

# Seminars help save energy

## Green group hosts meetings in North York

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The Toronto Green Community (TGC) is looking to North Toronto residents to help implement a new energy action plan aimed to reduce greenhouse emissions.

The five-pronged plan will encourage homeowners to do their part to conserve energy and, in so doing, save money on their electrical bills. While the program is in its early stages, the TGC will host two public meetings in the coming weeks in order to get the community involved. The group will then follow up with more in-depth seminars in January.

The Community Energy Action Plan looks at five key areas, ranging from simple behavioural changes to new appliances and home retrofits.

"It's about getting the awareness out to people and give people a number of options they can choose to help conserve," said TGC spokesperson Rehana Aziz. "We want this (plan) to be community-led and resident-led so while we want to give them the basic information, it's up to them to do what they want with it."

The action plan will be a two-way street, with the TGC always looking for outside ideas on how residents can implement what the organization calls the five pillars of conservation.

## Ways to save

The five pillars of conservation:

1. Behavioural changes – simple steps such as turning off lights and computers when not in use, and turning down thermostats two degrees;

2. Transportation energy – driving less and walking or taking transit more; buying locally grown food where possible to cut down on food transportation costs;

3. Home retrofits – ensuring homes are properly insulated can cut energy bills drastically – up to 60 per cent of energy use goes toward heating and cooling;

4. Appliances – old refrigerators, dishwashers, washers and dryers consume far more energy than newer models, and incandescent light bulbs waste energy compared to compact fluorescent bulbs;

5. Green power – solar water heaters and home-generated power can greatly reduce a home's reliance on the conventional power grid.

# Program geared to low-income neighbourhoods

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The TGC is also rolling out the program in lower-income parts of North York. Aziz said the beauty of the plan is there are elements contained therein that would enable people of all demographics to participate.

"Obviously, there are a number of factors that contribute to how much a person or a family can do, such as whether they rent or own, socio-economic conditions and lifestyles," she

said. "But there are parts of the plan that are feasible, practical and convenient for everyone."

Aziz suggested that homeowners invest in a home energy audit, in which experts examine a home to find areas where energy is being wasted.

"People can see how much they use in their homes and how much the little things add up," she said. "A staggering amount of home energy use goes into heating and cooling, so little things like

caulking windows can make a big difference in their heating bills."

She added some residents in lower-income areas may be eligible for free home audits and even free retrofits from the Windfall Ecological Centre.

"The goal is to get everyone involved, and they don't want people who want to make a difference to be unable to do so because of money," she said.

While the TGC has not set any hard conservation targets for the study, the

group is working with Windfall and Zerofootprint to devise a carbon calculator, which would determine energy use and possible savings through more conscientious conservation practices.

Two meetings are scheduled at St. Lawrence Heights Community Centre at 5 Replin Rd. The first will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, while the second will take place at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 17. Admission is free and refreshments will be served. Call 416-781-7663.