

Team in top 20 for solar competition

Posted on Tuesday, January 29, 2008

Written by

A team of students and profs will be among 20 international finalists going to Washington, D.C. in 2009 to compete in the U.S. Department of Energy's fourth Solar Decathlon competition.

"With the competition open to anyone around the world, of course we're very excited about it," said Alan Fung, one of the team's co-ordinators and a mechanical engineering professor.

The team is made up of architecture and engineering students and faculty and partnered with groups from the University of Waterloo and Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, B.C. The team will need to assemble an "off-the-grid" house powered only by solar panels and using environmentally-friendly materials.

The 75-square-metre house will then be shipped to the National Mall in Washington for the competition, which includes entries from schools as far away as Germany, Spain and Puerto Rico.

Teams will be graded on the amount of energy produced by the panels, how far they can drive an electrical car charged by the house, how many loads of laundry then can do, and even how hot their tap water is.

"How livable is the house? How adaptable is the house to the changing needs of applicants?" Fung said.

The team's entry is unique because it is "adaptable to all parts of Canada," he added.

Fung promised the group will use the best Canadian technology available in building the house, and the team even plans to display the finished house at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics.

"The credit belongs to Canadian applicants for impressing the judges," said Tom Welch, a spokesperson with the Solar Decathlon.

A team headlined by the University of Calgary is the only other Canadian finalist.

"These students are pushing the edges of R and D," Welch said.

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