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A gadget that traps the heat from hot water as it gurgles down the drain can save homeowners money and keep the planet green, a manufacturer says.

But Gerald Van Decker says bureaucracy at Queen's Park is keeping the device off an approved list of energy efficiency measures used by home builders.

However, a ministry of housing official says the province is awaiting stringent testing by the Canadian Standards Association of how well the devices perform.

Van Decker, who says the energy saving devices are being installed in 20 per cent of new homes, remains unhappy.

"We're being unfairly left out," Van Decker said in an interview.

Van Decker's company, Renewability Energy Inc., makes drain water heat recovery devices.

They are coils that wrap around the outside of the drain where hot bath or shower water runs down. The system pumps water through the coils, where it's warmed by the outgoing drain water.

That warmed water is then fed back into the home's water heater, which means it works less and uses less energy.

Van Decker says the systems can cost between \$500 to \$1,000. They're cheaper and easier to install in new homes, and Van Decker claims that builders are installing them in nearly 20 per cent of new homes.

The energy savings pay back the investment within five years, he says.

The problem, however, is that they're not recognized in the Ontario government's recipe book for achieving energy efficiency.

New homes have to meet certain provincial energy efficiency standards to comply with the Ontario building Code. Builders can use an approved list of measures to achieve the standard – such as better windows or more insulated walls.

But drain heat recovery systems aren't on the approved list of measures.

A consultant's report commissioned by Renewability Energy notes that drain water heat systems are recognized by federal agencies.

And it says they are among the simplest energy efficiency measures to install in new homes.

Van Decker – who has letters of support from other manufacturers – said he's been trying for a year to get drain water heat systems included in the provincial list of approved measures.

But he says he's had no success, in part because there are no clear rules for getting on the list: "They don't have a process."

But May Nazar of the ministry of housing says the ministry needs to consult other stakeholders in the building industry.

It is also waiting for the Canadian Standards Association to assess the technology and set standards for performance and safety, she said.

The CSA's work on the probably won't be completed until the fall, she said: "At this point we don't have enough data."

Van Decker's response: "Hogwash."

Other approved efficiency technologies on the ministry's list don't have CSA ratings, he said.

As well, he said, Natural Resources Canada has had the drain devices tested and rated by independent labs. The province could easily use those standards as it waits for the CSA, he said.