



Doors Closed Ontario! Campaign Report September 2005

Our door is closed,
but we are open.

Save energy when air conditioning by keeping doors closed.

weconserve.ca

ONTARIO'S CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

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Overview

Doors Closed Ontario was a pilot campaign for *We Conserve*, Ontario's new conservation movement. As a movement, our goal is to support the shift to a conserver society and economy in Ontario.

We Conserve strengthens cooperation between organizations through networks and collaborations, supports individual organizations in their area of expertise and leadership, and promotes their services and solutions through co-marketing initiatives. *We Conserve* also brings the potential for strengthening the conservation movement via common social marketing campaigns and a united fundraising initiative.

Consultation on how to design the *We Conserve* initiative was launched on July 5, 2005 with a challenge paper and website, www.weconserve.ca. Early on in the process, however, we wanted to provide a practical demonstration of the power of a conservation movement in raising awareness and achieving results.

Through our earlier work in promoting electricity conservation during heat waves, we became aware of a strong public outcry against "energy wastrels". People were willing to do their part to conserve, but they were outraged to see the wasteful practices of their neighbours, and in particular the stores and restaurants with an air-conditioner running full blast and the door wide open.

Our initial observation was:

- **Support for conservation is high.**
- **A significant percentage of the population practices conservation**
- **These people appreciate recognition for their efforts**
- **These people are open to new conservation messages**
- **Conservers hate to see blatant waste.**

Air-conditioner waste was an obvious target: highly visible and measurable. With help from Scott Rouse at Energy@Work and the Heating Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Institute of Canada, we estimated that if 10% of Ontario's 100,000 stores and restaurants left the door open while air-conditioning, up to 200 megawatts of power could be wasted.

The challenge was to design the campaign in a way that rewarded good behaviour while drawing attention to the wasteful practices.

Our answer was *Doors Closed Ontario!*

The campaign was simple: we designed a poster for the stores that were doing the right thing, and we asked groups and volunteers to help distribute the posters. In particular, we asked for help for a one-week blitz leading up to the second anniversary of the blackout on August 14, 2005.

The response was tremendous.

We sent the request out via our listserv and other network lists. The message was bounced by readers to many other people.

Within two days, we had offers of support for promoting the campaign by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. All three organizations included a notice on the campaign in an e-newsletter to their members.

Over 5,000 posters were distributed by 24 organizations in 15 communities (see list on page eight). Five municipalities signed up, as did two chambers of commerce. The poster was translated into French, Mandarin and Cantonese, and Portuguese.

Media Coverage

The media launch on Tuesday August 9th, 2005 was a great success. Over 30 media from Toronto and the surrounding area attended the launch which featured speeches by Chris Winter ED of the CCO and Peter Love, Ontario's Chief Energy Conservation Officer. Also in attendance were representatives from various NGO partners including, One Tonne Toronto, North Toronto Green Community, One Tonne Don Valley West, Cool Shops (Clean Air Foundation), Eneract, Canada-China Environmental Cooperation Council, Federation of Portuguese Canadian Business & Professionals. Representatives from the Chinese media and the Portuguese media were in attendance to discuss the campaign within these two communities.

"It was a fantastic media launch for Door Closed campaign this morning. So many media, including the main Chinese newspapers and TV. Congratulations!"

Frank Deng,
Canada-China Environmental Cooperation Council

The campaign was featured in newspapers across the province including the National Post, the Toronto Star, the Toronto Sun and a variety of local and community newspapers. Many radio and TV stations also featured the campaign.

We documented over 100 media hits on the Doors Closed Ontario! Campaign. The audience numbers for the electronic media (radio and TV) alone (taken from the media monitoring notes) indicates 4.2 million listeners were exposed to the message. Volunteers who distributed posters after the media blitz reported that stores and restaurants were often already familiar with the campaign.

"We had great success with promoting the campaign in the Portuguese community with a Portuguese media kick-off on Wednesday, August 10, 2005 which featured members of Cool Shops."

Ron Moniz,
Federation of Portuguese Canadian
Business and Professionals

The media was a vital part of this campaign as stores are more likely to put up a poster and close their door if there is a possibility that a news camera will be coming by. One Toronto retailer suggested that this fear of exposure by the media was directly responsible for their compliance.

The marketing aspect of the campaign is something that should be looked at next year. If we were to offer each business a free exposure on the Doors Closed website it would further entice those businesses that are concerned only with the bottom line.

Poster Distribution

Posters were distributed in 15 communities across Ontario, giving us an excellent range of feedback on the uptake on the campaign in different regions.

Major retail centers and streets were the most effective targets. Smaller stores are generally already concerned about losing money and have their doors shut. Some small stores do not have air conditioning at all. One volunteer suggested taking the campaign to another level and having signs that congratulate those stores that do not have air conditioning.

Volunteers from small towns and Northern communities found that few stores were interested in participating. Generally keeping doors open was just not an issue as it was not necessary for encouraging business. The campaign was successful in urban centers like Toronto and Ottawa with thriving downtowns. It was also successful in surrounding suburban centers like Oakville and Burlington which also have busy downtown cores. One organization in Hamilton reported that there were so few street facing stores in the city that keeping doors open was not an issue.

"The campaign was a great idea to spread awareness to Ontario about energy conservation and a great learning tool for businesses to realize how much energy they were leaking and how much they could be saving. Our members reacted positively with the campaign downloading the poster and were more than willingly to show it off and spread the message."

Ron Moniz,
Federation of Portuguese Canadian
Business and Professionals

The larger stores located in urban shopping districts were the worst perpetrators since they can afford to waste money for the sake of gaining business. Perhaps targeting large chains instead of going after small businesses would be more effective since the energy impact of a larger store having their door open is much greater. Also, volunteers approaching these large stores had little success since the staff do not generally make decisions and the order to keep the door open comes from head office. A few large stores in down town Toronto did close their doors because of the campaign.

Large chains posed a problem. Staff were all too willing to comply, but their hands were tied by corporate policy made in some far off city.

A Toronto merchant reported having lost customers because their doors were open. She also suggested that peer pressure among stores in a neighbourhood would force stores to choose to close their doors. As we suspected, congratulating stores on their conservation minded actions with a poster will have an impact on those stores who have their doors open.

Partnering NGOs responded positively to having their logo displayed on the posters as distribution partners. As partners in the campaign, their investment of time gave them valuable publicity, both in stores and in local media.

The support of municipalities and chambers of commerce was a tremendous boost to the campaign. The town of Oakville posted the names of those stores that participated in the campaign on their website. You can check out their results at <http://www.oakville.ca/3826.htm> (67 stores!).

"Stores were very happy to post the poster in their windows after I said that I would post their store name on our website as a participating store, to give them some free exposure. It worked very well."

Suzanne Austin, Town of Oakville

When we had a cultural association as a partner, we produced a bilingual version of the poster for them. Both the Canada-China Environmental Cooperation Council and the Federation of Portuguese Canadian Business and Professionals received media local coverage of their efforts.

Most businesses liked the look and wording of the poster however a few volunteers reported that some stores thought the wording suggested they were closed. Other volunteers thought stickers would have been more effective.

Many volunteers suggested distributing a simple card or brochure about the costs or energy use (both environmental and financial) along with the poster would be effective. With this information available, stores that had their doors open could have evidence of the waste of energy to pass onto their head offices and managers.

“All 12 posters went in half an hour! Will be printing more. They mostly have seen the ad on TV and are anxious to get on the bandwagon. It is now a fashion trend in the Beach, so I will be printing more.”

Cynthia Dudley, Toronto

Results

Number of Posters Distributed: 5345

Number of Partner Organizations: 27

Number of Ontario Cities/Towns where posters were distributed: 16

Number of Municipalities involved: 5

Number of Chamber of Commerce: 2

Number of languages posters translated into: 4

Based on the reports from local canvassers, we estimate that...

49% of businesses approached displayed a poster

12% of businesses visited had their doors open

64% of businesses with their doors open closed their doors when asked

The 12% of businesses with doors open supports our original estimate of up to 200 megawatts of wasted electricity during heat waves if 10% of businesses leave their doors open while air-conditioning.

Through direct outreach during this pilot campaign we estimate that we were able to save 5 to 7 megawatts of power by asking stores to close their doors. Not bad for \$3,000 worth of posters. With an earlier start in 2006, we anticipate even better results.

The more important result is how *Doors Closed* helped build a conservation movement in Ontario:

- We forged new partnerships in conservation
- We raised public awareness and support for conservation
- We promoted other conservation programs and groups

In short, the *Doors Closed* campaign demonstrated how a simple campaign can help support a complex movement and a deep-rooted shift in attitudes. It showed the value of a community-oriented and province-wide campaign: people to people communications, but with the active support and involvement of business and all levels of government.

Some Observations

Here are some quick observations on the campaign:

1. Support for conservation is strong, and from all sides
2. The public response to the campaign was strong and emotional. People hate to see stores and restaurants wasting electricity.
3. A provincial campaign with community-based outreach is a potent combination.
4. Doors Closed could not have worked without local capacity – community groups with staff and volunteers to help spread the word.
5. The involvement of business associations, chambers of commerce and municipalities made a significant impact
6. Big chains need to step up to the plate, with head office committing to conservation.
7. Small convenience stores, many owned by new Canadians, need friendly advice on energy conservation, such as is offered by Cool Shops

Now compare these results with the current debate over electricity demand, and the relative roles of conservation and new supplies ensuring a reliable, environmentally-responsible and economic electricity system in Ontario.

Everyone (and we do mean everyone) agrees that conservation is the first and most desirable option for meeting Ontario's electricity needs. Within the scope of conservation we include demand reduction, load shifting, and increased efficiency in electrical use.

Conservation is by far the cheapest option. From compact fluorescent lightbulbs to energy-efficient appliances and comprehensive energy audits, conservation programs promise better results at a fraction of the cost of new nuclear power.

Conservation creates a more resilient and competitive economy. At a time of rising energy costs, every dollar invested in energy conservation is a dollar invested in Ontario's economic security.

Conservation saves money. For families and individuals trying to make ends meet, conservation provides simple solutions to lower energy bills

Conservation means clean air. No emissions and no radioactivity. Conservation means a healthier environment and improved air quality – which in turn means healthier people and reduced strain on the health care system.

Conservation does present some unique challenges, however. It is not a centralized engineered solution. We cannot build a 500 Megawatt conservation plant, nor can we distribute it via power lines. We can, however, create an investment fund for conservation technology and financial incentives to ensure that conservation is an economically viable and attractive alternative

We can also develop our capacity to deliver conservation, be it through retailers, community volunteers and outreach projects and provincial campaigns. We deliver conservation through people, not wires. Compared to the cost of a new power line to Manitoba, this is a minor investment and it has the added benefit of creating new jobs and stronger communities across Ontario.

In a one-week blitz, Doors Closed demonstrated the potential of a conservation movement in Ontario. We need to move quickly to develop that potential and create a truly dynamic, multi-faceted conservation movement in Ontario.

Recommendations

Doors Closed 2006

As this was the pilot year for this initiative the Conservation Council of Ontario was happy with the participation and feedback from both Ontario NGOs and volunteers. Here are some recommendations for Doors Closed year two:

- Start the campaign earlier in the summer
- Produce an easy to read energy tip sheet to accompany the distribution
- Print removable stickers instead of posters
- Provide more support for the volunteers and make sure they understand the facts behind the campaign
- Target chain stores by contacting their head office
- Connect with more community groups to help with distribution

Numerous reporters asked us about pricing and regulating doors closed. We are emphasizing a voluntary approach that promotes a deep-rooted cultural value that as opposed to a by-law or similar regulation. However, we do recognize that voluntary programs like Doors Closed need to be supported by peak pricing. Smart meters and peak power pricing for medium and larger stores and restaurants would help reinforce the message that air-conditioning the great outdoors is a waste we can all ill-afford!

Involving the Retail Sector in Ontario's Conservation Movement

Finally, another important recommendation is to work with the retail sector to design an integrated *We Conserve* campaign that would allow stores to identify the conservation measure that make sense for them (i.e. not everyone has air-conditioning) and to promote their conservation products and services (organic cotton, recycled paper, energy efficient appliances, and organic food, for example).

We need stores and restaurants to be ambassadors for conservation, and in return Ontario needs to support those retailers and restaurants that embrace conservation in their operations and products.

Ontario's Commitment to Conservation

Ontario is at the crossroads for deciding on its energy investments.

We believe Ontario's first major investment should be in conservation. This would include:

- A conservation investment fund, on the scale equivalent to the cost of a new power plant.
- A commitment to community-based conservation capacity, including support services, outreach and provincial campaigns, equivalent to the cost of new distribution lines.

Everyone says conservation is the first option. Let's make it so.

Thanks to all who helped

Thank you to all the groups and volunteers who participated in the Doors Closed campaign. We look forward to working with you again on Doors Closed Ontario 2006!

1. Canada-China Environmental Cooperation Council
2. Canadian Centre for Pollution Prevention
3. City of Stratford
4. Clean Air Champions
5. Cool Shops (Peterborough, London, Toronto, Markham, and Ottawa)
6. Don Valley West One Tonne Challenge
7. Earth Day Canada
8. East Toronto Climate Action Group
9. Ecoperth
10. Elora Centre for Environmental Excellence
11. Eneract
12. EnviroCentre
13. Federation of Portuguese Canadian Business and Professionals
14. Halsall Associates Limited
15. North Toronto Green Community
16. One Tonne Toronto
17. Peterborough Green-Up
18. Pollution Probe
19. Reduce the Juice, Shelburne
20. Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce
21. The Beer Store
22. Timmins Chamber of Commerce
23. Town of Aurora
24. Town of Markham
25. Town of Oakville
26. Town of Uxbridge
27. Thames Region Ecological Association (TREA)

A special thanks to the hundreds of stores and restaurants across the province who displayed the poster and kept their doors closed.

Thanks to the Peter Love, Ontario's Chief Energy Conservation Officer and the Conservation Bureau of the Ontario Power Authority for logistical support. Thanks to Scott Rouse (Energy@Work), NAIMA Canada, and the Heating Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Institute of Canada for technical support

Thanks to the organizations who helped us promote the campaign to their membership:

- The Association of Municipalities of Ontario
- The Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association
- The Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

And finally, our thanks to The Beer Store and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, whose financial support for We Conserve allowed us to organize the campaign and print the posters.