

WWF's Living Planet @ Work pilot project boosts OPA's environmental initiatives.

Installing energy-efficient lighting, reducing printing and recycling organic waste are just a few of the ways the Ontario Power Authority (OPA) is reducing its environmental footprint as part of the World Wildlife Fund-Canada's Living Planet@Work pilot program. This program aspires to engage every employee in the organization in sustainability by providing inspiration, tools and opportunities to share, learn and celebrate successes. Since we signed on to the program in mid-2010, we've achieved a number of successes and are now working toward even more.

Our journey toward reducing our environmental footprint began in 2007 with the formation of an employee environment committee. We decided to concentrate on three to four green initiatives each year so we could celebrate our early wins and use them to gain momentum. In each initiative, we actively engaged employees and started with pilot projects that incorporated staff feedback. We also made ongoing staff education and awareness an integral part of these initiatives.

In all of our efforts, we have been extremely lucky to work with a committed group of people from across our organization. Each of them has been eager to demonstrate environmental leadership and "walk the talk" as the OPA works hard to lead and coordinate conservation initiatives across the province and ensure Ontario has a clean, reliable and sustainable electricity supply.

In 2010, we took a big step forward when our Board and executive team approved an environmental policy for our internal operations. This policy set the framework for our work and gave us the mandate to move forward in a number of key areas to achieve annual targets. The commitment of top management to reducing the OPA's environmental footprint spurred on our decision to participate in the WWF pilot project.

Our first major area of focus was on reducing the amount of paper we used in our printing. We moved to electronic pay stubs, set our printers to double-sided printing and upgraded our black and white paper to 100 percent Forest Stewardship Council-approved, post-consumer recycled content. As part of our Living Planet@Work efforts, we now track printing by employee organization-wide and are on track to meet our goals of reducing black and white printing by five percent and colour printing by 10 percent.

Another issue we are hard at work on – and one very close to our hearts at the OPA – is electricity conservation. In partnership with our landlord, Oxford Properties, we disconnected most of our perimeter ceiling lighting to take advantage of the natural lighting that comes in our windows. We also replaced existing lighting, using lower wattage fluorescent bulbs and replacing halogen pot lights with LEDs. These initiatives led to a seven percent reduction in electricity consumption. In 2010, our office space was sub-metered for monitoring plug and light load, with software showing energy use on each floor. This will provide us with a baseline for measuring future performance. We are currently exploring options for installing motion sensor lighting controls in our offices and meeting rooms and light switches so we can better manage our lighting. We are aiming for a further three percent reduction in electricity use this year.

One of our key goals has been to lead by example through the initiatives that we undertake. We are the first tenant in our 27-floor office building to implement a new waste management system that includes organic waste recycling. Our offices now have strategically located bins for separating four types of waste: organics, paper, recyclable containers and non-recyclable waste. We are in the process of

completing our first waste audit to determine the results of our efforts and track our progress toward our 10 percent waste reduction goal.

For the second year in a row, the environment committee also developed a set of performance indicators to support the key areas set out in our policy for approval by our board. These indicators cover the period from June 2011 to May 2012, and build upon our initial metrics developed for the period of the Living Planet@Work project. They allow us to track our progress in a systematic and measurable way.

Of special note, the OPA was recently named one of Canada's Top Green Employers for 2011. We're very proud of this award, which recognizes the significant momentum we have gained in our sustainability efforts. This validation has meant a lot to OPA employees and reinforced the importance of our activities internally to green our operations. In early July, we found out that we had the highest participation rate in Pollution Probe's Clean Air Commute in our size category – again thanks to the dedication of our staff to this worthy cause!

The OPA is passionate and excited by the work we are doing to lessen our collective impact on the planet. We'll continue to work diligently toward our environmental goals over the coming year, and carry on the lessons learned and experiences gained from Living Planet@ Work.