



Chalk Talk

Greetings

Feature

News

Energy Info

PLEASE SHARE CHALK TALK WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES!!!

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Why is it that right about now every year, I start to feel like one of the Griswolds in the subversive holiday film, **National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation**? The Griswold's beleaguered Dad, Clark, wants the Norman Rockwell dream — a perfect memory-making celebration that is full of tradition and family togetherness. Clark works so hard to deliver this fantasy that we just know he is doomed to fail. The tree cutting outing is a disaster, yielding an ill-fated tree that won't fit in the backyard let alone the living room. Their house is decorated with 25,000 (count'em!) light bulbs. Though Clark checks every bulb to see if one of them is 'out', they won't light up. He is unaware that he has connected all of them to a switch that resides in a little-used storeroom. When a family member accidentally trips the switch, the blast of light not only blinds their neighbours but causes the local power plant to switch to nuclear generators for back-up power. For those of you who haven't seen the film, I can assure you that life gets worse and funnier for the Griswold clan minute by minute. *[Note: The unedited DVD version is not recommended for children! TV version is OK.]*

This year, I'm looking for ways to enjoy more of the holidays by simplifying how I celebrate. I vow to use fewer lights and more candles; to shop in stores within walking distance of my home or workplace; to reduce my to-do/shopping list; spend more time with loved ones; and to share some of my good fortune with those in need.



As I write the last Chalk Talk for 2007, world leaders are meeting in Bali to discuss the environment. This issue features educational resources that provide valuable information on a variety of energy and related environmental issues. We wish you a safe and wonderful holiday season and a great new year!

CoEd Communications is dedicated to supporting the important work of teachers by providing classroom resources on a range of topics. We invite you to visit our website at 4edu.ca to view the many **free** teachers' resources on offer.

[As always, we welcome your thoughts.](#)

All about Energy. All in one Place.

New! The Centre for Energy Information recently launched a new [consumer section](#) that offers information, stories and tips on energy and the environment. Recognizing the detrimental impact of the very un-eco-friendly Griswold Christmas, we can all learn about choices that will help to conserve and protect our precious energy resources, not only during the holidays but all year long. There is so much we can do to make a difference. Teachers and students are invited to check out the site today!



Canadian Centre
for Energy Information

It is difficult to imagine how we can begin to solve the environmental challenges we face, until, and unless, we understand energy, renewable and non-renewable sources. [The Canadian Centre for Energy Information](#) provides extensive information about Canada's energy system. Visit this site to learn why stable and sustainable energy development is crucial to our way of life. These stakeholder-reviewed, fact-based educational resources assist teachers in the areas of science, technology, society, the environment and the economy.



Energy Literacy Series

The Energy Literacy Series examines 10 energy sources through the use of interactive and technology-based teaching materials, and will be correlated with curricula from all provinces. For more information check out www.centreforenergy.com/els.

Oil and Gas Learning Resource Series

FREE to teachers, these curriculum-linked learning resources were created by teachers for teachers. Go to www.centreforenergy.com/k-12.

Careers in Energy

Visit www.centreforenergy.com/careers for a searchable database of energy-related occupational descriptions and corresponding educational requirements.



To learn more about the essentials of energy, go to www.centreforenergy.com.

[Source: Canadian Centre for Energy Information]

"If you live in a city, you don't need to own a car."

Mary Kovack

Mary Kovack

need to own a car."

— Henry Ford's great-grandson, Bill Ford Jr. (Chair, Ford Motor Co.)

Website of the week

Statistics Canada's **CESI Indicators (Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators)** and **Envirostats**



A recent report on national environmental sustainability indicators shows that Canada's environment continues to face challenges with respect to air and water quality and greenhouse gas emissions. These indicators are reported yearly by Statistics Canada, Environment Canada and Health Canada.

The report found that the indicator of exposure to ground-level ozone, a component of smog, has increased over time. It also found that, while greenhouse gas emissions remained at nearly the same level in 2005 as in 2004, they are still significantly above 1990 levels and Canada's target under the Kyoto Protocol. With regard to the quality of freshwater, the report states that guidelines for protecting aquatic life were not met, at least occasionally, at many monitoring sites across the country. This indicator also showed that phosphorous, a pollutant derived mainly from human activities, was a major concern for the quality of surface freshwater in Canada.

The **CESI** report, released on December 6, 2007, is accessible from Statistics Canada's website at: www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=16-251-XWE. Highlights of the report are also available. The accompanying **CESI Information** module (www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=16-253-XWE), provides supporting material to the main indicators report, including data tables, charts and maps on the human activities that influence the environmental indicators.

The Daily (Dec. 10/07) reports on **EnviroStats**, Statistics Canada's new quarterly bulletin of environmental and sustainable development statistics — a look at [natural resource wealth](#) in Canada and a comparison of men and women's "trip chaining" practices* while driving are available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/16-002-XIE/16-002-XIE2007003.htm>. [*Trip chaining is the practice of stopping at intermediate points during a journey — for example dropping children off at school, stopping for a coffee and dropping off dry-cleaning, all on the drive to work.]

Also, check out [Human Activity and the Environment](#), Statistics Canada's leading publication tracking how Canadians interact with their environment, offering great maps tables, lesson plans and most recent data. To read more about this publication and Statistics Canada's other environment-related learning resources, [click here](#).

Meet Alberta's Solar Decathlon Team!



A team of students, faculty and staff from Alberta are competing in an international competition to build the most practical and energy efficient solar powered home.

- **The competition:** *The 2009 Solar Decathlon* – a high-profile international competition among 20 selected university and college teams.
- **The task:** To design, build and operate the most attractive, practical and energy-efficient solar-powered home.
- **The team:** Students, faculty and staff from University of Calgary, Mount Royal College and Southern Alberta Institute of Technology.
- **The goal:** To become the first western Canadian team to enter and win the 2009 Solar Decathlon International Competition.



[The Team's Solar Powered Home Design](#)

Pioneering innovative housing solutions in Alberta, this dynamic and dedicated team of students, faculty and staff will be submitting a house design that incorporates wood, water, stone and light to reflect Alberta's natural landscape. Every second year, Solar Decathlon teams and sponsors exhibit homes at a solar village in a 10-day competition held in Washington, D.C. The decathlon includes 10 contests in architecture, engineering, market viability, communications, comfort zone, appliances, hot water, lighting, energy balance and getting around. **For more information, see [Alberta Solar Decathlon](#), [Solar Decathlon](#) and [Advantages of Solar Energy](#) on [The Canadian Centre for Energy Information's](#) website.**

[Teens pessimistic about environment; Only 1 in 10 Canadian teenagers believe environment will improve in next 20 years](#) — Louise Brown, Education Reporter, TheStar.com, December 4, 2007

“Only one in 10 Canadian teens believe the earth’s environment will improve in the next 20 years, new research shows. In a study of science skills and attitudes among 400,000 15-year-olds around the world, more than half said they are aware of the environmental dangers of clear-cutting forests, acid rain, greenhouse gases, nuclear waste and genetically modified organisms -- and most teens called for tougher laws to fight these issues. But few hold out hope for solutions, according to the latest results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), run by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD.) The test showed Canadian teens rank third in the world for their science smarts after Finland and Hong Kong, based on a two-hour exam conducted across 57 countries. Students also answered a 30-minute survey on their attitudes towards science, and **nearly half of Canadian students said they plan to go into a career in science.**”

[Canada 3rd in world survey of science students; Ontario 15-year-olds score highest among all ten provinces in OECD study](#) – THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, [TheStar.com] December 4, 2007

“Finnish students came out on top of a worldwide education study on science performance by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development published today. But after Finnish students, 15-year-olds from Hong Kong and Canada came in at second and third place in proficiency at science, the focus of this year's study. Within Canada, Ontario scored the highest of all ten provinces. The report surveyed more than 400,000 15-year-old students in 57 countries.”

[Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators](#) — **The Daily**, Statistics Canada, December 6, 2007

“This is the third annual release of the Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators, prepared by Statistics Canada, Environment Canada and Health Canada. Highlights of this report were released on October 15, 2007, reporting on four national environmental sustainability indicators in three areas: air quality, greenhouse gas emissions and freshwater quality. The full report, released today, includes additional detail in several areas.”

[Gift-giving à la Grinch; As family environmentalists push ecological responsibility, may you enjoy a jolly, green holiday](#) — ALEX WILLIAMS, *The New York Times* [The Chronicle Herald.ca, Halifax], December 1/07

LAST CHRISTMAS, Donna Hoffman, an ardent environmentalist who lives in Austin, Texas, came up with an unlikely gift for each member of her family: an energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulb. "I wanted to connect through the gift-giving tradition," said Hoffman, 45, who works as a coordinator for the Sierra Club. "I also wanted to communicate my own deeply-felt environmental conviction."

[Is hydrogen power more than hot air? Real-world vehicles fuelled by hydrogen are finally arriving from Honda and BMW. But some experts insist they'll create more problems than they cure](#) — John LeBlanc, *The Toronto Star*, Dec 1, 2007

“Blues skies. Green trees. Birds chirping. That's the hydrogen fuel-cell car marketer's dream. But what's the reality? For more than a decade, automakers have pushed the praises of hydrogen as the next big thing... Beyond the test market, hydrogen-powered cars, vehicles that once appeared to be nothing more than an exercise in research and development, are finally arriving to the public. But the do-good cars, emitting only water and not emissions, could be riddled with more limits than advantages.”

[Opportunities abound for innovative emissions-cutters](#)— JIRI MALY, *Report on Business*, December 3, 2007

“Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is one of the most urgent social and business issues of this new century, amid an emerging consensus that these emissions - mostly in the form of CO₂ from burning fossil fuel - are causing serious damage to the environment. There are vastly diverging perspectives about how to confront the problem, with the debate fuelled by a poor understanding of the full range of options and their economic cost. Clarifying the available options' costs and benefits, McKinsey & Company last week published the latest in a series of studies on the issue, examining more than 250 ways to prevent or reduce GHG emissions in the United States. Like previous transformations of our economy, the shift to a lower-carbon-emitting world will create many opportunities to generate new profits - especially for firms that move quickly to innovate.”

[Bring joy to the world: From shopping and decorating to cooking and consuming, treat the planet properly this Christmas](#) — Chantal Eustace, Vancouver Sun, [canada.com], December 7, 2007

“Dreaming of a green Christmas? You're not alone. It's never been easier to celebrate the holidays in an eco-friendly manner without feeling like a Scrooge or a Grinch. At the same time, saving the planet while doing all your other holiday chores -- like shopping for the perfect party dress (or tie), hanging mistletoe or finding a Secret Santa gift for your boss -- might feel overwhelming. Don't get bogged down by the season. Amy Katz, author of Greenpeace's Green Living Guide, said making eco-friendly choices during the holidays is simple and economical.”

Happy Holidays! See you in '08 ...



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