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Team North Builds an Innovative Solar-powered Home

North House, an advanced solar-powered home being developed by a team of students from Ontario and British Columbia, will demonstrate Canada's commitment to sustainability and promote alternative energy sources, its university organizers say.

Team North, which involves students and faculty at the University of Waterloo, Ryerson University and Simon Fraser University, along with industry partners, is one of only two Canadian entries selected to participate in the prestigious the 2009 Solar Decathlon competition, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

The decathlon will be held Oct. 9-18 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., drawing 20 university teams with prototype solar homes from around the world. The teams will build a full-scale house to compete in 10 categories measuring the quality and performance of a solar-powered home.

Team North is developing North House as a marketable and interactive solar-powered home for people with active lifestyles. The team aims to combine green building, solar and interactive technologies in order to reduce energy demand, foster a conservation ethic, and boost the quality of life for all Canadians.

"North House will offer powerful solutions by using energy more efficiently and using energy from renewable sources," said Maun Demchenko, Team North's director of public relations. "North House will serve as a vehicle for teaching the public about solar technologies and how they can be used in new and existing housing. It will showcase innovative new sustainable green construction building practices in Canada on a world stage."

North House, deploying the latest in energy-efficient technologies and materials, will demonstrate how design can promote lifestyles that reduce energy use while maintaining a high quality of life.

Such an integrated approach to new construction draws on the interactions of all building components and systems to create a more comfortable building, save energy, and reduce environmental impact.

In 2007 a team of Montreal-area architecture and engineering students competed in the Solar Decathlon with a design entry entitled "Lumen-Essence". The only Canadian entry in the competition that year, Team Montreal placed 8th overall out of 20 teams from around the world.

This year's competition features two Canadian entries. In addition to the North House entry, the Alberta Solar Decathlon Team from the University of Calgary is developing an energy-efficient design that incorporates traditional Western Canadian wooden post-and-beam structure, a south-facing deck, a rooftop patio accessible from inside the home, and integrated photovoltaic cells incorporated into the roof, clerestory windows, roof balcony railing and solar louvers to maximize solar collection.

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