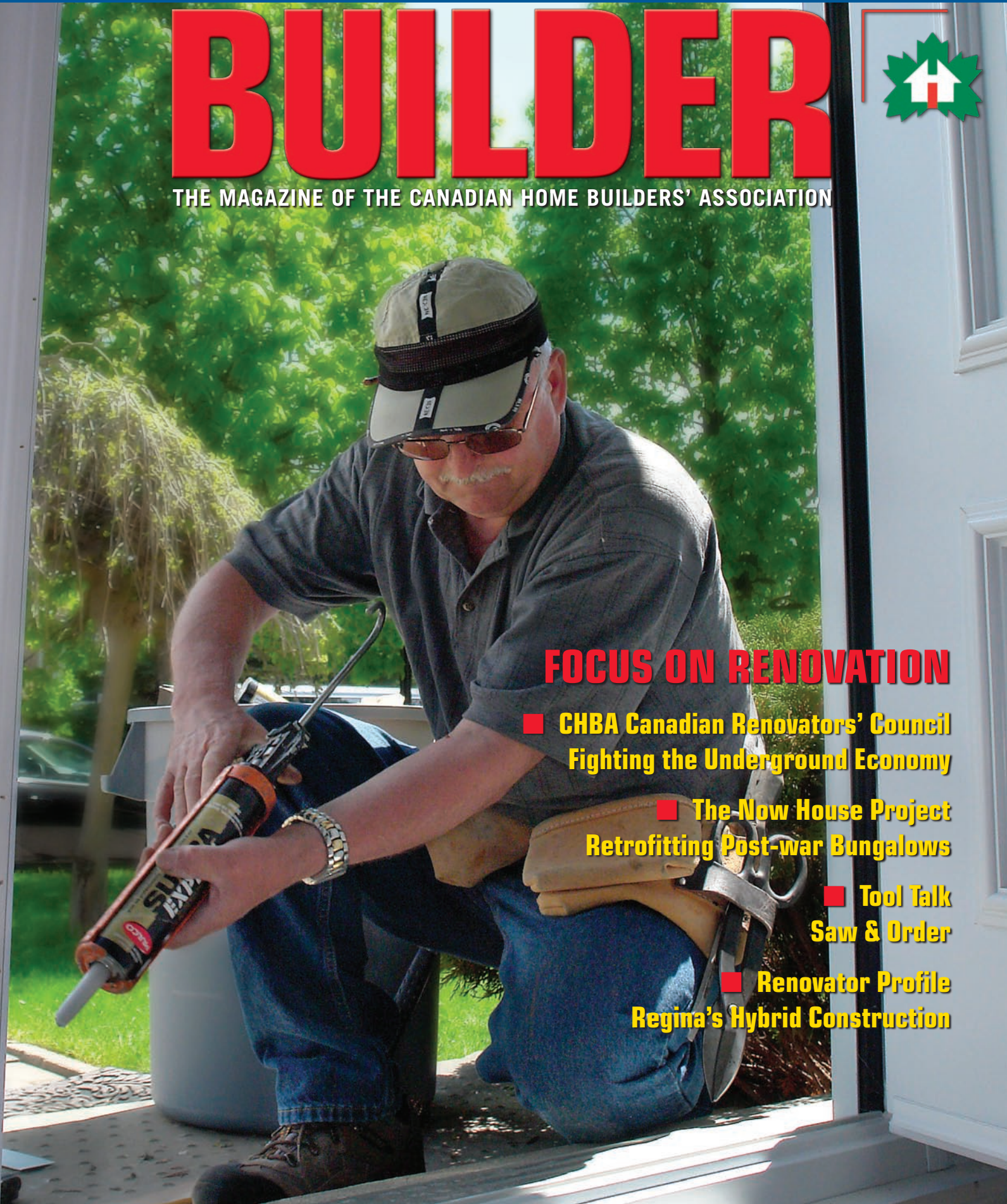


# BUILDER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION



## FOCUS ON RENOVATION

- CHBA Canadian Renovators' Council Fighting the Underground Economy
- The Now House Project Retrofitting Post-war Bungalows
- Tool Talk Saw & Order
- Renovator Profile Regina's Hybrid Construction



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## COVER

John Devai from Ady Renovation in Montreal puts the finishing touches on an insulated steel door and a side light in the West Island of Montreal.

Photo by: Home BUILDER Magazine

## 16 RENOVATOR PROFILE



In September 2008, while many businesses were scaling back or closing shop, Saskatchewan's Hybrid Construction opened its doors...and business is booming.

Home BUILDER Magazine is published by Work-4 Projects Ltd. six times a year. Editorial/Advertising: 4819 St. Charles Boulevard, Pierrefonds, Quebec, Canada, H9H 3C7. Tel.: 514-620-2200, E-mail: homebuilder@work4.ca.

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## 18 SASKATCHEWAN: THE MIGRATION CONTINUES

In the last three years, graduates, youth and young families are staying in Saskatchewan, and the population is expected to grow by 10,000 people in both 2010 and 2011. But how does that affect the housing market?

## 20 A CLEAR WINNER

Now in its fourteenth year, the Window Wise Certification Program has proven to be an invaluable asset for quality conscious window contractors.



## 22 PRODUCTS THAT BRIDGE THE GAPS

Many elements in residential construction require some functions to be separated and joined at the same time. These border zones with split personalities often give



builders and renovators problems. Jon Eakes shares new products that efficiently close the gap.

## 24 NOW HOUSE

Now House Project and the Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation (CHC) are taking five different approaches to the retrofit of the five post-war bungalows in the Bridgeview North community of Windsor. The model with the deepest energy reduction and most cost effective combination of changes will inform the future retrofit of 125 similar homes in this community housing portfolio.

## 26 FIGHTING THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY

According to a recent poll of the industry, the underground economy is present and thriving in all provinces.

## 30 TOOL TALK: SAW AND ORDER

Resident tool expert Jon Eakes showcases new products for renovators.



## British Columbia Approves Industry-Led Thermostat Recycling Plan

The Canadian Institute of Plumbing & Heating (CIPH) along with the Heating, Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI) with Summerhill Impact has expanded the voluntary Switch the Stat™ program to meet British Columbia's extended producer responsibility regulations for thermostats. Switch the Stat™ recycles all thermostats. The program has been brought to British Columbia as a mandated, responsible, manufacturer-funded program. The plan calls for putting thermostat recycling bins into the hands of installers, contractors, wholesalers, distributors, and retailers. With approval, implementation is expected to begin as early as July 2010.

## Home Buyers e-Valuate Mortgage Options

OTTAWA, Ont. — The CMHC 2010 Mortgage Consumer Survey shows that the Internet has become an important resource for first-time home buyers, with 89 per cent indicating that they looked online for mortgage-related information, while 84 per cent researched mortgage terms and conditions before deciding on a mortgage option.

More than two-thirds of first-time home buyers used an online calculator to compare different options when shopping for a home. As a result, 85 per cent of first-time home buyers noted they had a good understanding of the size of mortgage they could afford before buying a home, with the average Canadian home buyer taking 12 months to plan their purchase. The on-line survey polled more than 2,500 active mortgage users.

For complete details of CMHC's 2010 Mortgage Consumer Survey, visit [www.cmhc.ca/en/hoficlincl/moloin/cosu/index.cfm](http://www.cmhc.ca/en/hoficlincl/moloin/cosu/index.cfm).

To register for a recycling bin at your location, visit [www.summerhillgroup.ca/eng/impact/programs/switch-the-stat-signup.php](http://www.summerhillgroup.ca/eng/impact/programs/switch-the-stat-signup.php)

## Ontario Launches LEEP and TAP

TORONTO, Ont. — The EnerQuality Corporation, which provides certification, training and consultation in energy-efficient housing to the Ontario residential construction industry, has announced the launch of the Local Energy Efficiency Partnerships (LEEP) in four Ontario regions and Technology Adoption Pilot (TAP).



The LEEP technology review process, and the installation of technologies in TAP Discovery homes, aims to accelerate the adoption of builder-selected, energy-efficient technologies and best practices across Ontario. It addresses the issue of builders who must decide which new products are the most market-ready, offer the greatest value, and fit best into the housing development system.

The four participating Ontario home building associations are BILD - GTA, London, Sudbury and

Hamilton-Halton and Niagara (who have partnered for this initiative). This will lead to the building of 40 demonstration homes over the next two years, in these four regions.

Funding for the LEEP and TAP initiative has been provided by Natural Resources Canada's CanmetENERGY, the Ontario Power Authority, Enbridge, and Union Gas. For complete information on LEEP / TAP, visit: [www.enerquality.ca](http://www.enerquality.ca).

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Create-A-Tile function lets you drag and drop from a number of tile patterns and designs to create your own tile patterns.

Home Owners helping homeowners



The Magazine of the Canadian Home Builders' Association  
Vol. 23 No. 3  
May/June 2010

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# TIRED OF LOSING MONEY ON EVERY PAYROLL?



## Reality?



### Employee Time Card

#### Bill Kemp

Monday, June 14, 2010 - Friday, June 18, 2010

Jobsite Name	Cost Code	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Total
Brentwood Job	Framing	7:38	7:35	7:53	-	-	23:06
Crestview Job	Drywall	-	-	-	7:58	7:49	15:47
		7:38	7:35	7:53	7:58	7:49	38:53

*Bill Kemp*  
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## CHBA – Alberta Appoints Executive Officer

EDMONTON, Alta. – Canadian Home Builders' Association – Alberta announced the appointment of **JIM RIVAIT** as the association's Executive Officer. A well-respected government relations specialist, Rivait has presented to numerous groups and associations across Alberta.

Most of Rivait's career was spent with the Alberta Government. Over the course of 17 years, he served in a number of policy, planning and management positions, mostly in the natural resources and environmental areas. He also served as executive assistant to two cabinet ministers. For the last eight years, Rivait was vice president of a national trade association during which time he was the lead negotiator involved in the extensive legislative reforms.

## The Next Generation of Energy Efficient Programs

### CHBA President Victor Fiume Speaks to the House of Commons

OTTAWA, Ont. – In his April 29 speech to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources, CHBA President **VICTOR FIUME** addressed several issues on behalf of new home builders and renovators.

Fiume noted: "It is the CHBA's view that the experience gained through the ecoENERGY Retrofit – Homes Program presents the federal government with a valuable opportunity to introduce new initiatives to support further energy efficiency improvements in the existing housing stock."

Fiume stressed the need for urgency to develop plans for the "next generation" of the Program, so it can be addressed in the next federal budget in early 2011.

With regard to "new" housing initiatives, Fiume commented, "There are a number of development initiatives already underway. These include the 'next generation' versions of the R-2000 Standard, ENERGY STAR for New Homes, and the EnerGuide Rating System."

Fiume concluded that, "we have a very solid foundation to build upon, due in no small part to federal involvement through the Office of Energy Efficiency and other federal initiatives. We need to build on this capacity."

## 2010 Cycle of Hope: MHBA Rides for Habitat for Humanity

WINNIPEG, Man. – The Manitoba Home Builders Association is once again a feature sponsor for the annual Cycle of Hope. This year will be the 17th consecutive year that approximately 50 cyclists register for a 15-day cycling tour and make a commitment to raise a minimum of \$2,500 for Habitat for Humanity Winnipeg. The group plans to raise enough money to construct a new home for a low-income working family. This summer, riders will cycle "The Rockies to the Red" – departing from Waterton National Park, Alberta, on July 3, and cycling back to Winnipeg on July 17.





By Peter Norman

## Will Canadians Keep Spending?

The strength of Canadians' love affair with home renovations proved to be stronger than the global financial crisis and the deep economic recession at home. Residential renovation spending did pause briefly during the harsh economic conditions at the end of 2008 – interrupting a remarkably strong and steady pace of growth spanning over a decade – but, following a brief decline (about -5 per cent between the third quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009), the pace of residential renovation spending bounced back quickly, rising almost 12 per cent (all figures are adjusted for inflation) between the first and fourth quarters last year (See chart).

Residential renovation spending (defined as the sum of residential alterations, improvements, conversions and repairs) is an important contributor to our economy. All told, it is a \$55 billion dollar industry and accounts for about half of all residential construction investment.

### Room for Optimism

Without a doubt, the federal home renovation tax credit (HRTC) deserves some of the credit in boosting spending into the end of 2009. Eligibility for the credit ended in January, so now is a good time to evaluate the economics of the renovation sector in recent times and

consider its prospects for 2010 and beyond.

Despite the strong recovery in the second half of last year, growth in renovation spending on an annual basis slowed to 0.8 per cent (after inflation) in 2009 following a decade of advancing at an average annual rate of 7.3 per cent – some 3.5 times faster than the rest of the economy during that period.

Market conditions across

the housing sector have been buoyant in recent months and it's tempting to assume that 2010 is off to another very strong year in terms of residential renovation spending.

There are, in fact, several reasons to be optimistic about the renovation sector.

First, the housing stock continues to grow and age. With age come necessary repairs and upgrades, and new homes added to the stock increases the potential pool of homes for renovation work. This is like a "built-in" factor. Even if all other market conditions were neutral, the aging of the housing stock helps boost requirements for renovations in real terms year in and year out.

The recent boom in the existing home sales sector is also encouraging. There is a strong link between turnover in the housing market and renovations. Many households make necessary repairs, as well as cosmetic changes, prior to selling, in order to increase the attrac-

tiveness of the house. And many renovate after buying, in order to adapt their new home to their individual needs and tastes. This includes buyers of newly-built homes who put on the finishing touches, finish basements, install landscaping, etc.

Research conducted by Altus Group for the Canadian Real Estate Association finds that the average MLS® transaction in Canada generates about \$15,000 in incremental renovation and repair spending within three years of the purchase. Existing home sales surged at the end of 2009 and also put in a strong first quarter of this year. Even if existing home sales markets cool through the remainder of 2010, there will still be some positive spillover this year from the recent boomlet.

### Challenges Ahead

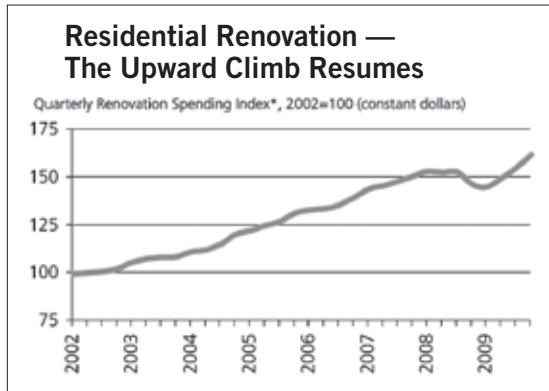
Despite these many reasons to be optimistic, real challenges lie ahead and will weigh in heavily on renovation spending likely leading to some softening in total renovation spending in 2010.

First and foremost, public policy will have a distinct dampening effect on renovation demand. As stimulative as the federal HRTC was to activity in late 2009 and early 2010, it is clear that much of that incremental activity was "pulled forward" and as such a decline in spending following the program's termination is inevitable. Moreover, this soft spot will be reinforced by negative impacts on renovation demand in Ontario and B.C. from the imposition of nearly \$1 billion per year in new taxes on renovation, through the new HST, in addition to higher rates coming in Quebec and Nova Scotia.

It is clear that the sharply higher tax environment will have two effects on the renovation sector; it will curtail some demand for contractor renovations and also will shift some activity into the underground economy. Both of these effects are troubling for the industry.

The tax environment is not the only cautionary factor for the months and years ahead. Rising interest rates will also take a toll. Generally, interest rates play an important role in the economics of renovation demand. When they are low or falling, homeowners take advantage of the situation to renew mortgages at lower rates, freeing up disposable income for other spending, such as renovations. As well, lower interest rates bring down the cost of directly financing renovations. On both accounts, higher and rising rates, as we expect to see over the next several months, will have the opposite, negative effect on renovation demand and spending.

Canadians love to reinvest into their homes and rental properties through renovations, making the sector a key growth leader in the economy. The economy is recovering from last year's recession, but the renovation sector faces some key challenges ahead. On balance, renovation spending is expected to be modestly lower this year, on an annual basis, and generally flat in 2011. ■



\* Excludes conversions and repairs.  
Source: Altus Group Economic Consulting based on Statistics Canada data

Peter Norman is a member of the CHBA Economic Research Committee and is Senior Director of Economic Consulting at Altus Group (formerly Clayton Research), a firm of urban and real estate economists.



By Tim Bailey

A display of confusion or uncertainty can cause a home buyer to quickly remove you from his or her short-list.

Tim Bailey is general manager of AVID Canada, the leading provider of customer loyalty research and consulting to the home building industry. Through the AVID system, Tim's team improves referrals, reduces warranty costs, and strengthens the brand of its industry leading clients. He can be reached at [tim.bailey@avidglobal.com](mailto:tim.bailey@avidglobal.com)

## Selling Expectations: How critical sales knowledge drives customer delight

To succeed in home building today, you must deliver an outstanding home-buying experience. This requires a selling process that delivers superior knowledge, conveys extraordinary value, and sets reasonable expectations.

By the time prospects arrive at your sales office, most of them have already been introduced to your company through advertisements, websites, and other marketing efforts. That they decided to make a physical visit likely means you have been prequalified as a possible choice in their home purchasing quest. It is therefore imperative that their experience with your salespeople and the buying process reinforces the previously promoted image and information; it is also vital that their first interaction with you yields more value than they could obtain from an Internet search. Thus, you must use a value-building sales process, based on a solid foundation of knowledge. Here are some tips:

**Identify a clear value proposition:** A long-winded discussion on features and benefits does little to build value in a home buyer's mind. Generally, people develop needs as a result of problems; until you unearth those problems, it is impossible to offer meaningful solutions. A clearly defined value proposition allows you to illustrate how your product will add more value or better solve a prospect's problem than competing offerings will. Expert knowledge of your distinct value proposition insures that you do not waste time telling prospects what you are, but rather educating them on *how you're different*.

**Know your customer:** Delivering a great customer experience requires the ability to match purchasers with what they believe to be their most perfect decision. A great recommendation does not occur haphazardly; rather, it follows a series of purposeful questions. In the home sales process, matching a solution to a purchaser's needs requires not only strategic questions, but also exceptional listening skills to pick-up on what benefits are truly valuable to each purchaser.

**Identify your specifications:** A display of confusion or uncertainty can cause a home buyer to quickly remove you from his or her short-list. Therefore, it is imperative that salespeople have complete knowledge of home specifications, standards, and available options. Misinformation at the early stages can magnify into unfulfilled expectations or customer disappointments later on.

**Convey your process architecture:** To produce a consistent customer experience throughout the building process, use transition points to re-establish expectations. These transition points occur as a prospect evolves from shopper to purchaser, to planner and designer, to confident observer, to homeowner, and finally to a recipient of your warranty services. Carefully outline the customer process and convey it to buyers during the

sales meeting. Then use it as a roadmap for establishing expectations and building trust and confidence.

**Sell a dose of reality:** Even the best-intentioned home builder will not be able to overcome promises that set unrealistic expectations for customers. To build a positive customer experience, provide a few examples of potential pitfalls that a customer may experience. These "doses of reality" should be strategically placed in the sales process and combined with detailed assurances of the remedies. Done correctly, it's similar to providing an inoculation for dissatisfaction — a dose of the disease to build up a customer's immunity.

**Stand by your promises:** There is a considerable difference in delight when homebuyers believe you will stand by your promises instead of hiding behind your policies. A salesperson that has unwavering knowledge of what a home builder is able to deliver can use that information to build a high level of customer trust and confidence.

**Know how to say "no":** A salesperson who tries to accommodate everything a customer asks for is either setting the stage for future customer disappointment or is selling a product that only requires an order-taker. The truth is that it is acceptable to say "no." Ironically, it is even necessary at times in order to stay on the path toward customer delight.

The key to saying "no" without jeopardizing a customer's positive experience is to structure the "no" around what you **A.R.E** able to do. This means being able to propose **A**lternative solutions or options where possible; providing a solid **R**eason for not being able to meet a customer's request; and being **E**mpathetic to show that you really do care and want to help the customer.

**Be conversant on service:** Knowledge of warranty and service procedures needs to be part of any sales process designed for sustained customer delight. The role of a warranty representative is to reinforce and enhance a customer's experience — not to struggle with resurrecting it. Detailed service knowledge during the sales process is necessary to ensure that expectations are accurately set; a customer misinformed on warranty or service procedures during the sales process can quickly become a disenchanting detractor for a home builder.

"Best efforts will not substitute for knowledge," according to quality guru W. Edwards Deming. And knowledge is a critical component in the sales process. If the expectations being sold are designed to be exceeded, it forms a foundation for delighted customers and increased referrals. It is not just a home that is being built for a customer, but also a record of predictability and trust. Although records are often made to be broken — promises are not. ■

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By Aziz Laouadi

## Guidelines for Solar Shading of Residential Windows

A recent article in *Home BUILDER* reported on NRC-IRC studies of several types of window shading devices and their effects on heating and cooling energy use and interior thermal conditions. Based on this work, NRC-IRC compiled a report that offers guidelines for the selection and operation of residential solar shading devices for typical Canadian cold climates.

While shading devices such as operable exterior insulating blinds and highly reflective interior shading can reduce overheating of a house in summer and heat loss in winter, the effects depend on a number of factors. The NRC-IRC research was done using the twin houses of the Canadian Centre for Housing Technology. Each is a typical, modern two-storey house with extensive windows on the south and north facades. The study considered various combinations of window types (windows typical of older housing and high-performance windows for current and future housing) and types of shading devices

(typical interior blinds, interior highly reflective metallic blinds, interior highly reflective closed-weave screen shades, between-pane highly reflective metallic blinds, exterior insulating rollshutters, and exterior closed-weave screen shades).

### The Selection Process

The selection of a shading and window system often requires a trade-off between the energy performance and the cost of the shading device, the visual and thermal conditions for the house occupants, and esthetic considerations. For this reason, the guidelines address thermal peak loads and energy use for old, current and future low-energy or net-zero energy Canadian houses. They consider parameters such as energy costs and payback periods, thermal and visual conditions near windows, risk of moisture condensation on the interior surfaces of windows, and risk to window glass panes due to heat build-up.

The energy performance of each window and shading combination was calculated for Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax. This was based on computer simulations, questionnaire data on householders' use and control of shading devices, and field energy performance data collected for the selected shading devices.

The study affirmed that windows with high solar heat gains and low U-factors are the best candidates for all construction types of houses in cold climates, providing higher annual total energy savings. Based on energy effects, double clear windows with low-E coatings and argon gas are a more effective option for the renovation

of old houses, or for new houses when compared, for example, with triple clear super low-E windows.

### Some Guidelines:

- Exterior insulating rollshutters and close-weave screens were found to be the most effective shading devices for reducing heating and cooling energy use, on-peak cooling power demand, risk of moisture condensation on the interior window panes, and thermal conditions that might cause discomfort near windows. The payback periods, however, are long. Their effect on total energy use in the house is small when they are used with super high-performance windows. The benefits are greater when the shading devices are used with conventional windows (such as double clear windows). It is worthwhile to consider shading devices for renovations of vertical windows of old houses in regions where their operation is not likely to be hindered by ice build-up.
- Compared to typical interior (horizontal or vertical) blinds in old houses with conventional double clear windows, exterior rollshutters can reduce the annual heating energy use by 7 per cent, the cooling energy use by more than 40 per cent, and the on-peak cooling power demand by 18 to 42 per cent (30 per cent on average). Windows with typical interior blinds (the most widely used type of shading devices in Canada) are not particularly energy-efficient or cost-effective in energy terms compared to unshaded windows, but they may still reduce the house cooling energy use and the on-peak cooling power demand by up to 12 per cent.
- Compared to typical interior blinds, interior reflective closed-weave roller screens can reduce annual cooling energy use and cost by up to 25 per cent and on-peak cooling power demand by 13 per cent on average, without negatively affecting heating energy use. Thermal glass breakage due to high temperature is not a risk if the air space between the shades and the window is well ventilated, but there is a higher risk of moisture condensation on interior window panes.
- Interior reflective blinds can reduce house cooling energy use by up to 15 per cent, and the on-peak cooling power demand by 7 per cent on average, but they are not cost-effective in energy terms compared to typical interior blinds. However, the lowest-cost brands could be cost-effective when installed in older houses in cities with high fuel costs such as Halifax.

*The guidelines developed by NRC-IRC will assist homeowners and builders select energy-efficient and cost-effective shading and window systems for renovation projects, or for the construction of low-energy houses. The guideline report can be accessed at [www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/obj/irc/doc/pubs/tr/tr300.pdf](http://www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/obj/irc/doc/pubs/tr/tr300.pdf).*



View from inside through a double-clear low-e window with an interior reflective roller.



Interior view through rollshutter.

Dr. Aziz Laouadi is a senior research officer in the Indoor Environment program of the NRC Institute for Research in Construction. Dr. Laouadi can be reached at 613-990-6868 or [Aziz.Laouadi@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca](mailto:Aziz.Laouadi@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca).

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By Fanis Grammenos

When it comes to the neighbourhood fit up, the balance between stability and change is very delicate.

## Neighbourhood Retrofit

Change is constant. Neighbourhoods, stable as they look at first, go through natural cycles of change that may be triggered by family makeup, income changes, ageing, technology, regulations or planning decisions at City Hall.

As a family evolves it may need more rooms for children, a home office for a working parent or a suite for a grandparent who cherishes the company of kin. With time, however, the children move out, and the house feels empty.

Higher up the causative ladder, City Hall might decide that a district is ripe for intensification and introduce new density zoning or permit other than residential uses. Similarly, a quiet residential road turns into a collector or arterial. Over time, all these triggers change the nature of the neighbourhood, its physical appearance and can affect its desirability. Long-term residents look at relocation.

### Fitting Up

For these reasons and more, a residential neighbourhood would have to be shaped to either accommodate change or avoid it, at least in the short term. But accommodating change is easier for houses than for entire neighbourhoods.

Let's take a look at the house first, the basic building block of a neighbourhood. It can be a small house at the beginning that matches the purse of a young couple and designed to grow as their family and incomes grow. Later, as one of their parents is widowed, more space may be needed for an accessory apartment. Perhaps a job change and flexible work arrangements necessitates the need for a home office. With age, stairs may be hard to negotiate and the second floor may be of limited use: the ground floor might have to grow.

Can a house accommodate all these adaptations? Yes, and easily, if the design sticks to some basic rules; with difficulty and greater expense if it doesn't. Any house can expand toward the back, up into the attic and down into a liveable basement. To do these changes economically, and with pleasing results, however, the house design must anticipate them.

Advice on how to design with this flexibility in mind and examples of how it can be done are plentiful. Documents such as the Grow Home, Liveable Attics, the Sprout Home, FlexHousing and Renovating Distinctive Homes contain a treasure chest of experience. Give your set of house plans a good second look from the perspective of adaptability. Buyers will be delighted to know that the house they choose is flexible enough to accommodate whatever changes happen to their family. They can look forward to staying in a neighbourhood they love no matter how their personal circumstances change.

When it comes to the neighbourhood fit up, the balance between stability and change is very delicate. Many



A narrow loop in Wildwood Park, Winnipeg: A street type that ensures neighbourhood stability by limiting traffic to residents only. While cars can't traverse, people have complete freedom of movement.

elements of a neighbourhood are fixed and rarely, if ever, change — its street pattern and open spaces, for example. They are set in the approved development plan and are likely to stay the same for generations. What changes inevitably and frequently is traffic and the makeup of main thruways. As the city grows and expands, so do its arteries and its traffic. And with traffic naturally sprouts commerce and retail. The result: What used to be a relatively quiet, harmonious residential street becomes a busy road and the houses flanking it are gradually converted or displaced by commercial uses, office buildings, gas stations and convenience retail — a welcome advantage for the neighbourhood, but not for those living on the same road. As rush hour traffic stalls, drivers will try shortcuts to optimize their trip; adjacent quiet streets are now affected and parents are concerned about safety. Retrofitting a neighbourhood to restore its original qualities can be a lengthy and acrimonious process with no guaranteed outcome, although some retrofits have succeeded in the long run.

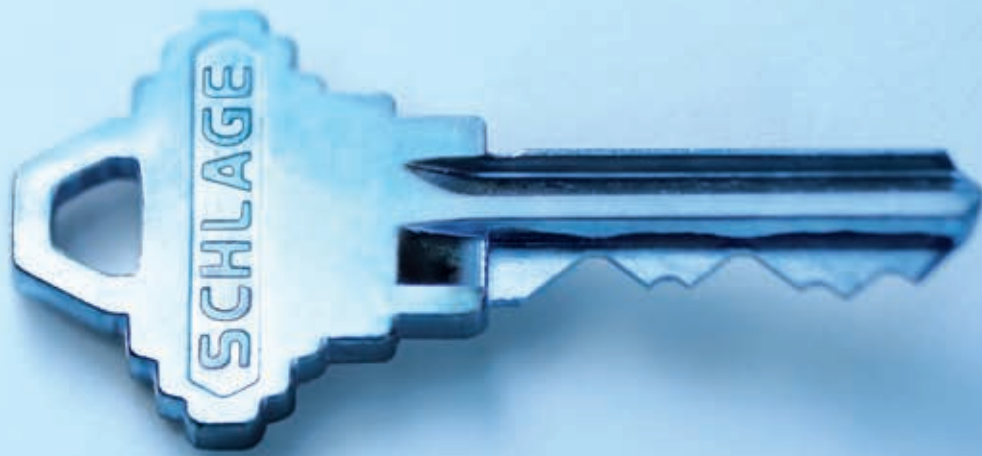
To ensure that stability and change are accommodated in a neighbourhood plan, it must follow the rule of "filtered permeability." It means laying out a street network that differentiates between modes of transport such as foot, bike and motor and treats each differently. Some parts of the network give priority to pedestrians and bikes and "filter out" the motorcar; a connected bike path network would be an example. The reverse "filtering" happens on highways where bicycling is prohibited.

A network model that applies this principle consistently is the Fused Grid described in The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)'s *Alternative Development Standards: A Guide for Practitioners*. There are also plenty of stable, cherished Canadian and U.S. communities old and new that have followed this idea among them, such as Wildwood Park in Winnipeg (1950s), Saddleton in Calgary (2008), and Village Homes in Davis, California (1980s).

To anticipate the inevitable change of a neighbourhood, plan the houses with the needed flexibility to accommodate a family's stages and also lay out its street pattern to channel growth away from purely residential streets. This way, the neighbourhood will maintain its desirability, its houses their value, and its residents their satisfaction. ■

Fanis Grammenos is a principal of Urban Pattern Associates and was a senior researcher at CMHC for 20 years. He can be reached at fanis.grammenos@gmail.com, and you can see his planning work at www.fusedgrid.ca

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*Angela Ricci, Jason Daum, and Jerry Ricci opened Hybrid Construction in 2008. The trio's openness to rural contracts and quality customer service has quickly established their Regina-based business.*

In September, 2008, most of North America was braced for an economic recession. Saskatchewan, in contrast, was enjoying tax cuts, government finances in the black and record growth in real estate prices. And while so many businesses across the continent were scaling way back or closing shop, **Hybrid Construction** opened its doors.

**ANGELA RICCI** had a government job as a human resource professional but was ready for a change. The daughter of a home builder, she had been toying with the idea of starting a renovation company with her brother, Jerry, and their friend, **JASON DAUM**, an experienced contractor.

"We put our heads together and thought, things are so good in Saskatchewan right now, why wouldn't we do this?" Ricci said.

Today the three are equal partners of Hybrid Construction in Regina. They do interior and exterior renovations to homes and businesses, including additions. Angela handles business from the office.

### Meeting Customer Expectations

Hybrid's contractors quickly became known for their willingness to travel out of their way into small towns. Unlike Regina where clients

# HYBRID Construction

## Great Work, Great Timing

BY MICHELLE MORRA-CARLISLE

are easily accessible to meet on their coffee break, folks in small towns are much farther away and tend to want longer meetings.

"Jason got back at 2 a.m. the other night from a customer meeting in the town of Carn-duff," Ricci said. "People in rural Saskatchewan want to see you. You literally have to sit at the table with them for two hours. It's just a rural mentality, and we understand that."

The trio have also learned that there is a lifecycle of feelings customers go through. It starts with excitement, but can quickly evolve into frustration if things don't go exactly as expected — which they seldom do in construction. Hybrid Construction understands that communication builds trust.

"Sometimes a renovator will start a job, and then have to leave it for a day or two," Ricci said. "When that consistency is lost, it frustrates people. So if we don't come in for two or three days because the tiles need to set, we explain that to them."

### Building a Team

Although Hybrid hasn't experienced problems establishing a loyal clientele in a very short time, getting the company started had its snags, including finding skilled workers; Saskatchewan's labour market depends on people coming in from outside the province or the country.

Daum, however, had lived on the Caribbean island of Grand Cayman for a few years as the owner/operator of a construction company. When Hybrid was starting up, he invited seven men he had worked with and trusted back in Grand Cayman to come on board.

Although the men were keen, it took Ricci

18 months through the immigration process to get those immigrant workers to Regina. In the interim, Hybrid had hired several subcontractors from Windsor, Ontario. As for those seven workers (who have now arrived safely in Saskatchewan, despite having to learn a few things about construction in a country where it snows), they're doing great.

### From Ground-Level Up

Whether it's because of Hybrid's openness to rural contracts, customer service practices, or a combination of factors, business has grown fast. Saskatchewan's EnerGuide for Houses program, which until this spring gave grants to homeowners for energy efficiency upgrades, has also had a positive impact.

So, too, has Saskatchewan's financial state. Just a few years ago, Saskatchewan's long-stagnant real estate market started to grow. The result: homeowners suddenly had the equity and the motivation to hire professional contractors for substantial renovations.

► 18





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16 ▶ Ricci also attributes the positive start to doing things right. The underground construction economy has yet to affect Hybrid Construction in a big way, although prospects sometimes say they know someone off the books who can do the job for much cheaper. When that happens, Ricci and her partners explain Hybrid's fees and spell out the value their customers gain from using a legitimate business.

"I suppose you attract what you are," she said. "In order for us to deal with people who are legitimate, we have to be legitimate. We have paperwork, we draw up the contracts, we pay our WCB premiums."

In general, the underground economy seems to concern Ricci's customers more than it concerns her. "Customers sometimes want proof that we are who we claim to be," Ricci said. "Some are reluctant to pay us a deposit because a contractor in the past may have run

## Those who are doing good, honest work will survive any economic change.

off with the money. We encourage those customers to meet us at our office, so they know we are a real entity."

Less than two years since it first opened, Hybrid has received an award nomination from the Better Business Bureau. The company generates plenty of leads by knocking on doors in small towns, attending home shows in Saskatchewan's cities, and through referrals.

Ricci couldn't be happier. Asked what she would change in her marketplace if she could, she laughed: "Reality TV. Those renovation programs are great, but there's a lot that we don't see. They've probably made some mistakes and had to re-cut it, redo it and clean up the mess."

As for competition, Ricci has no concerns. There have even been times when a competitor asked Hybrid to do a little job for them in a small town, since they're so often in the neighbourhood.

"There is enough work for everyone in this province," Ricci said. "Those who are doing good, honest work will survive any economic change." ■

# Saskatchewan Market Report: The Migration Continues

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

Through the 1990s and early part of the twentieth century, Saskatchewan enjoyed a labour market of comparatively low unemployment, largely due to the chronic exits of youth and graduates from post-secondary institutions for out-of-province opportunities.

But things are changing – in the last three years, graduates, youth and young families are staying in Saskatchewan, and the population is expected to grow by 10,000 people in both 2010 and 2011, assisted by positive inter-provincial and international migration.

In his February release, *Low Unemployment & Population Growth: The Challenge for Housing*, Alan Thomarar, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Home Builders Association – Saskatchewan, noted that, "There is a challenge to meet the demand for housing for those staying and those that we want to welcome to Saskatchewan. We must continue to invest in trades based training and capacity building for both land supply and development throughout the province... We have strength in housing prices, low unemployment, increasing disposable income, wage growth, and a growing population. All factors which support increasing housing construction throughout the province."

## Starts and Resales

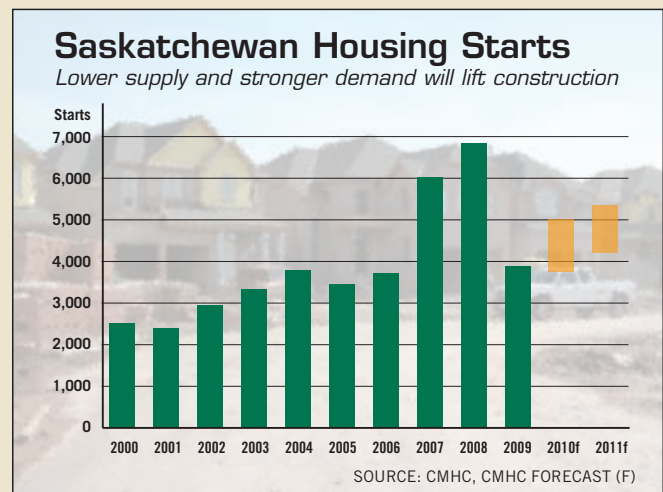
Nonetheless, in 2009, Saskatchewan experienced what Canada Mortgage and Housing's First Quarter 2010 Report referred to as "an economic contradiction," the result of a slower pace of consumer spending, weaker exports and lower commodity prices. A global economic recovery over the forecast period should lift commodity prices, increasing investment, employment and exports; labour market conditions are also projected to improve, which will support increases in housing activity and consumer spending.

Slower starts at the beginning of 2009

reduced the supply of single units, but sales improved during the second half of the year and builders responded by increasing starts. The momentum from the second half of 2009 is expected to continue and single-detached starts will rise in 2010 and 2011 to 3,150 and 3,375 units, respectively.

Higher supply levels from earlier year's starts contributed to a lower level of production in 2009. The industry addressed an imbalance between supply and demand by reducing new construction. Inventory levels will likely peak in early 2010, and as inventory levels are drawn down, this will cause multi-family starts to expand to 1,350 units in 2010. CMHC predicts that new construction will fall below the elevated production of 2007 and 2008, although it will continue to improve in 2011.

The resale market is also bouncing back. After a slow beginning in 2009, due to economic uncertainty, the second half of 2009



showed improvement from the prior year. By year-end, residential transactions in the province totalled 10,856 units, a 6.4 per cent gain over 2008. Slower growth in average prices combined with low mortgage rates will continue to sustain resale growth in 2010.

Although active listings are trending down from historical highs set in early 2009, the buyer still has considerable choice and this will continue to moderate price growth to \$239,000 in 2010 and \$248,000 by 2011. ■

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BY DAVID MITTEN

# A Clear Winner

## The Window Wise Certification Program enters its 14th year

There are more than 2,000 window manufacturers in Canada, and more than 30,000 window contractors installing them. Yet many windows aren't even tested to conform to the CSA A440 industry standard, and very few contractors have trained and certified installers. In fact, as recently as the mid-nineties, there wasn't even a replacement window installation course for installers to become better educated and informed.

The problem was rectified in 1995 when SAWDAC (Siding and Window Dealers Association of Canada) created a one-day window installation course for experienced installers. The course included a 100-page manual and videos on proper installation methods. The challenge remained, however, to find a solution to an epidemic of poorly installed windows.



In 1997, after consulting with many industry groups and carrying out market research, the Window Wise Certification Program was developed. The quality assurance program contains five key components: approved windows, certified contractors, trained and certified installers; random job inspections, and a quality assurance guarantee. Most importantly, it provides homeowners with a list of approved windows, as well as a list of certified window contractors — from a trusted, independent source.

Now in its fourteenth year, the program has proven to be an invaluable asset for quality-conscious window contractors. In 2009, window contractors certified under the Window Wise National Certification Program installed 53,022 windows in 8,946 homes across Canada.

For many installation companies, Window Wise has also provided an edge in the bidding process. That was the case when 27 townhouses in a condominium corporation decided to change all their windows: the corporation determined that a Window Wise certified installer would provide a cost-effective way of insuring that the job is specified correctly and installed properly. The job was awarded to Window Wise dealer **Beingessner Home Exteriors** in St. Jacobs, Ontario.

"Before Window Wise, numerous contractors would bid on large projects that typically had very poorly defined specifications," said **Doug Beingessner**, owner. "It was difficult for specifiers to define window quality and measure workmanship; contracts were chosen primarily on price, and owners were often unhappy with their new windows. Window Wise sets a standard for the window and the installation method. A Window Wise inspector visits the work site when the work begins and at intervals thereafter."

### Quality Guaranteed

All Window Wise approved windows are Energy Star Qualified and tested to meet or exceed minimum performance standards,

which vary from region to region. Window Wise Certified Contractors must also be in business a minimum of three years, carry \$2 million in liability insurance, abide by the SAWDAC Code of Ethics and offer a minimum five-year written workmanship guarantee.

Window installers are trained at the Window Wise Installation Course and are certified by having their work inspected at least once per year. Every homeowner who purchases from a Window Wise Contractor receives a five-year written guarantee from SAWDAC that backs up the protection offered by the window manufacturer for defects and the window contractor for installation.

How important is that to homeowners? "My company joined Window Wise when it was first

launched and we have continued to belong to the program for two reasons: workmanship and marketing," said **Dick Hames, Beverley Hills Home Improvements**, Hamilton, Ont. "Getting 65 installers trained and practicing the same methods greatly

improved the production side of our business. Call-backs dropped off dramatically, while pride of workmanship went up."

Hames noted that Window Wise has also bought his sales staff a reduction in presentation time, and an increased closing ratio. "Our sales have increased over 200 percent and our gross margins have gone up quite a bit. It's hard to say exactly how much of these increases are due to being Window Wise Certified. But, I can say Window Wise is a very important part of our success." ■

### Window Wise Program Components

- Approved Windows
- Certified Contractors
- Trained and Certified Installers
- Random Job Inspections
- Quality Assurance Guarantee

### Window Wise Statistics Since the Program Started

1,607	Total number of installers trained
73,329	Total registered jobs
403,150	Total windows installed and guaranteed
3,120	Inspections
20	Manufacturers participating
43	Installation companies/contractors
14	Warranty claims in 14 years

*Window Wise is a registered program of SAWDAC and Renovation Canada. For more information about The Window Wise National Certification Program visit [www.windowwise.com](http://www.windowwise.com).*

*David Mitten has been the Executive Director of SAWDAC for the past 21 years. SAWDAC, with offices in Cambridge Ontario, has 400 renovator/members located across Canada.*



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# Products that Bridge the Gaps

BY JON EAKES

Many elements in residential construction require some functions to be separated and joined at the same time. The most common example would be the caulking between a window and siding; good caulking separates the two allowing structural movement while joining them in a water tight seal. These border zones with split personalities often give us problems, but luckily new products often allow us to efficiently close the gap.

## Thermal Bridging

Although scientifically, thermal bridging is all about localized heat losses, we usually think of the other side of that flow: the localized cooling of interior surfaces that often cause condensation and a whole flow of subsequent problems.

It wasn't until the early '80s that we realized achieving better insulation and air sealing of the double header required building roof decks higher up from the exterior walls. The new construction solution allowed more space, while maintaining proper structural support became

the raised heel trusses and various other new truss designs.

In renovation, the problem was often solved with a layer of foam insulation over the double header in the soffit area, or ingeniously on the inside of the double header with a large common renovation item: cove moulding made of polyurethane foam. These both provide a surprisingly good localized insulation, do not affect the structure and that moulding even has a bit of design class.

Until now, concrete balconies resisted all attempts at blocking the thermal bridge through the wall, because the structural concrete-to-concrete attachment cannot be compromised. Since this has become an important problem in high rise condo construction, a thermal break system with structural capacities has been developed that can be adapted to low rise resi-

dential work. **The Lenton® THERM Balcony System** ([www.erico.com](http://www.erico.com)) provides structural integrity specifically designed for concrete balconies while blocking the heat flow.

## Mixing Steel and Metal

Metal studs often require wooden backing for strengthening door frames or sink hangers — not to mention the problem of attaching electrical boxes. We tend to do this with one kind of scrap or another, and while pleased with the quick straight work that metal studs permit, we end up with creative chaos hidden behind the drywall.

Someone decided to take short pieces of 2x4 or 2x6, mill it to a specific size with specific bevels and grooves on it, and came out with **Clip on Stud™**.

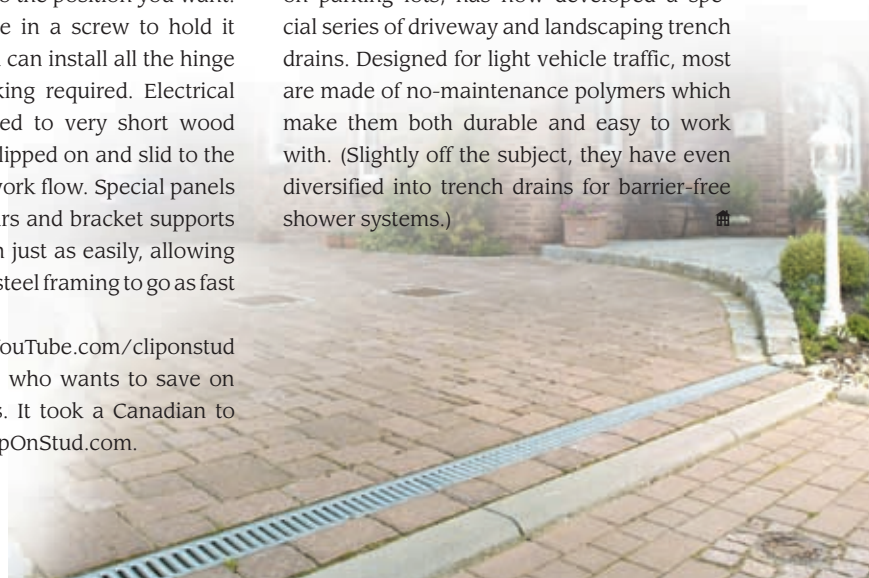
The bevel allows them to very easily swing into the steel stud and the channels lock it into place — except it is just loose enough to allow sliding up and down to the position you want. You then simply drive in a screw to hold it there. In minutes, you can install all the hinge and strike plate backing required. Electrical boxes can be attached to very short wood studs first, and then clipped on and slid to the right height in rapid work flow. Special panels for plumbing, grab bars and bracket supports clip-in and lock-down just as easily, allowing the wooden aspect of steel framing to go as fast as the metal work.

A quick look on [YouTube.com/cliponstud](http://YouTube.com/cliponstud) will convince anyone who wants to save on labour over materials. It took a Canadian to think of this. [www.ClipOnStud.com](http://www.ClipOnStud.com).

## Rain Control

Rain gutters and downspouts take control of water runoff from the roof, while sloped landscaping can keep the foundation dry. Last month's issue (March/April 2010) highlighted grass grids for driveways that percolate rather than shed water, but when we do have lots of hardscaping, we need to think of trench drains — a surface structure that we can walk or drive over but that still allows the free flow of water into an underground drain system. The obvious need for a trench drain is when a driveway slopes towards the garage, but even a long driveway sloping to the street can accumulate enough flow to cause erosion or safety problems. The commercial sector's movement towards better-looking design with equal functionality now provides the residential sector with a complete range of new options.

**ACO Systems Ltd.** ([www.acocan.ca](http://www.acocan.ca)), a company that has traditionally concentrated on parking lots, has now developed a special series of driveway and landscaping trench drains. Designed for light vehicle traffic, most are made of no-maintenance polymers which make them both durable and easy to work with. (Slightly off the subject, they have even diversified into trench drains for barrier-free shower systems.)






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# The Now House Project

## Retrofitting Yesterday's Homes for Tomorrow

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

Between 1941 and 1947, in an effort to provide affordable housing for munitions workers and returning veterans and their families, **Wartime Housing Limited** built more than 30,000 houses. Following the war, plans for this popular style of home were distributed to individuals and builders across Canada. It is estimated that a million of these homes remain throughout Canada.

The team at Now House Project believed (and later proved) that retrofitting just one house could result in a greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) reduction of six tonnes; multiplying that by a million homes could produce potential savings of six million tonnes annually.

This was the design concept proposed by **LORRAINE GAUTHIER**, a founding partner in **Work Worth Doing**, a design and communications company that creates positive social and environmental change. In May 2006, when CMHC invited Canada's builders and developers to submit their expressions of interest for Equilibrium™ demonstration homes (a national sustainable housing demonstration initiative), her team went to work on the Now House™ Project proposal.

The objective of the Now House™ Project was simple: to show homeowners and contractors how to dramatically improve the energy efficiency of existing homes with a

few relatively easy modifications. The home: a 1200 sq ft. (including basement), 1½ storey, detached house, built in 1946 located on Topham Road, Toronto.

Seventy-two builder- and developer-led teams submitted expressions of interest to CMHC for evaluation by a committee of independent housing experts. In February 2007, Gauthier learned that Now House was one of 12 successful applicants.

The first Now House was completed in September 2008; a complete profile of the first Now House, including images, energy and technical summaries and more, can be found at [www.nowhouseproject.com](http://www.nowhouseproject.com).

[cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/su/eqho/noho/](http://cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/su/eqho/noho/) (or simply enter Now House in the CMHC search box). As it turned out, Topham Road, Toronto, was just the beginning.

### Now House Windsor 5

With the objective of finding a more affordable zero energy retrofit model than the first demonstration house, Now House Project and the Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation (CHC) took five different approaches to the retrofit of the five post-war bungalows in the Bridgeview North community of Windsor. The model with the deepest energy reduction and most cost effective combination of changes will inform the future retrofit of 125 similar homes in this community housing portfolio.

The Now House Windsor 5 project was completed in the fall of 2009, almost 58 years after the original opening of this subdivision. Initially, 325 houses were built in the early 1950's to provide affordable housing in a city suffering a housing shortage following WWII. The community grew and today is a diverse neighbourhood with a mix of young families and the community's original residents.

The project also helped create economic stimulus and local jobs in a community hard hit by plant closures. Fifteen Windsor companies were employed in the retrofit and building materials and products were purchased from local suppliers and manufacturers wherever feasible. Local builders are the most frequent visitors to the demonstration house that is open according to a posted schedule, available at [www.nowhouseproject.com](http://www.nowhouseproject.com). 🏠

### Inside Now House Windsor 5

#### Before

The roofs are constructed of 2x6 roof rafters and 1x8 roof boards with asphalt shingles in good condition. The attics and crawl spaces were insulated with some deterioration showing. Windows are aluminum with fixed panes in the upper portion and opening sliders in the lower portion. Walls are constructed of 2x4 stud framing and clad in vinyl siding. Basic plumbing was in good condition. Basement walls are concrete hollow block. Each home had a forced air gas furnace approximately 19 years old and a gas-fired hot water heater. The electrical box had been upgraded to the breakers. Grey water heat recovery pipes have been installed. In some houses, air conditioning was provided by window units.

#### The Retrofit

The five models all included a base package of insulation, low flow water fixtures, energy efficient appliances, doors and lighting. Two houses received standard upgrades of energy efficient forced air gas furnaces, heat recovery ventilators and central air conditioning. Two houses were converted to a hydronic heating system; one

of the two is solar ready. The other received a solar thermal system which provides hot water used for domestic hot water and home heating; this house also received new energy efficient windows. Two homes have grid-tied solar photovoltaic systems, and have been approved under the OPA's Feed-in-Tariff.

#### After

The five homes will be monitored over the next 12 months for comparison to baseline data. Post energy audits show significant improvements with the average EGH improvement exceeding 100 per cent. The retrofit of these post-war bungalows adds another 60 years to the life of these homes.

#### The Team

The Now House Windsor 5 project was the combined effort of the Now House Project, Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation and 15 builders and trades companies from the Windsor area.

For more information visit [www.nowhouseproject.com](http://www.nowhouseproject.com) and [www.wehc.com](http://www.wehc.com).

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**Financing Services**



BY DON JOHNSTON

As the Chair of CHBA's Canadian Renovators' Council, **JOHN FRISWELL** knows firsthand the level of frustration that renovators are feeling. The underground economy is growing and renovators aren't going to take it anymore.

John Friswell is the president of **CCI Renovations**, an award winning renovator in Vancouver. He is well aware that the HST is going to fuel the underground "cash" economy in his province, and in Ontario.

This is one of the big-ticket items on his Council's agenda. HST aside, no province is immune to this problem. The HST had a devastating effect when it was introduced in Atlantic Canada a decade ago but, according to a recent poll of the industry, the underground economy is present and thriving in all provinces.

The federal government promised that the GST would be revenue neutral when they introduced the new tax 20 years ago, but then started collecting extra taxes on renovations. They have been doing so ever since. "It's time to restore tax fairness, and that's message we are taking to the federal government," Friswell said.

### Canadian Homeowners Love Rebates

Last year's Home Renovation Tax Credit (HRTC) was a huge success in creating jobs

and getting the economy going. It also demonstrated that homeowners will abandon the cash operators to get a receipt if they can use it to get a rebate.

"The receipt makes all the difference," Friswell said. "That's why we have recommended a permanent home renovation tax

**Last year's Home Renovation Tax Credit (HRTC) was a huge success in creating jobs and getting the economy going. It also demonstrated that homeowners will abandon the cash operators to get a receipt if they can use it to get a rebate.**

rebate." He realizes, however, that the rebate must be supported by other initiatives. Consumer education is an important part of the solution, which is why he was so pleased when Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) "picked up the ball" to help the CHBA to renew its "Get it in Writing" campaign, noting that, "CMHC has done a terrific job and done it quickly."

The new materials are centred on a consumer website that is loaded with excellent information about the hazards of dealing with cash operators. It even has a feature where consumers can tell their own stories about cash deals gone bad. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has also kicked in to make copies of the brochures available in quantity to all local HBA's who order them.

So far, the federal government's main response to the threat from the underground is the Contractor Payment Reporting System or CPRS. "This is like looking for your lost car keys under the street light," Friswell said. "The real cash economy avoids paper, so there is no paper trail. Yes, it will find careless non-filers, but otherwise all it does is to create more paperwork for honest businesspeople."

The federal government provides millions of dollars each year to homeowners for basic house upgrading through the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) and there is always a risk that some funds can find their way into the underground. That's why, several years ago, the Canadian Renovators' Council asked CMHC to review its policies and procedures to minimize this risk. CMHC responded by tightening up the rules in response to this request to require a paper trail.

CMHC's response is the kind of thing that the Canadian Renovators' Council makes possible. It provides a direct "face-to-face" channel to the federal government and its agencies, which is instrumental in getting things done. Last year, when the federal government was planning its stimulus package, the CHBA President wrote to the Minister suggesting he consider engaging the home renovation

industry to kick-start the economy and the rest is history.

"I was sorry to see the end of the ecoEnergy grants program last month but I understand that it was an expensive program for them," Friswell said. "CHBA has written to the Minister of Natural Resources offering our help to develop a new, more sustainable initiative. Stay tuned!"



**Victor Fiume**  
President, CHBA

High shelter costs are primarily linked to government policies and imposed costs.

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## “The Emperor Has No Clothes”

In representing the interests of CHBA members across Canada, one of your Association's ongoing jobs is to confront those who say things about our industry that are misleading, or simply not true.

We do this for a very important reason – if the CHBA doesn't “push back” when others release faulty or misleading information, there is a real risk that policy makers will believe it is accurate, and act on this basis.

So, like the young hero in the timeless children's tale, CHBA stands up and speaks plainly when “the emperor has no clothes.”

I wanted to let you know about two areas where recent CHBA action is working to counter such misinformation.

### A “Disconnected” Conference Board Report on Affordable Housing in Canada

On March 30, the Conference Board of Canada released its report, *Building From the Ground Up: Enhancing Affordable Housing in Canada*. The media release and Executive Summary of the report received a fair amount of media coverage.

Some of the key coverage points include claims that the private sector does not provide adequate housing for lower-income people, that housing “unaffordability” is a widespread and growing problem, and that, to address this, governments should “engineer deals” with developers using mechanisms such as inclusionary zoning and density bonusing.

Overall, the media coverage of this report painted a dismal picture in relation to the issues involved – and our industry – making the case for strong government intervention.

But there is a problem with these conclusions: That's not what the report actually said. It's too bad that so few of the media actually read the full report – because it was quite accurate. Among the points made were the following:

- The private sector does an excellent job delivering housing that is affordable to the vast majority of Canadians.
- High shelter costs are primarily linked to government policies and imposed costs, such as development charges, taxation policies and municipal planning and zoning policies.
- Affordability problems are mostly related to income issue, not supply, and the number of people so affected is generally overstated.
- Governments' approaches to assisting these people are inefficient or ineffective.
- Effective solutions to housing affordability should involve less direct government involvement on the supply side, and more in relation to income support.

The actual content of the report is very much in line with how the CHBA views many of these issues. It points

to the real problems and their causes.

So how can a media release and Executive Summary from a major research report be so disconnected from what the report actually says? That remains a mystery.

But if this type of misinformation goes unchallenged, there is a real risk that it will be accepted by governments, who tend to pay attention to organizations like the Conference Board.

In response, the CHBA has already had a critique prepared by the Altus Group. This has gone out to all local and provincial HBAs so they, in turn, can make certain that the policymakers they deal with are not misled.

I was also very pleased to read an excellent Op-Ed on this curious disconnection, written by Peter Norman of the Altus Group, which appeared in the *Financial Post* on April 14, 2010.

Entitled “A Tale of Two Reports,” Peter's article noted that “the Conference Board report on affordable housing shows what policies don't work . . . and then recommends them.” The article points out the glaring inconsistencies between the reports' Executive Summary, and what the research in the body of the report actually concluded.

So, while we may never understand how the Conference Board managed to get things so wrong in relation to their own report, I am very pleased that the CHBA and the Altus Group have set the record straight on this matter.

### Confronting Those Who Would “Snatch Defeat from the Jaws of Victory” When It Comes to Energy Efficiency

Another area where the CHBA focuses its attention has to do with the frequent calls for “tougher” energy efficiency requirements in building codes.

As an ENERGY STAR builder, this is an area where the misinformation churned out by regulatory advocates sometimes amazes me.

If you listened only to the advocates, you'd conclude that, when it comes to energy efficiency in homes, nothing much has changed in the last 20 years. The obvious remedy for this lack of progressive thinking by builders is for government to regulate, and the more the better.

These calls for more regulation often have a near-hysterical tone to them. In the face of a pending climate change disaster, they ask how we can not do everything possible to make homes more energy efficient – regardless of the consequences for housing affordability, technical viability, enforceability and impact on homeowners.

The trouble with this line of argument is that it ignores both evidence and common sense. But that doesn't mean politicians don't pay attention to it, or take action as a result. Unfortunately they do. And that is where the real risks come into play.

The proper role of regulation is to intervene where there is a clear public policy issue, and where no other solution can be found – what economists refer to as a ▶

- ▶ “market failure.” This approach is what we call “smart regulation,” and it makes a great deal of sense.

So, for me, the first question has to be: Where is the evidence of a “market failure”?

In my own province, Ontario, ENERGY STAR is the dominant voluntary, market-driven energy efficiency label. Since its full launch in 2007, ENERGY STAR has moved forward to capture about 22 per cent of eligible starts in Ontario during 2009. That’s nearly a quarter of all new homes built. In Saskatchewan, where ENERGY STAR was introduced somewhat later, similar momentum is building. Other industry-supported initiatives across Canada, like Built Green, are achieving equally impressive results.

If that is a “market failure,” I really want to know how success is defined! ENERGY STAR and Built Green have been a huge win – for our industry, for new home buyers and for the environment.

This shows, quite convincingly, that beyond minimum acceptable levels of performance for addressing energy efficiency objectives in codes, the voluntary, market-driven approach is the right way to go. This works because, as we look for new ways to win customers in a competitive marketplace, an initiative that makes sense will attract builder commitment and innovation.

Ever increasing regulation in this area would kill innovation, as builders would be forced to seek out other avenues for differentiating themselves and attracting customers.

This is a case where “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” remains a maxim for the wise.

The other possible rationale for ever-increasing regulation of energy efficiency in housing would be if the residential sector were seriously lagging other parts of the economy in this area. If we were “bringing up the rear,” governments might have reason to give us a push.

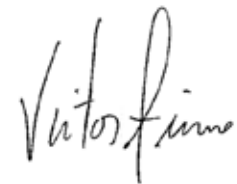
So is this happening? Not at all, in fact, quite the opposite.

The residential sector is leading others, and has significantly outperformed them over the last 20 years. Both energy use and greenhouse gas emission rates for homes have fallen, almost continually, since 1990.

As a sector, we have every reason to be very proud of our performance and to cite this record to counter misleading advocacy.

Thus, in the face of these facts, why do the regulatory advocates keep pounding out the same old tune? This is a good question, and one we need to put to them at every opportunity.

The reality is that energy efficiency is best addressed through voluntary, market-driven initiatives that tap into the competitive forces of the market. That’s what the record, and the evidence, makes clear. Those who espouse ever-increasing intrusions by governments through escalating energy efficiency requirements are dealing in misinformation – and we need to call them on it.



### **Builders Tackling Integrated Community Energy Systems (ICES)**

Development of integrated systems for meeting the energy needs of communities and neighbourhoods is seen by many as the “next step” in the smart, sustainable use of our energy resources. While integrated approaches, such as district heating, waste heat recovery and combined heat and power systems work on paper, their real-world viability for the residential development industry is less clear. Gaining a better understanding of the business case for integrated systems will be the focus of a CHBA Builder Task Group meeting in May. The Task Group will bring together new home builders and developer members from across Canada to examine the current state of knowledge and look at the business opportunities that integrated systems may offer.

### **Apprenticeship Grants and Incentives**

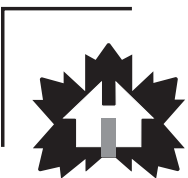
CHBA President Victor Fiume has written to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Hon. Diane Finley, requesting that the federal government apprenticeship grant and incentive programs be extended to include all provincially designated trades which are receiving provincial program support.

The CHBA has long recommended expansion of the tax measures for apprenticeship training beyond Red Seal trades. Unfortunately, very few in the housing industry are able to take advantage of these tax measures because they apply only to Red Seal trades and not to all provincially designated trades in residential construction.

The CHBA is encouraged that provincial governments have started to support apprenticeship training in non-Red Seal trades through tax measures and other financial incentives. By extending federal apprenticeship grants and incentives to all provincially designated trades, the result would be positive for young people wanting a career in residential construction and increase the supply of skilled trades in the industry.

### **National Building Code News**

Work is underway on the 2015 National Building Code, and the CHBA has learned that the Institute for Research in Construction has commissioned studies on sprinklers and on stair safety. Meanwhile, work on the 2010 NBC is nearing completion for publication. The CHBA hopes that proposed changes to the climbability requirements for guards and balustrades can still make it into the 2010 edition.



26 ▶ Education and Information

The Underground Economy has been a major focus for the Council for many years, but not its only concern. In addition to working with the federal government to improve government policies and programs, the Canadian Renovators' Council also works on information products for renovator members, as well as consumer education initiatives.

The Council produced a *Guide to Renovation Contracts* three years ago which was well received. The Council's Vice Chair, **MIKE MARTIN** of **Luxury Renovations** in Ottawa, reports that the Council is about to release the second edition of its popular publication. New clauses have been added and others revised based on feedback from members.

"We plan on sending a copy to every renovator who is a member of CHBA," Martin said. "The reaction from renovators to the original version was very positive, and the new edition is even better."



As far as public education is concerned, October has been Renovation Month for almost as long as there's been a Canadian Renovators' Council. Since its launch almost 20 years ago, **Home Hardware Building Centre** has been a partner and this year will be no exception. Joining them again this year as National Renovation Month sponsors will be **Genworth Financial, Delta** and **RBC Royal Bank**.

"Home Hardware counts the number of copies of its flyers in the millions and so messages carried by them about the benefits of working with a professional renovator go a long, long way," said Martin. Each year, CHBA produces articles and model public service announcements for use by local associations, and has again distributed them early to give local planning committees a head start.

The CRC has also promoted the Renomark initiative at every opportunity. Renomark helps customers connect with professional renovators while creating a vehicle for manu-



**John Friswell**

facturers and suppliers to invest in the professional renovations industry. It is a win-win situation and the CRC would like to see Renomark present across the country.

"BILD deserves credit for making this happen," Friswell said, "and it's up to the rest of us to make the most of it." Friswell, and the Canadian Renovator's Council, are also open to suggestions. "If you are a renovator with ideas about how to make it easier for professional renovator members to be successful, we're all ears. We'd love to hear from you. Drop us a line at [crc@chba.ca](mailto:crc@chba.ca)."



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# Saw and Order

*This month's issue is focused on my favourite topic: renovation! Narrowing the product selection down to just four was the tough part of the job.*

## Tool Security and Organization



Protecting your own tools on a construction site is always a problem. **Stanley** has thought out the problem rather thoroughly with the FatMax® Xtreme™ Portable Truck Box, which features a 42-gallon capacity, water-resistant box with good internal organization, large wheels and extendable handle — and then it gets better. A docking rack bolts down to the bed of your truck: The box just slides in and a key locks it into place, so not only doesn't it bounce around, but only you can get it out of the truck. The lid locks with a keypad combination lock making it easy for you to open and close securely, and it has a siren if someone else attempts to open it. I checked it out while putting on demonstrations for the NB Home Builders — it is built sturdy for construction sites. The price is \$299 at most renovation centres. [www.StanleyTools.com](http://www.StanleyTools.com)

## Saw Horses with Attitude

Although it looks and acts much like half a pair of saw horses with the added advantage that it folds up compact for transportation, it performs more like a super Workmate.



## Bi-Metal Oscillating Saw Blades

If you are using an oscillating tool in renovation you

The **Rigid**® Super Clamp Portable Work Station has a foot-activated vise on the top. With its reversible head, it clamps from 0 to 37-1/2 inches wide with a one-ton clamping force.

Since that foot lever works on a ratchet, it can act as much as a press as a vise. While a foot-activated vise is generally reserved for factory situations, you will come to appreciate having both hands free when this is brought onto the construction site.

Now this tool won't give you the table-sized work surface that many portable work surfaces give, but by either buying two or, less expensively, building an exact height work horse companion, it can actually hold larger material more securely than other devices. It can support 220 pounds and weighs 37 pounds. Price: \$199 at Home Depot. [www.Rigid.com](http://www.Rigid.com)

## Two Heads Are Better than One

**Lenox**® finally figured



out that a good portion of each of their diamond blades never wore out, but got thrown away because the part near the shoe of the saw was dead. So they have come up with a non-conformist solution:

the Diamond Double Tang Reciprocating Saw Blade. You actually get more cuts for fewer dollars in cast iron, ceramic tile, clay pipe, stone, brick, marble, plaster and cement siding board. You will have to go to professional plumbing, electrical or tools distributors to find these.



must not miss out on the relatively new bi-metal blade. It doesn't cut as quickly as the large Japanese teeth blades, but it can stand up to hitting a nail. Note that tempered screws or square spikes will even kill this blade — but sometimes that is the price to pay to accomplish an otherwise impossible cut.

The Fein patents on the oscillating concept have run out and every manufacturer is making oscillating tools now. Although the battery-powered and corded low-powered tools can do well on hobby and light duty tasks, trying to do heavy cuts, particularly with the wide fan tail blades can destroy most of these newcomers. The Fein MultiMaster® is perhaps the best known of the oscillating tools and is operating at 250 watts power. Contractors doing heavy work on a constant basis, or even just trying the most difficult job of removing old caulking with a scraper knife should be looking at the 400 watt professional big brother to the MultiMaster, the Fein SuperCut® tool. Go to [www.Fein.ca](http://www.Fein.ca) and search for SuperCut.

## Learning Curve

Oscillating tools require different working techniques from those of reciprocating or circular or even orbital tools and so many people have asked me for help with these tools that I have produced a long series of technique videos on the subject, which you can see on my web site at [www.JonEakes.com](http://www.JonEakes.com) in the Learning Curve tab. 📺



Montreal-based TV broadcaster, author, home renovation and tool expert Jon Eakes provides a tool feature in each edition of Home BUILDER. [www.JonEakes.com](http://www.JonEakes.com)



## BETTER HOMES – TOGETHER, THAT'S WHAT WE'RE BUILDING

When you choose Rogers as your communications and entertainment provider, you're choosing to partner with a leader. In other words, Rogers will commit to providing innovative services and excellent value for your homebuyers.

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# A STRONG FOUNDATION TAKES TIME TO BUILD

For over 35 years, The Alberta New Home Warranty Program has been the foundation of trust in the Alberta new-home construction industry.

We are the industry leader in:

- educational programs
- warranty services
- dispute resolution services
- homebuyer resources

Look to us for more.

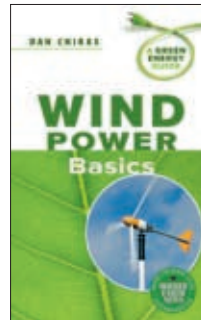


The Alberta New Home Warranty Program

[www.AlbertaNewHomeWarranty.com](http://www.AlbertaNewHomeWarranty.com)



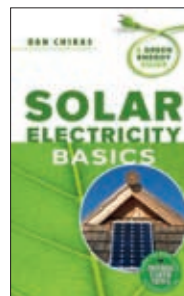
## Two New Green Energy Guides Wind Power Basics New Society Publishers



Wind power is the fastest growing source of energy in the world; by the year 2020 it is projected to supply at least 12 per cent of global electrical demand.

Whether you're considering your own small-scale wind energy system or just want a straightforward, detailed introduction to the benefits and challenges of this rapidly emerging technology, *Wind Power Basics* provides a clear understanding of wind and wind energy systems.

## Solar Electricity Basics New Society Publishers



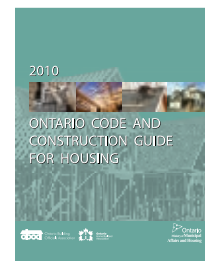
Once a curiosity, solar electric systems are becoming more commonplace. *Solar Electricity Basics* provides a clear understanding of the sun, solar energy, and solar electric systems with theoretical, practical and economic aspects of residential solar installations.

Both featured Green Energy Guides are authored by Dan Chiras, founder of The Evergreen Institute, and a respected educator and author who has published

more than 25 books on residential renewable energy and green building.

Order information: \$12.95 each from [newsociety.com](http://newsociety.com)

## 2010 Ontario Code and Construction Guide for Housing Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ontario Builder Officials Association, Ontario Home Builders Association



The Fourth issue is formatted in a construction sequence rather than a Building Code sequence with colour illustrations that clearly depict Building Code construction requirements. Fully updated and includes the latest amendment O.Reg 503/09 (December 21, 2009).

Order information: \$90 at [www.serviceontario.ca/publications](http://www.serviceontario.ca/publications).

## CHS: Residential Building Activity Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation



The 2010 edition of CMHC's *Dwelling Starts, Completions, Under Construction and Newly Completed and Unabsorbed Dwellings - 2009* is now available online at: [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64681/64681\\_2010\\_A01.pdf](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64681/64681_2010_A01.pdf)



## No New Taxes or Credits or Rebates to Offset HST on Ontario Condo Fees

OTTAWA, Ont. — There were no new tax credits or rebates proposed in Ontario Budget 2010 that would help offset condo fees, anticipated to rise due to the HST effective July 1st. In response, the Canadian Condominium Institute (CCI) (Toronto) and Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario (ACMO) announced that they will continue their efforts on behalf of the condominium industry to obtain solutions to the serious and unique problems facing condominium owners affected by the HST, and to have the governments open up the legislation for review and changes. For more information, visit [www.acmo.org](http://www.acmo.org). ☛

## Refunds on Green Home Mortgages Reach \$3 Million Milestone

OTTAWA, Ont. — Canadian homeowners have received \$3 million in premium refunds through CMHC's Green Home mortgage insurance program. Through the program, which was launched in 2004, qualified borrowers can obtain a mortgage insurance premium refund of 10 per cent when CMHC Mortgage Loan Insurance is used to finance the purchase or construction of an energy-efficient home, or to finance energy-saving renovations. ☛

## Getting FIT — Fenestration Installation Technician is Coming

TORONTO, Ont. — The Canadian Standards Association, CSA, is in full swing to develop a certification exam for residential windows and doors installers, according to **MILES MURPHY**, Product Manager for Personnel Certification.

A steering committee is in the process of developing the Fenestration Installation Technician (FIT) test, which will consist of 80 to 100 questions. Candidates will be required to comply with practical requirements and prove experience in the field.

The purpose of the program is to promote building envelope integrity, energy efficiency, health and safety, consumer protection, and to ensure that defective practices are circumvented before they can cause costly material damage.

CSA's Fenestration Installation Technician (FIT) personnel certification program, with the support of the Canadian Window and Door Manufacturers Association (CWDMA) and Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN) and the participation of stakeholders from across Canada, is currently under development. It is expected to be launched by January 2011. ☛

## Resale Market Sees Nearly 100,000 Homes Listed for Sale in March

According to statistics released by The Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA), some 97,663 residential properties were listed for sale on the Multiple Listing Service® (MLS®) Systems of Canadian real estate Boards in March 2010. This is an increase of 20 per cent from the previous March record set in 2008. A total of 233,402 new listings have come on stream since the beginning of the year, more than in any other first quarter period on record.

The national average price of homes sold via Canadian MLS® Systems in March was \$340,920. This is the second highest national average price on record, just \$300 below the peak reached last October. Compared to March 2009, the national average home price was up 17.6 per cent. For more information, visit [www.realtor.ca](http://www.realtor.ca). ☛

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All Weather Windows Ltd. ....	2	800-638-5709	<a href="http://www.allweatherwindows.com">www.allweatherwindows.com</a>
American Technical Publishers . . . . .	35	800-323-3471	<a href="http://www.go2atp.com">www.go2atp.com</a>
CertainTeed Gypsum Canada, Inc. ....	21	800-233-8990	<a href="http://www.becertain.ca">www.becertain.ca</a>
CertainTeed Insulation Group . . . . .	34	800-233-8990	<a href="http://www.certainteed.com">www.certainteed.com</a>
Cosella-Dörken Products, Inc. ....	13	888-433-5824	<a href="http://www.delta-dry.com">www.delta-dry.com</a>
Delta Faucet / Masco Canada . . . . .	17, 34	905-712-3030	<a href="http://www.deltafaucet.com">www.deltafaucet.com</a>
DMX Plastics Limited. ....	19	416-751-5851	<a href="http://www.dmxplastics.com">www.dmxplastics.com</a>
Dow Building Solutions . . . . .	36	866-583-2583	<a href="http://www.insulateyourhome.ca">www.insulateyourhome.ca</a>
Exakttime, Inc./The Joblock System . . . . .	8	888-788-8463	<a href="http://www.exakttime.com">www.exakttime.com</a>
GE Appliances - Commercial Sales . . . . .	23	800-307-8864	<a href="http://www.gebuilder.ca">www.gebuilder.ca</a>
Genworth Financial Canada . . . . .	11, 35	800-511-8888	<a href="http://www.genworth.ca">www.genworth.ca</a>
Home Hardware Stores Limited . . . . .	6, 7	519-664-2252	<a href="http://www.homehardware.ca">www.homehardware.ca</a>
Jubilee Rose Enterprises . . . . .	35	604-535-7339	<a href="http://www.jubileerose.com">www.jubileerose.com</a>
MoistureShield . . . . .	4	866-729-2378	<a href="http://www.moistureshield.com">www.moistureshield.com</a>
Rinnai . . . . .	3	888-571-2627	<a href="http://www.redmondwilliams.com">www.redmondwilliams.com</a>
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Schlage Lock - Ingersoll Rand . . . . .	15, 35	800-900-4734	<a href="http://www.schlage.com">www.schlage.com</a>
Simpson Strong-Tie Canada . . . . .	29	800-999-5099	<a href="http://www.strongtie.com">www.strongtie.com</a>
TD Financing Services . . . . .	25	866-320-3757	<a href="http://www.tdfinancingservices.com">www.tdfinancingservices.com</a>
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## CALENDAR

**May 28 – 31**  
Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Annual Conference  
Toronto, ON  
[www.fcm.ca](http://www.fcm.ca)

**June 8 – 10**  
Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC) 3rd Annual National Conference  
Vancouver, BC  
[www.cagbc.com](http://www.cagbc.com)

**June 14 – 16**  
NeoCon World's Trade Fair  
Chicago, IL  
[www.neocon.com](http://www.neocon.com)

**September 17**  
CHBA - Alberta Awards of Excellence in Housing  
Jasper, AB  
[www.chbaalberta.ca](http://www.chbaalberta.ca)



### NEXT ISSUE JULY/AUGUST

Your annual checklist of the latest in building materials, new products, technology and tools. Suggested products: new products & design elements, new working concepts, tools & power tools.

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Inspired by the graceful appearance of the Linden tree, the Linden kitchen faucet from Delta has a fresh look with a natural resonance. Linden is the first pull-out kitchen faucet to offer Delta’s new Multi-Flow™ feature.

The wand flows at a water-saving 1.5 gpm with an easy to use toggle button that allows you to set the stream to low, high or spray. The high stream flows at 2.0 gpm, making tasks such as filling the sink or large pots easy. Perfect for any décor, the Linden Pull-Out kitchen faucet is available in chrome, Venetian Bronze® and Brilliance® Stainless finishes.

For more information, contact:  
**Delta Faucet**  
Phone: 1-800-345-DELTA  
[www.deltafaucet.com](http://www.deltafaucet.com)

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