

# Bluewater Power Launches Smart Meter Pilot - Watford: The Smartest Town in Ontario



*Energy Minister Cansfield helps Bluewater's Ron Copeland and Paul Bell install a smart meter at Watford's main library.*

Bluewater Power Distribution has launched its smart meter pilot project in the Town of Watford, a community located east of Sarnia in southwestern Ontario. They've even given the project a catchy title to raise awareness and draw attention to the new pilot - *Watford: The Smartest Town in Ontario*.

have urban centres, but also have a substantial rural base. One of Bluewater Power's greatest challenges in the implementation of smart meters will be to come up with a cost effective communication system for their rural customers.

750 smart meters are being installed for residential and business customers in Watford. The town was chosen for the project because a large portion of Watford's customers already have automatic radio read (AMR) meters, which are a required component of smart meter communications technology. In addition, the town is within a geographically self-contained 'communications neighbourhood.'

Getting the pilot off the ground has involved the coordination of some key meter technology and industry partners who are working alongside Bluewater on this important project: ITRON, Elster Metering, Bell Canada, Hewlett Packard Canada, SPI Group, SAP Canada and Deloitte.

There are a series of issues that Bluewater Power wants to address before the full-scale deployment of smart meters in their service area. Seven areas of interest that they will determine through the pilot include:



*Bluewater Power launches its smart meter pilot project with the support of its many partners.*

"The Provincial Government's vision is for smart meters to benefit all of our customers and we are doing our part to ensure the necessary technology has been tested and is in place to allow us to carry out the vital role of installing, monitoring

and managing the meters," said Tim Vanderheide, Vice-President Client Services at Bluewater.

Bluewater Power is made up of six different municipalities. Sarnia and Point Edward are urban and contiguous and make up approximately 90% of the customer base. Petrolia, Watford, Alvinston and Oil Springs

- Meter change out practices;
- Reliability of the 'smart' meter being used;
- Reliability of meter connectivity to collectors and to head end systems;
- Ability to translate proprietary meter vendor AMR read data to interface and be read by SAP system;
- Determination of the size of data associated with the meter reads to project infrastructure requirements and determine performance standards;
- Demonstrate ability to perform billing functions as required, as well as the 'transition' environment where both new and existing meters coincide together; and,
- Demonstrate the ability to generate data exchange with external stakeholders through standardized electronic transactions.

Bluewater Power's attention has focussed on providing information and educating their customers. Not only has the distributor held a town hall style meeting to discuss the pilot project but in November they also held an Energy Conservation Trade Fair and Workshop in conjunction with the Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and Natural Resources Canada. The smart meter pilot project was officially launched at the event with Energy Minister Cansfield and MPP Maria Van Bommel in attendance, among others.

"The least discussed but perhaps the most important aspect of the Smart Meter initiative is the customer," said Janice McMichael, President and CEO. "Bluewater Power is committed to keeping the customer informed and educated, because at the end of the day, it's the customers who will be making the difference."

Watford customers will not be exposed to Time-of-Use (TOU) pricing during the pilot, however each participant will receive information regarding their consumption patterns and the cost of power that would have been applied if the TOU pricing were in effect. Customers will also receive information on how to shift load so that they can take best advantage of TOU pricing once it becomes mandatory.

*Bluewater Power is the largest electric utility in Lambton County, providing electricity to over 34,000 customers in Sarnia, Point Edward, Alvinston, Oil Springs and Watford. Bluewater Power's distribution system network consists of over 553.9 km of overhead plant and 202.6 km of underground plant, covering a service area of 178.14 square kilometres.*

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