

Orangeville awarded for conserving energy

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Congratulations, Orangeville, you done good! That's the message from Ontario Clean Air Alliance (OCAA), which awarded Orangeville Hydro one of eight "Peak Buster" awards for reducing peak electricity demand this past summer below the provincial average. Demand across the province actually dropped this year by 4.7 per cent. But by dropping peak power use by 6.2 per cent, Orangeville's utility had better reductions than 72 of the province's 80 utilities, says Jack Gibbons of the OCAA.

"We issued a challenge this spring," says Gibbons, asking that utilities develop local programs to reduce peak power use. The eight winners "all had great conservation programs," he says. The single biggest determinant of a utility's success at reducing was a commitment to reduction goals by the CEO, according to Gibbons. Orangeville Hydro's president is George Dick.

Orangeville Hydro used a number of different programs to lower use.

"The Great Refrigerator Roundup has proved to be a continuing success with a large amount of interest from our residents, as well as the Every Kilowatt Counts coupon program," says Orangeville Hydro's conservation program coordinator Amy Proctor-Long. The latter consisted of seven coupons for products that had the Energy Star label, while the former was an offer -- still ongoing -- to pick up operational fridges and freezers 10 years or older free of charge. The utility also had a program called Reduce the Juice. Reduce the Juice was first instigated in Shelburne. Two summers ago, the program came to Orangeville. Fifteen high school students canvassed residences, informing people of ways to reduce their electricity consumption. This past summer, the program focussed on businesses instead, with two university students providing ideas for reducing power consumption and costs. Proctor-Long says the program was "well-received by the business community."

With the approach of winter, there are still ways to reduce energy consumption, says Proctor-Long, providing specific examples such as sealing off drafts, and using portable space heaters when warming hard-to-heat areas. For the OCAA's part, their long-term energy strategy has three focusses: improving conservation, developing renewable energy sources, and bridging the gap to 100 per cent renewable energy with high-efficiency, gas-fired power plants. Gibbons says he'd like to see coal phased-out by 2010, no development of new nuclear capacity, and retirement of reactors when they reach the end of their service lives.