of pride for our homes and our outdoor spaces. So now, let me challenge you to think of the city, the province, the country, and the planet as our larger homes.

Many of us have household hazardous waste in our homes, such as used oils, chemicals, paints and thinners. Did you know that the Fredericton Region Solid Waste Commission (FRSWC), at 1775 Alison Blvd, accepts household hazardous waste every Wednesday and Saturday. Perhaps you could organize a neighbourhood hazardous waste day and get a group neighbours together to take one load to the Waste Commission so it can be safely disposed of, or recycled, without harm to the environment. Remember New Brunswick now collects paint for recycling (check out www.recyclenb.com to see what can be recycled and where the drop-off depots are, including FRSWC).

Now what can you do as an environmental steward of your Province? The Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB) is hosting its Spring into Action Annual Auction Fundraiser on Saturday, April 30 at the Crowne Plaza in Fredericton. CCNB is a committed action-oriented green champion for New Brunswick. I encourage you to join Marshall Button and friends for their annual auction. It's for a great cause – our province's environmental health!

The Daily Gleaner

What can you do about helping improve the environmental performance of Canada? VOTE! I encourage you to check out the environmental platforms of each political party, most of which address the environment in some way on their party website. Here are some key points:

- The Liberals are proposing a green renovation tax credit for homeowners.
- The Conservatives – I actually can't find anything! Ouch.
- The NDP envision a clean and sustainable economy; and
- The Green Party's vision includes a focus on sustainable development in virtually all aspects of our lives.

And what about being a citizen of Planet Earth? Well, perhaps that comes back to what we do in our home, in our neighbourhood, and our city. We all know the now famous quote: "Think Global, Act Local", and here is its history, as provided by Wikipedia:

"The original phrase 'Think Global, Act Local' has been attributed to Scots town planner and social activist Patrick Geddes. Although the exact phrase does not appear in Geddes' 1915 book 'Cities in Evolution', the idea (as applied to city planning) is clearly evident: 'Local character' is thus no mere accidental old-world quaintness, as its mimics think and say. It is attained only in course of adequate grasp and treatment of the whole environment, and in active sympathy with the essential and characteristic life of the place concerned."

So let us take pride in our property this Spring – pick up, clean up, neaten up, and fix up. Let our space be visually pleasing for ourselves and our neighbours. And as we do this, let's green up our habits, supplies and materials: reduce, even as we build and repair; and reuse and recycle, before we dispose of. Think Global, Act Local.

Peter Corbyn is Special Advisor to The Climate Project Canada and co-founder of GreenNexus.com.