



Alex Dzierba spoke Thursday about renewable energy resources for Saskatchewan.

**Photograph by: Bryan
Schlosser, Leader-Post,
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With the climate evidently changing, many are looking to the sky to lessen their carbon footprint.

But Indiana-based physicist Alex Dzierba has a message for those thinking of going solar: Better save up.

Dzierba has spent the time since his retirement from Indiana University in 2008 working with the U.S. Navy on its plans to reduce non-renewable energy use. On Thursday, he was in Regina to discuss what can and cannot work for this part of the world.

Like many homegrown analysts, Dzierba believes solar power is a non-starter in the province.

According to his calculations (which took into account the average intensity of sunlight in Regina), generating enough electricity to power an average home on a quarter-acre lot, half of the property would need to be covered in solar panels at a cost of about \$250,000.

So while the SaskPower bill would dip to zero, it would take 50 to 60 years to make up the capital costs.

"And solar panels probably have a lifetime of about 20 years," Dzierba said prior to his presentation at the University of Regina. "At first glance, someone might say, 'Why don't we do that?' But if you work out the cost, it's not very practical."

If solar is a no-go, what renewable options are financially viable for Saskatchewan residents and corporations?

Currently, SaskPower draws about five per cent of its power supply from wind and 23 per cent from hydro -- both ideas which should continue to be feasible.

Dzierba pointed to a windfarm in his home state that is located where the wind-speed average (6.1 metres per second) is close to that of Regina. So while the only three windpower facilities in the province are located in the southwest, Dzierba believes the Regina area is close to being a cost-effective spot for wind power.

Dzierba also referenced "small hydro" projects happening across North America. One such method involves building a reservoir on high ground above a lake, pumping water to it when power supplies are high and bringing it back down to create power when necessary.

"There's a lot of work starting to happen on making the grid greener," said Dzierba

Until more renewable forms of energy are readily available in the province, Dzierba said home and business owners should continue to follow the well-publicized steps -- compact fluorescent light bulbs, energy-efficient appliances -- for reducing energy consumption.

Dzierba also recommended products like the Google PowerMeter when they are available. The new software will plug into a home's power reader, allowing residents to see exactly when and where they are using power.

"If people know how they're using their energy, you can get another 20 per cent in overall reduction," said Dzierba.

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