

ENERGY STAR LAUNCHES HEALTH CARE ENERGY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

New program to assist hospitals and LTC homes embrace energy savings

By Kent Waddington, Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care



Energy intensity in Canada's health services sector is the second highest of all commercial and institutional facilities, according to a 2005 Natural Resources Canada report. This comes as no surprise as treatment and care facilities often require extremely high levels of energy to power diagnostic and emergency medical equipment, and other vital health service machinery on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis. It is estimated our national health care energy bill exceeds \$1 Billion annually.

Rising utility costs are once again prompting a growing number of Canada's over 3,500 healthcare facilities and their facility managers to focus their attentions on ways in which they can reduce their reliance upon fossil fuels. Many are turning to ENERGY STAR for assistance.

ENERGY STAR is the international symbol of energy efficiency and has been adopted by governments

throughout the world thanks to international cooperation agreements. ENERGY STAR in Canada is administered and promoted by Natural Resources Canada's Office of Energy Efficiency, which enrolls participants as well as promotes and monitors the use of the ENERGY STAR symbol across Canada.

Only manufacturers whose products pass ENERGY STAR testing are allowed to display the ENERGY STAR symbol. Typically, a product must be among the top 25% of all makes and models on the market in terms of energy efficiency to be awarded the ENERGY STAR symbol, and a company must prove at least one of their products meets the ENERGY STAR technical specifications before it can use the symbol.

Those who purchase ENERGY STAR qualified products save money because these products use less energy than conventional alternatives, yet

offer the same or better performance. From an environmental perspective, improving energy efficiency reduces air emissions that contribute to smog and climate change.

The ENERGY STAR symbol appears on approximately 50 types of products such as household electronics, kitchen and laundry appliances, and light bulbs. While many may be familiar with these products for the home, there are tremendous opportunities for our healthcare facilities to embrace ENERGY STAR as part of an overall environmental stewardship initiative focusing on cost reduction and energy-savings. For example, there are ENERGY STAR qualified products available for use in healthcare kitchens, cafeterias, kitchenettes, office spaces; as well as common areas such as waiting rooms, lobbies, hallways, and washrooms. Many of these ENERGY STAR opportunities are featured in the Health Care Food Services Resource Guide: Going green in the kitchen with ENERGY STAR.

ENERGY STAR is also more than just a symbol on a product. It encompasses a range of activities that have led to the development of industry accepted, energy efficient technical specifications. By purchasing ENERGY STAR qualified appliances and equipment, you are taking the first step to demonstrating your commitment to energy reduction and environmental leadership.

Embracing savings with HELP

Step two involves participation in the ENERGY STAR Health Care Energy Leadership Program (HELP), a newly

minted energy efficiency initiative designed to assist Canada’s health services sector more fully embrace energy savings and reduction opportunities.

HELP was developed with the support of Natural Resources Canada’s Office of Energy Efficiency and is being brought to Canada’s health services sector by My Sustainable Canada (MSC), and the Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care (the Coalition) – two of Canada’s leading non-profit environmental stewardship groups.

As ENERGY STAR participants and advocates for the sector, MSC and the Coalition, are working with forward-thinking and committed executives, facility operators, food and laundry service managers, and other green healthcare champions to help them better understand the potential their operations have to reduce energy consumption, educate staff, clients and volunteers; and turn energy dollars into healthcare dollars for improved care delivery.

Participants in the voluntary HELP initiative will be able to take advantage of a number of no cost educational and logistical components. These include webinars and onsite ENERGY STAR training, ‘Spot the ENERGY STAR Opportunities’ walkthroughs at the Coalition’s ‘Getting to Green’ workshop host sites, sample ENERGY STAR procurement language for inclusion in Request for Proposal (RFP) documents, training on the online ENERGY STAR Simple Savings Calculator, and help in building business cases for the purchase of ENERGY STAR

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qualified appliances and equipment. Access to a national peer-to-peer network is also planned.

Participating with ENERGY STAR

Any healthcare organization wishing to take their energy efficiency commitment to the next level will be assisted in becoming a formal ENERGY STAR Participant. Benefits of being an ENERGY STAR Participant include the ability to use the internationally recognized ENERGY STAR Participant symbol to promote your commitment, opportunities for joint marketing and promotional campaigns, having your organization profiled on the Canadian ENERGY STAR web site, heightened public image by showing leadership in addressing environmental challenges such as climate change and air pollution, support for implementing energy efficiency initiatives that save money and reduce GHG emissions, and access to additional training and print-ready promotional materials.

The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) recently became the first healthcare facility in Canada to sign on as an ENERGY STAR Participant. According to Jessica Heiss, Coordinator, Sustainability & Building Integration at TOH, "We recognized that by joining we would have an incentive to better embrace energy efficiency throughout our sites and make it a much bigger element in our overall corporate planning and redevelopment strategy. In practical terms, we are working to increase the awareness of ENERGY STAR savings opportunities

among members of our purchasing teams and engineering consultants as we plan for new purchases and upgrade projects. ENERGY STAR offers a framework to better embrace energy efficient appliances, energy awareness training, and NRCan gives you an opportunity to be recognized for your accomplishments."

When proactive healthcare organizations like TOH embrace energy conservation and environmental management through formal policies and actions, they enhance quality of life for employees, clients, patients, and those in the surrounding communities they serve. Energy and operating cost decrease, workplace and healing environments become more comfortable and people-friendly, employee morale improves, local economies are stimulated, employees become more aware of how their actions can reduce their overall impact on the health of our environment, and aging facility infrastructure gets revitalized.

Sound Energy management practices, which include the adoption of ENERGY STAR principles, can greatly decrease operating costs, free up much needed funds for infrastructure renewal, more importantly, and provide additional funds for patient care. And isn't patient care what it's all about? ■

To learn more about ENERGY STAR and how you can work one-on-one with one of the new HELP Team members, contact them at feedback@greenhealthcare.ca or visit www.energystar.greenhealthcare.ca

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