

(Kitchener Waterloo, August 4, 2006) – The Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo are asking residents and businesses to make an extra effort to conserve electricity as part of a Voluntary Blackout Day on Sunday, August 13th.

The Blackout Day is a reminder of the electricity blackout of 2003, and of the importance of energy conservation. It was initiated by the City of Woodstock, which challenged all Ontario municipalities to participate. The Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo took up the challenge with the support of Kitchener Wilmot Hydro and Waterloo North Hydro.

Following the blackout of 2003, as the power came back on, Ontario residents and businesses were urged to limit energy consumption to avoid overloading the system. Citizens responded by turning off air conditioners, lights, appliances and televisions, and successfully reduced the demand on the electricity system at that critical time.

The Voluntary Blackout Day aims to recreate that success and remind citizens that simple actions can make a significant impact on electricity consumption.

Residents and business owners are being asked to do the following on Sunday, August 13:

- \* Turn off air conditioners
- \* Turn off lights
- \* Avoid using any major appliances.

“We’re asking people on August 13 to do whatever they can to help conserve energy that day, and every day too. Focusing on August 13 helps send the message that there can be consequences if we don’t think about conservation, but the message we’re really trying to send is that every day, individuals can take small steps to conserve electricity,” states Waterloo Mayor Herb Epp.

Adds Councillor Berry Vrbanovic, Acting Mayor of Kitchener and Chair of the City’s Environmental Committee, “We are encouraging everyone to pull together and see how much we can reduce our consumption on this day. Hopefully some the actions we take on August 13th will turn into long-term habits, perhaps in a modified form such as only using major appliances after 8 p.m.”

Ontarians are breaking records for electricity use. The Independent Electricity System Operator, which is responsible for managing Ontario’s electricity system and balancing supply with demand, tells us that on August 1st, 2006 a record high of 27,005 megawatts of electricity was used at the late afternoon peak. This exceeds the July 13th, 2005 peak of 26,160 megawatts and suggests a trend toward increased consumption during summer months.

On the Voluntary Blackout Day, residents and businesses are being asked to focus on three key actions: turning off air conditioners, turning off lights, and avoiding use of major appliances. But there are many things consumers can do every day to conserve electricity. These include:

- \* Turn off all but essential internal and external lights.
- \* Set air conditioners to 26 degrees Celsius (80 degrees Fahrenheit) or higher, or use fans as an alternative.
- \* Close blinds and curtains during the day to keep out the sun and retain cooler air inside.
- \* Turn off unneeded appliances, electronic equipment and computers.
- \* Give the oven and stove the night off; prepare your food on the barbecue or in the microwave. This saves electricity and helps to keep your house cooler.
- \* Avoid using major power-consuming equipment like dishwashers, washers and dryers, and swimming pool pumps until after 8:00 p.m.
- \* Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs).

Ron Charie, President and CEO of Kitchener Wilmot Hydro, said, "We are asking all customers to do their share and reduce their consumption where possible to alleviate the demand on Ontario's electricity system."

Added John Janzen of Waterloo North Hydro, "The memory of the Blackout serves as a poignant reminder of how dependent we are on electricity. While raising the air conditioning thermostat by one or two degrees has little effect on our personal comfort, when thousands of homes take the same action it significantly reduces the overall demand."

The Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo are leading by example by reducing electricity consumption at their facilities. The temperature in City of Kitchener facilities has been set at an average of 26 degrees Celsius, fountains have been shut off, and all non-essential computers, monitors, equipment, and lights have been shut off. Air handlers have been scheduled to cool Kitchener City Hall at night to lessen cooling requirements during peak hours.

Employees at the City of Waterloo are asked to turn out lights where ever and when ever possible, close blinds to keep out heat, and turn off computers, lights and fans when leaving for the day or when not in use. In addition, the City Hall operates on night lighting throughout the weekend and the Atrium's light is monitored throughout the year by a photo cell which is automated to only turn on lighting when the natural sunlight filtering through the windows fails to safely illuminate the area. Solar panels at City Hall also contribute to reduced energy consumption.

In addition to reducing strain on the electricity system, conservation has other benefits. It is good for the environment because it reduces emissions from coal-fired generating plants, and it also saves money on energy bills.

For more energy conservation tips, visit the Kitchener Wilmot Hydro website at [www.kwhydro.on.ca/conservation\\_tips.html](http://www.kwhydro.on.ca/conservation_tips.html) and the Waterloo North Hydro website at [www.wnhydro.com/savingenergy](http://www.wnhydro.com/savingenergy).