

GREEN TECH THE SERIES COLUMN FOR JULY 29, 2015  
HEADLINE: HOW DO WE RATE IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY?

I get a steady stream of surveys and manufacturers' information offering various opinion polls on housing, sustainable living and energy efficiency. Most are promoting something and go to the junk file pretty quickly. A couple of late did seem interesting, however, so I thought I would share them here.

Lennox Industries is one of the most reputable and responsible manufacturers of HVAC appliances, amongst other things. Their recent US survey on "keeping cool" had some interesting results; some cute and some surprising. Almost half of those surveyed felt they rated a "B" when it came to energy efficiency and over a third said they had done some kind of energy saving work on their home in the past year. With respect to air conditioning, 61 percent turned it down at night, 43% raised it when company came and one of the cuter comments was that 13% raised it when making "whoopee." If their air conditioner quit, 53% would take off some clothes and cold shower was next at 25%. 30% said they would walk around in their underwear, rather than operate their A/C, unless it got really uncomfortable. 68% admitted they would spend the money, rather than do the "underwear" routine.

According to this survey, 69%, up 13% from last year's survey, put conserving money over helping the environment; the buck still reins number one incentive.

I receive emails from the "Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance." Recently, this non-profit organization produced a survey called "Energy Efficiency & Canadians" and some of the results here are worth sharing. They surveyed 1584 Canadians, using a probability testing-margin of error 2.5 19 times out of 20. Like our American neighbours, about a third said they had made a major effort to conserve energy last year. Only 22% of Canadians feel they have done all they can in saving energy and, surprisingly, region, age, and income were not a factor in their desire to conserve.

Our neighbours to the south have a wide range of state and federal programs to entice home owners to improve their homes. Other than some small programs available like the "Save on Energy" rebates ([www.saveonenergy.ca](http://www.saveonenergy.ca)), we don't have a lot here. The Save on Energy programs cover rebates on air conditioners and furnaces, coupons for light bulbs, Energy Star fixtures, electric water heater blankets and programmable thermostats to name a few. Over half of Canadians see a financial incentive in window upgrades, insulation and upgrading their HVAC systems. 66% of Canadians felt they would see a financial impact if they lowered

their winter temperature setting to 20.C, during the day and 18.C, at night. The percentage stayed the same when asked about driving less and 60% now wash clothes in cold water. 54% use the energy setting on dishwashers and washing machines, so it would seem that we are slowly getting the message.

When asked how much the environment would be helped if we did the following: 74% felt energy efficient cars topped of the list, followed by insulation, windows and HVAC upgrades. Surprisingly, 41% felt servicing their HVAC equipment was a good idea and 78% supported recycling. Programmable thermostats or monitoring the home temperatures was close behind at 67 and 61%. When it came to their actual home, a whopping 81% said they had switched to CFL's and energy efficient appliances ranked right up there, too, at 72%. One unfortunate number popped up in the survey; only 26% had had a home energy audit. For the few hundred dollars it costs to have a skilled auditor evaluate your home you would be assured that your energy improvements gave you the best bang for your buck. Only three in ten homeowners took advantage of any energy rebate program.

When asked the question, "How regularly do you do the following things?" recycling got top marks, 93% said they always or regularly recycled. After that the numbers drop substantially; temperature setbacks, cold water washing and using energy mode on appliances were all under 70%. With a country as vast as ours, vehicles are almost a necessity for many. When asked if they were driving less, walking or using public transit, 76% said it would be very beneficial to the environment. 43% said they now drive less or use more public transit. While 45% said unplugging computers and electronic appliances, like your TV, were beneficial to the environment, only 29% actually did this.

Like the Lennox survey, direct correlation to conservation and saving money was a significant association. Unfortunately, very few Canadians feel they are financially able to help the environment. If they did invest in a sustainable project, they wanted to see a direct impact on this investment. 42% of Canadians felt they were only somewhat able to make changes in their lifestyle that would benefit the environment. On the home front, interest in an energy saving investment in their home changed dramatically depending on the payback time involved. If the up-front costs can be returned in 2 years, then 86% of those surveyed were seriously interested. If told it would take up to 10 years to recover the investment, this percentage plummeted to 30%.

When asked what is holding them back from taking steps for energy conservation, 67% said it was the cost and 54% said their lifestyle did not afford

the time to make this step. Sadly, almost half of Canadians said making these energy upgrades in their homes was not worth the effort. The survey found that the majority, 90%, felt government subsidies for energy upgrades were a good idea, and that even \$1,000.00 would make a difference in their decision process. Nearly the same number felt the EnergyStar rating system was very helpful. Not unlike our American neighbours, saving money came first, then the environment, so, while we are slowly getting the message, we have a way to go to put the environment first.

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