

# Musicians unplugged for Earth Hour

**Hollie Pratt-Campbell**  
Kingston This Week

Three years ago, 2.2 million homes and businesses in Sydney, Australia turned out their lights for one hour in support of global sustainability and energy awareness. The event sparked something in millions of people around the world, and two years later, with support from the World Wildlife Fund, 4100 cities in 87 countries were participating in Earth Hour.

FM 96's Tricia Knowles observed the initial event in Australia with interest.

"I heard about it and thought, why isn't anyone in Canada doing something like that," she recalls. "I thought someone in Kingston should do something, then it occurred to me I could be that someone."

After talking with representatives from the WWF, Knowles submitted a proclamation to the City of Kingston stating that Kingston should recognize one hour at the end of March as Earth Hour.

It happened.

And it will happen again, Saturday, March 27, when the city will go dark, at least in the downtown core, for one hour from 8:30-9:30 p.m.

But it will go off the grid in a good way, thanks to Knowles and a group of volunteers and entertainers who have put together a concert at Market Square, from 7-10 p.m. Performers include Miss Emily (Fennell), Mojo Shooter and Reuben de Groot; guest speakers include the Hon. John Gerretsen, Minister of the Environment, and the winner of a local high school sustainability speech competition; and other special guests.

Knowles has watched the Unplugged movement grow with some pride from that first time out.



Submitted photo

**Emily Fennell**

"They accepted the proclamation and we had this tiny little event [in 2008]," she says. "Then last year we were happy they accepted it again, and that's when we decided to do an off-the-grid concert."

Last year, close to 650 people gathered in Market Square for Kingston Unplugged to show solidarity against climate change, and rock out to the music of Angel Martin, Miss Emily and In A Cloud of Awesome. During the two-hour event, the city of Kingston decreased consumption by 14%, or by 13,462 kWh, compared to an average amount for that time of night.

This year, Knowles is working with a group of volunteers to plan an even bigger event. An extra hour will be added before the main show featuring straight acoustic music. There will also be sustainability displays from local area businesses and community groups, that will provide resources on how to live a more environmentally friendly life.

It is hoped that this year's event will

draw over 1,000 people, and that electricity consumption will be reduced by 20%.

The power supply will again be supplied by Outpost Alternatives, using solar and wind energy. Other sponsors include the City of Kingston, the Sustainability Centre, Switch Kingston, and Corus Entertainment.

"We've got a really incredible mix of music this year," she says. "It's going to be fun for everybody. They're all local people who are passionate about the environment."

Knowles urges those who are unable to come to the show to turn out their lights at home. Saturday, March 27 between 8:30 and 9:30 is Earth Hour, an international event supported by the WWF and hundreds of other municipalities.

"Primarily, Earth Hour is an event to bring awareness to the fact that global warming isn't just a myth," explains Knowles.

Queen's Observatory is opening its doors for a special night of sky viewing as part of Earth Hour celebrations on campus. Earth Hour Among the Stars takes place Saturday, March 27, from 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. at the Observatory in Ellis Hall.

A slide show presentation will be held in Ellis Auditorium from 7:30 until 8 pm, followed by viewing through the large telescope on the fourth floor, Ellis Hall, and two smaller telescopes, which will be set up on University Avenue.

From 8:30 - 9:30 p.m. Queen's will reduce energy consumption by turning off all non-essential heating systems and most non-essential lights. Power consumption levels will be monitored before, during and after Earth Hour.

Last year, Queen's main transformer measured a 3.2 per cent drop in campus power levels during Earth Hour.