



Westmount celebrates
its 11th Earth Hour

Description

Turn off your lights and come 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) 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.

Earth Hour is a global grassroots environmental movement celebrated annually on the last Saturday evening... This year, our theme will be “Single Use – Let’s all reduce!

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 greenhouse 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 continued objective is 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, with an eye on how we can be most sustainable in reducing greenhouse gases and pollution... complemented by a children’s craft corner, film screenings, healthy food and snacks...’

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 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 **Single Use – Let’s all reduce!** Various kiosks will be on display, with an eye on how we can be most sustainable in reducing greenhouse gases and pollution in our effort to mitigate climate change. This will be complemented by a children’s craft corner, film screenings, healthy food and snacks available along with organic wine, beer and juices at a cash bar.

‘... the amateur astronomers of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada/Montreal Centre will be outside pointing their telescopes skyward to provide splendid views of various celestial delights.’

The evening programme also 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. MNA **Jennifer Maccarone** and Deputy Mayor, Councillor **Marina Brzeski** will also address those present. A children’s workshop on recycled arts and crafts will be led by Ingrid Birker and the **RCMP Pipes & Drums Band** will signal, with typical fanfare, the beginning of Earth Hour at 8:30 pm.



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 various 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.

Come and join us at Victoria Hall, 4626 Sherbrooke W, on **Saturday, March 30, 2019**, from 5 pm till 10 pm for this year's celebration of *Earth Hour*, along with the growing number of enthusiasts who now participate each year!

The Westmount *Earth Hour* event is held in collaboration with the **Westmount Healthy City Project**.

Feature image: courtesy of Earth Hour-WWF

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