

Tougher building energy efficiency standards on horizon: McNeely



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A local MPP says the provincial government will require new non-residential buildings be built to higher energy efficiency standards, starting in 2012.

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Ottawa-Orleans Liberal Phil McNeely said upcoming changes to Ontario's Building Code means new large buildings will have to be 25 per cent more energy efficient than the minimum standards set out in the 1997 model national energy code of Canada.

Currently, non-residential buildings in Ontario must only meet the national code, which sets out minimum standards for features such as the building envelope, water heating, lighting as well as the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

"There is nothing more important (in reducing greenhouse gases) than getting the building code right," said Mr. McNeely on Friday in a luncheon address to the Building Owners and Managers Association of Ottawa.

Mr. McNeely, who is also the parliamentary assistant to the minister of energy and infrastructure, emphasized the importance of energy conservation given the inevitable rise in electricity prices.

Closing Ontario's coal-fired power plants and replacing them with renewable power sources "are not low cost," he said.

There has been a recent surge of local landlords certifying their buildings to environmental standards, according to commercial real estate services firm Cushman & Wakefield Ottawa.

The firm's green real estate practice group tracks the number of buildings with an advanced certification under an industry program known as BOMA BEST or the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building standard.

At the end of the first quarter, there were 37 Ottawa buildings representing approximately 6.48 million square feet of commercial space in this "green market."

That's up from 20 buildings and 3.77 million square feet at the end of 2009.

"We are beginning to see a real market transformation in Ottawa," said James McNeil, an associate vice-president at Cushman & Wakefield Ottawa who leads the firm's green real estate practice group.