

Our energy footprints: carbon emissions and privacy

Author : Jason Unger

Our energy footprints: carbon emissions and privacy

We live in a data rich environment. We also leave a carbon footprint in our day to day lives. Current approaches to reducing emissions have focused on big emitters but evolving technology is enabling energy savvy consumers to save money while contributing to climate change mitigation efforts. What started with smart thermostats is likely to escalate with our increasingly connected world. Smart grids and smart devices (and the “[internet of things](#)”) may soon reveal a detailed narrative of your energy consumptive day.

This energy narrative will be of value to many people – government, industry and individuals – in tracking energy consumption and evaluating climate mitigation efforts across an entire economy. In the same instance, individuals and companies may not want their energy story shared. What is a reasonable expectation of privacy in relation to our energy stories, if any?

The ELC’s new report [Energy Consumption Data and Rights to Privacy: Climate change mitigation policy, privacy and the “internet of things”](#) in Alberta summarizes the current provincial and federal privacy frameworks in the context of energy consumption. The report concludes that there is a need to increase the efficacy of gathering energy consumption information to efficiently evaluate the effectiveness of climate policy. Similarly, there is a need to clarify what type of private information should be publicly disclosable to foster goals related to education and awareness among citizens.

The ELC recommends undertaking statutory reforms to ensure public authorities have the tools they need for climate mitigation policies to succeed while respecting the privacy of citizens. The amendments proposed are focused on efficient and effective data gathering and sharing among public authorities and utilities. The amendments also focus on providing additional clarity around when and how data may be gathered, used, shared and distributed by public authorities to facilitate individual behavioural changes.

[Download Now!](#)

ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTRE:

The Environmental Law Centre (ELC), a public interest environmental law charity, believes that law is one of the most powerful tools to protect the environment. Since it was founded in 1982, the ELC has been and continues to be Alberta's only registered charity dedicated to providing credible, comprehensive and objective legal information regarding natural resources, energy and environmental law, policy and regulation in the Province of Alberta. The ELC's mission is to educate and champion for strong laws and rights so all Albertans can enjoy clean water, clean air and a healthy environment.

*As a charity, the Environmental Law Centre depends on your financial support. [Help us](#) to continue to educate and champion for strong environmental laws, through tools such as [our blog](#) and all of [our other resources](#), so that all Albertans can enjoy a healthy environment. **Your support***

makes a difference.

[*Donate online today*](#)

Share this: