

The Pearson Eco-Business Zone Sustainability Tour brings green lessons to life

On June 25th, 2009 local business leaders from the Pearson Eco-Business Zone boarded a bus and set out on an adventure to see first hand the green initiatives of their neighbours. With stops at Woodbine Entertainment, Lange Transportation, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, Bayer Inc. and Molson, attendees were treated to the whole gamut of environmental programs - ranging from an underground stormwater system and geo-thermal retrofit, to a green roof and Molson's recycling program.

At Woodbine attendees learned about the organization's approach to environmental management, including how they engage their employees in their energy and waste programs. It was also an opportunity to learn more about *Woodbine Live!* - Woodbine's planned entertainment and commercial expansion on its adjacent lands to begin later this year.

Just down the road at Lange Transportation, attendees were treated to the story of Eric Lange and the retrofit of his 30-year 70,000 square foot building. Probably one of the most compelling stories for the day, Lange highlighted how he eliminated his natural gas bill entirely (\$60,000 a year) and cut his electricity costs in half by retrofitting his building to utilize geo-thermal heating and cooling and upgraded his lighting system to new lights and solar tubes. Lange pulled out all the stops and invited all of the vendors he worked with, which allowed businesses on the tour to speak first hand with the companies that helped Lange retrofit his building.

After getting slightly lost and blowing a tire on the bus, the tour made its way to the GTAA's Underground Stormwater System, which allowed attendees to venture under the the airport's apron to see first hand how stormwater is handled at Toronto Pearson. GTAA also served up lunch with a tour of their Fire and Emergency Services Training Institute which is a LEED Silver building.



Not to be outdone in going places usually off-limits, Bayer Inc. highlighted their environmental program and climate change goals before allowing everyone up onto the roof of their Belfield Road facility. The reason? To see Bayer Inc.'s green roof. Installed in the fall of 2007, the green roof covers 9,000 square feet and, while it has improved insulation in the building and the handling of stormwater, it has also become a nesting ground for birds. One of the surprise highlights of Bayer Inc. was also their employee facilities - while the tennis courts and exercise room were nice, Bayer Inc.'s naturalization of the back of their site has provided a great place for employees to enjoy lunch outside and a walk (as well as a place for foxes and deer to live).

Then to cap the day off, the tour made its way over to Molson. The visit to the pub was no doubt a nice cap to an exciting and informative day, but the tour of the production line gave everyone an insight into the

amazing recycling efforts of Molson as they strive to maintain their 98% recycling rate. Beyond recycling though, Molson's employee engagement program for energy management and planned bio-gas facility were also highlights that illustrated Molson's commitment to becoming the green beer in the brown bottle.

Overall, the first Pearson Eco-Business Zone Sustainability Tour was an opportunity for local businesses to learn from each other. Some of things companies learned from their neighbours and planned to implement within their own business were ideas around developing an employee green team, installing green roofs, day lighting with solar tubes, and utilizing geo-thermal for heating and cooling. One attendee admitted they were skeptical about geo-thermal, but after seeing it in action at Lange Transportation, intended to take it back and crunch the numbers for a retrofit they were planning. It is this kind of peer-to-peer learning that Partners in Project Green strives to encourage.

Stay tuned for the next tour ...