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Conserving can be a year-round resolution

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As the Chief Energy Conservation Officer of Ontario, I am committed to helping Ontario residents conserve energy and save money 365 days a year. Ontario is facing a challenge - ensuring we have a dependable supply of cost-effective electricity. During last summer's heat wave, Ontarians demonstrated that we could reduce our use of electricity by a measurable amount. But we don't have to wait for an emergency. We can do small things to save electricity every day.

Electricity consumption in the average Ontario home looks like this: 38 per cent to appliances (including washer, dryer, fridge, freezer, stove and dishwasher); 31 per cent goes to heating and cooling; 15 per cent to lighting, and 15 per cent to water heating. Much of this energy is not put to good use, as heat leaks around poorly fitted doors and windows, and lights and appliances are left on when nobody is home.

Here are 12 easy tips to get you started. You'll be surprised

at just how easy it is to save energy in your home, and how much you can save, too.

- A programmable thermostat is easy to install and has become very easy to use. You will wake up to a warm house without wasting energy.

- Defend the purchase of that stylish new sweater by using it as a reason to keep your thermostat set lower in the winter. For every degree you lower the heat, in the 16 to 21 degree Celsius range, you'll save up to five per cent on your heating cost.

- A dirty furnace filter reduces air flow and makes your furnace work harder. Clean filters can save up to five per cent of energy use. Special

tape to seal leaky heating ducts is easy to apply and keeps heat going to where it is needed.

- Take a quick shower instead of a bath. A typical bath uses about 75 litres of hot water, while a five-minute shower with an energy-efficient shower head will use about half that amount.

- Wrap your electric water heater and reduce energy use by eight to 10 per cent with an easy-to-install "tank insulating blanket", available at hardware

and building supply stores.

- Is the temperature of your refrigerator and freezer set for only as cold as you need? Defrost your manual-defrost freezer regularly to ensure it operates at maximum efficiency. Dispose the old "energy hog" fridge in the basement, which is wasting both space and energy. The fridge you bought in 1975 costs about four times as much to run as a new EnergyStar model.

- Wash your clothes in cold or warm water. Did you know that 85 to 90 per cent of the energy used by washing machines is used to heat the water? If you are buying a new clothes washer, check out front-loading models, which cost a little more but use about half the water of conventional washing machines.

- Use energy-saving small appliances, like an electric kettle, toaster oven or microwave whenever possible. Run your dishwasher only when you have a full load, and use the energy-saving cycle. If you have the space, use old style clothes drying racks which also add humidity to the dry winter air in your house. When the

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