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For Immediate Release

The Regional Municipality of York constructs new solar wall at Elmwood Gardens in Stouffville

Project caps first energy retrofit of entire public housing building

NEWMARKET – A solar wall at the Elmwood Gardens seniors' residence in Stouffville is the first to be installed on a building owned and operated by Housing York Inc., the non-profit housing corporation operated by The Regional Municipality of York.



“The solar wall is a perfect example of sustainability in action because it reduces the impact of higher energy costs,” said York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch. “It makes good business sense, it is good for the environment and it helps to keep this seniors' residence comfortable in the winter.”

The building's heating system needs to draw air from the outside to refresh the air in the central hallway. Rather than drawing air directly from the outside and heating it, the system draws air from inside the metal panels of the sun-facing wall. On a cold winter day, the difference in temperature between the air inside the solar wall and the air outside can easily exceed 8° Celsius.

“The benefits are both economic and environmental,” said Brenda Hogg, Town of Richmond Hill Regional Councillor and Chair of the Region's Community Services and Housing Committee. “The solar wall will save \$3,300 per year in energy costs and we will reduce green house gas emissions by 15 tonnes.”

The solar wall on the 51-unit seniors' building on Elm Road does not employ expensive photovoltaic cells. It has no moving parts, there are no maintenance costs and it comes with a 20-year warranty.

The cost of the two sections of solar wall at Elmwood Gardens, including installation, was \$37,000. However, the solar wall and seven other individual energy upgrades at the building received a total of \$134,000 in energy reduction incentive funding from Enbridge Gas, Ontario Power Authority, Hydro One and Natural Resources Canada. The average payback period from energy savings for all the energy upgrades at the building will be less than five years.

Since January 2004, the price of natural gas has increased 62 per cent. If the cost of natural gas continues to rise at a similar rate, the investment in the solar wall will be paid back even sooner.

Construction of the solar wall occurred between February and May of this year, marking the final step in upgrading the entire building. Elmwood Gardens is one of two buildings to be upgraded. The other is Founders Place, a 100-unit seniors building on Timothy Street in the Town of Newmarket.

Other energy upgrades in these two buildings include the installation of water saving toilets, more energy efficient lighting and refrigerators, programmable thermostats, new high efficiency rooftop air units and boilers and the introduction of a building automation system that uses computer technology to maximize the performance of mechanical equipment in the building.

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