

# Observe and conserve: lower your energy bill

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There is a common misconception that in order to save on energy bills, it requires a considerable cash investment, such as adding insulation, installing new windows or new heating systems.

In reality, it's possible to save a few hundred dollars every year by simply changing behaviours in the home.

The challenge with making a few changes around your home to save energy is hard to measure, due in large part that you only receive energy bills once a month. Who knows how much changing a light bulb, turning lights off or unplugging the TV, cable box and DVD player really save?

Well, help is on the way! The New Brunswick Lung Association is launching a pilot program to demonstrate that New Brunswick households can lower their energy bills by using home energy monitors; portable devices that display how much you are spending on electricity in real time. These devices consist of a small unit that attaches to your electricity meter and sends a wireless signal to a hand-held unit that displays your energy cost in real time.

If you turn on a light or oven you can see the increase in cost immediately. Conversely, turn off a light or two and see how much you save. It's a simple idea - if you can measure it, you can manage it.

These devices are well documented for helping households save energy between 5 per cent and 20 per cent by simply helping change energy use behaviours. Do some quick math in your head and figure out what 20 per cent less per year is off your bill. Perhaps enough to buy Christmas presents.

The New Brunswick Lung Association is looking for participants for the pilot program. These participants will help to demonstrate how the use of home energy monitors can develop data to further prove their value as a low-cost device to help collectively save millions of dollars per year.

Also, just as important, they will aim to prove that the monitors also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants from electricity generation; a key cause that motivates the New Brunswick Lung Association.

I started using a home energy monitor about three years ago, and it helped us save \$300 to \$400 per year. Did you know that all of those red lights on the TV, DVD player and cable box consume energy? Mine consume about \$80 per year, even when they are not in use. I spent \$15 on a power bar that allows me to plug all of the electronics into one source that can be turned off when they are not in use. I also discovered how much the oven can cost when left on too long - ouch!

Pilot participants will be given a logbook to keep records during the pilot project which will end in February 2013. Participants will also be able to keep their home energy monitor after the pilot ends.

Visit [www.nb.lung.ca](http://www.nb.lung.ca) to find out more about the observe and conserve pilot program; a great program managed by a great organization.

Peter Corbyn is special adviser to The Climate Project Canada and co-founder of [GreenNexus.com](http://GreenNexus.com).