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SASKATCHEWAN INSTITUTE OF
APPLIED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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SIAS makes world a greener place

Eco-friendly mindset evident both in and out of the classroom

February 21, 2012 – Going green, sustainability, energy efficiency: They're all buzzwords of our times.

But for homeowners, builders and others with a social conscience, what do they mean—in practice?

That was the focus of the Green and Sustainable Energy Housing Forum and Fair, held recently at SIAST Palliser Campus in Moose Jaw. This second annual event was hosted by the City of Moose Jaw as part of the city's Green Plan. More than 400 people attended the two-day event, which showcased how homeowners, industry, government and communities can save money and energy while protecting the planet. More than a dozen presentations covered topics ranging from energy-efficient home design and housing's impact on the environment to innovations we might see in the next generation of healthy, sustainable homes in Canada.

"Technology is developing extremely rapidly," says Ron Smallwood, a SIAST facilitator and green group member who helped organize the forum and fair. "Homeowners, tradespeople and students alike came out because they wanted to hear about new options in environmentally friendly materials and methods."

The possibilities are plentiful. Participants learned, for instance, how hundreds of materials destined for the dump—old windows, cabinet doors, car trunks, chalkboards and more—were transformed into a 512 sq. ft., two-bedroom home. The total cost? Only \$35,000 for the 80 per cent recycled home, said presenter Eric Penner de Waal, owner of a Regina construction company committed to building non-toxic, "earth-conscious" structures.

Another presentation described how Toronto's Regent Park, an isolated social housing neighbourhood with aging infrastructure, is being revitalized into a sustainable mixed-income,

mixed-use community with a centralized thermal heating and cooling system. It's an ambitious project with a 10- to 15-year timeline.

It's also a great example of how the "three pillars" of sustainability--the environment, society and the economy—can work together. The three pillars characterize many eco-friendly initiatives, including those at SIAST.

For years, students and staff have been "greening" SIAST's four campuses. Recycling and "turn-off-the-lights" reminder stickers are taken for granted. Students hold educational fairs to raise awareness of composting, energy conservation and hybrid cars. SIAST Woodland Campus now loans bikes to staff and students and a small urban wind turbine has been put to the test at SIAST Palliser Campus. Off campus, SIAST volunteers have installed programmable thermostats and low-flow showerheads and toilets as part of a provincial energy efficiency program.

Clearly, SIAST is keen on green, and that's reflected in its programs, too. SIAST offers a variety of programs that train the supervisors, managers, technologists and technicians who work in the field—whether it's sustainable housing, energy efficiency, environmentally friendly building materials or other green initiatives.

"It's an exciting time for students to be in these programs," says Jamie Hilts, SIAST's dean of technology. "Advancements in building and green technology mean that there are more and more choices today. Students leave SIAST with the tools to make those informed choices."

Here's a sampling of how graduates of these programs are making the world a greener place:

Architectural and Building Technologist. Grads incorporate green building technology into their work by ensuring homes are built near stores and bus routes, choosing solar water heating to reduce demand for electricity, and by designing insulated and air-tight building envelopes. Many are self-employed consultants while others work for architects, engineers, home designers, developers, contractors or construction specialty companies.

Architectural and Interior Technologist. With a sound knowledge of interior construction, space planning and environmental controls, these grads integrate eco-smart ideas into drawings and bid documents. They might select sustainable materials--such as certified wood products and recycled plastic--for interior construction. Similar to grads of the Architectural and Building Technologist program, many are self-employed. Others work for interior designers, home designers, facility managers, developers, contractors or construction specialty companies.

Civil Engineering Technologist. These techs may be involved in many aspects of residential and commercial projects, including structural design, project management, inspection, materials testing and surveying. They work on structures that range in size from large, multi-

storey buildings to detached homes, and may choose environmentally friendly materials (such as chipped tires in pavement design) and methods that support sustainable energy.

Mechanical Engineering Technologist. Working in the industrial and commercial sectors, grads draw on their training in mechanical design, industrial systems and instrumentation, HVAC and controls. They might compare heating ventilation systems to ensure the most efficient ones are installed and work with companies interested in using the latest technology to reduce their non-renewable energy consumption.

Electrical Engineering Technologist. Grads play a role in generating, distributing and transmitting electrical energy. Some work in industrial building design, using contemporary design techniques to ensure commercial buildings, factories and plants use energy-efficient equipment. Others might work in the alternative energy sector (wind, solar, biofuel power, etc.) or be employed by companies that produce materials and equipment used in energy conservation.

Building Systems Technician. Many of these grads are responsible for the operation and budgets of large facilities such as hospitals, malls and high-rises. They might try to achieve operational efficiencies by using variable-frequency drive motors in fans and pumps, energy-efficient lighting and capacitors that correct a building's power factor.

SIAST is Saskatchewan's primary public institution for post-secondary technical education and skills training, recognized nationally and internationally for its expertise and innovation. SIAST serves 26,000 distinct students with programs and courses that touch every sector of the economy. SIAST operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

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