
News Release

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Government And Industry Partner on “Pay-As-You-Go” Plan to Cut Energy Consumption and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

OTTAWA — A new pilot project jointly funded by the Government of Canada, ATCO Electric Ltd. and InfoEnergy Inc. will determine if utility customers who have “smart” meters installed to track their energy consumption will better manage their energy use. Today, Senator Tommy Banks, on behalf of the Honourable R. John Efford, Minister of Natural Resources Canada, announced the Government of Canada’s contribution of approximately \$150,000 to the Pay-As-You-Go Smart Metering Project.

The project, the first of its kind in western Canada, also introduces the pay-as-you-go concept to energy purchases in Alberta. The 500 residential customers who volunteer for the project, to be conducted in Drumheller and Grande Prairie, will be able to prepay their electricity with a smart card (similar to a prepaid telephone card) and monitor their power usage in real time.

“Electricity delivered to the home is one of the few things that most of us use before we pay for it,” said Senator Banks. “The pay-as-you-go system could be an important added incentive to conserve energy and reduce emissions that contribute to climate change.”

Projects such as this one can be a significant step in helping Canada meet its climate change objectives and the One-Tonne Challenge goal of reducing individual greenhouse (GHG) emissions by 20 percent.

In Canada, this metering concept originated with Woodstock Hydro, which installed smart meters on a voluntary basis in selected homes in the southwestern Ontario city. The City of Woodstock reports that these households are saving about 15 percent in electricity costs compared with homes using traditional billing methods, because users can more closely monitor their energy use and take individual measures to reduce it.

The goal of the Alberta project is to determine if this technology can produce the same energy savings in other communities as those found in Woodstock. Since residential electricity consumption represents a significant percentage of Canada’s GHG emissions, a wide-scale pay-as-you-go system could reduce emissions substantially.

“By providing people with real-time information on how much electricity they are using, customers have control over their energy consumption,” said Woodstock Hydro Services Inc. President Garry Roth. “Our experience in Woodstock shows that if you provide people with the right tools, they become wiser energy users.”

“This unique partnership demonstrates how cutting-edge technology, processes and innovative thinking can benefit Albertans and the environment,” said Dick Walthall, President, ATCO Electric Ltd. “It’s often said that information is power. With the real-time information provided by smart meters and increased purchasing flexibility, customers participating in this pilot project will have the information to better manage their own energy use.”

ATCO Electric Ltd., part of the ATCO Group of companies, serves more than 200,000 electric customers in northern and east-central Alberta as well as parts of the Northwest Territories and Yukon.

InfoEnergy Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Woodstock Hydro Holdings Inc., a utility owned by the City of Woodstock. It was created to promote pay-as-you-go and advanced smart metering systems, and sell the meters, software and expertise to implement these systems.

Natural Resources Canada, through its Office of Energy Efficiency (OEE), will support the implementation of this project by providing funding and information material for participants. The OEE will also monitor the results of the project. This initiative helps enhance Canadians’ quality of life through the sustainable development of our energy resources — supporting the Government of Canada’s agenda of strong social foundations, a strong economy for the 21st century and ensuring Canada’s role of pride and influence in the world.

FOR BROADCAST USE:

Alberta utility customers may soon be using “smart” meters to monitor how much energy they use in their homes. Senator Tommy Banks announced today in Edmonton that the Government of Canada would contribute \$150,000 to a pilot project with ATCO Electric and InfoEnergy, the first of its kind in western Canada. He made the announcement on behalf of Natural Resources Canada Minister John Efford.

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