

## Cheaper electricity lauded

*John Gleeson, Olds Albertan, November 23, 2010*

Average residential consumers could expect to pay about \$10 less each month on their electricity bills if they sign up with Mountain View Power, an official from the Olds Institute told town council's policies and priorities committee last week.

The rates offered for residential and commercial users are about three cents lower per kilowatt/hour than those charged by other retailers, said Joe Gustafson, chair of the institute's technology pillar committee.

Showing P&P his own monthly electrical bill, which switched over to the new system about eight months ago, Gustafson said he expects to save \$120 for the year.

"So a citizen of Olds would have saved about three cents a kW-h and the Olds Institute gets a penny," Gustafson said of the initiative, launched Nov. 1, calling it a "win-win" for the community.

For a business, the savings will be more substantial – Gustafson estimated a 14,000-square-foot commercial building could save more than \$3,500 a year by switching over to Mountain View Power.

"Anytime we have an opportunity to leave money in the community, it adds capacity for other things to happen," Gustafson said. "And the beauty of this is that 100 per cent of the profits go back to the community in capacity and vitality."



*Noel West/Olds Albertan*

Joe Gustafson makes a presentation on Mountain View Power to Olds Town Council.

Licensed by Service Alberta under the Fair Trade Act, Mountain View Power was created to take advantage of cheaper power being sold to rural electrification organizations by Calgary-based UtilityNet.

Describing the company as paperless and "very, very lean," Gustafson said UtilityNet sells power at the industry "spot price" and takes one-half of a cent from each kW-h sold, while the institute collects one penny.

"Over time it will generate for the institute in the area of \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year."

Customers do not have to be located in Olds to sign up but could be anywhere in the region, as long as Fortis is their energy distributor.

"Nothing changes," Gustafson said, "except your bill goes down on power consumption only. We can sell power to anyone with a Fortis connection."

Large businesses and facilities cannot switch over if they exceed the cap of 250,000 kilowatt hours, economic development officer Gail Scott said.

New customers will see a one-time charge on their bill for a credit check, she added.

Asked by Mayor Judy Dahl whether community organizations have been approached "to let them know it's a win-win for everyone involved," the officials said they are waiting for the launch of about 35 businesses and residences that signed up after a notification was sent out by e-mail last month before they "take it on the road."

"We're gonna do a slow march," Gustafson said, noting it was "kind of a complicated thing" to explain in less than a half hour.

After the meeting, Gustafson said the projected savings are based on current comparisons and could change in the future. With UtilityNet having just raised its share from one-third to one-half a cent, however, he said he doesn't expect rates to increase again in the foreseeable future.

For more information see [www.mountainviewpower.com](http://www.mountainviewpower.com) or call 1-877-244-7294 (toll-free) or 403-244-7299 (ext 123).