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Home is where the green is

Alec Bain

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The Ryerson-monitored green home in Richmond Hill, Ont.

Courtesy Heathwood Homes

A master's engineering student, a civil engineering prof and Heathwood Homes in Richmond Hill have grouped together for the community's first "green home."

Ryerson University's Alan Fung and master's engineer student Mahssa Ghajarkhosravi begin their assessment of the first "green home" today.

The house, in Richmond Hill, Ont., is equipped with the most advanced green energy systems — surpassing government-endorsed Energy Star standards by far — and is considered the first green "home."

According to Heathwood Homes president Hugh Heron, other companies have created environmental houses before, but they were more like labs, where Heathwood is a "home."

Ryerson's findings for Heathwood will make homeowners an active entity in the fight against greenhouse gas emissions and energy waste. With these houses, Richmond Hill could reduce up to 20 per cent of water and gas usage.

"When I saw the application for the construction of the home, I was very excited," said Richmond Hill mayor Dave Barrow. "We get so many applications similar to this but none that either actually get built or of such a large scale."

The green home will be opened as a showroom by Heathwood Homes and a second, with Energy Star standards is scheduled to be opened within the next year for the same purpose.

For the first year, Fung and Ghajarkhosravi will be monitoring the efficiency of the energy conservation

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home without tenants. This first set of data will then provide a starting point to compare how much energy a tenant will use living in the home.

"Energy Star is simply not as good as the green system, but (the green home) is so expensive," Ghajarkhosravi said.

The idea behind the green home is the balance between solar, gas, water, and other renewable energy sources to maximize energy and minimize cost.

Innovative green features include a solar-panelled roof, carpet made from recycled water bottles, bamboo flooring, and a recovery water system that uses the same water twice, saving one-third of water usage. As dictated by the Ontario Power Authority in 2006, tenants will also have a chance to sell off extra solar energy to the province.

It costs approximately \$50,000 for an entire green home system (not including labour and installation), according to Ghajarkhosravi.

The Energy Star home, although cheaper, is not as effective as the new green home.

For future homes built to this model, Fung and Ghajarkhosravi will determine how to save money as well as energy.

Once tenants have moved in, Fung and Ghajarkhosravi's findings will advise the homeowner on how to monitor their energy consumption themselves. It is the first green home in Canada that has a monitored and automated system that enables the operation of its components from in-home touch pads, and computers and smartphones from remote locations.

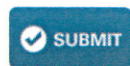
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