

## 2009 BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARD RECIPIENTS' PROFILE

### Markham District Energy: a poster boy for district energy

**M**arkham District Energy (MDE), winner of the Board of Trade's 2009 Donald Cousens Conservation and Environmental Leadership Award, has more than its share of fans and admirers.

"We're one of the poster boys in Canada for district energy," boasts MDE president and CEO Bruce Ander.

A producer of thermal energy and electricity, municipally-owned MDE supplies hot and cold water to heat and cool six million square feet of residential and commercial space in Markham Centre. The company operates two natural gas-fired plants with two more in the works and distributes hot and cold water through an extensive network of underground pipes to condo towers and customers such as IBM and Motorola. The fourth plant, currently on the drawing board, will serve the soon to be expanded Markham-Stouffville Hospital.

MDE reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent compared with conventional heating and cooling systems and plans to increase that even further as it transitions to renewable fuels in the next decade.

The biggest challenge faced by MDE when it was established in 2000 was educating developers and property owners about district energy.

"It was totally new to them," said Ander. "They didn't even know what district energy was. If you go to Denmark,

Germany or Sweden, district energy is well established, but in Canada it's not that well known, so we had to sit down with developers and walk them through the value proposition."

Aside from the positive impact on the environment, property owners served by MDE avoid having to purchase, install and maintain their own heating and cooling equipment.

Persuading developers to sign on is much easier today, given MDE's track record of reduced greenhouse gas emissions, competitive pricing and zero downtime in 10 years.

The global focus on conservation and renewable energy presents entrepreneurs with a wealth of business opportunities, but it's a crowded space rife with pitfalls for those who haven't done their homework, warned Ander.

"The energy sector in Ontario is changing before our eyes and the opportunity is certainly there as long as you are prepared to get educated and understand what you're getting into."

The Donald Cousens Conservation and Environmental Leadership Award was presented to MDE at the Markham Board of Trade's 2009 Business Excellence Awards gala by Donald Cousens himself, who was

instrumental in the founding of Markham District Energy as mayor of Markham from 1994 to 2006.

