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CNE suite showcases green living ideas

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Contrary to what Kermit the Frog said, it's easy being green.

Visitors to the Sustainable Condo on display at the Direct Energy Centre during the CNE, now through Sept. 3, will discover plenty of ideas on how to save energy and incorporate environmentally friendly features into their own homes.

The 1,000-square-foot suite showcases green, sustainable and energy-efficient interior design and internal systems, featuring state-of-the-art technologies.

While not every Ex visitor may find it practical to install a green roof or radiant heating, they may contemplate switching to LED lighting, changing to low-flow faucets and shower heads or buying Energy Star appliances and furniture made from natural or recycled materials.

The appliances, devices and strategies featured can reduce a household's energy and water bills by \$300 to \$400 a year. The products and building materials used are renewable, recyclable and non-toxic.

The Sustainable Condo debuted at the Pacific National Exhibition in Vancouver in 2004 and has been on the road since, at events such as a green building trade industry show in Atlanta and Toronto events like IDEX interior design and building show, the International Home Show, the Green Building Show, and Realtor Quest.

"Having it at the CNE will take something that's been on the fringe and bring it to a very public venue. This takes it mainstream," says Mark Salerno, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.'s district manager for the

Greater Toronto Area. Replicating a home setting is an effective way to show consumers how its features can be used in 'real life', he says.

The condo was an EcoSmart project, designed by Busby + Associates Architects to address the challenges of urban sustainability. EcoSmart is a non-profit society that helps the building industry innovate and adopt ecological and economical technologies.

After the Ex, the Sustainable Condo will make its permanent home in the Music Building at Exhibition Place.

While it is a condo suite, Salerno says the beauty is that the features and products can be used in any type of dwelling of any scale, such as detached homes, or social or co-operative housing.

The display was recently upgraded – for example, visitors can see the difference in illumination between standard halogen and LED lighting with a flick of a switch, as well as note the savings on an energy reader.

"The light levels are comparable, but there are appreciable savings," says Salerno. As well, the LED bulbs last 50,000 hours, so they cut down on bulb replacement.

All furnishings now come from De Boer's, instead of from multiple sources across the country. This makes it easy for people to source the items, says Salerno. The pieces come from De Boer's everGreen line, an extensive collection of eco-friendly home furnishings.

"The condo gives people the idea, 'this is something I could do right now in my house or talk to a renovator about,' " says Salerno. "If they are buying a new house, they might talk to their sales agent to see if some of these features are available."

For new-home buyers, there are incentives for buying energy-efficient homes, says Salerno, such as a rebate on CMHC mortgage insurance for Energy Star designated houses and suites in LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified condominiums. Also, CMHC waives the surcharge on 40-year amortizations.

Salerno says the Sustainable Condo shows that many ideas are "attractive and easy to implement." Visitors will be able to pick up brochures and website links to learn where they can buy the products featured.

For example, someone in the market for new appliances might choose Energy Star models. An energy-efficient fridge uses 28 per cent of the electricity of a conventional fridge. An efficient combination clothes washer

and dryer uses only 10 per cent of the energy and 25 per cent of the water of conventional machines.

Partners in the Sustainable Condo include Ontario Power Authority, Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), the Royal Bank and the City of Toronto. The city has been involved in several initiatives, such as the addition of a kitchen island with a waste sorting area; it also provides rebates of \$60 to \$75 to homeowners who replace old toilets with a dual flush model. The power authority encourages use of LED and compact fluorescent lighting.

Some of the key features in the Sustainable Condo include:

- Water-saving low-flow faucets and shower heads and a dual-toilet.
- Waste water heat recovery unit and tankless hot water heater.
- Products made from recycled or natural materials, such as upholstery and bedding made from organically grown fibres, raw wool carpet, and furniture made from reclaimed wood, recycled steel or woods certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.
- Radiant heating and cooling.
- Heating recovery ventilator.
- Breathing wall of plants and herbs, to filter indoor pollutants.
- Energy Star appliances.
- All-off switch, which turns off all lights when exiting the unit; as well as motion detector lights, dimmer switches and LED lighting