

## Corporate culture meets climate change

Thursday June 28 2007



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In contrast to the stuffy 50-something Bay Street type who was mourning the loss of the formal corporate culture on CBC radio the other day, I am welcoming the McGuinty government's decision to turn down the air conditioning at Queen's Park with open, bare arms.

In case you missed it, the premier is setting a good example for conservation by ordering all government offices to keep their air conditioning set no lower than 26 Celsius - and encouraging employees to go casual during the warmer months to accommodate the higher temperatures.

"We're asking everyone to do their part to protect the environment," Premier Dalton McGuinty said in a news release. "Wearing more comfortable clothing during the warmer months cuts down on the air conditioning we use and increases awareness about how important it is that we address the challenge of climate change."

I can only hope that more businesses -- offices, retail environments, restaurants and more -- take this cue and follow suit (or no suit as the case may be.)

I couldn't count the air conditioning abuses I've seen at businesses over the years and in recent months: air conditioning running and the door propped open at retail locations; air conditioning cranked so high at restaurants that patrons ask to be moved to sections away from the vents; temperatures so cold in offices that when one departs into even a mild summer day, the sudden heat seems stifling.

Now I have a bit of an ulterior motive for this column. I'm working on behalf of a woman who wears three layers to the office in the winter and keeps two sweaters on her chair as backup, winter and summer.

She understands that her body's interpretation of hot and cold may be different than others. In fact, she rarely turns the central air on at home, and often argues with her husband about this.

But she is sure a happy medium can be found in a temperature that makes wearing short sleeves risk-free in the office in the heat of July - even without the backup sweater. (Ok, she'll keep the backup sweater.)

Now, as for the argument for appropriate business dress, I think that short sleeves (or at least shirt sleeves) should be acceptable in most work places during the summer months - especially if one of the side effects is reduced strain on our electricity supply. Call it corporate culture meets concern for climate change.

So, local business owners and managers, I urge you to take a walk around your work site some day soon. If you see people in long sleeves, wearing sweaters or jackets, or perhaps using a cardigan to cover bare legs, you might want to consider turning up the thermostat a couple of degrees.

For more information about reducing your energy use, why not contact Reduce the Juice. This youth-led initiative, which started in Shelburne two years ago and expanded to Orangeville last year, recently received a government grant to continue its conservation mandate locally and in other communities. Visit [www.reducethejuice.ca](http://www.reducethejuice.ca) to learn more.