

## Energy Heroes in our Midst

Today's Clean Air Clean Energy column was written by Bolton resident Paul Hingorani.

Bob Budd was stuck in gridlock when it struck him – this simply wasn't sustainable! With little else to do, he began to contemplate the immense size of the tailpipe that would be needed to handle all of the exhaust fumes spewing out from the cars around him. "I decided I needed to do something more about my energy consumption" he recalls, reflecting on that day over twenty years ago. He has kept that promise to himself and future generations. Living entirely off the grid for more than ten years, what Bob has achieved and how he has done it is truly inspirational.

Bob was a presenter at last month's *Living Off the Grid* workshop held at the Ecology Retreat Centre near Orangeville. The workshop addressed growing concerns about the impact on the planet of using non-renewable energy, and the growing interest in and adoption of alternative sources of renewable and non-polluting energy. The workshop was oversubscribed - perhaps an indication that others are starting to feel as compelled as Bob to take action. Attendees ranged from those interested in leveraging alternative forms of home energy – one couple was building an off-the-grid home – to a building inspector, an independent builder, and even representatives from a local hydro utility.

The workshop covered a wide range of alternative energy options, made easier to understand and apply by the experienced and extremely knowledgeable instructors. The focus was on home energy consumption needs for heating, cooling and light, and how to effectively meet these needs through alternative, cleaner forms of energy such as the sun and the wind. This also included wood, through the use of advanced combustion technologies. Bob focused on how to effectively leverage wind power, and shared his numerous and humorous experiences building and utilizing home-sized wind generators. His home also makes use of photovoltaics to turn sunlight into electricity on less windy days, as well as solar-heated hot water. By the end of the workshop, it was clear that there is no one 'right' solution to meeting all home energy needs. Rather, there are better ways of heating, cooling and lighting your home that properly consider improved energy efficiency – turning high grade electricity into heat is very inefficient, for example – and the sustainability of the source of that energy.

While Canadians have much to be proud of, we are the largest per capita consumers of energy in the world. Canada also lags behind both the U.S. and Europe in its use of alternative energy sources. However, the same variety of options and technologies that have been successfully used in other countries are available here. Unlike Bob, and without the government subsidies that have spurred adoption in other countries, you may not choose to make use of alternative forms of energy. However, you can still be an energy hero. All workshop presenters agreed that practicing energy conservation is increasingly critical. If in future the government sees fit to pass on the true price of energy to the consumer, you will also realize significant financial benefits.

You can find out more about the Ecology Retreat Centre at [www.ecologyretreatcentre.com](http://www.ecologyretreatcentre.com) or (519) 941-4560.

For more information about other topics in the Caledon Clean Air Clean Energy Program, please contact us at [cca@caledoncountryside.org](mailto:cca@caledoncountryside.org) or (905) 584-6221.

Previous articles in this series are available at [www.caledoncountryside.org/stepup.htm](http://www.caledoncountryside.org/stepup.htm).

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