

# Customer Views

An interview with John Kononiuk  
Manager of Capital Projects, London District Catholic School Board

## What motivated you to initiate your renewal project?

Initially, we wanted to improve facilities, reduce commodity costs, and improve the teaching and learning environment for staff and students in an affordable way. With traditional funding it's impossible to do unless you have creative funding strategies. It took two years to determine a workable strategy that would fit. Ameresco helped us come up with a plan to do the upgrades and fund them through energy savings and GPTL funds from the Ministry. This became a \$14 million project, which would touch a majority of the schools across the system.

## What issues/barriers do you encounter when commencing renewal projects?

The size of the project and the ability to role it out over a short period of time, because we all know the sooner you complete it the sooner you realize the savings. We were challenged with bringing a partner to the table. I felt Ameresco had a proven track record while others thought we should consider different options, aside from an external partner.

## What was the added value of working in a partnership?

Ameresco provided a savings guarantee and shared interest in making it work and ownership in the risk and implementation. The process was transparent at every stage. It enabled us to change direction — adjust on the fly. With the economic situation and government cut backs as they are, this flexibility allowed us to step back and refocus, and change scope without affecting the results we needed to achieve and our target of 20% reduction in utilities.



## What other people or factors influence your decisions and your success?

Information from other school districts and their staff i.e., plant department best practices helps reassure that we are doing the right thing. There aren't many organizations out there that can provide this kind of solution. It is obvious Ameresco has studied, learned and knows school boards to be successful. This is a valuable asset to have.

## Why partner versus "Do It Yourself"?

Do It Yourself is not the answer! We don't have the resources to handle the project size. We are involved at a high level with our Admin; Ameresco is involved at a more detailed level in managing the day-to-day project. They have the technology, the expertise, the processes, and the resources to achieve our goals quicker. Our main objective is teaching students so we have to ensure the schools are operating effectively without disrupting the students. It may cost more, but you can seek out successful solutions. We know what we are getting and we are getting it in a very professional manner. We are achieving our results.

## What is the added value?

Ameresco has provided PR strategies to help enhance the Board's image, which have been a great success. In addition, they have aided with submitting applications for grants i.e., NRCan grants and other utility incentives. Ameresco prepared and submitted thorough, precise business cases, which were approved on first submission. They saved us time and money by coordinating and submitting on our behalf. It is a turnkey operation: design, implement, measure, refine, and wrap up. There's your solution — defensible, transparent, proven results.

## What are the key results you have experienced to date? What did you learn from the process that you can share with other boards?

We have achieved all of our project milestones. Our renewal and our savings goals are on target. We achieved \$14 million in renewal and \$450,000 in savings. The project will be completed in a few months. We have put a major dent in our needs list based on our RECAPP data and we are able to plan for the future. We also reduced our ecological footprint and led students in doing so as well. The Educators really like this aspect and found it a WIN-WIN situation.



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We had several environmental events with students, and the student body and faculty really embraced them. It was useful in demonstrating, celebrating and acknowledging our environmental efforts. It demonstrated what facilities and academics are doing holistically across the system.

## What would you change, knowing what you know now?

I would have utilized the solution earlier on because the project has gone so well. I see the positive side. It was the right thing to do. I wouldn't change a thing! Although if I had more money I would take it a step further as the needs are there.



## What would you recommend to someone new to the process?

Be open. Check it out. Give it a fair assessment. Do your homework. I would also suggest not always sticking with the old methods and processes.

If you take a look at Ameresco and who they work with: K-12, Universities, Municipalities, etc. They are experienced in a wide range of buildings — you will benefit from the exposure that they have to a wide range of solutions. You may not think to call them but they will have the solution!

My experience with Ameresco has been very positive from start to finish. I am impressed with the team approach. They go the extra mile to make their clients' needs number one. Think outside the box! Some people don't want to change, but we are faced with constant change.

## If you had to do it over again would you work with Ameresco. Will you work with Ameresco for future projects?

Yes, absolutely with the results we have obtained I don't see why not! We have a relationship based on mutual trust and respect. We can't do what I do on my own!



**John Kononiuk**  
Manager of Capital Projects  
London District Catholic School Board

For further information on LDCSB, please contact:

John Kononiuk  
Manager of Capital Projects  
Ph: 519-663-2088  
Email: [j.kononiuk@ldcsb.on.ca](mailto:j.kononiuk@ldcsb.on.ca)