



The Daily Gleaner

Beat the heat while staying 'green'!

July 28, 2007

Our annual summer heat wave is upon us. Those of us without air conditioners have started to experience uncomfortable days and hot sleepless nights. But before you let yourself get too grumpy from the heat, you might want to count your blessings. Many cities in the United States hit record highs, into the mid-40s (Celsius), in the last couple of years. Definitely very uncomfortable but yet nothing compared to India in 2003 where people in the state of Andhra Pradesh experienced 50 degrees Celsius. Just think about adding on another 20 degrees above our current 30 degree temperatures! We are fortunate in Fredericton; we experience extreme heat for only a few days or weeks a year.

Of course, our first instinct when the temperature rises beyond the mid-20s is to crank the air conditioner to high (for those of us who have air conditioners). However, there are other alternatives to help us manage the heat, save energy, and at the same time help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I do not have air conditioning in my home. But my good neighbour has been kind enough to turn me into a weather nut so I am frequently checking the weather online, and if I see a hot day coming up I take steps to keep my home cooler longer. My heat prevention measures include:

- Opening all of the windows in the house in the morning (if they aren't open from the night before);
- Closing all windows and curtains around noon to keep the heat out during the hot afternoon;
- Turning on the ceiling fan (if you have one) or floor fans in each room;
- Opening the windows again in the late evening;

Closing the curtains or blinds helps keep some of the heat out during the afternoon, especially on the sides of the house that face the sun during the day. This works well if someone is home during the day or you are able to get home during lunch. For those who cannot make it home at noontime, I would suggest opening the windows in your house that are shaded or not facing the sun in the afternoon. Keep the windows in the sun closed and blinds down that face the sun. And if some of your windows don't have curtains or blinds, just forget about aesthetics for the time and tack a dark sheet or towel over the window on those extremely hot days.

If you do have an air conditioner, try setting it to 23°C or 24°C, instead of 17°C (or above 73° Fahrenheit instead of 63°). Remember your body, in fact, doesn't like that drastic change in temperature from outdoors to indoors. That small change in temperature saves money and energy because you're not using as much power to cool your home. Reducing our energy consumption, hence our greenhouse gas emissions, is one way we as individuals can contribute to slowing down the climate change cycle.

How many stores or restaurants have you entered on a hot day and noticed that it is so chilly that you need a sweater? Do them and the planet a favour and ask them to turn down the air conditioner.

Another way to beat the heat is to go to a lake and sit in it for the day – this is a great way to use conserve energy! Remember, we are fortunate here in our climate - there are millions of people around the world who suffer through real heat waves.

So I challenge you – even in our Fredericton ‘heat wave’ - keep reducing your energy use. It will save you hundreds of dollars a year, lower your carbon footprint. and help our city meet its greenhouse gas emissions target. It takes all of us, together, to lead the way to Kyoto. Visit www.greenmattersfredericton.com for more information.

Peter Corbyn is the founder of www.earthinstitute.ca and www.greenenergychallenge.com