

# INTEREST IN SMART METERING PROJECT SURPRISES UTILITY, IBM

By Don Horne

When Hydro Ottawa and IBM took on the smart metering pilot project, they couldn't have imagined the kind of positive response from the public.

"We sent out 1,800 letters to people who already had smart meters to see who would want to participate in the pilot project," says James Strapp, project manager. "We were looking for a 10 per cent response, typical for any utility mailouts. Instead we got a 30 per cent response – 525 people.

"That kind of involvement rate has been a surprise – a very positive surprise."

Mr. Strapp, who works for IBM, is not new to metering projects.

"I've managed similar projects in the United States, and it has given IBM a sense of how to attract people to participate, form focus groups and conduct surveys."

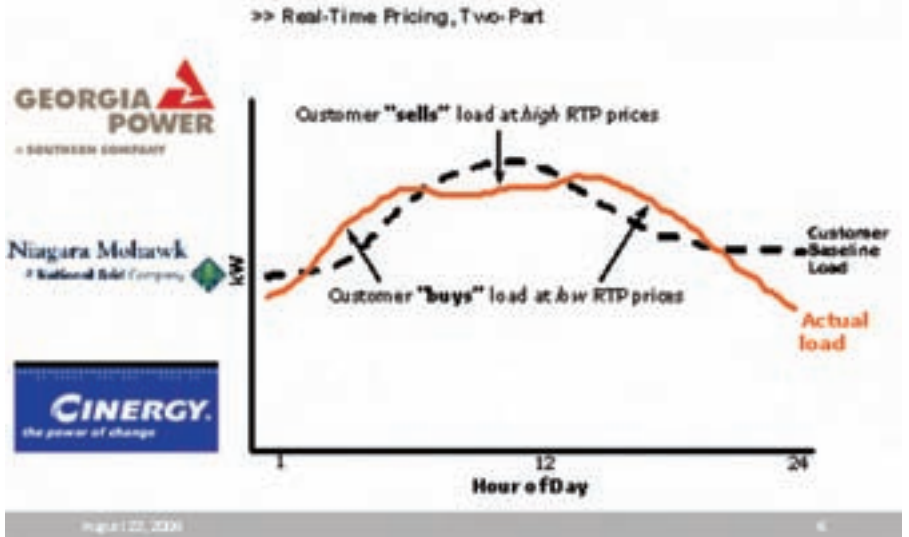
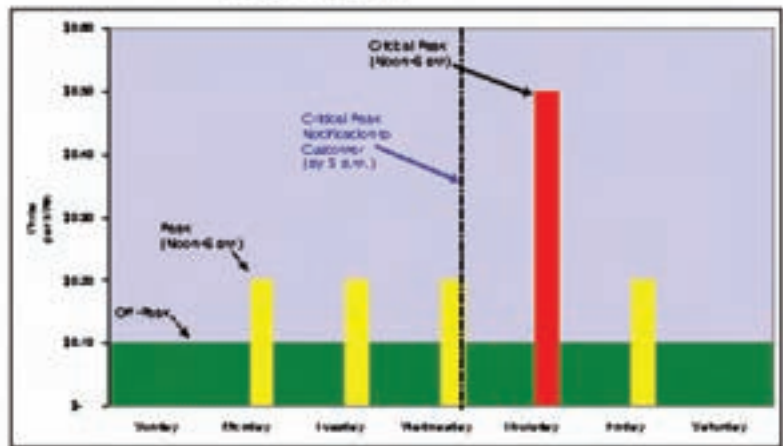
The project features 375 participants, broken down into three groups of 125 to look for potential consumption differences between those charged according to:

- standard TOU (Time Of Use) pricing where rates change in relation to periods of Off-peak, Mid-peak and On-Peak demand;
- TOU with critical peak pricing (CPP), and;
- TOU with critical peak rebates (CPR).

The Ontario Smart Price Pilot project will run for approximately five months with results to be presented in January of 2007.

"It will provide some very detailed energy information about usage, how much is off peak, on peak and critical peak," says Chris King of eMeter, who is providing consulting on the project.

"From what we've seen in the past, people respond very quickly once they are able to monitor their energy usage, and they modify their behaviour."



Ontario plans to have all homes and small businesses on smart meters by 2010.

In the United States, the prolonged

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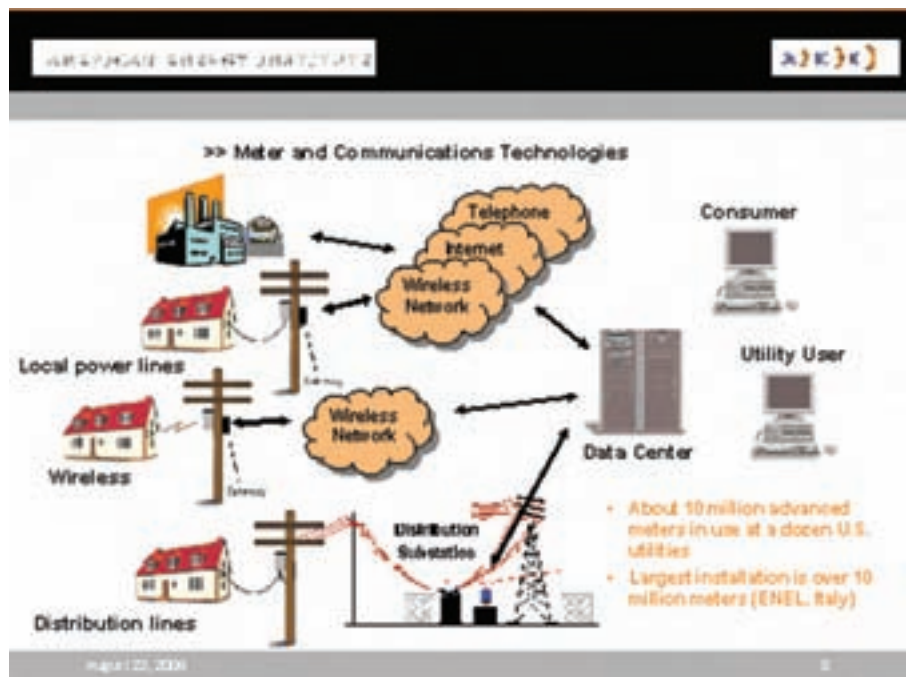
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## smart meters

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heat wave that enveloped much of the country this summer placed record demand for electric and water services in affected areas. High seasonal demand, coupled with the initiatives suggested under the “Smart Metering” Section 1252 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAAct), have placed conservation, balanced resource use and customer responsiveness to the top of many utilities’ priorities.

Smart metering is a term that describes an enabling technology for demand response and for time of use (TOU) rate schemes. Demand response is the management of customer energy use at times of elevated demand to help address system-wide reliability. For customers, TOU plans establish rates based on the time of day a resource is used or



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on overall demand during critical periods. Section 1252 of EPAAct suggests that states investigate the implementation of time-of-use rates reflecting the true cost of providing electricity during critical, high demand occurrences.

Through mid-July, AMRA has tracked at least 10 states that have begun their examinations of smart metering and advanced metering. In June, the California Public Utilities Commission approved a \$1.7 billion statewide plan to replace 9 million electric and gas meters with advanced meters to deal with its climbing electric demand, address balanced resource use and better serve its residents.

In northern Ontario, customers of Hydro One have ordered 10,000 electric-

ity monitors that the utility is giving away for free.

In total, 30,000 units are being made available on a first come first served basis to Hydro One residential customers in northern Ontario.

Danny Tuff, CEO of Blue Line Innovations commented on the program saying: “The demand for the monitors has been very positive. I think northern Ontario customers are enthusiastic about a device that can help them to monitor their electricity consumption and conserve. We all like to save money,” he says.

Northern Ontario Hydro One customers are the first in the province to be offered the free monitors.

Called the PowerCost Monitor, the

device is simple to install. The homeowner attaches the sensor unit to the hydro meter on the outside of the home and it reads the meter. It then sends a signal to a small companion display unit, which can sit atop the kitchen counter or in any other room in the house.

The display unit shows the homeowner how much money is being spent on electricity from moment to moment. There are no wires used to connect the sensor unit to the display unit in the home.

Research results from an earlier year-long Hydro One demonstration project with 500 Ontario homeowners showed that real time electricity monitors can help homeowners reduce their consumption of electricity by up to 15%.