

## **Green is cool... and saves you money!**

Doesn't it seem like the biggest buzzword these days is "green"? It used to be just a colour; now it's a lifestyle, with a glut of non-toxic cleaning products, recycled printer paper, and alternative energy companies like Bullfrog Power popping up everywhere. The great thing about green becoming mainstream is that it can actually save you, the consumer, some money when you purchase or upgrade your home. Nearly every level of government and every agency is hopping on the green bandwagon – the city of Ottawa will rebate you for buying a low-flow toilet, for example, while the provincial power company, Ontario Hydro, ran the Great Refrigerator Roundup last year, encouraging Ontarians to get rid of the old energy-guzzling appliances sitting in their basements by hauling them away for free.

The federal government, meanwhile, announced in its budget that it would be devoting more cash to support its Eco-ENERGY Retrofit program, which provides financial assistance to homeowners and small- and medium-sized business owners to help them improve the energy efficiency of their home or building. The program, which is administered by Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), offers rebates that can total up to \$5,000 to property owners who have their home's efficiency assessed and then make energy-saving upgrades, such as installing a new high-efficiency furnace, new windows and doors, or better insulation. Cutting-edge and emerging technologies such as "gray water" systems and solar panels are also eligible for rebates.

In order to take advantage of this grant program, the homeowner must have both an initial and a post-improvement energy assessment conducted by an NRCan-licensed energy advisor. The province of Ontario offers a subsidy to offset the cost of the initial assessment, and also offers matching grants to double the rebate from the federal government. Once the work has been completed, the advisor who conducts your final energy assessment will apply for your grants on your behalf and will prepare the paperwork for your signature. All upgrades must be completed within 18 months of the initial energy assessment in order to be eligible for grants, and homeowners may only apply once for each property they own. To find out more about this program, visit <http://oe.nrcan.gc.ca/>.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has joined the green parade as well, offering a ten per cent refund on its Mortgage Loan Insurance premium to consumers who use CMHC-insured financing to either purchase an already energy-efficient home, purchase a home and make energy-saving renovations to it, or renovate their existing home to make it more energy-efficient. For more information about this program, visit <http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/>.

REALTORS® make it their business to know about programs and initiatives that can make home ownership more affordable for consumers. REALTORS® also know that greater energy efficiency with both save homeowners money and give them the satisfaction of living a greener life. Why not ask your REALTOR® how you can take advantage of the many green programs available to you?

***Readers are encouraged to send questions or request topics to be discussed in this column. Please send your requests to [info@thenewsemc.ca](mailto:info@thenewsemc.ca)***