

Meeting power reduction targets will save everybody money, businesses told

By Rose Simone, Record staff
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WATERLOO REGION — Businesses and residents in Waterloo Region have a giant challenge to meet over the next four years.

Somehow, we need to collectively reduce power consumption by 55 megawatts, which translates into the energy that would be saved if 11 University of Waterloos were taken off the hydro grid.

In terms of residential homes, Waterloo Region has a target of saving 240 gigawatts of power, which translates into what would be saved if 24,000 homes in the region went off the power grid over the next four years.

It sounds like a lot, but these targets, set by the Ontario Energy Board and the Ontario Ministry of Energy, must be met to reduce the amount of money that would otherwise have to be spent on expensive power infrastructure, says Jeff Quint, supervisor for the conservation and demand management programs at Waterloo North Hydro.

On Wednesday, the three utility companies in the region — Waterloo North Hydro, Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro and Cambridge and North Dumfries Hydro — put on their second annual energy conservation technology symposium to encourage those targets to be met.

The symposium, at Bingemans Conference Centre in Kitchener, featured 60 exhibitors showing off the latest in energy-efficiency technologies as well as a full day of speakers who provided tips on saving energy and information on government incentives for businesses that want to put in more energy-efficient equipment.

The purpose of the symposium was “to bring the technologies to our customers and show them there are a lot of ways to save energy,” Quint said.

The symposium was mainly aimed at businesses, simply because that’s where the greatest energy savings could be achieved, but the three utilities are also trying to encourage their residential customers to do their bit.

People can go to the website, www.saveonenergy.ca, to see all of the incentive programs available.



Rec-energy-28. Lighting specialist Andrew Barber of Graybar displays lights at the Energy Conservation Symposium Wednesday. Mathew McCarthy/The Record
Source: The Record

Each utility company in the province has an energy saving target to meet by 2014. Waterloo North Hydro alone is trying to achieve a power reduction equivalent of three University of Waterloos coming off the grid, Quint said.

The province has to reduce energy consumption because it has an aging energy infrastructure that is reaching its capacity and it is very expensive to build new power plants, Quint said.

"To save a kilowatt of energy is cheaper than to build a kilowatt. If we can reduce the amount of energy used at the end point, we reduce the amount of infrastructure required to be upgraded and the amount of infrastructure required for power generation," Quint said.

Greg Rushby, a Kitchener consultant who runs Rushby Energy Solutions and works with utilities across the province on managing conservation programs, said businesses can look at "low hanging fruit" in energy conservation equipment that they can get a fairly quick payback from.

The most obvious is lighting, Rushby said. "There have been a lot of improvements in lighting technologies over the years and lighting is one of the rare cases where it is actually cost effective to take out even the perfectly functional older lights and swap them for the newer more efficient equipment that provide the same light levels," he said. "You can get a fairly quick payback on that in the right scenario."

Industries and commercial buildings can also reduce energy consumption by installing variable frequency controls on pumps and fans, he added. "Effectively, by just reducing the flow a little bit, you get a big savings in power."

Air compressors are also energy hogs in the industrial world, Rushby said. "So fixing leaks in your compressed air system is one thing you can do." There are other opportunities as well, such as variable speed equipment that can reduce the energy that air compressors use, he added.

But ultimately, "the most cost effective way to reduce energy consumption is to eliminate waste," Rushby said. "So, lights that are lighting rooms that no one is in, air conditioning that is cooling and boilers that are heating rooms no one is using are the things to cut back on."

Quint of Waterloo North Hydro said is also a good economic reason to get behind the power reduction target challenge.

"It helps businesses stay competitive in the marketplace and keeps them operating in Ontario," Quint said. "If we can help them lower their costs, every dollar they save is a dollar back in their pockets. That helps them remain here and keep their employees here."

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