

Prize: Hospital Home Lottery's luxury home getting attention because of its blue-coloured wood

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SAINT JOHN - It will be a few weeks yet before it's ready to receive its pricey furnishings.

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Photo: Submitted

The new luxury home being constructed by A.E. McKay Builders in Rothesay as the top prize in the upcoming 2011 Hospital Home Lottery is getting a lot of attention due to the blue colour of the specially treated wood being used. Now 95 per cent framed in, it will be the area's first BluWood home.

But the peculiar blue colour of the framing - now 95 per cent complete - already has people talking about and gawking at the \$650,000 luxury home that will be top prize for this year's Hospital Home Lottery.

"It certainly is a conversation piece," Andrew McKay of A.E. McKay Builders, whose company is erecting the house on Crosswind Crescent, off Highland Avenue in Rothesay, said Tuesday.

"You can't miss it," he said. "It looks like the Smurf house."

He's also been told that it's the first fully BluWood home in these parts.

Bluwood is the trademarked name of a proprietary, two-part wood treatment product that is guaranteed to protect wood products from mould, fungus growth and wood ingesting insects, such as termites.

It can be used in all of the wood-framing components of residential and commercial structures, including the roof, wall and floor systems, structural lumber, OSB (oriented strand board), sub-floor panels, engineered wood products, truss products, moldings and trim boards.

McKay said he had heard of BluWood, widely promoted by the likes of Mike Holmes of TV's Holmes on Homes, but never paid much attention to it until he was asked to consider using it in constructing the lottery dream home for the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation's fourth annual fundraiser, which kicks off in September.

"We were approached by Marwood Ltd. (of Fredericton), through (Kent), to do it," he said. "I think the idea of mould-proofing the house is great. I thought it would fit in nicely with the Hospital Home Lottery, which is anything good for your health.

"BluWood is something new for this area and a pretty interesting product."

Marwood, which prides itself on being environmentally friendly, was licensed as the Atlantic regional producer for BluWood Canada last year.

Dave Harris, Marwood's vice-president of sales and marketing, said it's produced in Tracyville, located on Highway 101, south of Fredericton.

Developed in 2001, and available in other parts of Canada for four years, Harris said BluWood's resistance to mould is its primary selling point in these parts.

"Pardon the pun, but it's a growing market," Harris said. "Consumers, the public in general, are becoming fully aware just how much mould is present in the environment around us. And more and more health studies are being released that link mould to many adverse health situations.

"People will argue if a home is built properly, then mould shouldn't be an issue because of how tight a home is built these days," he continued. "The reality is there is likely to be a breach of that building envelope during its life cycle. And when that breach occurs, and moisture gets in, then it's very difficult for it to dry. And that's when we encounter mould problems.

"We expect a demand for the product here in Atlantic Canada as the awareness of the effects of mould continue to grow," he said.

"That's what has happened in the rest of Canada."

Harris said some builders choose to use BluWood only in the high-moisture areas of homes, such as bathrooms, laundry rooms, basements and kitchens, while others do the entire home.

For an average home, he said, BluWood adds about 30 per cent, or \$8,000, to the cost of the structural framing package.

Developed a decade ago by a team of chemists, the first part of the chemical-enhancing treatment is a state-of-the-art infusion film that is absorbed into the lumber, interlocking with the wood's fibers to form both a topical and sub-surface, water repellent, semi-permeable film, which controls moisture absorption while allowing moisture vapour to exist. This allows the wood to breathe.

The second part is a DOT wood preservative that BluWood framing components with protection against rot fungi and wood ingesting insects.

Bluwood is also nearly odourless, emission free and reduces flame spread.