



The Daily Gleaner

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Top 5 List for 2009

Each year it seems that fewer and fewer people are making New Year's resolutions. The main reason for this is that often our resolutions are either too many or too lofty and we have trouble keeping them, which of course creates disappointment.

As for me, I still try to make at least one manageable resolution each year. And there are several that I keep from year-to-year as well. In case you haven't made your own resolutions yet, I thought I would share some ideas with you from my Top 5 List for 2009. The great thing about this 'green' list is that once you get started on a few of them, they are habit forming and your resolution fast becomes 'life as usual'!

5. Reduce energy consumption

- Hang your washing to dry (outside in the summer and inside during the winter).
- Search for leaks around windows and doors, and get out the caulking gun.
- Turn down the thermostat a few degrees and invest in a warm sweater or blanket.

4. Lead by example

- Recycle at home and at work.
- Start backyard composting or better yet, involve your neighbours and start a community-composting program (best to wait until Spring!).
- Talk to neighbours and friends about some of the environmental changes you are making (these changes can also save your money – that should get their attention!).

3. Buy local - help the local economy, your wallet and the earth

- Buy foods and products produced close to home.
- Re-use – there are lots of small local businesses that buy and sell used clothing and household goods – check them out!
- Discover weekend getaways in your own backyard - plan for short-trip vacations closer to home – save on gas, money and energy.

2. Become more active at taking action

- Get involved with a local conservation or environmental organization, or your children's school and start a green team or club.
- Become a member of the green committee at work or start one up.

- Write to your political representatives - local, provincial or federal - about your environmental concerns.
- Hold an eco-event at work, home or with your church or community organization.

1. Learn more – this is on the top of my list this year. I hope to learn more about the science of global warming and how others are taking creative steps to change it.

- Watch a documentary - there are a lot of environmental documentaries to discover. *An Inconvenient Truth* is always a great movie to re-watch as well.
- Read more – Stop by the local bookstore or library, there is a plethora of books out there about the environment, climate change, pollution, etc.
- Attend “green” events: workshops, festivals, or talks – often you will find several experts at these events who you can talk to one-on-one
- Sign up for a weekly or monthly environmental newsletter. Keep in mind that there are a lot of options out there – I suggest reading a few articles from different organizations to find out which newsletter you enjoy before subscribing.

I continue to make resolutions each year as a way to improve things in my life. Sometimes I fall off the wagon, which is not a bad thing as it often makes me even more resolute to get back on and do even better.

2008 was a tumultuous year – a year full of change, both unsettling and exciting. In 12 short months we have seen a historical US election; Canadian political turmoil and the possibility of a coalition government; and of course increasing economic uncertainty. I can imagine that all of this has you thinking about what might be on the horizon in 2009. I cannot predict what will happen in the political or economic realms, but I do know that I will focus on the things I can control and continue to make positive environmental changes in my own life and hopefully in the lives of those around me.

Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian who continually challenges herself and those around her to look for ways to be more environmentally responsible in their daily lives. For some ideas check out www.greenmattersfredericton.ca