

## EDITORIAL

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newspapers

The Liberal, published every Thursday and Sunday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of 100 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Media Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, Markham Economist & Sun, Stouffville Sun-Tribune, Georgina Advocate, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.

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## OPINION

## EDITORIAL

## Turn off for Earth Hour

What is your family doing for Earth Hour? Has your municipality signed up with the worldwide "Turn off the Lights" event on March 28?

It's a global call to action on climate change that has captivated ordinary people and environmentalists from tiny communities to major cities. By the end of February, more than 50 Canadian cities and towns had signed on and, to date, those include many here in York Region: Markham, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Richmond Hill and King City. There will surely be more, as both Aurora and Newmarket actively participated last year.

Both of York Region's school boards have enthusiastically pledged to support the awareness effort. The public board director and chairperson wrote an open letter to all schools suggesting switching off the lights for one hour is a "simple way to show you want to be part of the solution".

What can schools do if the actual lights-out is scheduled for 8:30 p.m. on a non-school day? Many inventive classroom teachers worked Earth Hour into their curriculum last year, turning the lights out and computers off for one hour the day before. Others had students write the following week about what their families did when the lights were turned out in their homes.

That's the fun and simple message of Earth Hour. We can all do something, even if it's as simple as turning off lights in rooms we're leaving or turning off computers we're not using.

Earth Hour started off small in Sydney, Australia in 2007. By the following year, millions of people in more than 30 countries switched off their lights for Earth Hour and last year, some 10 million people in Canada participated.

Think about that for a moment. What other public awareness campaign, spectator sport or public event galvanizes 10 million Canadians? And multiply that by the 75 countries that have pledged to support this year's initiative.

There's a message here. People care; they want to do something about the state of our planet and support the efforts of Earth Hour.

Talk with your family this weekend and make some fun plans. You can play board games by candlelight. Make it a contest within your family to see who can (safely) turn off the most power-using gadgets and machines — even the youngest child can participate.

If you want more ideas or inspiration, visit earthhourcanada.org and don't forget to turn out the lights March 28 at 8:30 p.m.

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## THE LIBERAL

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## Bootcamp week 5: exercise but diet too

OK, so the exercise is going well, and the moment of truth about lost inches (hopefully) will come Friday. But the weight loss is NOT going well.

The Survivor Bootcamp materials suggest "three to eight pounds lost" in the four-week Bootcamp program "without diet adjustment".

Now maybe that's if you go every day of the week, which some of my bootcamp conscripts do. I'm in the part-time program which is three days a week, not five.

Maybe that's why I'd only lost half a pound at the end of the three weeks.

Damn, I thought as I stood on the scales staring at the numbers, all that effort and only half a pound!

But as radical a change for my unfit body as the exercise program has been, it IS only three hours a week, and will total just 12 hours by the end of this week four.

As anyone who has ever been on a diet or exercise plan knows full well, a few hours or a few weeks don't offer a magic transformation. (Only the supermarket tabloids and gimmicky ads on shopping TV channels promise that.)

So, for my last week, I decided it was time for 'plan B'.

Diet AND exercise together - radical



Marney Beck

thought, I know.

It's not that I've been stuffing myself with chocolate or donuts. I ate one tiny piece of a giant basket of chocolate treats sitting in the newsroom all last week, and passed the box of donuts at a two-hour work meeting several times without having one.

I've been eating normal meals with my family, for example spaghetti dinners and potatoes with the roast.

So I downloaded the 10-day meal plan at the end of week 3 ("to accelerate results") and decided to finish my last week of bootcamp by following their diet recommendations, too.

Until I read the fine print, that is.

Wow, I've heard of low-carb diets, but this one takes the cake (bad pun, no cake allowed, not a single potato either, in 10 days!).

Most days two starch items or carbohydrates are allowed, a small whole wheat tortilla, or pita, or one slice of whole wheat bread. But not one single meal featured pasta or potatoes.

The only concession to carbs for some dinners is a quarter-cup of brown rice. Yes, that's not a typo, 1/4 cup!

OK, so I'll confess to all you thousands of readers that I cheated almost every day.

By cheating, I mean I brought the suggested turkey sandwich to work for my lunch and cottage cheese, plus the snack of fresh fruit. But I started my morning not with the suggested broccoli omelet (egg whites, 1 egg, 1 cup broccoli), but with my usual cooked cereal with fresh fruit.

My concession was reducing the amount of cereal from three-quarters of a cup to half a cup, but I'm sorry, I'm not working a full day and inflicting a crabby personality on my workmates - I have to have SOME carbs in the morning!

So yes, I followed the diet, but did modify it slightly, and some dinners

I did have a half cup of brown rice instead of a quarter cup. Horrors!

Was I hungry? Yes. But overall, was the suggested meal plan healthy? Yes.

If anyone could stay on it for 10 days, I've no doubt they'd lose weight for sure.

The final week of exercising went pretty well. I was feeling lightheaded for part of the Monday session, possibly because I'm eating fewer calories.

But there's no doubt in my mind and my body that I'm fitter and have much more endurance.

I'm sure I'll blow my first session push-up and sit-up scores out of the water, and even the dreaded plank. I should be able to hold that torturous move longer tomorrow during the final fitness test and measurement day.

But you'll have to wait until next week for the final results.

I'm anxious to know myself, but I'll have to share all the details of the final fitness test, and how many inches I lost (I hope) in the March 12 issue.

If my other bootcamp conscripts are willing, I'll share their good news too.

Several have been going to bootcamp five days a week and I'm curious to learn how their flab lost/fitness gained compares to mine.