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ATCO Electric customers first in Western Canada to test smart electricity meters

Pilot project gives customers the power to manage electricity use

Edmonton, Alberta – ATCO Electric today announced a one-year pilot project that gives residential customers in Drumheller and Grande Prairie an opportunity to get real-time information about their electricity use and the ability to pay-as-they-go. The pilot project is the first of its kind in Western Canada.

“Information truly is power,” said Dick Walthall, President, ATCO Electric Ltd.. “With smart meters providing real-time consumption information, ATCO Electric customers who volunteer for this pilot will have the power to better manage their electricity use. Reduced consumption leads to savings for customers and a reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions.”

Funded by ATCO Electric Ltd., the Government of Canada, and InfoEnergy Inc. (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Woodstock Hydro Holdings Inc.), customers can sign up to have “smart” meters installed to monitor their energy consumption as part of this pilot. They will pre-pay their electricity using a smart card - similar to a pre-paid telephone card.

Customers in Woodstock, Ontario reduced their electricity costs by about 15 per cent, compared with homes using traditional billing methods. “Our experience shows that if you provide people with the right tools, with real-time information on how much electricity they are using, they become wiser energy users,” said Garry Roth, President of Woodstock Hydro Services Inc.

“Electricity delivered to the home is one of the few things that most of us use before we pay for it,” said the Honourable R. John Efford, Minister of Natural Resources Canada. “The pay-as-you-go system could be an important incentive to conserve energy and reduce emissions that contribute to climate change.”

The one-year pilot project is expected to begin in early 2005. ATCO Electric will be recruiting a total of 500 residential customers in Drumheller and Grande Prairie to participate and use the smart meter system.

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