

Green housing saves greenbacks

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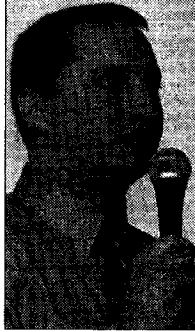
By Stephen Petrick
THE INTELLIGENCER

Recent improvements to Hastings County-owned affordable housing units are helping taxpayers and tenants save more than \$200,000 a year, an official said Thursday.

And the work is pretty good for the environment, too.

"At the start we weren't calling it green initiatives, we were calling it cost savings," said county housing manager Scott Robertson. "The thing to do was to put in energy efficient appliances."

The comment came following his presentation at the Affordable Housing Action Network Forum for social workers and housing advocates at St. Thomas' Anglican



SCOTT
ROBERTSON

Church Thursday.

The speech, titled Going Green in Social Housing, highlighted the improvements made to nearly all of the county's 2,200 units over the last three years.

As a result, it has seen the number of kilowatt hours used in its units drop by more than 3.5 million annually.

That number, staff said, is equal to a reduction of 1,065 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year or to removing 568 cars from the road.

But it required a lot of work, Robertson said.

County staff have replaced more than 14,000 incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs in recent months, he said.

They have also given out 724 new energy-efficient refrigerators to tenants and replaced weather stripping around doors and windows at 1,379 units.

They've also purchased new stoves, low flush toilets and low-flow shower heads, among other initiatives to lower energy use.

"A lot of these things were things

that needed to be replaced anyway," Robertson said.

He said he made the presentation to change the way the public perceives social housing institutions.

While some may see them as organizations that offer a service to low-income people, they can actually be leaders in the community, Robertson said.

"I don't think people think of social housing (tenants) as leading in environmental change issues."

With an expense budget of about \$19.5 million annually, Robertson acknowledged his department was more capable of taking on large projects than the average individual home owner or small landlord would be.

But, he said, most of the things his staff did was simple and inexpensive.

"The changing of the light bulbs was really easy," he said. "Anybody can do it and it has a huge impact."

The changing of the light bulbs will result in an annual reduction of 2.9 kilowatt hours, according to a housing department report.

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