

Go Green Challenge shows residents it doesn't take a big step to make a big difference

From shaving a minute off your shower time, to making a concerted effort to avoid single-use plastics, you don't have to completely change your life to make a positive difference on the environment around us, and this is a philosophy the Town is challenging Aurorans to get behind with the Go Green Challenge.

Now underway through the end of this month, the Community Go Green Challenge encourages individuals, families, schools, and organizations – including businesses – to challenge themselves to reduce their environmental footprint.

Through November 30, the Town will issue a series of challenges residents can meet through the GooseChase app. The more challenges you complete, the more chances you have to win and first prize includes a \$100 gift card to a local business that promotes sustainability. Second and third prizes are a \$75 and \$50 gift card respectively.

The Go Green Challenge is open to all Aurora residents and businesses and is family-friendly.

Challenges can range from washing all laundry in cold water to making use of the Town's Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations.

"We thought this is something we would love to do for the public," says Cindy Shaver of the Town of Aurora, who has coordinated the program with colleague Natalie Kehle. "It touches upon all different facets of environment and conservation, be it water or energy conservation, waste reduction, and that sort of thing. It is meant to be fun. Some of the initiatives are learning about what the Town is doing for environmental conservation and protecting our environment and opportunities to learn what the Region is doing. A challenge might be to watch a video on what the Region is doing and some are about learning and seeing the world through a green lens.

"The main thing was we didn't want people to feel it has to be all or nothing. The win for us is if we get some residents, staff members, business owners, even if they adopt a few new habits, that for us is a win. It is about making sustainable changes over time. When we constructed the challenges, we wanted to make sure we had a wide range – something for beginners, maybe people who are new to the idea of conservation and they haven't done anything like this before – it could be simple challenges like bringing your reusable bottle when you're out or taking a shorter shower. How long was it? Challenge yourself to reduce it. The point system we have is in relation to how difficult the challenge would be."

While the Go Green Challenge is on now, people can join in at any time before November 30.

Some residents have completed challenges and have already collected points, but there is always time to catch up and secure a prize.

"There is no commitment," says Ms. Shaver. "It is a great opportunity to get your feet wet; you can sign on and do challenges at your own leisure, which is really great. You can do as much or as little as you want, but this is a chance to learn. I want to encourage people to just take the plunge and see what fits – and not everything is going to fit. Maybe you don't want to go right out and be heavy-duty green, but there are all sorts of things we can do to actually have minimal impact on our daily lives but a huge impact on the environment. One thing we change in our lives might not seem like much, but collectively as a group if everyone in Aurora is doing it, it can be a huge change and significantly impact the local environment."

For more information on how to take part in the Go Green Challenge, visit aurora.ca/en/your-government/go-green-challenge.aspx.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter