

Gov't offers new home rebate

❑ Energy efficient houses qualify for up to \$2,400 as part of Green Strategy

By Cassandra Kyle
of The StarPhoenix

The provincial government announced a rebate of up to \$2,400 for energy efficient new homes Monday as part of Saskatchewan's Green Strategy.

Environment Minister John Nilson said while it may cost more initially to purchase an energy efficient home, long-term savings on utilities make up the difference. The rebate, starting at \$1,000 for buying an Energy Star or R-2000 certified home, will be administered by SaskEnergy on behalf of the government. Energy Star homes must meet certain design criteria to maximize efficiency, while R-2000 homes are graded on a performance-based scale focused on heating, durability and air quality.

"I think that the building industry in Saskatchewan has shown leadership across Canada for decades, and we have the chance to do that again," Nilson said of the plan.

The R-2000 program was developed in Saskatchewan more than 20 years ago, he said, and the Energy

Star certification brings an updated efficiency plan to provincial builders.

"Our green strategy says that we, as citizens of Saskatchewan, want to make the most efficient use of our energy," Nilson said.

The future construction of power plants may be pushed back or scrapped if enough energy is saved through programs like these, Nilson said. Buying an Energy Star or R-2000 home may allow buyers to borrow more money from the bank due to savings on utility bills, he added.

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The provincial energy efficient rebate for new homes starts at \$1,000 with the purchase of a certified house and moves up to a maximum of \$2,400. Here's how the rebate breaks down:

- ❑ purchase of Energy Star or R-2000 certified home — \$1,000
- ❑ purchase and installation of a solar domestic hot water heating system — \$1,000
- ❑ purchase and installation of a grey or drain water heat recovery system — \$150
- ❑ purchase and installation of one to two qualifying natural gas appliances, like ranges and clothes dryers — \$100 to \$250

Post-secondary institutes and skilled tradespeople could also benefit from an interest in energy efficient homes, he said, as specially trained workers or "green technicians" are needed at some parts of construction.

Alan Thomar, executive vice-president of government relations and research for the Canadian Home Builders' Association, said he expects to see between 400 and 500 new Energy Star or R-2000 homes built in Saskatoon in the next year. Thomar, also the chief executive officer of the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association, said builders who are part of the associations should have no trouble complying with the standards a certified energy efficient home requires.

"The builders who come to us know our standards. They willingly sign on, and they appreciate the need for environmental stewardship," he said. "We expect



—SP Photo by Gord Waldner

Andre Cayer, president of Watercycles, displays the company's grey-water heat recovery pipe, one product that boosts a home's energy efficiency

that (the builders) are going to build the best homes possible."

There has been a growing demand for environmentally certified homes in the past few years, said Ron Erikson, marketing sales manager for North Ridge Homes. Fluctuating utility costs are becoming a burden on homeowners and they're looking for a way to stabilize costs, he said.

"The market became aware that their mortgage rates weren't the only variable affecting their property," he said, noting now people are taking a second look at Energy Star and R-2000 homes.

"The good thing about it is that it's third-party rec-

ognized and third-party certified, so regardless of the builder it's a R-2000 or an Energy Star home.

I don't think it's going to have an impact on the marketplace in terms of sales, but I think it will have an impact on the decisions buyers make."

In addition to energy efficient appliances, homes eligible to receive the rebate are built with specified plans and use specialized materials to make them more environmentally friendly. Homeowners receive a certificate from the federal government once their house is certified. The rebate is available until March 31, 2008.

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