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Carbon neutral - The Eden Mills Community Hall has reached the maximum carbon neutrality possible. The Eden Mills Community Club is holding a celebration on Nov. 18. Submitted photo

## Eden Mills hall reaches 90% carbon neutrality

by Jaime Myslik

**EDEN MILLS** - The 100-year-old Eden Mills Community Hall is now as carbon neutral as possible.

"It means that the carbon emissions from the energy that we buy is about 90 per cent less than it was when we started the project," said Eden Mills Community Club secretary and professional engineer Richard Lay.

The village launched Eden Mills Going Carbon Neutral in 2007, and now, 11 years later, the community hall is essentially there.

"The key is first you've got to reduce your energy use as much as practical and then look for low- or no-carbon energy sources to produce the energy that you do need because all buildings in Canada have to be heated," Lay said.

"So we switched from using entirely propane for heating to almost entirely ... electric heat pump heating."

It's the backup propane heater that prevents the hall from being almost completely carbon neutral, Lay said.

"If we wanted to go all of the way to a hundred per cent carbon neutral, we probably could do it if we didn't have the luxury of that propane furnace," he said. "So that's where most of

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our carbon emissions are coming from now.

“They’re a tear in the ocean compared to what it used to be.”

Charles Simon, a “green” architect and one of the founders of Eden Mills Going Carbon Neutral, said the hall retrofit, in addition to achieving environmental sustainability, will allow the hall to continue running at an affordable cost even as energy prices rise.

“We’ve reduced our costs of running this place to a really, really low amount and so apart from all of the environmental and all the other reasons, just financially this assures the future of the club for a long time because we’ve cut down our cost,” said Simon.

He added people need to keep that in mind if they’re performing this type of retrofit.

It may cost a lot up front, but looking long term, the savings will likely be worth it, Simon said.

In 2007 the hall was using 6,000 to 7,000 litres of propane per year and about 13,000 to 17,000 kWh of electricity.

In 2018 the hall will buy about 400 litres of propane and 2,700 kWh of electricity, Lay explained.

A typical 2,000 square foot house in Ontario that uses propane heat will go through about 2,900 litres of propane and 8,800 kWh electricity, according to a 2011 Natural Resources Canada survey.

Over the last 11 years the Eden Mills Community Club, which owns the hall in a 50-50 partnership with Guelph-Eramosa Township, has raised funds to replace insulation, windows, doors, heat pump, lighting, and installed solar panels, theatre audio-visual systems, plumbing, wiring, flooring, landscaping and other building improvements.

“It’s an amazing effort and it’s gone over a series of different phases until we actually got to the phase where we’re now, virtually carbon neutral on a hundred-year-old hall,” Simon said.

“It’s very, very satisfying because it’s been a long haul and a huge amount of effort from a lot of people.”

Part of that effort came from raising the \$437,500 necessary to complete all of the hall retrofits.

That cost works out to \$75 per square foot, which Lay says is a good price for a renovation of this type.

The community club hosted fundraisers, book sales, performances, jazz performances, plays and music.

“It’s just a continuing fundraising issue and effort but it keeps the community together too, because we’re all working together,” Simon said, adding fundraising will continue for upkeep and maintenance of the hall.

While the idea behind Eden Mills Going Carbon Neutral, of which the hall was a part, was to reduce carbon emissions throughout the entire village, Simon and Lay said the efforts of the village have been stalled, largely due to a lack of public or low-carbon transportation.

“We have shown significant improvements in the carbon emissions of the buildings in the village, and we will show some data of that ... but the other parts of our lives that generate emissions, which is transportation for example, either on wheels or on wings, we haven’t shown really any substantial changes ... because it’s an inherent part of our lifestyle,” Lay said.

Simon said the village has made progress, however, “we have a lot of new people in the village who weren’t really in at the beginning, don’t know a lot about what we’re doing sometimes, so what we’re hoping to do is use this to infuse a little bit of new energy.

“We’ve had a lot of energy ... a lot of progress, and so what we want to do is celebrate what we’ve done and use this occasion to bring in some of the newer people who have come to the village and get a spurt of energy just to get over the next steps.”

The most recent 2013 survey showed CO2 household emissions, including transportation, had decreased by 12% in the village since the project began in 2007.

The survey also showed that sequestration of CO2 had increased by 6%, after more than 33,000 trees were planted. The village’s total footprint has decreased by 18%, said club

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Eden Mills church celebrates 150 years

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spokesperson Linda Sword.

The village's baseline sequestration through the trees and vegetation was calculated to be about 50%. Now about 68% of missions are neutralized, she said.

Based on the same measurement criteria, the average Canadian annual household footprint in 2013 was 14.1 tonnes, while Eden Mills households average 10.1 tonnes.

The Eden Mills Community Club is hosting a celebration for its near carbon neutrality on Nov. 18 at the hall.

At 5pm the carbon neutrality of the hall and the village will be discussed and at 6:30pm dinner will be served and Mary Lou Fallis and Peter Tiefenbach will put on a musical comedy performance.

Tickets are free for the carbon neutral presentation and \$25 for adults or \$15 for students for the dinner and performance.

For tickets visit [www.edenmills.ca/music](http://www.edenmills.ca/music) or contact Sword at 519-853-1896.

November 16, 2018

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