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## 5 Minutes for Business

Sometimes Sustainability Is Just another Word for Common Sense

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A few years ago, BC Comfort Air Conditioning, a B.C.-based company with over 45 years experience in mechanical HVAC services, noted employees were leaving the doors wide open in the chilly season for convenience.

One simple change—asking workers to keep that bay door closed—helped cut natural gas use by 65%, saving the company \$7,000 a year and reducing carbon emissions by the same amount as planting 500 trees.

The company appears as one of 12 case studies in a new report, [\*200 Million Tonnes of Opportunity: How small and medium-sized businesses are driving Canadian clean growth\*](#), a report from Climate Smart Businesses. 200 Million Tonnes features stories from 800 SMEs in 13 sectors Climate Smart has worked with, offering real-world examples on how to cut costs by reducing emissions through actions like route optimization, paperless operations, heat recovery, employee engagement and more.

In another example, a company saved \$65,000 in hauling costs by diverting 35% of its waste from the local landfill, reducing emissions by an amount equivalent to three tanker trucks of gasoline. A hotel chain in the Yukon was able to save \$180,000 a year by upgrading its incandescent light bulbs to LEDs. Sometimes the company's return on investment was not in savings but in happier employees or improved reputation.

Many small businesses, however, are short on resources but long on to-dos. When it comes to considering the sustainability of business operations, it can be intimidating to figure out that first step.

Luckily, there are tools to help. The World Wildlife Fund's Living Planet @Work program provides a list of activities and programs people can use to start the conversation in their workplaces. The WWF's Smart Office Challenge focuses on IT, which as a part of almost every business and a significant energy consumer, is a natural starting point for sustainability newbies. The tool offers a check list of simple actions that can have a big impact. For example, cutting energy consumption from PCs by half can be as simple as getting employees to turn them off at night. More information is available in this [interview](#) with the Canadian Chamber.

The Canadian Chamber is also partnering with Climate Smart to help share its [training program](#) across the chamber network. The Victoria Chamber of Commerce and the Mississauga and St. John's boards of trade will pilot the outreach program, offering their members a \$1,000 discount. SMEs that belong to other member chamber of commerce are also able to access the discount on a first come-first served basis. Contact [Christine VanDerwill](#) to learn more.

Flashy new innovations or clean technology start ups are exciting stories that make headlines and it can sometimes seem that is what sustainability is all about, but much of the time, going green can simply mean finding ways to use resources more efficiently.

When a business reduces its environmental impact by making better choices about how it uses energy and materials, some call it sustainability, but the practice has an older name: common sense.

**For more information, please contact:**  
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