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Business: Industrial

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Articles

On the road to sustainable packaging

"We want to be ahead of the curve," says James Downham, President and CEO of the [Packaging Association of Canada \(PAC\)](#) about the organization's [Sustainable Packaging](#) initiative. PAC is a Toronto-based, not-for-profit organization representing all sectors in the packaging supply chain including retailers, consumer packaged goods, packaging manufacturers, raw material suppliers, and packaging machinery suppliers.

PAC has joined forces with the US-based [Sustainable Packaging Coalition \(SPC\)](#) to develop and deliver training on sustainable packaging to the industry. Downham notes that the response to the training sessions has been overwhelming, demonstrating the awareness by industry of the issue and their motivation to address it.

One such course, co-developed by PAC and the SPC, [The Essentials of Sustainable Packaging](#), offers participants innovative examples from the packaging industry, challenges that can be expected and design considerations. To date, the course has attracted over 150 companies. By adopting more sustainable packaging strategies, the industry can dramatically lower its carbon footprint while benefiting from lower material costs, energy savings, operational efficiencies, and landfill diversion.

Packaging companies are aware and increasingly subject to the demands from further up the supply chain. Walmart, for instance, has developed its own scorecard – the [Walmart Sustainable Packaging Scorecard](#) – to be fully implemented in early 2010. With this scorecard, Walmart will be evaluating its suppliers and moving them towards sustainable packaging. To that end, Walmart in conjunction with PAC is offering trainings session on the scorecard to its vendor partners.

Downham notes that "PAC's Sustainable Packaging initiative is an holistic approach to sustainability," and does not focus solely on recycling. The packaging industry's definition is broad in scope and incorporates the triple bottom line theory that people, the planet and profit can live in harmony.

Currently, [PAC](#) is co-leading a retailer initiative with the intent to accelerate the packaging industry towards sustainability by developing a standard set of sustainable packaging metrics and scorecard. Downham explains that this initiative is awaiting the development of common metrics through the Global Packaging Project. The metrics will address all the aspects of packaging, such as energy efficiency and waste management that impact sustainable packaging.

“Eventually efforts by [PAC](#) and those at the global level will lead to product labelling for carbon footprint and [GHG](#) emissions. Industry has been and continues to be proactive; companies know the right path to take,” concludes Downham.

For more information, visit www.pac.ca.

Energy curtains offer energy savings and crop growing flexibility

“We saw immediate savings in the first few months,” says William Ravensbergen, General Manager, [P. Ravensbergen and Sons Ltd.](#) about the energy curtain upgrades implemented in early winter 2009 that, to him, was a “good business practice”. The company, a [CIPEC](#) Leader in the [Food and Beverage](#) sector is a greenhouse facility that produces potted plants.

The 17 000 square metre facility, located in Smithville, Ontario, maintains an average day- and night-time temperature of 21°C all year. Wood waste is the facility’s primary source of heat with an annual consumption of about 40 000 gigajoules (GJ) annually. When required, wood waste heat is topped up with natural gas consuming about 1400 GJ annually.

Ravensbergen explains that the shading system in a 3700 square-metre of their facility – needed upgrading and was replaced with XLS 15 energy curtains. At the same time, a “black out” shading fabric or energy curtain was added as a second layer to the existing XLS 14 energy curtain in a second 1400 square-metre zone. [NRCan’s ecoENERGY Retrofit Incentive for Industry](#) helped to reduce the total project cost of around \$65,000, including the installation of an automatic shading pulley system for the black out shading in the smaller zone.

Looking at five-year rolling averages of energy consumption, Ravensbergen has seen a positive trend, despite weather variability, with a 15 percent decrease for the months of February and March 2009. He expects to meet the projected \$8,000 annual energy savings with a net simple payback period of about eight years.

The black out shading in the smaller zone offers Ravensbergen an important advantage by creating a specific photoperiod, providing much more flexibility in growing certain light-sensitive crops. He continues to look for opportunities to help reduce energy consumption and maximize greenhouse space. For example, more energy-efficient fabrics are emerging and he is keeping an eye on greenhouse industry developments in Europe.

Gaz Métro offers array of energy efficiency programs for industry

Gaz Métro’s customers have been taking advantage of the utility’s wide array of energy efficiency programs since their launch in 2000. According to Vincent Pouliot, Chief, Energy Efficiency Service, 9200 participants have implemented projects that have saved 175 million cubic metres of natural gas in commercial and industrial markets since the programs debuted.

Gaz Métro, Quebec’s distributor of natural gas, has a global energy efficiency plan in place that currently includes 20 programs to support the acquisition of more energy-efficient equipment in the industrial, commercial, and institutional sectors. The utility’s [Energy Efficiency Fund](#), also part of Gaz Métro’s consumption reduction strategy, has incentives for the installation of solar heating and drain water recovery systems along with funding for energy-saving renovations to building envelopes and new efficient buildings.

For small and medium sized businesses and institutions, Gaz Métro offers [energy efficiency financial incentives](#) for feasibility studies and installation of water heaters, air furnaces and boiler retrofits. For example, to facilitate access to highly efficient condensing water heaters, the utility offers up to \$20,000.