

Clockwise: Steve Jones prepares a frame for installation of a new window during a makeover blitz to make a North Burnaby duplex more energy efficient on Thursday; Joel Bochen caulks a new window; Corey Dowie is shrouded in dust as he cuts out the frame for a new energy efficient door; Dowie sizes up an old door frame as he prepares to install a new one; Steve Jones rips out an old window.

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NEWSLEADER



Pilot program promotes energy efficiency

Burnaby one of eight eligible for home improvement grants

BY WANDA CHOW
NewsLeader

For North Burnaby resident Jason Lee, the decision around his house was first one of should I stay or should I go.

With the housing market as hot as it is, it was decided moving wasn't a real option, Lee said. "The wife and I decided we'll stay. Then, if we're going to, we'll have to start upgrading at least."

That's how the process started for Lee in upgrading the 39-year-old duplex owned by his family. On Thursday, he was watching as \$50,000 in work was being done to improve the energy efficiency of both sides of the duplex.

"I would've done less if I didn't have the grant," Lee said, of the Energy Savings Plan (ESP), a pilot program offering grants for energy efficiency improvements.

Burnaby is one of eight municipalities participating in the pilot for single-family homes funded by the provincial Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources. A total of \$100,000 is available to Burnaby homeowners on a first-come, first-served basis.

The program is similar to the former federal Energuide for Houses program that the Conservative government cancelled in its most recent budget. Energy audits are done of the home before and after the upgrades to measure energy improvements. The grants are calculated according to how much more efficient the home becomes.

While the federal program has been



Jason Lee keeps a close eye on the proceedings as a crew of workers replaces doors, windows, insulation and furnaces in his Burnaby duplex to make it more energy efficient.

cancelled, people who have had their first energy audits still have until March 2007 to complete upgrades, conduct the second audit and apply for that money, said Bret Conkin, vice-president of Homeworks Services which was doing the work on Lee's home. The federal program offers grants of up to \$4,400.

Homeworks, which specializes in energy efficiency upgrades, saw business plateau after the federal program was cancelled, said

Conkin, noting the average energy efficiency renovation his company sees is around the \$12,000 range.

Such work can fly "below the radar screen. It's not the first thing people think about," he said. "They don't think of the furnace until it breaks down in the middle of winter."

To qualify for the Energy Savings Plan pilot grants, all work is required to be done by Homeworks, having a consistent contractor

allowing the province to better review the success of the pilot program. The work and second audit must be done by January to qualify for the provincial money.

Typical homes can receive up to \$2,100, a combination of ESP grant and rebates from Terasen Gas and B.C. Hydro for furnace and window upgrades respectively. That's all in addition to the energy savings homeowners will enjoy over the long term.

In Lee's case, the duplex was getting new, more energy efficient windows and doors, additional attic insulation and ventilation (the latter to address potential moisture buildup resulting from the home becoming more air-tight). The original, 60-per-cent efficient furnaces were being replaced by 90-per-cent efficient models.

Municipalities were chosen for the pilot program through a request for proposals sent out around Christmas last year, said Nicolette Brinkhoff, Energy Savings Plan project manager for existing buildings. Each community had to show how it was supportive of the provincial government's energy efficiency targets. In Burnaby's case, the fact it has retrofitted city-owned buildings to be more energy efficient would have been evidence of that, Brinkhoff said. All the municipalities that applied were accepted for the grant pilot.

Any upgrades must be done by Homeworks to qualify for a pilot ESP grant, but if the program is expanded to the rest of B.C. in future, people will be able to hire their own contractors or do the work themselves, she said.

Visit www.saveenergynow.ca/burnaby or call 1-877-727-2830 for more information.

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