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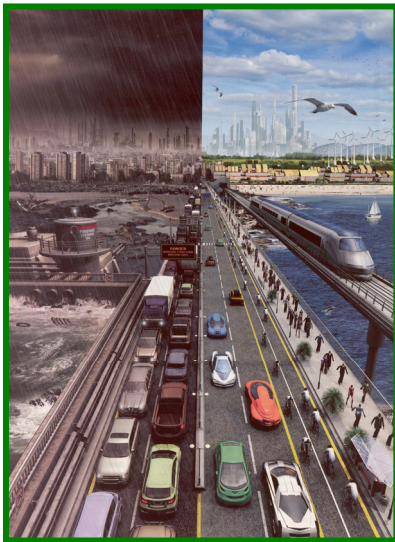
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### Message from the Director – Steven Hall

Just how green is your city? It's a question being posed to many US cities and may soon be facing Canadian ones as well.

The 2006 ranking of America's most sustainable cities (*sustainlane.com*) was released earlier this year to a frenzy of media, elected officials and city businesses who celebrated the top-ranked winners — among them, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle and Chicago. The cities were assessed on everything from air quality and green buildings to local food, agriculture and "city innovation".

For those cities that didn't top the charts, well, the news stories were less than festive. In Houston, which fell to last in the rankings, the appraisal offered some important lessons about the role green plays in our municipal identity.



To help improve its ranking, Houston brought on new environmental staff to polish up the city's greener side.

**What makes a city sustainable?** Hallmarks of sustainable cities include a commitment to clean energy and environment, an emphasis on creating a strong local economy, and citizens and city officials working together to make positive, thoughtful choices for the long-term benefit of the community.

While working on the task, the new staff realized that Houston did indeed have environmental operations within numerous departments, but they never met with one another or knew of each other's work. Houston's problem, it seems, had as much to do with its lack of self-knowledge and coordination of efforts as with its actual performance.

In this edition of our newsletter, I'm delighted to announce the upcoming launch of *Conservation Peel*. This will be Peel Region's newest web portal to everything that is green, clean and sustainable about the municipality. Best of all, it shows just what partnerships between municipal departments can really achieve when everyone's committed to a common goal.

### Feature: Going Green through *Conservation Peel*

As the role municipalities play in fostering sustainable behaviour broadens, so too do the tools available to help bring home the message of energy and environmental conservation.

This fall Peel Region will be launching *Conservation Peel* ([conservationpeel.ca](http://conservationpeel.ca)), an interactive, engaging website that provides a one-stop directory to Peel's conservation efforts. Whether its information on water, energy, earth or air — *Conservation Peel* brings it all right to your fingertips.

The concept behind the site is simple. When you make an effort to save one natural resource, there's a cascade of benefits.

Consider water use. Each time an effort is made to conserve water, it also helps lower the amount of energy needed to treat and pump water to your home. Less energy usage means fewer greenhouse gas emissions and better air quality. Better air quality means good health for you and your family. It's that easy. By using one resource wisely, we achieve a range of environmental benefits. That's the conservation connection.

The goal of *Conservation Peel* is to connect citizens to information that helps them understand how they use natural resources in their everyday lives — and to do it in a way that's exciting, interactive and trouble-free. Municipalities are realizing that getting information to community members requires an end-user perspective. This means understanding how citizens go about looking for information and then delivering that information to them in a way that makes sense.

In the case of conservation — whether it's waste recycling, water efficiency or energy — although these programs might fall under different departments it doesn't mean citizens should have to visit countless websites to get the information they're looking for. The clearer we present conservation, the easier it becomes for the public to understand its benefits. In Peel, five departments and divisions are working together to enhance this goal.

Bottom line: start strengthening your municipality's "green identity"; tell your story clearly and with a common voice. By working together to build self-knowledge and greater coordination between existing efforts within your municipality, you might be surprised to see just how green you already are.

### **Watt's New: *EmPowering Peel* Helps Staff Understand Utility Bills!**

Rate codes, price adjustments, kWh, m<sup>3</sup> — with all the abbreviations and industry jargon it's no wonder that

most of us only look at the amount due when the utility bills arrive in the mail.

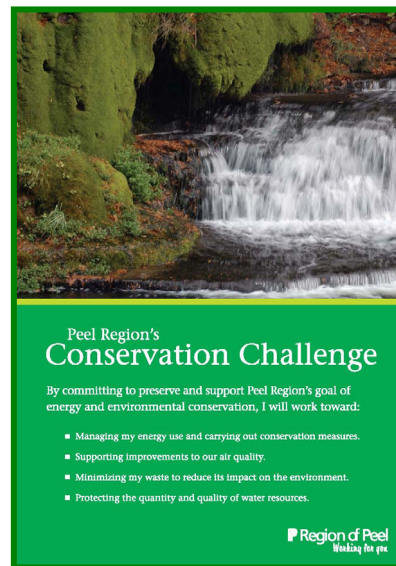
Energy bills can be complicated, but Peel Region staff are learning that the more you know about your bills, the more you can save. During August, Peel's staff conservation program "*EmPowering Peel*" hosted numerous employees in a series of lunch and learn sessions on how to read and understand electricity, natural gas and water bills.

During the sessions, staff received detailed breakdowns of how utility bills are calculated, the evolution of Ontario's energy industry and key insights on where it's headed. Topics included upcoming rate changes to the electricity market, decoding how commodity rates are set and what to look for on energy contracts before signing. All staff who attended were also entered in draws for great energy saving prizes. A special thank you to all those who helped deliver the presentations and organize the sessions!

To help staff lower their energy bills, everyone who attended the lunch and learns were given the opportunity to join Peel's "Conservation Challenge" - a

personal pledge to reduce energy consumption by 20 per cent.

If you're interested in learning how to host your own lunch and learn on utility bills, feel free to contact Corporate Energy for presentation tips at: [energy@peelregion.ca](mailto:energy@peelregion.ca)



**Peel Region's Conservation Challenge!** A staff commitment to manage energy use, improve air quality, minimize waste and protect water quality and resources.