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## Technology helps homeowners calculate energy use

Ontario's new harmonized sales tax and higher energy charges means the average homeowner is now paying about \$30 more per month for hydro.

As the price of energy rises, consumers are considering new ways to conserve and save money.

"I unplug things I am not using," said one consumer.

"I think that we need to be aware of how much things are costing us and not just that, but how we are using energy," said another.

### **Measuring energy-use in dollars**

Technology measuring your hydro meter might be just the solution.

Gerry O'Brien is chief technology officer for [Blueline Innovation](#). The company is based in Newfoundland but does some of its software research in Ottawa where O'Brien is based.

He says the new system they're offering takes raw data from your hydro meter to a wireless display inside your home, showing power consumption in dollars per hour instead of kilowatts per hour.

Blueline Innovation recently partnered with Microsoft, allowing electrical data from your home to be fed to a website called Holm.com.

The data is analyzed, charted and displayed in several ways showing your energy use and offering advice on how to reduce it.

"In the past, the problem was that people did not see the information in real time tied to their behaviour, so they had to wait for the bill to arrive and it was hard to relate behaviour to the bill. In my family, I have seen a change because we see the energy use and cost," said O'Brien.

The program also allows users to compare their power use to the neighborhood average. It indicates your carbon footprint, as well as your daily cycle of power use.

### **Smart Grid**

This is all part of the much talked about Smart Grid. Governments have spent billions on the infrastructure to build this grid.

However, consumers have been left wondering: When does it affect me? When do I see the benefits? Now, Internet-connected devices will help consumers realize some of those benefits.

The executive director of the Sierra Club of Canada says people could see energy savings of 10 per cent if they get involved.

"Some people just need to be told, 'Look this will cost you another 50 bucks a month, do you want to spend that money or not?'" John Bennett told CTV Ottawa.

"I think these devices are worthwhile for certain consumers who will pay attention to the information and act on it, but it is not a solution for everyone. We have found that if you put information in front of people they are likely to use it."

Even the hydro companies are in the device business. They offer a free thermostat so the utility can control some of your energy use .Their websites also offer free advice and conservation programs.