

Energy minister unveils province's energy-efficiency plan for buildings

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Energy Minister Richard Neufeld has unveiled the government's new strategy for making buildings more energy efficient across the province.

"In the energy plan, one of the goals (was) to review the energy efficiency act and to bring it up to date and up to standard and so that's what we've done," Neufeld said Friday. "We've come up with a plan that we want to put in place and have in place until 2010 and it's a voluntary plan."

According to the plan, the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources sought advice from an advisory group from industry, government and utilities about how to improve energy efficiency for new and existing buildings in B.C. The plan outlines cost-effective energy efficiency targets as well as how to reach the targets.

"The target is that we can save, if everything goes according to what we plan, about 22 petajoules of natural gas," Neufeld said. "To put that in perspective, that's enough natural gas to heat 200,000 homes. And so that of course helps with greenhouse gas and the need to develop more and more all the time."

The ministry suggests that meeting new targets for new residential housing will increase the energy efficiency of new detached homes by an average of 36 per cent and new multi-unit residential buildings by 43 per cent by 2010.

"Energy efficiency improvements of up to 17 per cent will be achieved in 12 per cent of existing detached homes by 2010," the plan states, promoting cost effective energy performance standards for new and existing buildings that conserve energy and improve energy efficiency. And there are incentives for people to make the necessary changes to make buildings more energy efficient.

"There are tax incentives, specifically, PST incentives," Neufeld said, in addition to federal government programs. "It's all voluntary. We're working towards 2010 on voluntary. We're hopeful by then that we can have enough new buildings and enough retrofit that we can start making some of these things a little bit more mandatory but that's out there a bit."

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