

# LIGHTING TORONTO

David Johnston is Director of the Environment, Health and Safety at Toronto Hydro, an electricity distribution corporation based in Ontario, Canada. In this interview he discusses the ways in which a successfully managed business is also an environmentally conscious business.



**Toronto Hydro** has served the city of Toronto for more than a century, and each decade brings fresh challenges and new approaches to the electrical distribution industry. Today the company has approximately 736,000 customers; a number that accounts for 18% of the electricity used in the province. It holds the accolade of being Canada's largest municipal electricity company. As a distribution rather than generation company, Toronto Hydro is responsible

for maintaining much of the public electricity delivery infrastructure in the city; its roles are predominantly focussed on providing reliable distribution, ensuring staff and public safety, and increasing efficiency where possible. To this end, it has worked to implement the ISO 14001 environmental standard, OHSAS 18001 occupational health and safety standard, and the ISO 26000 social responsibility guidelines. In June 2014, the Canadian Electricity Association (CEA) designated Toronto Hydro a Sustainable Electricity Company, in recognition of its long-standing commitment to corporate responsibility. Adhering to these standards was a prerequisite for receiving the CEA designation. "A few years ago we had already taken on the initiative to have Toronto Hydro certified to both ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 as part of an integrated environmental, health and safety management system," says David. "Earlier this year

we started going through the ISO 26000 requirements line by line to identify what we were doing that already conformed. We discovered and were able to demonstrate that Toronto Hydro was already meeting 99% of the requirements. The gaps were mainly centred around establishing materiality through stakeholder engagements as well as addressing the lack of a banned products list; a document that formally states we will not purchase or use certain

products. We put everything together and delivered it to the CEA; the CEA carried out a third party audit and verified our claims then awarded us the Sustainable Electricity Company designation."

**APPROACHING SUSTAINABILITY**  
Since gaining the CEA's seal, Toronto Hydro has further enhanced its sustainability focus, with Executive sponsorship and quarterly steering committee meetings.

A committee gathers at the beginning of the year to draw up and implement a sustainability plan for the year ahead, then meets quarterly to review progress and targets. As a consequence, Toronto Hydro has an intelligent and proactive approach to company-wide sustainability. Toronto Hydro has many programs of differing scales, which underline this focus. For instance, Toronto Hydro has implemented a capability for mobile centres that can be

TORONTO HYDRO CREATED SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT PRINCIPLES, A GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT TO GUIDE THE DAILY OPERATIONS OF ITS PROCUREMENT TEAM.



(L-R) ALINA RACOVICANU, DAVE JOHNSTON, KEES-JAN HOMSMÄ, SHEIKH NAHYAAN, DUNCAN KERR, ELIAS LYBEROGIANNIS, JODI ENGEL



set up much closer to work sites. This has reduced the distance trucks need to travel, and therefore reduced vehicle emissions. Satellite sites are present across Toronto where trucks can be parked and equipment stored. An additional bonus of this capability is the reduction of road exposure for the crews, thus further facilitating safety for both staff and the general public. To further reduce its environmental footprint, Toronto Hydro created Sustainable Procurement Principles - a governance document to guide the daily operations of its procurement team. As well as ensuring that its own procurement is done with sustainability in mind, a Vendor Management program means the company monitors the sustainable procurement principles of its suppliers. These are just some of the ways in which the company is trying to ensure that it is as environmentally friendly as possible.

"We are also in the midst of a fairly large capital program," David explains. "About 30% of our equipment is beyond its useful life. Though the equipment has served us well for the past 30 to 40 years, we are at a point now where those assets need to be rebuilt in order to maintain an acceptable level of service. The added benefit is that today's equipment is safer and much more efficient. For example, certain parts of the city feature distribution lines operating at 4kV voltage, a result of having not been updated since first being built. We are planning to gradually replace those with higher voltage cables that will help improve efficiency and lower line losses, subject to receiving the necessary approvals." In an effort to further improve

facilities at Toronto Hydro, the company is in the process of undertaking a number of consolidation and renovation projects across the city as part of its Operating Centre Consolidation Program. To ensure the standardization of these renovation efforts, Toronto Hydro developed a dedicated Facilities Renovation Standard. This standard details the specific products to be purchased during renovations, such as environmentally preferred products like recyclable carpet, dimmable LED lighting where possible, and low/no-VOC paints.

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Working with the local community is an important part of Toronto Hydro's sustainability plan. This is exemplified by initiatives such as its awareness campaigns, as well as the introduction of a suite of web-based tools that enable Toronto Hydro customers to monitor and control their electricity consumption, such as the Time-of-Use Portal. "I believe this has been a huge contributor to energy conservation," says David. The company also offers a helping hand to people on low incomes by replacing at no cost the inefficient incandescent porch bulbs with modern energy efficient compact florescent bulbs as part of its Brighter Nights™ campaign to provide greater street lighting at night and, therefore, greater neighbourhood safety. An annual public safety campaign also provides safety tips to various audiences, including children and seniors. Communications channels include public service announcements, school notices, customer newsletters, media events and interviews, and social media campaigns. ▶

WE WANT TO ENSURE EVERYBODY IN THE COMPANY UNDERSTANDS WHAT SUSTAINABILITY ENTAILS; NOT JUST RECYCLING BUT GREATER INTEGRITY IN OUR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORTING.



December 2013 saw Toronto struck by a major ice storm that brought down trees, disrupted power lines, and blocked major roads. More than 300,000 of Toronto Hydro's customers lost power during the peak of the storm. David explains how this led to one of the company's proudest moments in recent years. "The most outstanding accomplishment is that there were no serious injuries throughout the event. You have to consider that virtually everything was covered in ice while our teams were working. Trees and wires were coming down around them, yet we were still able to complete our work without sustaining serious injuries to either staff or the public. This was due to a lot of the preparation and training that has resulted from our pursuit of high standards, as well as dedication from all the staff during the emergency. A report prepared by an independent panel that assessed Toronto Hydro's handling of this major weather event has found that our response was generally in line with industry best practices. As with most areas, the report noted some areas for improvement, and we have since developed an action plan to address all of the recommendations, having made progress on a number of them to date."

want to ensure everybody in the company understands what sustainability entails; not just recycling but greater integrity in our Corporate Social Responsibility reporting, for example. To do this we will have very active stakeholder engagement to help us define what is material in order to guide our future vision. Most organizations struggle to achieve sustainability commitments, but Toronto Hydro leaders have embraced the Sustainable planning process that will help us effectively integrate strategy with reporting requirements. □

**DRAWING UP PLANS**

Through its sustainability initiatives, Toronto Hydro is looking at the future with an eye on improving its already impressive environmental health and safety credentials "We

