

Media release for Earth Day-Earth Walk

Victoria Astronomers Support Earth Day to Fight Light Pollution

On Earth Day Saturday April 21, Victorians who are demonstrating their concern for the environment will be joined by astronomers belonging to the Victoria Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. They are taking part in Victoria's Earth Walk activities because it fits naturally with their message of preserving the environment by reducing light pollution.

"Light pollution is noticeable at night when it permeates the nocturnal environment, but its effects are felt around the clock," said Lauri Roche, president of the RASC Victoria Centre. "Light pollution is the essence of waste, and it does much more than reduce the visibility of stars."

"Artificial light at night disrupts our circadian system that keeps us healthy and helps us resist cancer, infection and disease", she said. The World Health Organization lists "light at night" as a probable carcinogen.

"Wasted light affects many living organisms. For example, insects attracted by bright light at night become too exhausted to feed or reproduce. A decline in their populations can have widespread repercussions because they are the primary food source for numerous animals and are major plant pollinators. Light pollution also makes animals of all ages more vulnerable to predators," Roche said.

Light pollution even affects the chemistry of the air we breathe, because it prevents chemical changes in the air at night that breakdown chemical pollutants.

While astronomers recognize the need for some lights at night, she said light pollution can be reduced with appropriate shielding that does not alter our ability to see at night. Effective outdoor lighting actually promotes greater security and safety.

"The RASC encourages all Canadians to join in the spirit of Earth Day," Roche said. "The Victoria Centre will be participating in Earth Walk and invites everyone to visit our display table in Centennial Square after the Walk to learn more about how we all can help the environment by reducing light pollution."

Visitors to the RASC table may also view the sun (safely) through solar telescopes and learn about the RASC's other activities. For more information, visit www.victoria.rasc.ca<<http://www.victoria.rasc.ca/>>