

# Real Estate Monthly

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## The New EcoEnergy Retrofit Program: What You Should Know

If you're considering upgrading your home's energy efficiency, hold off until April 1st – that's when the federal government's new EcoEnergy Retrofit Program, which offers rebates of up to \$5,000 to eligible homeowners, goes into effect.

Homeowners who had an energy audit under the old EnerGuide for Houses Program before the government cancelled it on May 12, 2006, still have until March 31, 2007, to complete their renovations and apply for their grant money.

According to the senior chief of housing programs at Natural Resources Canada, the federal department responsible for administering these programs, the new EcoEnergy Retrofit Program includes some key improvements over the old EnerGuide Program. Not only will efficient heating equipment be on the checklist provided by the auditor but also cooling equipment, water-saving devices and renewable energy. The checklist itself, plus knowing ahead of time how much of a rebate you'll get, are other consumer-friendly features, she says.

Under the old program, the government subsidized the energy audits. Now homeowners will have to pay the full cost of the audit, which could amount to up to \$600.

The government claims that having homeowners pay the full audit cost will ensure that they will follow through with the recommended renovations. Critics are concerned, however, that some homeowners will be discouraged by the cost from having an audit carried out.

While waiting for April 1 to arrive, homeowners can research which renovations they would like to do, figure out how much



money they have to spend, and go to home shows to ask questions. Then, when the auditor comes, they will be in a better position to get the maximum benefit from the inspection.

### Getting Started

First, book a professional energy evaluation of your home with a government-approved energy auditor. National Resources Canada will post a list on its Web site, [nrcan.gc.ca](http://nrcan.gc.ca), once it becomes available. You can also call 1-800-387-2000.

Next, the auditor will test your home, including a blower-door test for air tightness, and provide you with a detailed and prioritized checklist for the best upgrades, including which changes would be the most effective at reducing energy use.

Third, get the work done. Keep your receipts.

Fourth, the auditor will re-inspect to ensure that the work has been done properly. The auditor will also help you fill out and submit the proper paperwork.

Finally, you will receive your rebate cheque.

### Focus on Ottawa Home Sales

According to statistics just released by the Ottawa Real Estate Board (OREB), 763 homes were sold in January, compared with 647 in January 2006. There were 682 sales in December 2006.

"This year is tied with 2002 for the highest number of sales on record for the month of January, possibly due to the warmer temperatures that Ottawa experienced for the first half of the month," said OREB's President. "Both the residential and condominium classes are showing strong increases over last January and the average sale price has continued to rise as well. It's an excellent start to the year for Ottawa's residential real estate market."

The average price of the homes sold in January in the Ottawa area was \$260,734, an increase of 6.3 percent over January 2006.

**Call today for real estate advice and information!**

## Home, Green, Home

**Did you know that the average Canadian generates about 5 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually, just by staying home? The good news is that only small sacrifices are required to make a house green friendly—and these changes can also help you save money!**

**Solar panels:** When connected to a local utility grid, solar panels can generate energy and heat from the sun during the day—and let you tap into electric power at night.

**Lighting:** Compact fluorescent bulbs are so effective at cutting electricity usage that legislation was introduced in late January in California to ban incandescent lighting by 2012. You can further save electricity by turning off all lights when you are not in the room. Alternatively, you can go high-tech and buy infrared sensors that activate lights when they sense your body heat.

**Windows:** They can account for up to 25 percent of a house's total heat loss. Take action by using glass with a reflective low-emissivity glaze or invest in double-glazed window panes pumped with argon gas to boost insulation.

**Computers:** They use the same amount of electricity for every two seconds in use as they do to power up, which means that they should be shut off when you are not surfing the Internet or working on a Powerpoint presentation. Your reward: about \$100 in annual savings.

**Phantom loads:** Even when they are turned off, computers and appliances, such as TVs, cell phone chargers and DVD players draw electricity. Avoid this waste by unplugging appliances when not in use.

**Refrigerators:** Probably the biggest energy hogs in your home. To cut down on waste, position them away from direct sunlight and keep them no cooler than 2-4°C. Unplug that old basement beer fridge as well; in some cases, these models use up to \$100 worth of electricity every year.

**Clothesline:** Use a free solar- and wind-powered clothes dryer—less glamorously known as a clothesline—for maximum savings. Use a free solar- and wind-powered

clothes dryer – less glamorously known as a clothesline – for maximum savings.

**The yard:** Get out the snow shovel! You'll save energy and burn off 100 more calories than you would using a snow blower. Come spring, you can also sweat out 50 percent more calories using a rake instead of a fossil-fuel-powered leaf blower.

**Your electricity source:** Investigate your options for purchasing green power or electricity from renewable sources such as wind.

**Washers and dryers:** High-efficiency front-loading washers use about 40 percent less water than conventional

models, but even if you have an older machine, you can cut down on the bulk of the electricity that it consumes by using cold water. When purchasing a new dryer, buy one with a moisture sensor that will shut off automatically when your clothes are dry. Be sure to clean your lint filters frequently to improve air circulation.

**Furnaces:** Every degree that you turn down the thermostat saves 2 percent on your heating bill. Caulking, weather stripping, storm windows and programmable thermostats also more than pay for themselves in energy savings.

**Hot water tank:** For big savings, wrap your tank in an insulating blanket (available at most hardware stores). In new homes, consider drain-water heat recovery, which takes hot water going down the drain and uses it to preheat water entering the rest of the house.

**The blue box:** Recycling is easy. And it works. Recycling a single aluminum pop can, instead of making it from scratch, saves enough energy to run a TV for three hours. Don't forget the compost heap: it cuts down greenhouse gas emissions through reduced landfill waste.

**Your car:** Driving 20,000 km in a typical SUV emits 6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> each year. An efficient hybrid car emits only 2 tonnes of greenhouse gases. Taking transit is an even better commuting solution: a full city bus can offset about 40 cars, reducing emissions by 50 tonnes.

