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NEW FINANCING PROGRAM WILL HELP FAMILIES SAVE ON UTILITY BILLS, IMPROVE HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Manitobans will also Enjoy the Lowest Combined Rate for Electricity, Heating, Auto Insurance in Canada, Guaranteed: Premier

Manitoba Hydro will cover the upfront cost of home improvements that reduce energy consumption through a new financing program, Premier Greg Selinger announced today.

"More efficient homes and buildings make life more affordable for Manitoba families," said Selinger. "Reducing our energy use also protects all Manitobans against future energy price increases while reducing greenhouse-gas emissions."

Under the new program, expected to be in place by fall 2012, Manitoba Hydro will finance the upfront capital costs of energy and water retrofits, and will recover the costs through a monthly charge on the customer's utility bill. Projects will be eligible when the improvement results in utility cost savings projected to be greater than the monthly repayment charges amortized over the lifespan of the improvement. The program will be more effective in older and less energy-efficient homes, where measures like insulation, high-efficiency furnaces or low-flush toilets have cost-effective paybacks.

The program will be complementary to Manitoba Hydro's existing Power Smart Residential Loan Program and will build on the success of existing Power Smart programming, which already saves Manitobans over \$36 million every year on their utility bills, said Selinger. The new, on-meter program will act as a top-up for customers. It will allow financial flexibility, enabling them to put more cost-effective measures on the meter and use the loan for other projects, the premier added.

The premier also announced the province will follow through on a commitment to guarantee Manitobans pay the lowest combined electricity, home heating and auto insurance bills in the country.

The plan would require the province to table a utility rate bundle comparison report by the end of September 2012. The contents of the report, including utility cost comparison data, would be prepared by Deloitte, the independent accounting firm selected in March following an open tender process. The accounting firm would be responsible for identifying the average Manitoba consumption of electricity, natural gas for home heating and auto insurance, and comparing the cost of the same utility bundle in other provinces.

"This is the next step in following through on our commitment to keep Manitoba one of the most affordable places to live, work and raise a family," said Selinger. "We know affordability is an advantage Manitoba families value."