

'You are not alone' during Pride Week

Calling all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender residents.

York Region's Pride Fest is your opportunity to come together and promote a positive perception of who you are.

"The events of the week send a message to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people across the region that they are not alone," said Barbara Urman, committee co-chairperson co-ordinator for the York Region LGBT Community Outreach Program. "(It also) provides an opportunity to gather and learn more about what is avail-

able in the region and to break down what I refer to as oppression by omission."

Pride Fest takes place from June 7 to 14 at venues across York Region, including Bruce's Mill Conservation Area in Whitchurch-Stouffville, where on Sunday, June 14, there will be a picnic and barbecue for LGBT people, their friends and family.

York Region Police Chief Armand La Barge, along with regional chairman Bill Fisch and Canadian author Brian Francis will also be in attendance.

For more information, go to www.yorkpridefest.com or contact Barbara Urman at 905-895-2371.

Advertorial

Out with the old. In with the new central AC unit.

"Are we paying for the entire street's air conditioning?" My husband pointed at a figure on our electricity bill. Last summer, even though the temperature wasn't soaring, our electricity bill was. Like the average Ontarian, more than half of it was spent keeping our house at just the right temperature. (If only I had known then what I do now.)

That number sealed the fate of our loyal (it had been with us for 12 years) - albeit inefficient - central air conditioner (CAC). It had to go. But what would take its place? I found my answer after spending some time on the internet. Here's what I learned: energy-efficient units have gotten considerable buzz over the past few years, and for good reason. Aside from being eco-friendly, they are also big money savers. In my case, upgrading my cooling and heating system could shave up to 15% off our electricity costs. That could translate into roughly an extra \$350 per year. Enough to convince me that yes, replacing the old CAC would be worth it.

Given their popularity, locating an efficient CAC unit was easy. The magic words: ENERGY STAR®. Find a qualified unit and you're guaranteed it's at least 8% more efficient than standard models. Happily, Ontario government-funded rebates made buying our new energy-efficient system cost-

effective. Take the **COOL SAVINGS REBATE** from Every Kilowatt Counts: an easy-to-get, valuable rebate of up to \$525 on ENERGY STAR qualified central cooling and heating systems. (Not to mention a \$25 rebate on programmable thermostats.)

Savings-wise, that's just the tip of the iceberg. Arranging for a simple home energy audit (through an organization licensed by Natural Resources Canada; all the information is on everykilowattcounts.ca) opens the doors to a slew of other rebates. By participating in the **eco-Energy Retrofit for Homes** (through Natural Resources Canada NRCan) and Ontario's **Home Energy Savings Program** you can receive up to an additional \$1,400 in rebates. (Plus, for a limited time NRCan has increased their rebates by 25%). Bundled with the **COOL SAVINGS REBATE**, you can save up to \$1,950. Read that number again! Not to mention the new **Home Renovation Tax Credit (HRTC)** that will offer a credit of up to \$1,350 on all energy-efficient home renovations in the coming year. Plus, I found no shortage of contractors willing to help make the transition to energy-efficiency less painful.

"What's with all of these government rebates?" my skeptical husband had countered when I showed

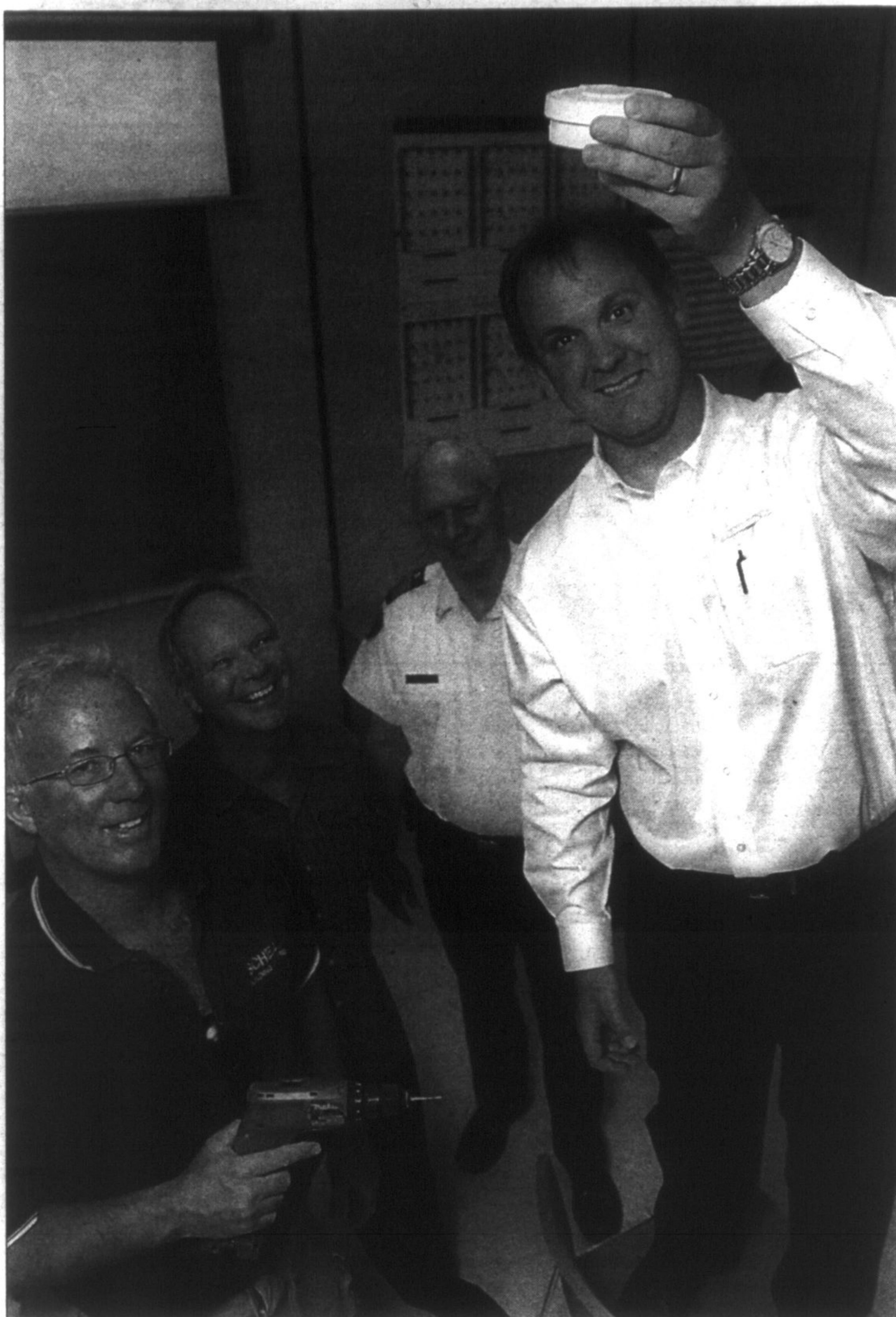
him what we could save. I found that the Ontario government kicks in and helps people because consuming less electricity at home means less electricity needs to be produced overall. Ultimately, that helps us all because it's good for the environment and the province.

Now, almost a full year after switching over, my family has been saving for months; plus we're armed, efficient and ready for when those hot days of summer come calling once again.

Tips to trim down your electricity use this summer from everykilowattcounts.ca:

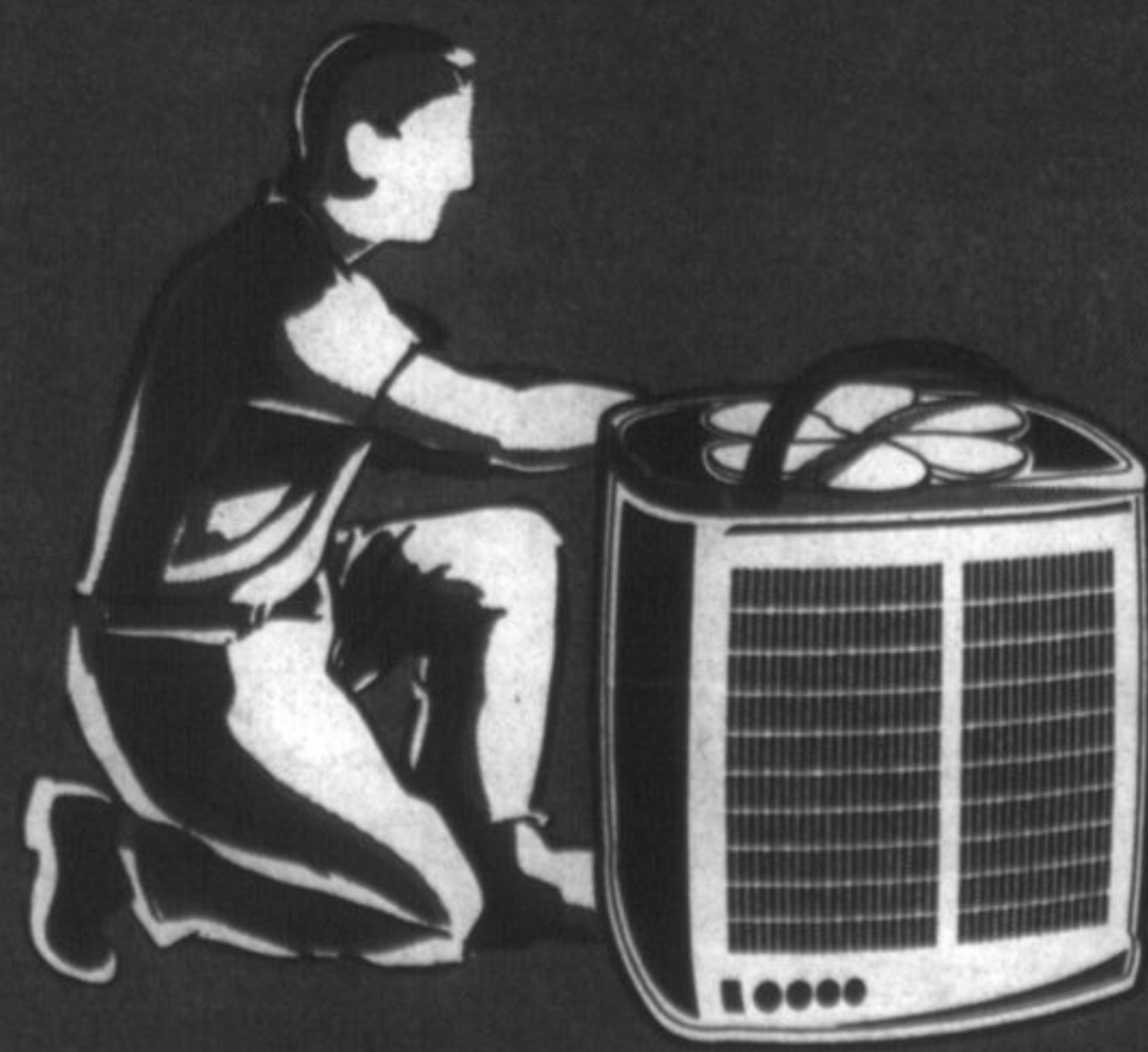
1. Clean your air conditioner's filter every 30 days or so.
2. Use ceiling fans in the summer to create a cool breeze.
3. During the hot days of summer keep your house at 25°C when you're home and 28°C when you're away.
4. Sign up for **peaksaver**® and let your CAC's temperature get cycled down for short periods of time during weekdays. It lessens the strain on the electricity system and helps the environment.

HOW MANY SPONSORS DOES IT TAKE TO...



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Stefan Bortolussi, general manager of Stouffville Canadian Tire puts a smoke detector on the ceiling as Ron Schell (from left) of Schell Lumber, Sandy MacKenzie of State Farm Insurance and Whitchurch-Stouffville fire chief Chris Powers lend a hand. The three are sponsors of the annual smoke detector program. Firefighters have checked 1,200 homes for detectors during the last three years. About 55 per cent of homes complied. This year, crews have a zero-tolerance approach when dealing with homes that have been checked previously. Also, landlords who fail to provide smoke alarms in rental units will be issued a \$235 ticket.



THE DEAL THAT KEEPS ON SAVING.

Save up to \$550* with COOL SAVINGS REBATES on ENERGY STAR® qualified central cooling and heating systems installed by a participating contractor. And then keep saving every year.



When you replace your central air conditioning system with one that is ENERGY STAR® qualified or higher.



When you replace your non-programmable thermostat with a programmable thermostat.



When you replace your furnace with a mid to high-efficiency furnace with an electronically commutated motor (ECM)†