

# Town could get retrofit with smart meters soon

By **Melanie Hennessey**  
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STAFF

Every Milton home could soon be retrofitted with smart meter technology that'll allow residents to take advantage of cheaper energy rates during off-peak hours.

Milton Hydro president Don Thorne said the utility expects to receive approval by the end of the month from the Province on the initiative that'll put about 13,000 more smart meters into use around town.

"It's a pretty exciting time," remarked Thorne, noting the retrofit would probably be done by early next year. "We're expecting to see changes in consumption patterns."

By 2010, the Province wants all Ontario homes to have smart meters installed.

But since Milton Hydro has been testing the technology for a few years now, Thorne said it's ready to go right now.

"We have been leading the way," he said. "And we feel the sooner our community gets the technology, the better it will be."

All larger industrial and commercial businesses in town had smart meters installed in 2003, and currently new homes built in Milton are required to have the new technology, which allows residents to evaluate their energy consumption by time of day and strategize how to conserve.

About 4,000 of these meters are now in use around town, and that number is expected to grow to 6,500 or 7,000 by the fall.

Smart meters also let homeowners benefit from time-of-use rates, meaning those who do laundry or run their dishwasher during off-peak hours will pay substantially less. In fact, Milton Hydro was the first in the province to have its customers on time-of-use rates.

Thorne explained those with smart meters pay 10.5 cents per kilowatt hour between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., 7.5 cents between 7 and 11 a.m. and 5 and 10 p.m. and 3.5 cents between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. and on weekends and holidays.

Households without smart meters pay 5.8 cents — no matter what time of day — for the first 750 kilowatt hours and 6.7 cents after that. "As you can see, there's a real advantage (to the smart meters)," he said.

The cost of retrofitting the smart meters in Milton would be added onto the fixed component of customers' bills and would probably equate to about \$2 or \$2.50 a month, Thorne said.

But, he noted the expectation is that any cost incurred would be offset by the savings residents could take advantage of with the new technology.

Thorne said pricing has encouraged those who currently use smart meters to use the bulk of their energy during off-peak hours.

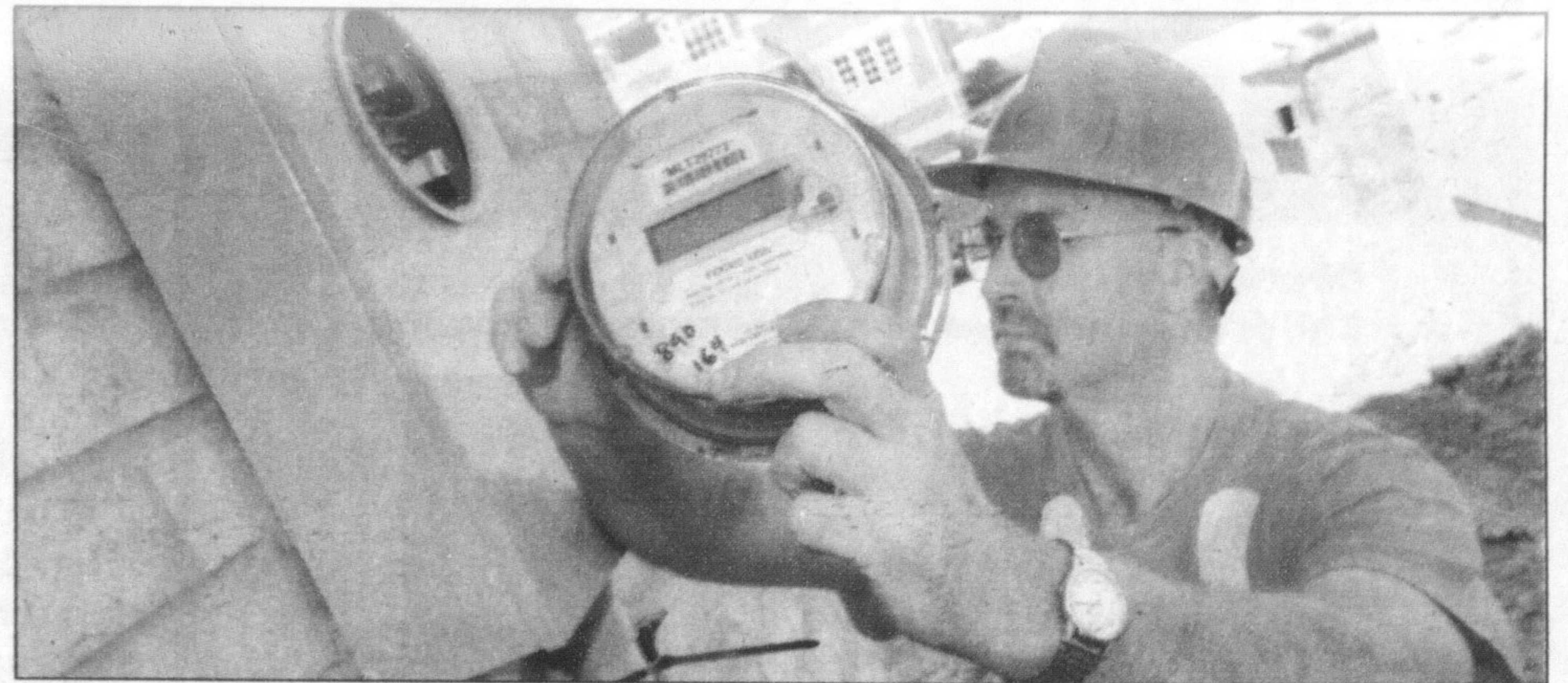
He pointed out that there are several things the average person can do to get the most out of the time-of-use pricing, such as run an air conditioner to pre-cool the house when the price is low and then keep the windows

closed and run a fan during the day.

So does it really make a difference if individual homeowners start to focus on conserving energy?

"Absolutely," Thorne said, noting while large companies tend to have a steady consumption rate throughout the year, residential rates "ramp up" during the summer.

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Milton Hydro's Kyle Gervais installs a new smart meter in one of the new subdivisions on Yates Drive. GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

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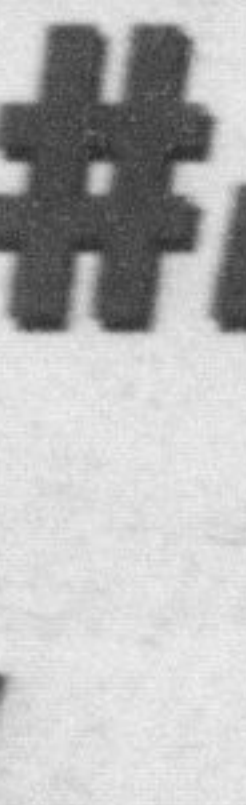
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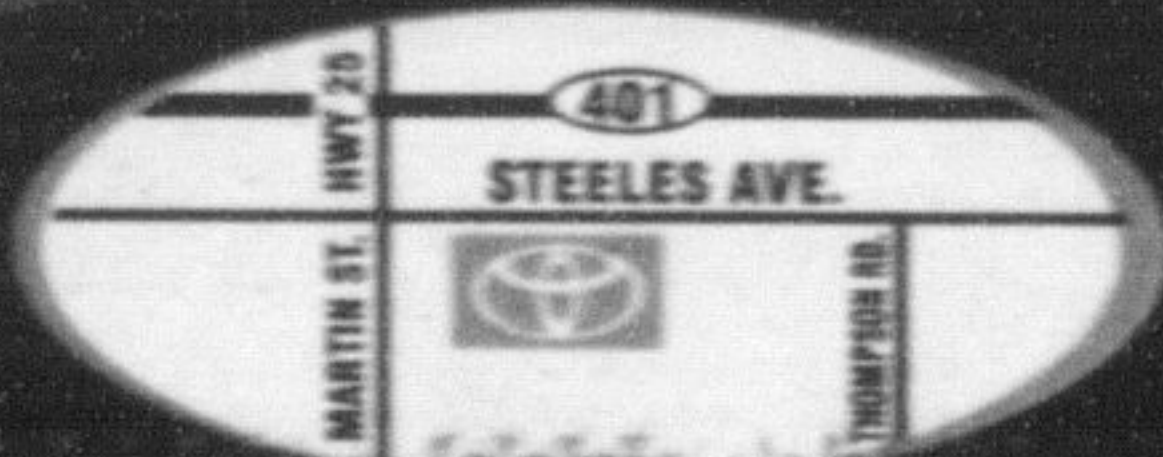
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