

New energy rebates offered

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A new \$36 million provincial rebate program should encourage Albertans to save energy by re-insulating their homes, says a local expert.

Alberta will dole out the cash in rebates as part of a new three-year energy efficiency plan, according to Rob Renner, the province's environment minister.

"Albertans have clearly told us that they have a role to play and they want to act upon it," he said, speaking at an energy efficient show-home home in southwest Edmonton.

The plan, which targets new-home buyers, renovators and taxi drivers, should rein in about one megatonne in greenhouse gas emissions a year when complete — equivalent to about 0.4 per cent of the province's current total emissions or removing about 200,000 cars from the road for a year.

"It's a significant impact on the environment," Renner said, "But more importantly, I think it's a significant opportunity for Albertans to begin to participate."

This is the largest energy efficiency program ever done in Alberta, said John Rilett, vice-president of Climate Change Central, and should help about 100,000 households save money and energy through efficiency. "It's a very large first step towards meeting Alberta's climate change targets, and a very exciting first step."

Big green discounts

The program, which covers any purchases made since the start of 2009, gives anyone who buys a new home with an EnerGuide efficiency rating of 80 or higher up to \$10,000. A home with a rating of 81 uses about 30 per cent less energy than the typical Alberta home, according to the Built Green Society of Canada.

This is a smart move that should help people save money and energy, said Leigh Bond, president of Threshold Energies. "Instead of building the same old crap that's going to have to get retrofitted again later on down the line, let's try and get new houses built right the first time."

Homeowners can also get up to \$3,150 back by re-insulating their homes. "Insulation is one of the biggest paybacks," Rilett said, as it also reduces your gas bills.

Like the other rebates in the program, Rilett said, this one can be combined with cash from the federal ecoENERGY program and the Home Renovation Tax Credit. It costs about \$10,000 to re-insulate your entire home, but you can get all but \$1,510 of it back through the rebates.

Start with your attic if you choose to re-insulate, Bond said. "Heat rises," he points out, and most attics have little insulation. After that, consider getting a high-efficiency furnace, which can shave 20 per cent off your gas bill.

The provincial program offers a \$600 rebate for high-efficiency furnaces, as well as about \$400 and \$100 for



Mountain View Gazette (Olds, AB)				Order/Commande 134628
Date 28.04.2009	Circ. 21000	Page 34	2 / 2	



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efficient hot water heaters and clothes washers, respectively. Taxi drivers who bought a gas-electric hybrid after July 1, 2008 are eligible for a \$3,000 rebate. The program also offers \$200 for energy efficiency evaluations required to qualify for the ecoENERGY program.

Plenty of opportunity

Albertans have plenty of low-hanging fruit to pick when it comes to reducing their emissions, Rilett said. Just seven per cent of Alberta homes have a high-efficiency furnace, for example, and a tiny fraction have an EnerGuide rating over 80. "There's only a couple hundred of these homes right here, and we're building about 40,000 new homes a year."

Rilett hoped changes to provincial building codes would eventually make these efficient homes commonplace. "As individuals, we have a lot of opportunities to do our bit when it comes to mitigating climate change," he said. "That often comes down to using energy more wisely."

A full guide to the rebates is available at www.climatechangecentral.com.