

# Public aware but not conserving Resource scarcity perceived

by Julie Green

Although the public's perception of resource scarcity is not well developed in Edmonton and Calgary some people have taken conservation measures.

"Our attitude is complacent: I'm all right, Jack. People feel that the problems are elsewhere," said Dr. Edward Jackson of the U of A geography department, lecturing Wednesday about energy resource scarcity perceptions in Edmonton and Calgary.

Forty per cent of the people studies thought energy resource scarcity wasn't too serious a problem in Alberta, while 46 per cent thought energy problems were somewhat serious at a national level.

Energy scarcity problems at a world level were thought to be very serious by 52 per cent of those questioned.

The energy problem is ranked behind inflation, housing, strikes, urban growth, unemployment and pollution as a provincial problem. Nationally the resource scarcity problem is ranked ninth.

But Jackson said, "There is some evidence that concern is developing about resource scarcity."

Although many people are aware of methods to reduce consumption, fewer people put these methods into practice. For example, 73 per cent of those studied are aware that turning off lights is conservative action but only 63 per cent do so.

People also recognize and to a lesser extent, practice conservation by reducing the temperature of their homes, altering driving practises, and increasing home insulation. "Awareness doesn't translate directly into behaviour," Jackson said.

"Our perceptions are consistent with those from other parts of the world," Jackson said, citing other studies done in Canada and the United States.

These studies have determined that people are concerned about energy availability and cost.

However, energy concerns

are over-shadowed by bread and butter issues such as unemployment and housing costs, he said.

The studies show many people believe that no shortage exists at all, said Jackson. They believe that poor planning by government, self-interested oil companies and even government oil company conspiracies are responsible for the energy scarcity, said Jackson.

The studies have also found that conservationist behaviour is not consistent. "Some people are willing to adjust habitual behaviour, for example, by turning down their thermostat. Most of these measures involve little personal inconvenience," said Jackson.

"As concern increases, conservation will increase. I am optimistic that people will become more aware of conservation," said Jackson.

Jackson conducted his study by sending out surveys to 1000 homes in Edmonton and Calgary. About 47 per cent of those sent questionnaires replied.



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