



Westmount celebrates
its 10th Earth Hour

Description

Turn off your lights and join this ever-popular event

By **Tony Moffat**

Earth Hour is a global grassroots environmental movement celebrated annually on the last Saturday evening (or 2nd last if Easter falls then, as it does this year) of March. At 20:30 local time, across 24 time zones and 6 continents, power is extinguished, lights go out – including the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The goal is to raise awareness of the devastating effects of light pollution on human, animal and plant life, the impact of unnecessary energy consumption on all aspects of our environment, and their wider repercussions on climate change.

Light pollution (LP) is increasing at an alarming rate worldwide: 6% per year.

Light pollution (LP) is increasing at an alarming rate worldwide: 6% per year. Left unchecked, the exponential increase of LP could reach intolerable levels for humans, animals and plants alike. We need darkness at night! Without it, essential sleep is compromised and many animals lose their orientation. In a broader sense, LP is a symptom of our environmental carelessness, especially the squandering of non-renewable energy sources such as fossil fuels which is contributing significantly to a runaway anthropogenic growth in green-house gases (GHGs), and hence global warming.



These concerns galvanized the citizens of Sidney, Australia, into launching Earth Hour in 2007. Westmount followed in 2009. Our initial objective was to alert our fellow citizens to the adverse effects of our unconstrained use of energy on the environment in general and, in particular, the significant contribution that our excessive use of outdoor lighting makes to the pollution of the night sky.

‘Various kiosks will be on display, including a mock-up home with rooms featuring interactive displays and activities to show how we can be most sustainable in reducing greenhouse gases and pollution.’

Our first two EH celebrations were held outside at the Westmount Lookout. Amateur astronomers, with their precious telescopes, showed us some of the more brilliant wonders of the night sky. Sadly, more numerous, fainter objects are no longer visible even without the full moon, even through a telescope, due to the brightness of urban night skies. Mayor Peter Trent and his cohorts, including George Bowser and Stan Grossman, played and sang (with frozen fingers) environmental songs. Hydro Westmount doused the lights at the Lookout, which helped greatly. However, the following year, in 2010, a brisk cold wind blew from the North, driving us into the civilized warmth of Victoria Hall for subsequent EH events.



This year, our theme will be **Zero Waste – Zero Emissions. What can we do to reduce our impact on climate change?** Various kiosks will be on display, including a mock-up home with rooms featuring interactive displays and activities to show how we can, in each of those rooms, be most sustainable in reducing greenhouse gases and pollution in our effort to mitigate climate change.

The evening programme includes a brief speech by our **MP Marc Garneau**, former president of the Canadian Space Agency and first Canadian astronaut and record three times in space, where he was able to witness light pollution globally from above and how it was growing each time. There will also be four workshops, including one for young people. Mouton Noir will be serving delicious vegetarian food.

‘... the amateur astronomers of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada will be outside pointing their telescopes skyward to provide splendid views of the giant planet Jupiter... our Moon and other celestial delights.’

Throughout EH, weather permitting, the amateur astronomers of the **Royal Astronomical Society of Canada/Montreal Centre** will be outside pointing their telescopes skyward to provide splendid views of the giant planet Jupiter with its amazing four bright orbiting moons (discovered in 1610 by Galileo and which changed our view of the Universe forever), our Moon and other celestial delights. Hydro Westmount will douse the lights around Victoria Hall for better viewing and as an example of what the whole City could look like with reduced lighting. The RCMP Pipes and Drums Band will announce with great fanfare the beginning of the actual Earth Hour at 8:30 pm.



Come and join us at Victoria Hall, 4626 Sherbrooke W, on **Saturday, March 24, 2018** from 4:30 pm till 9:30 pm for this year's celebration of Earth Hour, along with the growing number of enthusiasts who now participate each year!

Sign-up to our newsletter
and get email notification
of our most recent articles

[Sign up](#)

Feature image: courtesy of Earth hour-WWF

All other images: Morrie Portnoff, RASC Montreal Centre

Read also: [Sustainability: Golden opportunities](#)



Anthony (Tony) F. J. Moffat

Emeritus professor of astronomy & astrophysics in the Département de physique at the Université de Montréal, Dr. Moffat was appointed Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2001. His interests focus on massive stars (helium-burning Wolf-Rayet stars in particular), stellar winds, binary stars, as well as the structure and dynamics of our own Galaxy.



Category

- 1. Article | Environment
- 2. Westmount

Tags

- 1. Climate Change
- 2. Earth Hour
- 3. Tony Moffat

Date Created

March 2018