

# TIMES COLONIST

## Saanich sweetens pot for building 'green'; Municipality to give priority to applications for projects using energy-efficient components

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 Byline: Bill Cleverley  
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Saanich is launching a program to help residential builders cut red tape and cash in on government programs for building "green."

The municipality will give priority to applications for housing projects using energy-efficient components and provide those builders rebates of up to 30 per cent on building-permit fees. The program could be up and running in six weeks.

Saanich will also designate an employee to serve as an energy adviser, directing builders to available green rebate programs and in many cases even filling out the applications for them.

"If you say to the builder 'it's free money and we'll do the paperwork,' there's absolutely nothing for them to lose," said Mayor Frank Leonard.

"Everything is about time and money. Here we can save time and money in the short term for the builder; save money in the long term for the homeowner and serve an environmental public good at the same time."

He said the program should be particularly helpful to smaller contractors.

"Our experience is that they don't have a lot of time. They want to get on with building a house, not chase around looking for government programs to get a subsidy on X, Y, or Z.

"So this idea of having an in-house energy adviser who would do that for the builder will be attractive. I think there will be a lot of take-up on that."

In launching the program, Saanich is the first B.C. municipality to provide rebates using the Canadian Home Builders' Association's new **Built Green** program standards. **Built Green** certifies dwellings as bronze, silver or gold, depending on their level of energy efficiency and environmental features.

Leonard said **Built Green** is to residential buildings as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is to commercial or institutional buildings.

The new program is part of Saanich's 2005 green building policy, which requires a minimum LEED silver for all new municipal buildings.

It should be particularly attractive to people undertaking renovations where taking a couple of extra steps can result in huge energy savings, said Gordon English, a green builder and Victoria president of the Canadian Home Builders' Association. Some of the processes are new to municipalities, such as building exterior walls with an air barrier on the outside, and using a vapour-barrier paint on the inside.

"Before, different municipalities might say, 'I don't know how that works so I'm not going to accept you doing that.' It's now proven to be a superior way of doing it," English said.

He said the economics of single-family-home construction make LEED standards difficult to reach, but **Built Green** standards achievable.

"Dockside Green [for example] is a huge project where you can do something like that (LEED) and amortize it over 2,500 units as opposed to one. This is more geared to the things are more practical to do for single-family and small multis," English said.

Costs of Saanich's program -- expected to be about \$52,000 this year and \$61,000 next -- are being offset by a \$75,000 grant from the province.

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