



By Don Horne

## MAKING ENERGY EFFICIENCY A MONEY MAKER FOR BUSINESS

Companies have a choice in the coming years to see the words “energy efficiency” as either an obstacle or an advantage to making money.

Toronto – and by extension all of the municipalities orbiting it – are looking to embrace energy efficiency as a means to lessening their reliance on electricity, and, in the process, reduce air pollution. Mayor David Miller has already made a pledge to make Toronto “the greenest city in North America”.

The city has already taken steps through the introduction of LED (Light Emitting Diode) streetlights at Exhibition Place. Each streetlight contains 117 LEDs which emit the same light as a conventional streetlight – but use 50 per cent less electricity and last five times longer.

Switching the city’s some 160,000 streetlights to LED could save Toronto \$6 million a year in electricity costs, in addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by over 18,000 tonnes.

Another example sits south of the border in the Rocky Mountains. Super-insulated homes are a reality (and have been for quite some time). A home in Denver, Colorado built when Michael Jackson still had his own nose and natural skin pigment boasts a monthly electricity bill of roughly \$7 US. It should be pointed out that this is a 3,700 square-foot home without a furnace, that is warm enough to grow tropical fruit.

And improvements have been made in the past 25 years to such energy-saving technology, especially in the field of energy-efficient light bulbs.

For those who can’t read the writing on the wall – especially those directly involved in the field of new construction – employing the best energy-efficient materials and methods will be the trump card for any company looking to win big.

It won’t be long until municipalities create incentives for companies who choose to build more energy efficient.

Developers would be rewarded by getting bumped to the head of the line for approvals. It costs the municipality nothing, but hits the developer where it hurts – the pocketbook – where time translates



into money when they are looking to get a project moving forward.

Instead of the current permit fee system, “green” builders would receive a rebate while energy inefficient builders would pay a penalty.

Concurrently, those who build above and beyond pre-set energy efficiency standards would receive rewards (like the system currently being used in New England).

For those already in a building, savings can be had there as well.

Electric water heaters and home heating – not to mention electric stoves and clothes dryers – are heavy drains on electricity.

Incentives to convert to natural gas (with a healthy mix of solar thrown in)

would dramatically decrease demand on the grid.

For businesses, they could claim energy efficiency as an operating expense when filing their provincial corporate taxes. Paying for energy is an expense, so saving on such an expense should have its rewards.

Currently a typical office building uses 27 watts of electricity per square metre of floor space just for lighting. The technology exists to reduce that to only three watts.

It is changing the thinking of politicians and businesspeople from thinking that climate protection is purely an expense into realizing that there is profit to be made in being environmentally friendly and energy efficient.

*don@electricityforum.com*