

A bright idea

LED lighting an alternative to CFL bulbs

By Anthony Bonaparte
 The Suburban

Traditional energy-consuming incandescent light bulbs will soon go the way of the Dodo bird when they are completely phased out by 2012. As a result, governments have been pushing to have compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs take their place. CFLs — those cute, swirly thingamajigs — were introduced several years ago as far greener, energy-saving alternative, but they have a downside.

Since they contain mercury, considered a hazardous waste, when CFLs burn out they have to be taken to a collection depot and then trucked to a smelter for recycling. If they break, put on the HAZMAT suit and call Environment Canada. No broom or vacuum cleaner here.

But there is another option. Energy-saving, environmentally friendly LED (light-emitting-diodes) lights don't have that problem. "It's not harmful to the environment since there's no mercury in them. So in some instances it's really appealing in a home," says Jamie Shapiro, vice president and director of sales for LED Source (www.ledsource.com), a LED

LIGHTING & FABRICATION BY DANIEL WELLS, LED CREATIONS



Under-cabinet and ambient kitchen lighting is a great use of LED lighting.

lighting franchise servicing eastern Canada.

The LED lighting industry has seen rapid growth in recent years. It claims to be the most energy-efficient lighting solution currently available — 1,000 percent more efficient than incandescents and 300 percent more than CFLs, while using up to 90 percent less energy to run.

This growth has come at a good time for Shapiro. "LED is the next big thing

and we believe it's ready for prime time right now."

Founded six years ago, LED Source is an international supplier of LED lighting that specializes in evaluations and retrofits and start-to-finish consultations on all manner of projects that range from commercial office space and schools to residential and landscape lighting.



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The long-lasting lamps are ideal in homes with high ceilings or cove lighting.

Shapiro, along with business associate Mark Etcovitch, brought the U.S. based concept north last September. Shapiro says the advantages for a homeowner can be broken down by the numbers. "With an LED lamp, you save up to 90 percent more energy that with a traditional incandescent light source. You save up to 50 percent more energy versus a fluorescent source, so right there the energy saving is huge," says Shapiro.

The long life of the bulb is another advantage. "The life of an LED is in the neighbourhood of 50,000 hours, whereas an incandescent can go from 750 to 2,500. A CFL is about 6,000 to 8,000," he says.

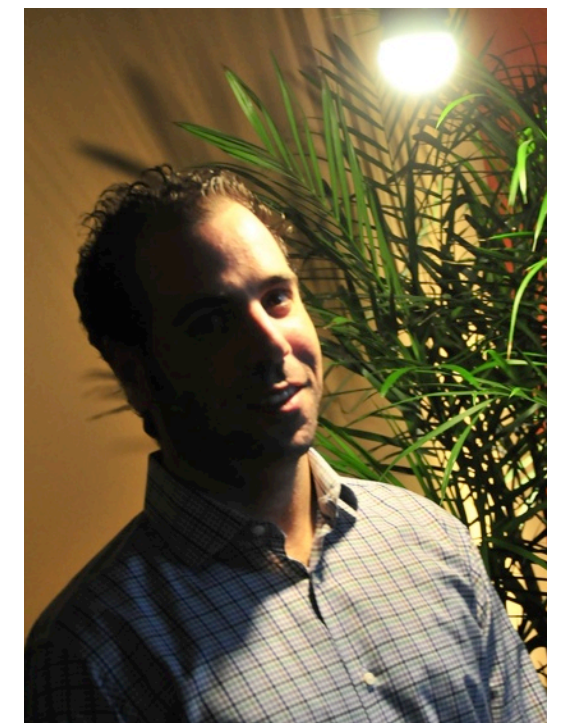
"The big appeal to LED is energy savings, maintenance savings and the return on investment. In a commercial application where the lights are on 18 to 24 hours a day, the payback is really quick. In a residential application where

the lights are on two to four hours a day, it will take five or six years."

Shapiro says some areas of the home where long-lasting LED lighting makes sense is under-cabinet lighting in the kitchen, homes with high ceilings or cove lighting, landscape and exterior lighting, like under the roof's soffit — which can only be accessed with a tall ladder.

But he admits that LEDs might not be the best solution for easy-to-access and infrequently used lights. "The energy savings are there, but the problem is the lights are just not on enough for a quick ROI (return on investment). But if you're going to stay in your home for 20 years, in seven years you'll have your money back and from that time forward you're saving," he says. ■

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