

BRIGHT IDEA TRANSLATES INTO SAVINGS

FOR GEORGIAN COLLEGE

By Colin McKim

By replacing conventional fluorescent light bulbs with an innovative, energy-efficient system, Georgian College expects to cut its electricity bill by \$137,000 annually.

"We're looking at incredible savings," said Jeff Choma, Georgian's manager of mechanical and electrical systems.

The new system, in which lights dim when natural light is available and switch



off when rooms are empty, seems to be working well, said Choma. "We're getting some excellent feedback."

The college spent \$1.3 million on the lighting retrofit at its main campuses in Barrie, Orillia and Owen Sound.

Conventional T-8 and T-12 fluorescent tubes were replaced by slimmer T-5 tubes, which produce twice as much illumination and consume half the electricity.

Because the lights are brighter, the college was able to reduce the number of fixtures by one-third. In classrooms, the system has the ability to adapt to different teaching situations.

If someone is giving a PowerPoint presentation, the lights will dim above the screen while the rest of the room will receive enough soft illumination for students to take notes.

In a room where there is bright outdoor light flooding in, the lights will brighten incrementally the further they are from the natural light, Choma explained.

"We really took the time to select the best technology," he said.

As a result, Georgian is saving more than 70 per cent in energy costs compared to its previous lighting system.

The college's new lighting is the largest project of its kind in North America, said Choma: "We have drawn the interest of a number of people in the industry."

Because the cut in energy consumption will reduce greenhouse gases, the college received \$140,000 in one-time funding for the project from the federal government through Natural Resources Canada.

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