Home energy efficiency begins at the library checkout in Kelowna

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'See the Heat' program loans thermal imaging cameras for homeowners to detect energy leaks

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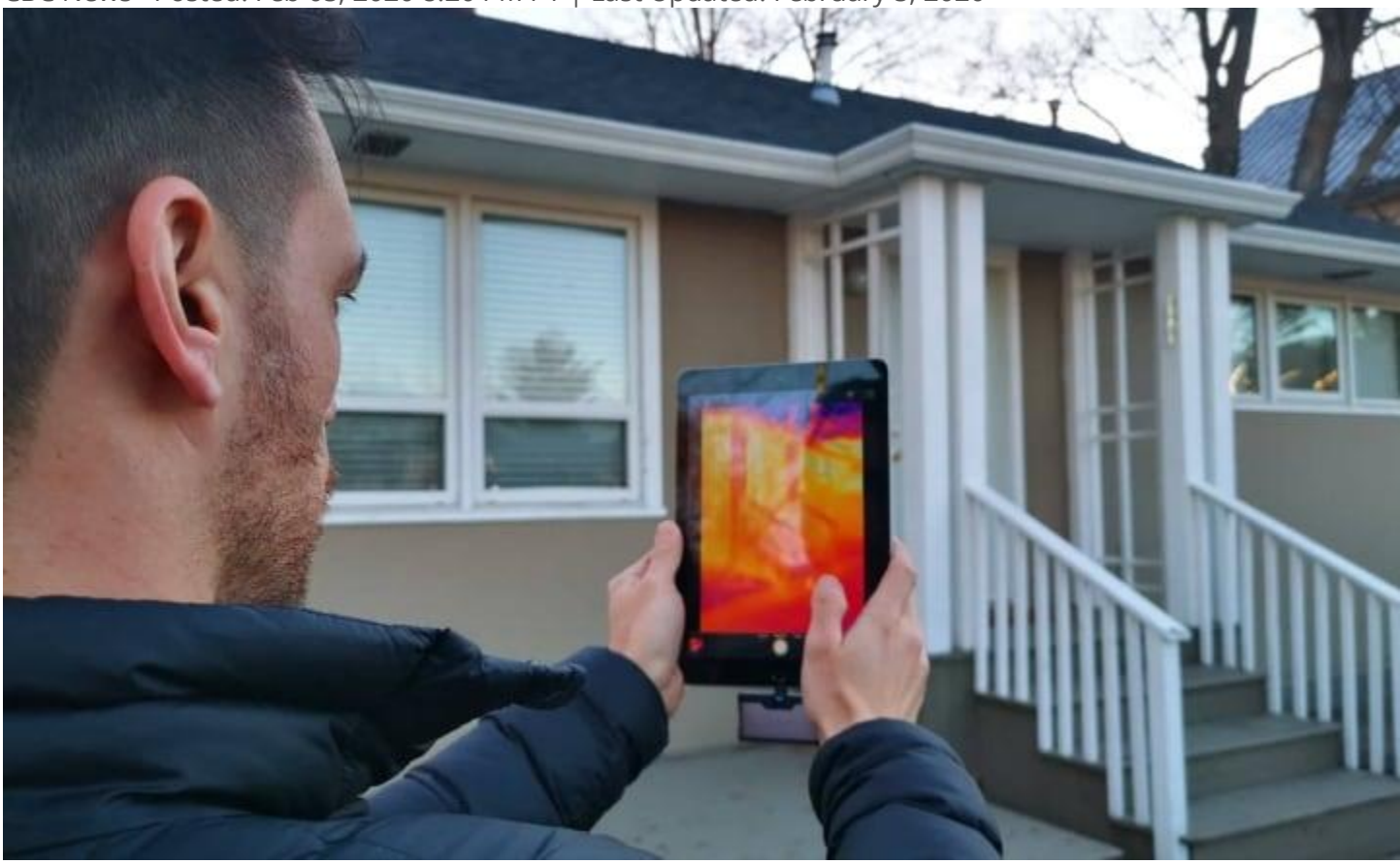

Chris Ray, community energy specialist for the City of Kelowna, demonstrates the use of a thermal imaging camera to identify heat loss areas in an older home. (Christine Coulter/CBC)

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comments

One of the hottest items being checked out from the Okanagan Regional Library these days isn't a book or a DVD.

With just a library card, residents can take a thermal imaging camera home to detect heat leaking from their homes.

The camera-lending program, dubbed "See the Heat," was launched in partnership with FortisBC and the City of Kelowna to encourage home energy efficiency improvements.

Chris Ray, the community energy specialist for the City of Kelowna, told *Daybreak South's* Christine Coulter about 70 per cent of the homes in Kelowna were constructed before the year 2000.

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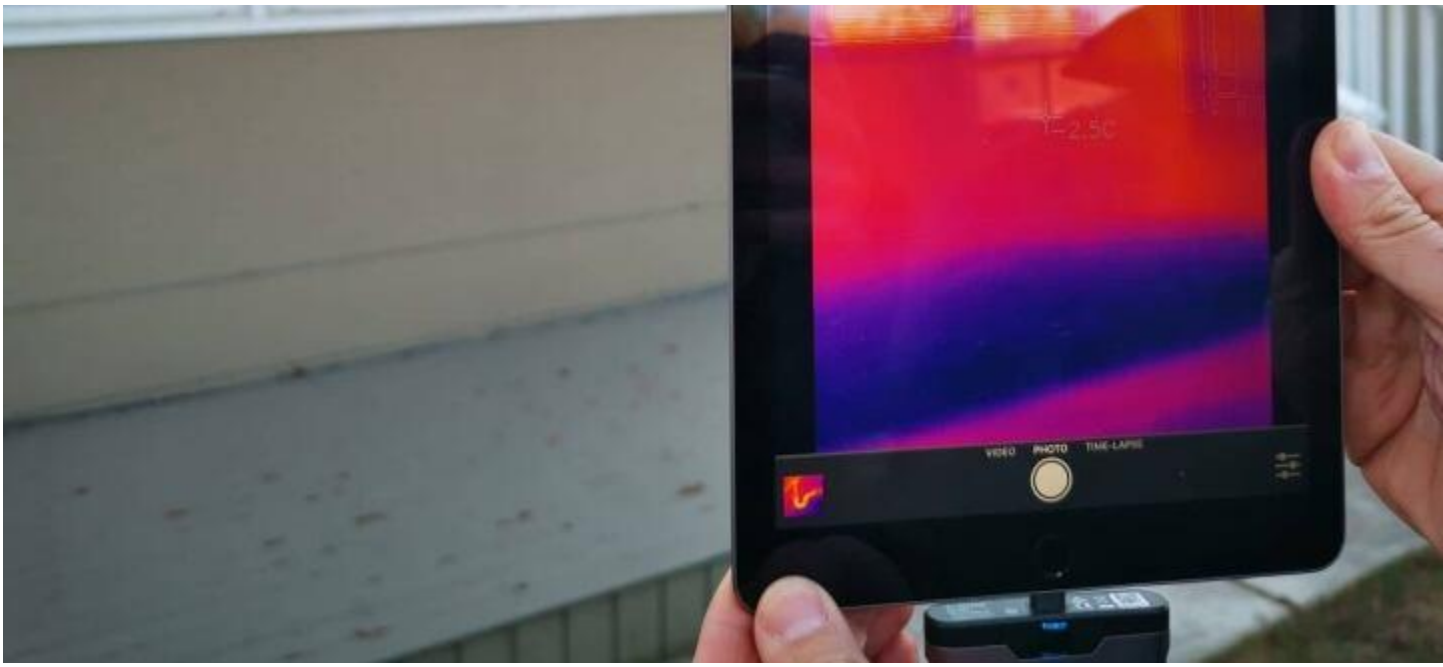
"They can be quite inefficient," Ray said. "So we're looking for ways for people to engage with energy efficiency within their own home and recognizing that first step is just being able to potentially see heat loss."

The small camera is plugged into a smart phone or tablet to display the images. After downloading an app, operating the camera is straightforward, Ray said. Winter or summer are the best seasons to use the tool, when 10-degree or greater differences between indoor and outdoor temperatures make heat loss more clearly visible.

As he demonstrated the device on an older Kelowna home, the screen displayed temperatures as colours, with darker shades of purple indicating cold air and lighter yellow and orange for warm air.



The small thermal imaging camera, plugged into a smart phone or tablet (as shown here), registers temperatures as colours, with dark purple areas indicating cold air and yellow or orange showing the escape of warm air. (Christine Coulter/CBC) (Christine Coulter)
From outside the house, the thermal imaging camera displayed bright yellow light around window edges.

Ray suggests homeowners should measure heat loss with the camera from both inside and outside of the house.

Inside the house, the camera shows a visible gap between the front door and the frame as a wide dark purple line.

"That's basically showing that cold air is coming in," he said.

Free draft-proofing kit

The camera loan comes with a draft-proofing kit, which the borrower gets to keep. The included weather stripping and foam insulation can be used to stop some of the heat loss that the camera reveals..

While a draft-proofing kit can plug the gap in the door, Ray said, government incentives are available to help homeowners with a formal Energuide assessment to identify major energy inefficiencies and solutions.

The EnerGuide assessment costs $700 to $1,000, but Ray said the City of Kelowna currently offers an additional $150 rebate for the assessments on top of the $300 rebate offered by the B.C. government.

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Meanwhile, checking out the thermal imaging camera from the library is a good first step for people who aren't sure how to assess and address energy efficiency in their own homes.

"It's a great visual way to at least get people started on that trajectory," Ray said.