



Conservation Zone

**Ontario's long tradition of
Christmas Lights gets an
energy efficient makeover**

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The first settlers to Ontario placed lit candles in holders on trees in celebration of Christmas. More than 100 years ago, in the 1890s, electric lights were used for holiday store displays and some grand homes, but this was rare and very expensive. In the 1920s, strings of big coloured bulbs, using enough electricity to burn your hands, complete with woven cloth coverings over the wires were common.

Fast forward to the 1970s and mini-incandescent bulbs became the rage. Each of these bulbs consumed about 0.5 watts, compared to the five watts that the big bulb incandescent lights sold beside them used.

Today, you can buy strings of Light Emitting Diodes. Known as LED Christmas lights or Seasonal Light Emitting Diodes, they use about 10 per cent of the electricity of a mini-incandescent, about three per cent of the older, larger Christmas lights and are much less likely to burn out.

So toss out your old bulbs and get yourself an early holiday gift this year! Thousands of others have exchanged their strings of old-fashioned bulbs for new LED lights. The old strings are decommissioned and the plastic, glass and wire are all properly recycled.

The power needs of these newer lights are very low; in fact some of the outdoor strings come with a small solar photovoltaic device which converts sunshine into electricity for seasonal illumination. These don't even need to be plugged in. Also, automatic timers let you preset when the lights go on or off which saves costs and draws less power.

*A special feature prepared and funded by the
Conservation Bureau of Ontario
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