

Energy Conservation

Energy conservation technologies, strategies and best practices are moving forward at warp speed – for reasons that don't need to be listed here. Toronto commercial buildings consume far more energy than necessary and we all pay for this in many ways.

One large and completely avoidable cost is the increase we all pay that results when the city's requirement for energy exceeds the supply from our regular grid. This generally occurs late in the day on the hottest of summer days when both commercial and residential air conditioning units are on full blast.

When this happens the power authority must increase power generation by running coal plants full out to avoid rolling brown outs. In Ontario peak demand has also necessitated the building of expensive and inefficient gas-fired "peaking" generating plants that run for only a few hours a year. Not only does this peak demand cost us all in increased power prices, it means more pollution on some of our worst air quality days. This is compounded by the fact that on the hottest days when demand is high, transmission line wires can lose up to 20% of the power we pump through them, making this an incredibly inefficient way to meet our electrical requirements.

There are all manner of technologies available to knock the top off the peak and avoid this waste, cost and pollution. The easiest way is by being vigilant in promoting efficiency in our own lives. Is it constantly too hot in your favorite store? Frigid in your office in August? Does your child's school have an energy efficiency program? Are you a client or a shareholder of a corporation whose head office lights shine all night? Are the vending machines in your community centre on 24/7? (Vending machines are one of the worst energy hogs of all – with quick and economical fixes available from many brands of vending misers).

Everyone who pays a residential power bill should sign up for a *Peaksaver* program through your local utility (Toronto Hydro, Enersource, Hydro One). They will attach a small radio or internet-controlled device to your air conditioner. On extremely hot days when power use soars the utility may signal the device to turn up your air conditioner by a couple of degrees for a few hours (maximum 4 hours). Your air conditioner continues to run so your home won't feel much different -- but it's a painless step toward helping to lower energy costs and phase out coal power.

Much more importantly - as stewards of the commercial buildings in our city it is incumbent upon us to investigate the measures available to make our buildings more energy-efficient and responsive to the demands being placed upon the grid. The Ontario Power Authority (OPA)'s CDM (Conservation and Demand Management) program is designed to lower peak demand and reduce capacity. For commercial buildings the DR3 program is administered by a handful of approved DR3 (Demand Response 3) aggregators. These firms work with building owners to ensure efficiency. The list of currently approved aggregators is available at <http://www.powerauthority.on.ca/Page.asp?PageID=924&ContentID=6626>. A building owner or manager who does not investigate this program is doing a disservice to their tenants, their city, their province, their country and the planet.



Let's use our considerable might as the movers and shakers of Canadian commercial real estate to think about affecting a serious and lasting paradigm shift in the way we think about the buildings we build, own, manage and use. Here are scenarios that we can turn into realities:

- Owners compete to have the most efficient buildings and those who win (with the best-maintained power plant, most intelligent controls, most aggressive in-building energy-saving programs and lowest op costs) get rewarded with serious recognition and tangible rewards.
- Boards, owners, REITs and stakeholders stop suggesting and begin mandating a significant, top-down shift in energy and environmental management strategies
- Corporate leaders mandate comprehensive energy management and conservation measures to reduce risk management and enhance shareholder value.
- Large space users and their broker representatives pressure landlords to be pro-active about energy efficiency and insist that owners articulate clear timelines with respect to integration of renewable energy technologies and modern building controls
- Excellent tenants in multi-tenant buildings insist upon being individually metered and financially rewarded for their best practices.
- Building managers ensure that tenants compete with other tenants to be the most energy efficient and those who are the greenest are rewarded with plaques, lunches, mementoes or press releases. Those who continue to waste energy through thoughtless practices like leaving on lights, computers, appliances and copying machines are penalized by bearing the burden of a fairly weighted op cost levy.
- Corporate managers and HR execs step up their game when it comes to the bigger picture of taking care of the planet and integrate meaningful incentives for employees integrating the firm's stated corporate sustainability principles into their daily business decisions. They begin to employ innovative management techniques to promote green behavior reward "green" performance in a meaningful way.
- As women, as Canadians, as employees... as people who have been taught to *mind our own business* - we start asking why? Why isn't my government doing this? My board? My corporation? My manager? My association? My community? My church? *Why not?*



Why is the parking lot so bright that you could perform surgery in it? Why aren't all of our building systems talking to each other? Why are the tenants in my building who are truly invested in lowering their carbon footprint treated exactly like those who display a completely cavalier attitude toward conservation? Why aren't we bringing in dinner for our "green team" and sending them home with a little token of our gratitude for their family because they worked into the evening on something that will benefit us all? And (my current favourite): *Why is it so **hot** in here?*

Besides our power as commercial property decision-makers, we have the *best* kind of power – the incredible, eloquent, elegant, durable, unstoppable, persuasive power of *women*. Let's overcome our feminine reticence – whether innate or taught – step just a little out of our comfort zone and ask: **Why not?**



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