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LED Lights and the Future

If I had written an article in 1988 and said that in less than twenty years we would pay \$2.00 for a bottle of water, some of us would be driving hybrid cars, and CDs would essentially be obsolete because we would be downloading music on our cell phones, you would have said I was nuts.

Well, the reality is that in 2008 all of the above are happening. Which brings us to the next question: What will status quo be in 2028? For those that think 1988 wasn't too far back, 2028 is just as close!

It seems that there are banner years for change, such as the launch of CNN and MTV in 1980 and 81; and now in 2008 incredibly expensive gasoline prices that are sure to be remembered long into the future. And while driving around town this holiday season it seems to me that we are currently experiencing another banner year for change – the LED seasonal light bulb!

LED light bulbs consume substantially less energy than traditional light bulbs. In fact, eight strings of LED lights will save you about \$20 in electricity and about 100 lbs of greenhouse gas emissions every year versus the traditional bulbs. And these bulbs are guaranteed for hundreds of thousands of hours, so that means you can will them to your great-great-great-grandchildren, and they will still work! I estimated that my outdoor Christmas LED bulbs will cost me about a 25 cents this season. So why wouldn't I use them?

I am very impressed to see that The New Brunswick Provincial Capital Commission and its partners The Home Depot, Credit Unions of New Brunswick, the Caisses populaires acadiennes, NB Power, and Rogers Communications answered the green call by offering discounted seasonal LEDs to all communities in New Brunswick. Fifty communities signed up and will collectively be reducing their seasonal lighting cost from about \$5,300 to \$50! This project is so impressive that it was featured on the homepage of CBC's One Million Acts of Green website last week (www.green.cbc.ca).

So, what has this got to do with 2028? What will Fredericton look like in twenty years and what new technology and green gadgets will be ubiquitous then? Maybe LED bulbs will be passé and there will be an even more efficient light bulb on the market. Perhaps we will all be driving plug-in hybrids that get 120 miles per gallon (assuming that we are still using internal combustion engines at all). Perhaps wind turbines and tidal power will be generating all of New Brunswick's energy requirements. DVDs will likely not exist any more. You will be able to download movies and TV shows where you want and when you want it, even on the 20th generation Blackberry and iPhone.

Change happens, and although some of us may not like it, change is reality. We notice it most when big change happens fast, such as the increased uptake of LED seasonal lights this year.

The bottom line is that change that makes a positive difference for our planet should be embraced. So, if you haven't made the move to LED seasonal bulbs yet, maybe you will next year. It will help cut \$20 to \$30 on your January electricity bill every year, and who doesn't want to save money every January!

Peter Corbyn is a co-founder of GreenNexus.com and a board member of The Climate Project – Canada.