

Firm looks at affordable energy at home

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With the increase in natural gas rates that took effect today, Regina residents will be looking for cheaper ways to heat their homes.

The desire for environmentally sustainable and affordable energy alternatives motivated two young university graduates to launch WestSource Solutions Inc., a consulting firm that targets the average homeowner, commercial organizations, and developers focused on sustainable development.

WestSource Solutions CEO Lyle Weichel and chief operations officer Kim Korchinski partnered with SunSmart and SpringBoard West Innovations to provide a simplified strategy for clients to reduce utility costs and CO2 emissions in their living spaces.

"Making your home energy efficient and environmentally friendly can seem like a great idea until you try to figure it out. Figuring out the 'how' can be both time consuming and frustrating. Our company takes the hassle out by figuring out the plan for you," said Weichel.

"A lot of these technological concepts aren't new. People have talked about this for many years, but what we're seeing is the maturing and further commercialization of these technologies. The costs (of technology) have gone down, but energy costs are going to continue going up, especially with the economic growth that we have in Saskatchewan right now and its aging infrastructure," said Weichel.

SunSmart Homes is a residential construction company that has teamed up with WestSource to design energy star homes. WestSource handles areas such as the design, component packaging, and determination of life cycle costs for renewable energy systems.

"We're hoping (WestSource) will help us to design a better home informed by the engineering side. We're also hoping that we can translate some of what we're doing into marketing and messaging with some efficacy behind it. We can show people the facts and the savings they can expect," said Mark Lemmerick, president of SunSmart.

During the construction process, SunSmart helps to divert most of the waste from landfills; typically 2.5 tonnes of waste is generated by a 1,600-square-foot home. They also compost drywall that is left over from the sites and use materials that comes from forests with sustainable harvesting practices.

Susan Gorges, CEO of Springboard West Innovations, thinks that SaskEnergy's natural gas price increase will shift clients towards green living.

"What that's going to mean is that everybody's heating bill is going to go up exponentially, so the motivation for companies, like WestSource Solutions, to launch right now is that everyone is going to say how can I reduce my costs? And instead of just wearing a sweater and slippers at night, if there's a way to keep the home comfortable and not use much energy then it's a good thing to do," she said.

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