

Local Wood Initiative saves energy, money and the planet



By Nate Smelle

The Bancroft and Area Forestry Industry Association (BAFIA), Harvest Hastings, along with the County of Hastings, Hastings Stewardship Council, Bancroft Stewardship Council and the Ontario Trillium Foundation have joined forces to raise awareness about the importance of woodlands and the forestry industry in Hastings County. The Local Wood Initiative is a multi-dimensional project that pools together resources from around the county for the sake of creating a healthier local economy and in turn a healthier environment.

The process begins with an site visit to your home and land by a team of experts who will take a look at how you are currently consuming energy and resources, from which they will suggest to you ways on how you can save energy, money and the planet. This team consists of the three project coordinators: executive director of Harvest Hastings, Louise Livingstone; energy consultant Matt Caruana; and forestry technician Virginia deCarle. The team will look at everything from the energy efficiency of your home, to potential threats posed by invasive species, to the potential sustainable land and forest uses for your property.

?It's very much a way for people to look at their energy use, so they can cut down and save money,? said Livingstone.

?We can also help you find out ways to cut costs by using local wood.?

The project also acts as a social network of sorts, this massive project lets people know where they can buy local wood, who they can go to for advice, where to buy fire wood and how to get involved in forest stewardship.

?When we are there visiting we let the homeowner know whatever we find is most relevant and can help them,? said Caruana.

?They will also get a hold of all this information so that if at some point in the future they, let's say, want to work on their well, or septic system, all of the information they need will be right there.?

On top of the obvious financial benefits that come with cutting down your energy consumption with help from the Local Wood Initiative, is that it also helps cut down greenhouse gas emissions.

?The philosophy behind it is to cut greenhouse gas emissions by managing natural resources sustainably,? Livingstone said.

?We need to keep in mind that trees and forests use carbon dioxide for photosynthesis. They create carbon and store carbon. If you use wood you are locking up carbon in the life of your furniture and the house and so on.?

Using sustainably harvested local firewood as a heat source also helps cut down greenhouse emissions by giving people an alternative to burning fossil fuels. The more efficient peoples' homes are, said Caruana, the better it is for their pockets and the planet.

?More people are buying firewood without really knowing what they are buying,? she said.

?Obviously firewood needs to be properly seasoned; and also some firewood is of much better value than other firewood.?

Livingstone pointed out that on their website www.localwood.harvesthastings.ca there is a great deal of other useful information available to help guide wood users to a local and sustainable source for their wood or wood products.

?I don't think people see that we are totally dependent on trees,? said Livingstone.

?We don't think about photosynthesis, and how that's where our energy, our food and our air come from. Trees are the lungs of our planet, and we are very blessed to have 65 per cent tree cover in Hastings county. Most of southern Ontario is lucky to have only five per cent left. We need to stop taking trees and forests for granted.?

Residents throughout Hastings County can tap into the benefits provided by taking part in the Local Wood Initiative. This covers a huge area with Hastings County stretching more than 160 kilometres from the Bay of Quinte to north Algonquin Park.

For more information on the Local Wood Initiative, or to set up an onsite visit by their crew of experts contact: info@harvesthastings.ca, or call 613-395-4388, or 613-391-9034.