



St. Catharines – Environmental Sustainability Summit

Club Roma, St. Catharines, Ontario - November 14, 2008

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**By Max Cananzi
President and CEO
Horizon Utilities Corporation**

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Thank you, Mayor McMullan.

It is a pleasure for me to be here today to help kick off the City of St. Catharines' very first Environmental Sustainability Summit.

Most of you here probably know Horizon Utilities as the company that delivers a safe and reliable supply of electricity to homes and businesses in St. Catharines and Hamilton.

But what you may not know is that as a key player in Ontario's energy industry, we believe we have a vital responsibility to contribute to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of our communities. That is why we are so proud to be the presenting sponsor at today's event.

Climate change is considered by many scientists to be the most serious threat facing the world today. THE most serious threat. Personally, I find that very worrisome. However, as Winston Churchill once said when faced with almost insurmountable odds, ***“Let our advance worrying become advance thinking and planning.”***

And that is why we are here today. Not to worry, but rather to work together, think and plan. Plan the steps we must take to build a sustainable community.

I would like to commend the City and you, Mr. Mayor, for the leadership you are demonstrating today in mobilizing the community of St. Catharines to work collaboratively to talk about possibilities, identify opportunities and start forging a path to a greener tomorrow. We are facing a huge challenge and working collaboratively will be the key to our success.

At Horizon Utilities, we are passionately committed to helping create a culture of energy conservation in Ontario and have partnered with many organizations in the community to educate the public.

Initiatives
Within
Horizon
Utilities

But before encouraging others to conserve electricity, we got our own house in order. Within our facilities, we have installed energy-efficient lighting with special timers and carefully monitor our heating and air-conditioning systems to ensure we are not over-cooling or over-heating our buildings.

We are proud to report we operate one of the largest fleets of hybrid vehicles of any local electricity distribution company in Ontario. We have also instituted an anti-idling policy and consider low emission fuel alternatives such as ethanol or bio-diesel in our procurement specifications.

Energy
Conservation
Programs

Outside our doors, we have been working very hard over the past few years to help customers conserve energy, save money and improve the environment.

We've given away 40,000 energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs at community events; removed and recycled (for free!) more than 3,000 old, inefficient refrigerators; paid out \$710,000 in Summer Savings rebates to 42,000 customers who reduced their electricity consumption in the summer of 2007; and offered incentive programs to businesses for performing energy-efficient retrofits.

To date, our energy conservation initiatives have resulted in energy savings of more than 59 million kilowatt-hours of electricity – enough energy to power more than 6,600 homes for one year. This has diverted 14,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions from the air, the equivalent of taking 27,000 cars off the road.

I invite you to stop by our exhibit to learn about the many programs available to our customers to save money and save energy.

Smart
meters

We are convinced that energy conservation programs like the ones I have just described are having an impact. I am sure you will agree that, people are much

more concerned about energy conservation than they were five short years ago. They understand the need to change and are ready to take action.

Three years ago, we were concerned the public would be resistant to the idea of smart meters. These new hydro meters record electricity consumption on an hour-by-hour basis and, coupled with time-of-use rates, will help consumers better manage their electricity use and encourage energy conservation.

Today, instead of being resistant to the idea of this new technology, customers call us to find out when they will be receiving their new smart meter. They can't wait to have access to detailed information about their energy usage patterns.

So far, we have installed 100,000 smart meters. Although time-of-use pricing is not yet in effect, customers are reporting they are already shifting some usage to off-peak hours by setting their dishwashers to go on in the middle of the night or doing their laundry on the weekend. They aren't saving money by doing this yet but, by taking these simple actions, they are doing their part to reduce global warming.

Our smart meter experts are on hand today at our exhibit tables, so if you would like to learn more about smart meters, please stop by.

Partnering
in the
Community

As I mentioned earlier, we all need to work together to effect change of the magnitude that is required. For this reason, I am very proud of our track record of partnering with organizations in the St. Catharines community to bring energy conservation initiatives to residents.

For example, we've worked with City staff to promote Earth Hour, Earth Day and the Blackout Challenge. We are also assisting the City with an initiative to replace the bulbs in traffic lights with energy efficient LED lamp heads.

We donated energy conservation kits to Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold to assist low-income residents.

We performed a retrofit at the Niagara Housing Authority that included replacing 213 refrigerators, 60 exit signs, and 213 overhead lights. We also installed temperature limiting thermostats with baseboard controls. As a result, the Niagara Housing Authority saw their annual energy bill decrease by \$26,000.

Education

These initiatives have all been successful in raising awareness about the need for energy conservation but we believe that real change comes about through education – particularly of our young people.

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure to visiting the YMCA Children’s Discovery Centre of Niagara to unveil an interactive energy conservation model and a children’s video called “Power for Tomorrow.”

During my visit to the Centre, I had the chance to ask some of the little children what sorts of things they could do to save energy. To my amazement, just about every hand went up. They knew they should turn off the light in their bedroom. They knew the difference between incandescent and fluorescent lights. And some were even aware of the issue of “phantom power.” If there are some of you in the audience who are not sure what I mean by that term, stop by our exhibit and pick up a free copy of our “Power for Tomorrow” video.

For older children, Horizon Utilities has made a major financial commitment by providing both school boards in St. Catharines with teacher guides and workshops, student workbooks and classroom materials for an innovative Grade 5 curriculum course called Generation Conservation. For those who are interested, we will be demonstrating some of the hands-on experiments that make this program so interesting at our exhibit tables.

This fall, we expanded this program to Brock University’s Faculty of Education by offering Generation Conservation teacher training workshops to hundreds of their students. A few of the student teachers who attended the training are working with us today.

Over the summer, we also provided energy conservation and electrical safety instruction to children of all ages in Ontario's first Energy Days Summer Day Camp program. Program coordinators, camp counselors and campers provided us with valuable feedback when we pilot tested the program at the Welland Canal Centre.

Renewable
Energy

Other evidence of the sea change in public attitudes with regard to energy conservation can be seen in the growing interest in renewable energy sources – wind, solar, biomass and geothermal.

Today's customers are demanding self-sufficient solutions. At every Home Show and community event we attend, customers express their profound interest in renewable solutions. We are constantly fielding questions about solar panels, wind turbines and other forms of renewable energy.

Today, customers who are willing to spend money to build a system to generate their own electricity can sell excess power to the grid. Horizon Utilities has the in-house expertise to assist customers who are interested in exploring this avenue.

Closing

Horizon Utilities is proud to be on the forefront of the energy conservation movement, proud to be making a difference in the St. Catharines community, and proud to be doing our part to help curb climate change.

In closing, I would like to encourage you to take advantage of this day. Take in all the presentations on the agenda. Participate in the Town Hall Sessions. Visit the exhibits and network with each other. And finally, I will echo the words of Mayor McMullan and challenge you all to make a commitment to a greener tomorrow by filling in a commitment form. A sustainable community starts with us. Thank you.