

Free For All Smart Meters

By Jill McWhinnie

Last Friday my friend Karen called to reschedule a dinner party that was to take place that evening – to 3 a.m. the following morning. I had no immediate plans for 3 a.m. so it wasn't a big deal, but I was curious as to the reason for the last minute change.

"It's the meter," explained Doug, Karen's husband, the following morning over coffee and dessert as the grey light of dawn spilled in through the dining room window. "We've been over budget on power the past few weeks, so we had to cut back on our peak usage."

"We just weren't paying attention," said Karen guiltily. "But we've got things under control now." She gestured to the slow cooker. "We've had the breakfast bacon on since midnight. It should be ready in an hour or so."

I thanked my hosts for dinner and drove home, pulling into my driveway at about 5 a.m. As I was walking to the door I noticed a light in my next door neighbour's basement. I was immediately concerned – only last week there had been reports of a home invasion not far from our street. I approached the basement window cautiously and peeked in. My neighbour, Laura, was moving around freely downstairs, folding towels. I tapped on the window and she gestured for me to come to the back door.

We sat down at the kitchen table. "The coffee should be ready," said Laura. "I programmed it at 3:30 when I started the wash."

"Since when do you do laundry in the middle of the night?" I asked. Laura yawned. "The meter...says that's

the best time. And we can save even MORE money by doing the laundry at 2 a.m. on the weekend."

"Isn't that a little inconvenient?" I asked. "Not when you're saving for your son's education!" said Laura idealistically. "I've saved 4.4 cents per kilowatt hour by doing the laundry this morning."

I recalled reading that the government had recently passed legislation requiring smart meters to be installed in everyone's homes to reduce energy demand during peak hours. The meters would measure how much electricity is used in the house, what time of day it is used, and would encourage residents to shift their consumption of energy to off-peak hours.

I hadn't yet gotten around to installing one and was beginning to wonder if I wanted to. I've always been an incorrigible energy waster. I remember my Dad walking around the house angrily flipping off the lights I had left burning in every room. I thought he was just being compulsive and attributed it to his having lived through the Depression. How would a cold, unfeeling piece of machinery deal with my energy excesses when my own otherwise indulgent parent was so intolerant of them?

I decided to speak to my neighbours Paul and Betty. I always called Paul when my appliances or the lawnmower were broken – he knew a lot about machines and would likely know all about these meters. I knocked on their front door and walked in. Paul was sitting in his shorts in the living room. A large block of ice was lying in a plastic basin in front of him. A small electric fan whirred behind the ice block, flowing a current of cool air toward him. The rest of the house was like a sauna.

"Air conditioner not working?" I asked. I normally needed a parka in their house in the summer. "Do you know how much power air conditioners draw?" said Paul indignantly. I confessed that I did not.

Betty emerged from the kitchen, drying a dish. "The dishwasher was almost as bad. We promised the meter we wouldn't use it unless it was an emergency. But when we explained to the meter about Paul's heart condition, it said we could keep the little fan."

That night I noticed Grace and Ray, an elderly couple, sitting outside on their deck, candles burning on the table in front of them. How romantic, I thought. Married 50 years and they dine by candlelight! "Hi there!" called Ray. "Come on over!"

I sat down beside Ray at the little round table. Grace took a flashlight from her apron pocket and went inside to get me a cup of tea. As she pulled open the slider I noticed that the house was in complete darkness.

Ray pushed their dinner plates to the other side of the table. "Sandwiches!" he said dismissively. "She doesn't want to use the stove." Grace not using her stove? I thought of the huge holiday dinner Grace and Ray always hosted for their family, for which Grace cooked a 40 lb turkey with all the trimmings.

"How are things looking for Christmas dinner?" I asked. Ray did not appear optimistic. "The meter said it'll see what it can do."

Jill McWhinnie is a longtime Stouffville resident and recovering hydroholic who is searching for her inner conservationist.

So you have high blood pressure What's the solution?

Submitted by Lebovic Leisure Centre fitness staff

You're feeling a bit tired, sluggish and lethargic; you've put on a few pounds over the years. The answer – join a fitness centre or start exercising to get in shape. Sound familiar? Not so fast.....

You arrive at the fitness centre, they check your blood pressure, it's 150 over 100 and they want medical consent before you start. That can't be me, you think, what a bother. More than 7.5 million Canadians have been diagnosed with high blood pressure or hypertension.

Many more probably haven't taken the time to have their blood pressure checked

because they don't regularly see a physician. Hypertension is the major cause of stroke, heart attack, congestive heart failure and kidney failure. It is often referred to as the silent killer, because it has so few outward symptoms; it just creeps up on you without your knowledge.

All individuals should have their blood pressure checked before beginning an exercise program. According to the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiologists, if an individual's systolic blood pressure (pressure as the heart beats) exceeds 144, or diastolic blood pressure (pressure as the heart refills) exceeds 94, he or she should not begin an exercise program without medical consent.

It is not uncommon to see clients arrive at the fitness centre with blood pressure exceeding 150 over 100 who claim their blood pressure is under control. Hypertension can be managed with lifestyle changes that include losing weight (if overweight), limiting alcohol intake, increasing aerobic physical activity, reducing sodium intake, quitting smoking or reducing the amount of saturated fats in your diet.

Other non-controllable risk factors include sex, race, age and family history. Regardless of how healthy an individual's lifestyle may appear, he or she may still be at risk of developing hypertension. While people exercise, their blood pressure nor-

mally increases. Those with higher base blood pressure can have higher than normal readings when exercising, putting them at risk for a cardiac episode.

This occurs regardless of age or fitness level. It is often necessary to control base blood pressure levels with medication before beginning an exercise program. For this reason it is important to have your blood pressure checked on a regular basis.

The path to a healthy lifestyle needs to be a partnership between you, your physician (and possibly other medical professionals) and your fitness centre.

Come & See Whitchurch-Stouffville's NEW GEM
 **The Newly Renovated** 
LEMONVILLE COMMUNITY CENTRE
 is hosting an **OPEN HOUSE**
Saturday September 23rd. from 7-9 p.m.

Join us for this Community Celebration

View the impressive NEW FEATURES as one the town's most recognized community buildings shows off it's "NEW LOOK"

Sample Wines
 from Local Wineries
 Appletwood and
 Willow Springs

Music by Harpist,
 Gwyneth Reid

DOOR PRIZES COURTESY OF LOCAL BUSINESSES

SEE YOU THERE! For further information **CALL 905-640-3965**



BIRKETT-HASSARD

Insurance Brokers Limited

*Offering Home, Auto,
 Commercial and Farm
 Insurance to the Community
 Since 1898*

*6262 Main St., Stouffville
 905-640-2000*

