

# Updating boilers a boon to condo

**Changing law could allow more access to funds**

Energy efficiency upgrades can be very expensive

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Toronto Hydro's Yves Lemoine says changing the act would encourage the early adoption of conservation measures.

By upgrading its boiler system, Lexington Condominiums has reduced its utility costs by an impressive 24 per cent. The complex's senior property manager is now wondering how much more could be saved if the Condominium Act was changed.

Toronto City Council in May passed a motion by Councillor Mike Del Grande (Scarborough-Agincourt) asking the Ontario government to change the act to allow better access to capital reserve funds for energy efficiency upgrades.

The reserve funds of condominiums are available but it's very difficult to dip into them unless a piece of equipment needs replacing.

"We were very fortunate, in that our equipment was due to be replaced, so timing was on our side," says Elizabeth Beaudin, senior property manager for Lexington, which is located on Carlton St. between Yonge and Church Sts.

"Some newer buildings may not have energy-efficient equipment and it would be beneficial for them to look at the savings from replacing it with some things more efficient."

With the exception of the domestic hot water boilers, all the equipment in the 24-year-old condominium was original.

In 2004, Toronto Hydro Energy Services was called in and added two new high-efficient boilers, revised the piping and replaced one boiler with two high-efficiency ones in the swimming pool at a cost of \$290,000.

It added up to annual savings of \$55,000 in energy costs.

Beaudin says that had the act been changed, she would have probably recommended her condo board consider a lighting retrofit, especially in the



Elizabeth Beaudin, property manager of Lexington Condominiums on Carlton St., shows off the building's new CAMUS boilers. The condo might have done more energy upgrading on site, but the Condominium Act restricts the access to reserve funds.

garage.

"Technology has advanced so much that there are some potential savings there, given that the lighting is on 24 hours a day," she says.

Yves Lemoine, vice-president, engineering and business development for Toronto Hydro Energy Services, says a change in the act would encourage the early adoption of conservation

measures instead of waiting for the equipment to fail.

"You could do advance equipment replacement, such as windows," he says.

"And often what we find when we go into buildings, is that certain pieces of equipment aren't maintained or aren't operated in the right way, such as being left to run 24 hours."

## Updating Boilers a Boon to Condo

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Gord Perks, senior campaigner for the Toronto Environmental Alliance, a non-governmental advocacy organization on environmental issues in Toronto, says the motion is an excellent idea.

"These are the kinds of issues where we should be putting our attention, instead of trying to come up with long-term storage of radioactive waste," he says.

He says the most expensive and most polluting thing to do when faced with an energy shortage is to increase the amount of energy you create. The least expensive and quickest is to figure out how to use energy more efficiently.

"Most people think that energy efficiency and conservation means having less. Having less light, less refrigeration, whatever. In fact, efficiency means getting exactly the same service using less electricity."

He says that buildings are nowhere near as efficient as they could be, in terms of how they use heating and electrical energy.

"Usually we find that when you make an investment into energy efficiency, because you aren't paying so much for your energy any more, you're getting a fairly quick payback.

Harry Makivirta, president of the Virta group, an energy conservation company that manages the installation of cost-saving equipment, says even buildings built today could use an upgrade.

"Most of these buildings are still being built with the

standard efficiency boiler. It's the cheapest boiler on the market because the lowest bidder wins the job. If we took out that standard efficiency boiler and put in a high efficiency one, there would be a savings of 20 per cent."

Other areas where there could be savings include the pump that boosts water to the upper floors and the CO2 fan in the garage. "You could monitor and measure the CO2 and fans would only go on when level goes high. Smart thermostats that would bring the temperature to a satisfactory level, when motion is detected in a suite, could achieve a 20 per cent saving, he says.

And a system that take the humid air from the swimming pool and puts it back to heat the pool could save up to 80 per cent of the energy cost.

The motion has landed on

the desk of Peter Love, Ontario's Chief Energy Conservation Officer and head of the Conservation Bureau, who writes an annual report on energy efficiency for the government.

"It (the motion) is interesting but before I comment on it, I'd want to talk to the framers of the legislation to see what they have in mind," he says. "I'm sure there are some pros and cons and I'll do research to determine what the issues are."