

BUILDER



THE MAGAZINE OF THE CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION



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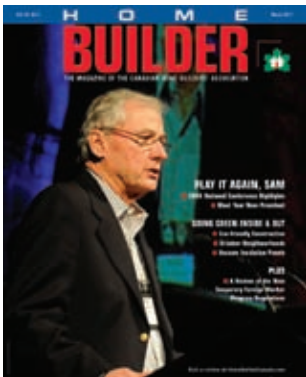
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COVER

CHBA Economist Peter Anderson projected 180,000 housing starts for 2011 but cautions builders to be careful for what they wish for: in some regions, we may have building material supply issues, as well as a shortage of land availability.

Photo by Richard Bain

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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Whether your company currently employs temporary foreign workers (TFW) or may do so in the future, you need to be aware of the new Temporary Foreign Worker Program regulations that will come into force on April 1, 2011.

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Meet your President, Vince Laberge

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THE PLANT ENCYCLOPEDIA

Currently, *The Plant Encyclopedia* is in beta testing phase, and lists more than 25,000 plants. In March, 300,000 more plant pages were planned to be “seeded”.

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TOOL TALK

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Rising Costs Due to Development Charges a Critical Problem

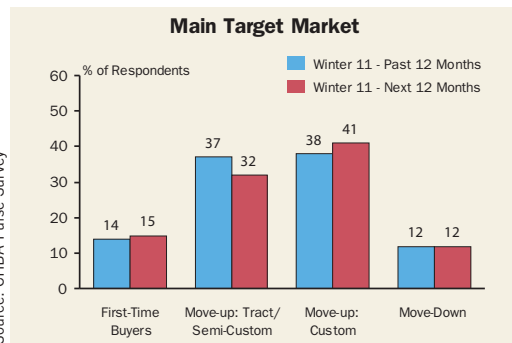
OTTAWA – The 44th Pulse Survey of new home builders and renovators was conducted by the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) in December 2010 and January 2011, with the assistance of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Natural Resources Canada. A total of 369 new home

builders and renovators across Canada responded to the survey that was tabulated and analyzed on behalf of the CHBA by Altus Group Economic Consulting.

Rising costs due to development charges remains the top concern for new home builders in most regions. About one in three new home builders identify rising costs due to development charges as a critical problem, and as many as 47 per cent in Ontario. Home builders report stable employment in the industry in the past year, and employment is expected to be higher over the next year in most regions but Quebec.

Survey respondents also reported that traffic is generally lower at new home sales sites. The decrease is across all buyer segments (i.e. first-time buyer, move-up, move-down), and in most regions. Inventories of new single-detached homes are up in Atlantic Canada and Alberta and B.C., lower in the rest of the country. The move-up market will continue to be the main target market for most new home builders, with some shift from the tract/semi-custom towards the custom segment.

The complete survey is available online at www.chba.ca/about/pulse-survey.aspx.



Source: CHBA Pulse Survey

Infrastructure Projects to Sustain 2011 Construction and Stabilize Costs

VANCOUVER — According to Vancouver's BTY Group report on construction costs across Canada (*Market Intelligence Q1 2011*), this will be a good year to kick off construction, with cost increases expected to be moderate for most provinces before returning to normal levels in 2012.

The report states that, while construction costs declined sharply in 2009, the industry began to turn around in 2010 and costs have evened off at mid-2006 levels, about 35 per cent higher than they were in 2001. The cooling residential sector in the second half of 2010 will continue to moderate cost increases through 2011; annual industry increases are expected to return to historical norms of 2 to 3 per cent by 2012.

A PDF copy of the complete report is available on www.bty.com.

Economic Action Plan Supports Software Development in Alberta

CALGARY — The Honourable **GARY GOODYEAR**, Minister of State (Science and Technology), has announced a contribution of \$30,000 to OnTrack Engineering Ltd. from the National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC-IRAP). Founded in 1984, OnTrack has been providing project control tools to the engineering and construction industry for more than 25 years. The company currently employs ten people in Calgary.

The funding, part of the Government of Canada's Economic Action Plan, will support the company in a three year project to rewrite its proprietary software, OnTrack Project Manager. The software integrates and automates, in real time via the Internet, all the functions of cost control, procurement, contract management, material management, planning, financial transactions, and document control.

More information is available online www.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/eng/ibp/irap.html.

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The Magazine of the Canadian Home Builders' Association
Vol. 24 No. 2
March/April 2011

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HBA Members Recognized Amongst Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies

TORONTO — Fifty of the country's leading private organizations, spanning a wide array of industries, have earned the distinction of Best Managed Company by demonstrating business excellence through a rigorous and independent process that evaluates their management abilities and practices.

Regional HBA members honoured included: **Losani Homes** (Hamilton-Halton, Niagara, Waterloo); **Nuheat Industries Ltd.** (Greater Vancouver); **All Weather Windows** (Medicine Hat, Eastern Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Central Nova Scotia, Edmonton, Greater

Vancouver, Central Interior, Central Okanagan, Calgary, Manitoba, Sea to Sky, Northern BC, Central Alberta, Regina, Saskatoon, South Okanagan, BILD, Lethbridge), **Ames Tile & Stone** (Manitoba, Greater Vancouver); **Morrison Homes** (Calgary); **Sifton Properties Limited** (London, Brantford); **Jayman MasterBUILT** (Edmonton, Calgary); and **Trico Homes** (Central Okanagan, Calgary).

JOHN HUGHES, Deloitte partner, Private Company Services, and national leader of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies Program, noted that, "After two years of shoring up, deleveraging balance sheets and focusing on cost reduction strategies, Canadian businesses now have growth back on the agenda. Clearly we're not out of the woods yet, but one of the most impressive aspects of this year's award recipients is the focus of management teams and employees on growth and investment."

Combined, Canada 50 Best Managed Companies for 2010 generated \$11.5 billion in revenue and employed more than 52,000 Canadians. To learn more about Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies program visit www.canadas50best.com.

OHBA to Build Hope in Puerta Plata, Dominican Republic

TORONTO — For the first time in the history of the Ontario Home Builders' Association (OHBA), the annual conference will be held out of province. The 2011 Conference and Humanitarian Build project will be held from Nov. 22 to 29 in Puerta Plata, Dominican Republic. A highlight of the conference will be a humanitarian build project allowing conference attendees and their families to help build a structure for people living in very poor neighbourhoods in the Puerta Plata area. The concept started with a challenge by 2010 OHBA president **JAMES BAZELY**. Registration to the 2011 Conference and Humanitarian Build project sold out quickly. More information is available at www.humanitarianbuild.com.

BILD Headquarters Goes Green with Solar PV Rooftop Installation



ASSOCIATIONSBUILD

GREATER TORONTO AREA — The Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) is leading by example by embracing the micro Feed-in Tariff (microFIT) Program under the Green Energy Act to provide renewable energy to Ontario's power grid. Working with PURE Energies, BILD has installed an 80-panel solar photovoltaic array on the roof-top of its headquarters building in the Don Mills area of Toronto. The 20 Upjohn Road facility is also home to the Ontario Home Builders' Association, and the EnerQuality Corporation, which administers the ENERGY STAR for New Homes program across Ontario. The solar rooftop will produce about 15,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity each year, and will provide a highly visible example to residential home builders within the GTA and across Ontario. www.bildgta.ca.

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Association to Association

Does your regional or provincial Home Builders' Association have news or information to share? A recent survey or poll? A new program or fundraising initiative? If you have a newsworthy item that would interest other Association members across the country, please e-mail your 250-word entry to Judy Penz Sheluk at editor@work4.ca for consideration. Selected entries will appear online or in an upcoming issue of Home BUILDER Magazine. Please put "Association to Association" in the Subject line. Submissions may be edited for style and/or space.

While others sleep, I stand watch.



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By Peter Norman

The good news for the housing market is that we're likely in for another year or more of very attractive mortgage rates.

2011 in a Holding Pattern

2011 has ushered in a modestly more favourable outlook for the Canadian economy, but housing markets still face challenges. On balance, expect housing to be in a "holding pattern" this year with some modest growth next. Recent housing starts data continue to confirm the recent pattern for Canada, which is a gradual moderation in demand from last winter's special-factor-driven highs. Total Canada-wide housing starts moderated to 179,100 units seasonally adjusted at annual rates (SAAR) in the fourth quarter of 2010, according to CMHC, down about 6 per cent from the third quarter. Declines occurred in both single-family and apartment units. Starts were lower in all provinces except Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and PEI.

Existing home sales improved in Q4 (up by 12 per cent) compared to Q3, but remain below levels prevailing in the 2005-2008 period.

The general expectation for the first half of 2011 is for still modestly lower housing starts across most of the country, with gradual improvements, especially regionally, thereafter with an improving economy.

A Matter of Interest

Interest rates in Canada remain low and favourable. The posted five-year mortgage rates offered by the chartered banks have been sitting below 5.5 per cent since early August last year and have averaged only a little over 6 per cent since the onset of the recession about three years ago. Of course most new mortgage takers and those renewing mortgages in recent years have been offered closed five-year deals that are discounted a further 1.5 percentage points or so.

Low mortgage rates mean stronger housing affordability. Housing affordability today is much lower than it was just prior to the recession, but still not a favourable as in the early 2000s [see chart].

The low mortgage rates through the recent recession and recovery have been of interest to both buyers and housing market watchers. The dominant narrative being put forward, including in this space, has been that mortgage rates have been unnaturally low through the

recession/recovery, in part due to the stimulus efforts of both the Bank of Canada and the US Federal Reserve, and that at the first signs of sustained recovery, tighter policy and returning appetite for risk in financial markets will set rates soaring.

Consumers clearly believed this, and this was one of the key factors leading to a boom in home sales in the latter half of 2009 and early 2010.

The question for early 2011 is: where are the higher rates? For interest rates to rise, gradually or quickly, the pace of economic growth will have to accelerate much faster than what we've seen in recent quarters. The level of production and national income in Canada is little changed from where it was before the recession. The unemployment rate remains elevated and industrial capacity utilization low. Signs point to several quarters ahead before the Canadian economy sees this output gap narrow and put real pressure on interest rates.

Until then, the good news for the housing market is that we're likely in for another year or more of very attractive mortgage rates, which means continued strong housing affordability for those potential home buyers still left in the market.

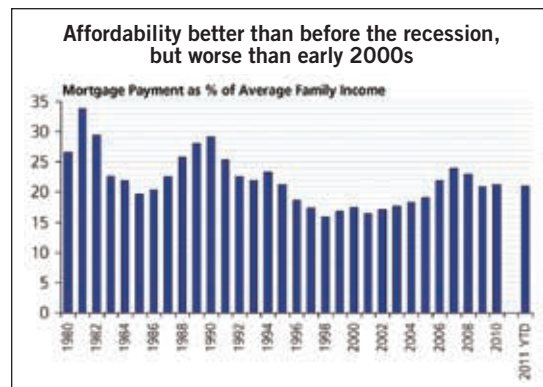
Housing Market Challenges Remain

But housing market challenges still remain. While continued low interest rates and favourable affordability will be generally good news for the housing sector in 2011, a number of challenges lie ahead. Chief among these will be the increasing inaccessibility for the first-time buyer segment. The federal Department of Finance and the Bank of Canada have expressed concerns regarding the level of household debt in recent months, and have announced tightening around the rules and criteria for federally-insured mortgages. These rule changes have shortened the allowable amortization period, decreased the maximum loan-to-value ratio and tightened the conditions under which insured mortgage holders can withdraw equity from their homes.

Perhaps the largest challenge is simply the demographics. Underlying demographic demand is said to be for some 175,000 housing units per year, and elevated levels of production in Canada in the mid 2000s will take more time to fully absorb.

On Balance, Steady Housing Starts

The Canadian economy continues to gradually improve and with it will come better times ahead for the housing sector. In the short term, recent data suggests a slowdown in housing demand, in part due to a number of tax and policy issues. But interest rates are low and steady and affordability favourable. All told, expect housing to be in a holding pattern in 2011, with starts coming in at around 174,000 units, with gradual improvements thereafter.



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.

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By Fanis Grammenos

Travel to work accounts for about 40 per cent of all driving.

Greener Neighbourhoods

Planners feel uncomfortable when reading the statistics on the prevailing trends in travel: car ownership is growing steadily, personal driving is rising, walking and bicycling are declining, and fewer children walk to school. Also discomfoting are the stats about increasing levels of obesity among adults and children and the growing number of cases of lung and other complications attributed to poor air quality. This unease propels a strong drive to change how communities are planned and built. But can different planning techniques stall or reverse these trends?

Let's look at personal driving, the impact of which contributes to 18 per cent of air pollution. For their first 80 years in the city, cars were running without catalytic converters. The unhealthy result was inevitable, but also unsustainable. Enter the "cat-con" car in the 1980s that reduced smog dramatically—a simple, inexpensive, regulated device with an enormous positive effect: same city, more cars, more driving, but far fewer noxious gases.

Planners and developers had little to do either with the problem or its solutions. Looking 50 years ahead, fuel-cell, full electric and hybrid cars, now in production, will send fewer or no gases out the exhaust pipe; same city, no pollution. When driving must be done, improved technology could make it healthier for people and the planet alike.

But rehabilitating the tailpipe still leaves parents, children and everyone else stuck in their cars, driving to nearby or far off destinations. Can people be enticed out of their cars and on to their bikes and feet? What can a developer do about less driving in a new subdivision?

Connectivity, Permeability & Proximity

What we do know is that travel to work accounts for about 40 per cent of all driving, and that it is a habit daily commuters find hard to break. A CMHC study (2010) showed that there was no difference in the use of transit among eight suburban neighbourhoods, even though four were designed to be transit-friendly; each of the eight scored a mere 9 per cent in transit use. It would appear, then, that the decisive factors lie outside the developer's subdivision plans.

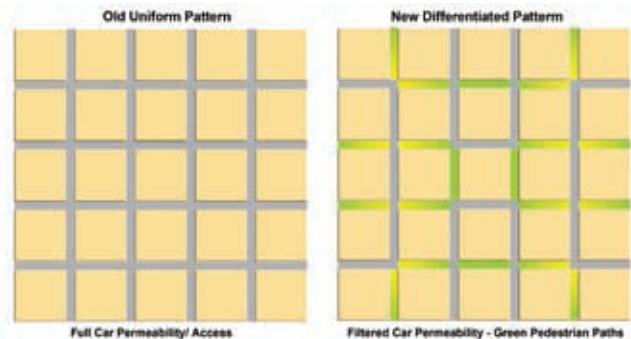
But at the neighbourhood scale, the developer can have an influence. It all rests on two key concepts: connectivity and permeability. Connectivity translates into how often people can turn a corner within their neighbourhood. If you can count at least 30 to 40 intersections in a square kilometre, check "good." More is better. Permeability is about filtering and preferential treatment. When walkers, joggers and cyclists can keep going safely beyond the area where cars are permitted, they get the advantage — preferential treatment, if you will — a distinct positive when promoting activity.

Research findings support this.

One more concept completes the greener neighbourhood: proximity to amenities. This means having destinations, such as parks, playgrounds, convenience stores, schools, barbers and other facilities and services nearby.

Pedestrian Pathways

A recent CMHC study compared eight neighbourhoods. The two layouts with the highest connectivity and the most pedestrian paths scored 100 per cent more walking trips above the average of all eight neighbourhoods combined, and about 300 per cent more than those



Both these neighbourhoods are well interconnected, one with 'regular' streets and another with a combination of streets and paths. Studies show that people walk more in the second.

with the least walking trips. The positive influence of the paths is further supported by a "low walking" neighbourhood that offered very high connectivity but very few pedestrian paths. Conclusion: connectivity works best when complemented with paths.

More precise evidence comes from a Memorial University (2010) study: Of seven neighbourhood designs, two stand above the rest with 25 per cent and 32 per cent more walking in the set; both have paths separate from the regular streets. In addition to increasing walking, they also lowered driving by about 10 per cent.

An earlier CMHC study (2008) found that the presence of separate paths increased walking by 11.3 per cent and its higher pedestrian connectivity reduced local car kilometres by 23 per cent. Separately, another study concluded that having recreation green space close to home would get more young people walking.

Though locally reduced, driving remains in the range of 78 (lowest) to 81 (average) per cent of all trips. But we can now trust that it is possible to get more people back on their feet. Green their streets and they will start walking. ■

References:

- Giving Pedestrians an Edge — Using Street Layout to Influence Transportation Choice* (CMHC)
- Comparing Canadian New Urbanist and Conventional Suburban Neighbourhoods* (CMHC)
- Modeling the Influence of Neighbourhood Design on Daily Trip Patterns in Urban Neighbourhoods* (Memorial University of Newfoundland, © Xiongbing Jin, 2010)

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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By Tim Bailey

Delivering successful wows requires that everyone in your company focus on “connections” instead of “transactions.”

The Wow Factor

One of the best ways to solidify your relationship with customers is to “wow” them through a strategy of surprise and delight. This is not a new idea. Back in 1912, the makers of Cracker Jack enjoyed a dramatic increase in sales when they began to include a surprise toy in every package of the popcorn treat. Today’s consumers still have an insatiable desire for the unique and amazing, and home builders who successfully deliver a “wow factor” to their customers create compelling reasons for those customers to rave about them long after moving into their homes.

The strategy of delivering wows needs to be completely understood before the concept can fully benefit your business. For starters, a wow alone is unable to produce customer delight. In addition, a wow will not generate success when implemented as a recovery tactic for failure to meet expectations on other fronts: The principle of surprise and delight must be combined with a solid ability to deliver predictability to your home buyers. Customers want the anticipated and consistent, with an occasional pleasant surprise or value-add mixed in. You must be able to deliver both the expected and unexpected, and that requires understanding the evolution of wows.

Musts

To a home buyer, certain expectations are so fundamental that they are unspoken and assumed; they are the “musts”. These are the most basic essentials that have little to no satisfaction potential to a customer. They do, however, have a high dissatisfaction potential if not met. These musts evolve over time as consumer trends or building sciences advance, and it is imperative that they are always understood. Much like the caramel and popcorn recipe in the Cracker Jacks is assumed to be edible, a home buyer inherently assumes that items such as plumbing, electrical, windows, moisture barriers, and other basic home components will perform and meet their expectations.

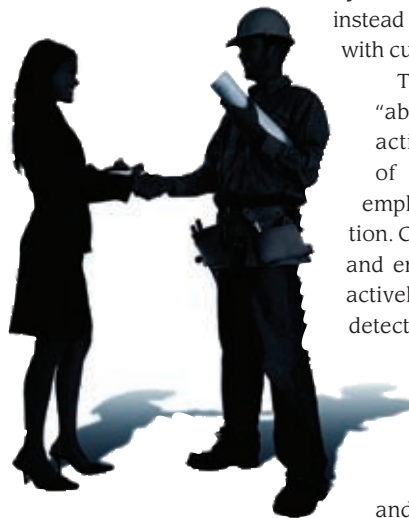
Wants

Unlike “musts”, a home buyer’s “wants” are spoken, and delivering on these will help to create satisfaction. Conversely, failing to provide wants becomes a recipe for dissatisfaction and disloyalty. For today’s home buyers, wants may include Energy Star-certified appliances, a walk-in pantry, solid-surface countertops, or covered patios for outdoor living spaces. Following the Cracker Jack example, wants are what take the ingredients from being merely edible to being inherently desirable.

Wows

If you are able to predictably and consistently deliver on home buyers’ “musts” and “wants”, you have your winning formula figured out. Now you’re in position to create an exceptional customer experience by delivering “wows”. Because home buyers don’t know that wows exist, they are unspoken. As a result, wows present little to no potential for dissatisfaction and extremely high potential for customer delight. In fact, the best customer experiences often come from creating wow moments of surprise and delight.

Although wows should appear like random surprises to your customers, they should actually be part of your strategic corporate culture, inherently understood by everyone in your organization. The best wows are personal memorable, show that you listened, demonstrate that you care, and are constantly being reinvented. Delivering successful wows requires that everyone in your company focuses on “connections” instead of “transactions” when working with customers.



This is a tall order and it takes “above and beyond” employee action. It stems from a culture of genuine caring and requires employee empowerment for execution. Consequently, you must both train and empower your representatives to actively listen to your home buyers, to detect any wow opportunities that may exist, and then to act on them.

In home building, trades are an extension of your team, and it is important that they also adopt this surprise-and-delight culture to create wow moments for your customers.

Putting It All Together:

The foundation of customer satisfaction rests squarely on predictability and consistency. To move beyond mere satisfaction to ultimate customer loyalty requires an element of surprise and delight for customers. Indeed, it is the added value moments with customers that allow you to differentiate yourself from the competition and build brand loyalty.

There is no cookie-cutter approach to surprising customers; the entire premise of wows rests on the spontaneity, uniqueness, and genuine nature of the actions. One of the most powerful ways to engage employees in delivering successful wows is to share best practices and real-life examples with them. It also helps to remind them that you are not in the home-building business serving people, but rather in the people-serving business building homes.

Tim Bailey is General Manager of AVID Canada, a 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.ca.



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By Phalguni Mukhopadhyaya

The VIP Treatment

Vacuum Insulation Panels Hold Promise for Increasing Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency in buildings is improving constantly and the future is looking even brighter thanks to technologies like vacuum insulation panels (VIPs). The National Research Council's Institute for Research in Construction (NRC-IRC) has been working to advance this technology, which provides insulating values up to R-60 per inch or even higher.

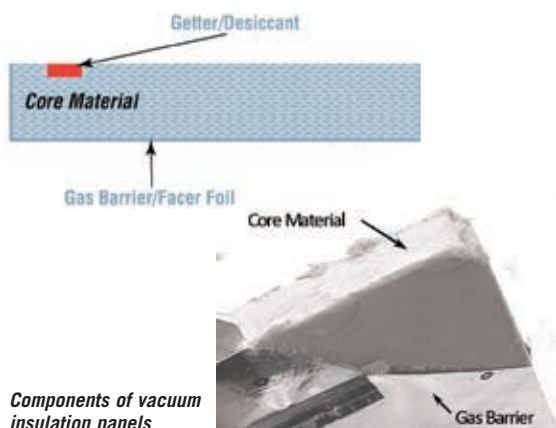
The Technology

The high insulating performance of VIPs is based on the fact that the absence or reduction of gaseous pressure inside an open-porous material increases its thermal insulating potential. VIPs are made with open porous core materials enclosed in an impermeable gas barrier and have three major components (Figure 1):

1. The core material is open-pored (and therefore evacuation-capable) and must be able to withstand the external load caused by atmospheric pressure. Ideal core materials should have an open cell structure, very small pore diameter, resistance to compression due to atmospheric pressure, and very high resistance to infrared radiation. Nano-structured (pore size) materials have been found to require the smallest degree of vacuum that has to be maintained.

2. The gas barrier/facer foil provides the airtight and vapour-resistant enclosure for the core material. Studies at NRC-IRC have indicated that commercially available vacuum technology and foil materials provide effective resistance against air and vapour permeation through the gas barrier seams.

3. A getter/desiccant is added inside the core material to adsorb residual or permeating atmospheric gases or water vapour in the VIP enclosure. The addition of the getter/desiccant increases performance and longevity.



Components of vacuum insulation panels

The thermal insulating capacity of VIPs is up to 10 times higher than that of conventional insulating materials. This property makes the panels particularly useful in applications where space is at a premium or where a very high insulating value is desired.

Several prototype projects using VIP technology have been completed or are being carried out in Europe and at least one in Canada. Despite their high insulating values, VIPs have been slow to make inroads into construction because of three drawbacks: cost, the need to protect them against puncturing, and the absence of long-term performance data or a procedure to predict long-term performance.

The Search for Alternative Core Materials

The long-term thermal performance of VIPs depends primarily on the gas barrier/foil facer and the core material. While the gas barrier helps to maintain the airtight and vapour-tight environment, the core material provides the insulating capacity. NRC-IRC is examining alternative core materials as a way of reducing the cost.

Building Applications

To function, VIPs must be well protected from mechanical damage due to functional loads or construction activities such as nailing. Accordingly, the VIP development process will need to include handling and quality control procedures and standards.

An obvious use for VIPs is to insulate precast cladding panels, where mechanical protection is provided by the concrete or any other rigid cover. For frame construction, carbon fibre protection for VIPs is being investigated. Another possibility is the use of conventional batt and rigid insulations to keep VIPs centred in envelope cavities and remote from potential damage from fasteners. These additional materials would also enhance the overall insulating value and reduce thermal bridging at junctions of VIP panels.

The Outlook for VIPs

Many building envelopes in North America have service lives of 25 years or more, so the long-term performance of VIPs is an important parameter to consider. Although VIPs are presently available from different Asian, European and North American manufacturing sources and come with a wide range of choices in terms of thickness, R-value per inch and size (length x width), little is known about their long-term thermal performance. Preliminary results from NRC-IRC laboratory and field-based ageing studies indicate that VIPs should be able to provide good long-term thermal performance. For the next five to 10 years it is expected that VIPs will remain more expensive than conventional insulating materials. With time, the cost will decrease as automation of the manufacturing process improves and economies of scale are achieved. In the near term, products such as floor heating systems, exterior doors and pre-fabricated façade elements are likely to make use of the high insulating value and slim profile of VIPs.

NRC-IRC will be hosting the 10th Annual International Vacuum Insulation Symposium (IVIS-X) in Ottawa on September 15-16, 2011. VIP experts from Asia, Europe and North America will present their latest research findings and discuss the future of VIPs in the construction industry. The web address for this symposium is www.ivis2011.org

Dr. Phalguni Mukhopadhyaya is a senior research officer in the Building Envelope and Structure Program of the NRC Institute for Research in Construction. Phalguni.Mukhopadhyaya@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca or 613-993-9600



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By Manjit Singh

New Temporary Foreign Worker Regulations

Whether your company currently employs temporary foreign workers (TFW) or may do so in the future, you need to be aware of the new Temporary Foreign Worker Program regulations that will come into force on April 1, 2011. Will your business be ready?

New TFW Regulations

Further to amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (IRPR), made pursuant to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, for the first time in Canada, employers of TFWs will be held responsible for not only their own non-compliance thereto, but also the non-compliance of their TFW employees as well.

The penalties for non-compliance will be harsh — businesses found to be in non-compliance may be barred from hiring any more TFWs for two full years and may also have their business names published on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) website as a further warning to future TFW applicants. Even worse, at present, there is no appeal mechanism for challenging/removing a business from the list of banned businesses once a non-compliance determination has been made.

The new regulations are the culmination of efforts by the CIC to confront the problem of exploitation of TFWs in Canada, implement a regime of stricter employer accountability in order to encourage greater adherence to the program's regulations, and ensure the temporary nature of the program.

TFW Visa Application Process

On April 1, 2011, TFW work permits will be issued through a process of triple-redundancy determination via a mechanism consisting of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

Applications will be determined against three essential criteria: (1) whether the job offer is genuine; (2) whether the employer has been compliant with the TFW program conditions and regulations for a period of two years prior to the date of application or, if non-compliant, whether the non-compliance was justified; and (3) whether the applicant has exceeded the new four-year cumulative cap on TFW status.

Genuine Job Offer

As part of the TFW visa application process, the genuineness of the job offer will be determined against several criteria, and it is expected that such TFW applications will be closely scrutinized by immigration officials. Consequently, businesses seeking to hire TFWs will have to tailor their employment offer letters in such a way as to address the requirements of the new regulations, and continue to monitor compliance.

Employer Compliance

Regarding the two-year past compliance requirement, immigration officials will not only be scrutinizing past TFW applications but may, in fact, requisition employer business records (such as T4 slips, employee records, etc.) to determine whether the employer has met the compliance requirements — any discovered past (two-year) non-compliance may not only fail a current TFW application, but also bar a company from any future TFW applications for a period of two years.

Four-Year Cap

Pursuant to the new IRPR regulations, TFWs will be allowed to legally work and live in Canada for a cumulative period of four years, with allowance for tolling the clock. TFWs will be required to leave Canada at the end of the four-year cap period and may not re-apply for TFW status until a further four-year period has elapsed (with some exceptions). Finally, non-compliance of TFWs with the four-year cap on status may be deemed as non-compliance by their employer — invoking the harsh penalties referenced above.

Conclusion

Consequently, businesses seeking to hire TFWs will have to monitor their own compliance to the new regulations and the compliance thereto of their TFW employees. Businesses should also ensure that their record-keeping is current and both easily accessible and discernible to Canadian immigration officials for the purposes of their past compliance review.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that businesses intending to hire TFWs consult with immigration lawyers current on the new regulations to ensure that their organization is ready to comply with the new regulations that will come into force on April 1, 2011, and maintain compliance thereafter. #

Resources:
Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, SOR/2002-227
Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, S.C. 2001, c. 27

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The penalties for non-compliance will be harsh.

Manjit Singh is an associate in the International Legal Services Group of Cambridge LLP. His practice focuses on international law (both private and public), immigration law, defamation law, and civil litigation. For more information, please visit www.cambridgellp.com

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Meet your President: Vince Laberge

On “Green” initiatives, governments, giving back, and getting ready for tomorrow...

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

RICHARD BAIN

Vince Laberge began his involvement in housing and construction as a teenager, and today he’s pretty much done it all, from construction and site management, to sales and marketing, company management and licensed real estate broker.

He’s also given back, and given back tirelessly. In the past, Laberge has served as president of both CHBA – Edmonton Region and CHBA – Alberta, been on the Board of Directors of the Alberta New Home Warranty Program, and served as the president of his community league. Today, he is on the boards of the Millwoods Cultural and Recreation Facilities Association and the Realtors Association of Edmonton.

At the National level, Laberge has served four terms on the CHBA Board of Directors and three years on the Association’s Executive Board. He also chaired the Association’s Urban Council for two years.

Laberge comes to the role of CHBA president with impressive credentials and a passion for the industry. We met up with him to discuss his vision for the coming year:

Home BUILDER Magazine: Tell us a bit about your business philosophy, and how it might transfer to your role as incoming president, CHBA.

Vince Laberge: My business focus has returned to my roots: custom homes and renovations with a much stronger focus on renovations. I am a RenoMark renovator [president of **Elena Contractors Inc.**] and my term will be dominated by the renovation side of my business. I’m also an R-2000 builder and Certified Built Green Builder [**WendyLynn Custom Homes Inc.**].

We prefer building in the bedroom communities of Edmonton where strong relationships can be fostered. Our Edmonton projects have centred on infill opportunities. I believe this will

be a very dominant part of our business going forward. The aging housing stock dictates the increased activity in renovations or complete rebuilds.

HBM: What do you see as your mandate in the role of president, CHBA?

VL: My role is simple: engage members. By that I mean engage members with government, and engage members in the analysis of our business environment so that they can make informed decisions as our markets change.

In relation to governments, there are many issues we need to be active on. We must be engaged at every level, and encourage our members to provide their experience and expertise to the work of our Association.

My role is also to be the next steward in bringing the Association along one more year. This means respecting the lessons we have learned, continuing our work at every level, and being ready for tomorrow.

HBM: If you had only one message to deliver to CHBA members, what would it be?

VL: Are we ready to take on the product type of tomorrow? With our aging housing stock and our aging population are we ready to adapt our current business operations?

HBM: You’ve volunteered at many levels of the Association over the years. How does that sort of involvement within the industry transfer to your day-to-day business?

VL: I have a deep passion for volunteering. What I discovered is that the lessons I learned from the people I’ve met have allowed me to become a better person, and a better new home builder and renovator.

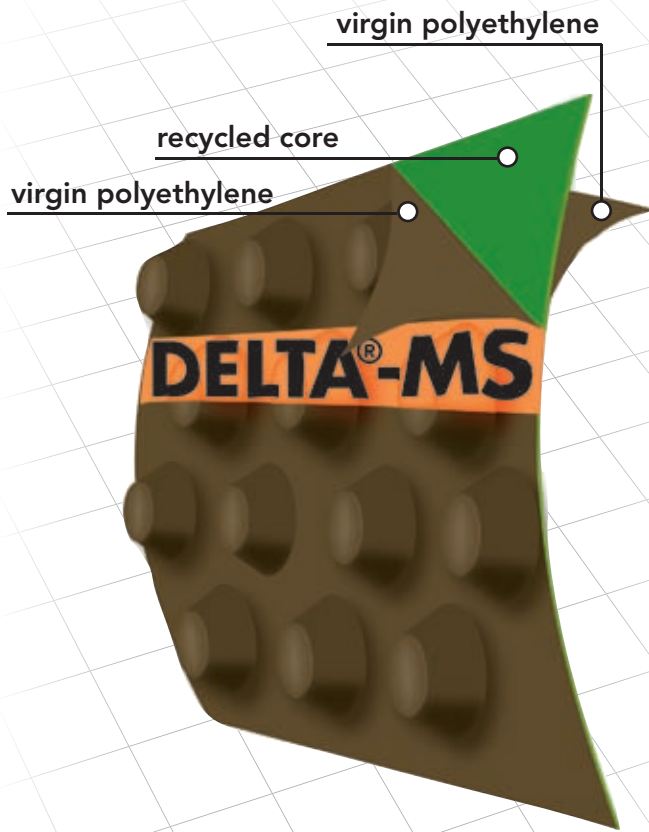
If members recognized how much they and their businesses could gain from being active in the CHBA, we would have line-ups to become involved. Simply put, volunteers learn first-hand from their peers. So, to answer your question, I would sum it up simply by saying “I become a better me.”

HBM: What impact has the “green” movement had on the Canadian residential construction industry in the past five years?

VL: The great thing about “green” with respect to our industry is that we are leaders and embraced this long before it got into the mainstream. We were, and still are, far ahead of the curve. Our industry has not needed

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20 ► regulations to bring on innovation in relation to the green aspects of our businesses. And this has helped us avoid the many unintended consequences that poorly-conceived regulation brings with it.

As with every new technology, we need to be certain that what we do works well and delivers real value to our customers. While we need to embrace new technologies, we have to be disciplined enough to know that not all are going to work, and some may actually work against our goals.

We cannot go at new green initiatives with the attitude that every new idea is good, until the proper research and analysis is done. Nobody gains from being overzealous in bringing on new technology without knowing all of the outcomes beforehand.

And we do need to pay very close attention to the costs versus benefits side of the question. We must be certain our customers are getting the value and the performance they are looking for.

For our industry, it all comes down to housing affordability and choice — can our customers get the home they want at a price they can manage?

HBM: *What will your key messages be as CHBA president in relation to governments?*

VL: Both business and government have learned many lessons over the last two years, as a result of the financial crisis and the recession. For instance, there is no doubt about the importance of our industry to Canada's economic well-being. It's clear that we have to apply these lessons, going forward.

One specific example: we know that the level of household debt matters given today's historically low interest rates. Recently, the Minister of Finance took some prudent steps in relation to mortgages and home equity borrowing, aimed at ensuring Canadians will be able to handle a return to more normal rates of interest.

For our industry, it all comes down to housing affordability and choice—can our customers get the home they want at a price they can manage?

My central message to governments is that tighter lending rules address only part of the problem. The other part has to do with governments' own role in driving up the cost of a new home. This happens through endlessly rising development charges, levies, taxes and charges. And it also comes through all manner of requirements placed on new development to pay for things that benefit the entire community. Increasingly, we're seeing governments

shift social costs into the mortgages of new home buyers, and that is irresponsible.

As well, the whole development approvals process takes too long, and ties up too much capital. This hurts our productivity, it makes it far more difficult to innovate, and it ends up meaning fewer jobs and less economic activity. We must get serious about cutting unnecessary red tape. ■



BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

MARKET REPORT: Alberta

Oil Will Pave the Road to Recovery

New home builders in Alberta expect total 2011 housing starts to be slightly lower than 2010, down from 27,088 to about 26,000 units, according to the latest Pulse Survey conducted in December 2010 and January 2011 by the CHBA. The problems for new home builders in Alberta most often cited as critical are rising development charges, potential requirements for sprinklers, rising costs of serviced lots, builder profitability and consumer confidence.

Renovators in Alberta paint a slightly more optimistic picture: about two in five renovators in Alberta report that their renovation activity is now higher than 12 months ago, while only one in five reported lower activity. Overall, renovators in Alberta expect some improvement in renovation activity over the next 12 months, with about 7 in 10 expecting higher activity. The average cost of a renovation is \$100,000 and takes 12 weeks to complete.

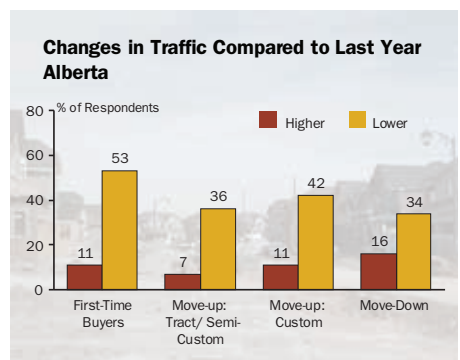
Both new home builders and renovators in Alberta report that, on average, employment in their companies is stable compared to a year ago, with an increase expected this

year. However, new home builders in Alberta reported that traffic at new home sales sites is down among all market segments compared to last year and, on average, that inventories of started-but-unsold single-detached units are higher compared to a year ago. Modest marketing shifts in the upcoming year will target the first-time buyer market, away from the move-down market.

Resales

The Alberta economy is benefitting from the recovery of oil prices, as investment in oil sands projects continues to grow, accelerating economic growth in Alberta. Employment growth in Alberta is also expected to recover in 2011, exceeding the peak level of employment reached prior to the economic downturn. As such, Alberta's labour market is expected to attract more migrants in 2011 and 2012, with total net migration to Alberta projected at 31,450 in 2011, and 34,100 in 2012.

In its *First Quarter 2011 Housing Market Outlook*, CMHC reports that the combination of increased migration, low mortgage rates, rising incomes, and peak levels of employment will also encourage home buying, pushing resale transactions to 50,400 units. Buyers' market conditions in most of Alberta's resale markets, which slowed resale transactions and inhibited price gains during the latter half of 2010, is expected to linger into early 2011. However, as spring demand outpaces supply, market conditions are projected to become more balanced. Higher mortgage rates will temper both resale transactions and price growth, with modest growth forecast for 2012. ■

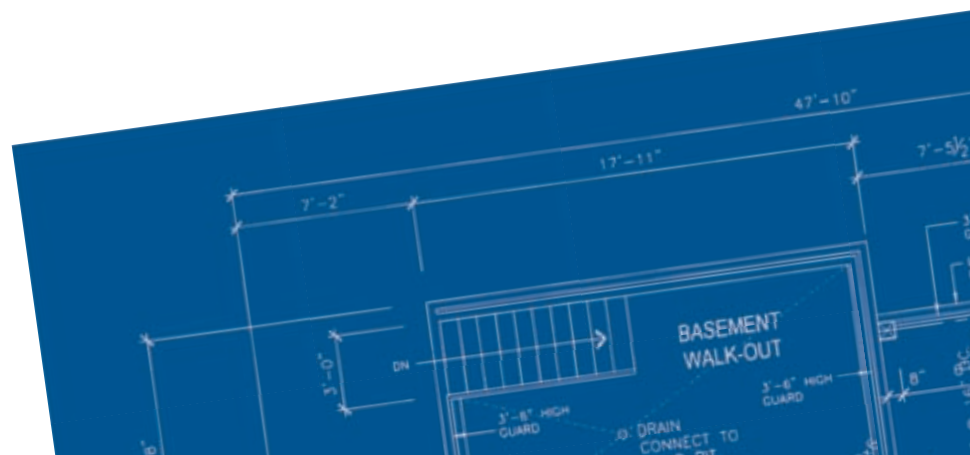




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Play It Again, SAM

A Tribute to the Winners of the 2010 CHBA National SAM Awards

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

The entertainment industry knows how to recognize their own, and they do it in grand style with a plethora of awards that include the Oscar, Emmy, Tony, Golden Globe, and People's Choice. We thought you might enjoy a few highlights from our own 2010 CHBA National SAM Awards, based on the entries received from new home builder, renovator and developer members. So without further ado:



Marketing Excellence Award

Empire Communities, Thornhill, Ont.:

"Schoolhouse"

Creative, Concept and Production: 52 Pick Up

Green Home Award

Natural Balance Home Builders, Vancouver, B.C.



Community Development Award ▲

Sun Rivers Golf Resort Community, Kamloops, B.C.: "Sun Rivers Golf Resort Community"

Grand SAM

Parklane Homes Ltd., Vancouver, B.C.

Creative, Concept and Production: Braun/Allison Inc., Chemistry Marketing & Design, Outline Graphics



Headwater, Bedford Landing



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24 ▶ New Home Awards

Production Homes:



Single Detached Home Under 1,500 Square Feet
Tarry Homes, St. Thomas, Ont.: "The Morningdale, Orchard Park"

Single Detached Home Between 1,500 to 2,200 Square Feet
Munro Homes Ltd., Regina, Sask.: "The Waterford Showhome, Harbour Landing"

Single Detached Home Over 2,200 Square Feet
Parklane Homes Ltd., Vancouver, B.C.: "Headwater, Bedford Landing"

Single Attached Homes
Phelps Homes Ltd., Grimsby, Ont.: "The Residences of Jordan Village, The Voronoff Model"



Custom Homes:

Single Detached Home Under 2,500 Square Feet
Alpine Timberframe & Design, Garibaldi Highlands, B.C.

Single Detached Home Between 2,500 to 4,000 Square Feet
Icon Developments Ltd., Ucluelet, B.C.

Single Detached Home Over 4,000 Square Feet
Ambassador Fine Custom Homes Inc., Mississauga, Ont.

▶ **Multi-Family Project:**
Boffo Developments Ltd., Burnaby, B.C.: "Jewel"



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CHBA President Victor Fiume presents the Rooftopper of the Year Award to Darryl Caunt



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Darryl Caunt, CHBA – Central Interior (B.C.)

Home Renovation Awards

Kitchen

Harwood Design Builders Ltd., Winnipeg, Man.

Any Room

Artisan Construction Inc., Delta, B.C.

Addition

Oswald Const. Ltd., Winnipeg, Man.

Whole House - \$500,000 And Less

My House Design/Build Team Ltd., Vancouver, B.C.

Whole House - More Than \$500,000

Zebra Group, Victoria, B.C.



Marketing Awards

Best Print Ad

Parklane Homes Ltd., Vancouver, B.C.:

"The Block" Creative, Concept And Production: Braun/Allison Inc.

Best Direct Mail Promotion

Rohit Communities Kelowna Ltd., Kelowna, B.C.:

"Copper Point Resort" Creative, Concept and Production: Pure Vision Inc. and Select Graphix Ltd.

Best Website

Abstract Developments Inc., Victoria, B.C.

Creative, Concept and Production: H&L Magazine, Sage Internet Solutions

Best Project Signage And Logo

Empire Communities, Thornhill, Ont.:

"Schoolhouse"

Creative, Concept and Production: 52 Pick Up

Best Brochure/Kit

Sterling Homes 'Edmonton' Ltd., Edmonton, Alta.

Creative, Concept and Production: Consumer Strategies Group

Best Sales Office

Homes by Avi Inc., Calgary, Alta.: "Avi Definitions Selection Centre"

See 2010 SAM Awards photo gallery on CHBA website: <http://206.191.48.134/samawards/2010/>

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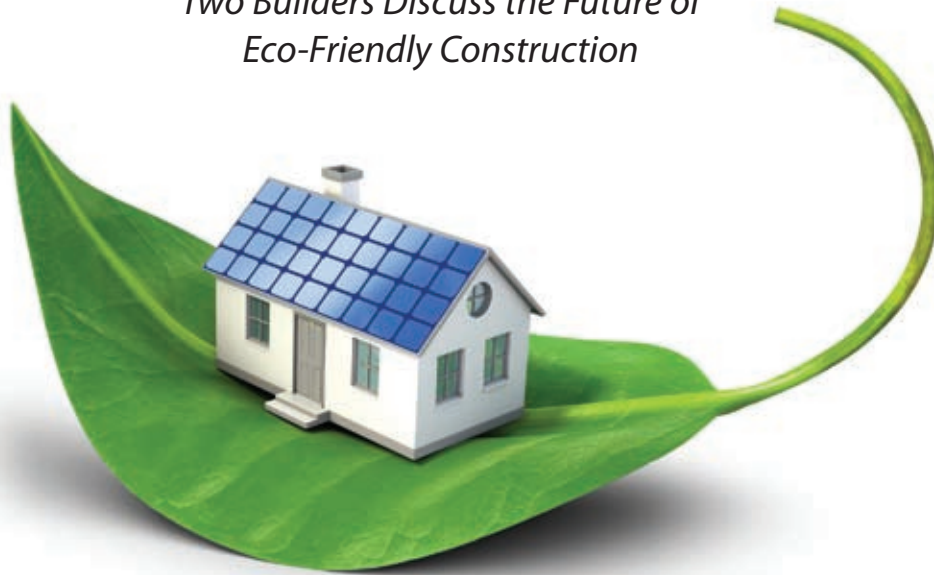
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Going Green Inside & Out

Two Builders Discuss the Future of Eco-Friendly Construction



BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

We have, in part, the energy crisis of the 1970s to thank for many of the green building practices currently in our collective toolboxes. Certainly the 1970s can be credited with supplying the motivation to find ways of reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Today we're seeing builders, designers, and manufacturers across Canada take green to a new level. In fact, it could even be said that we're at the beginning of an eco-friendly construction movement, one that goes beyond energy efficiency within the building envelope to incorporate features such as solar panels, geothermal, water conservation and renewable materials — all while reducing the amount of building materials going into landfill.

There are also a number of green building programs available, among them such industry standards as R-2000, Built Green, LEED for Homes and ENERGY STAR for New Homes. But any 'green' builder will tell you it's not just about the program. Rather, it's a philosophy that permeates all aspects of their business.

We asked two finalists of the 2010 SAM

Green Home Award to share their thoughts on eco-friendly construction. Representing Russell, Ontario, a small community southeast of Ottawa, is second-generation, small volume home builder, **JOHN CORVINELLI**, president and owner of **Corvinelli Homes Ltd.** Representing Garibaldi Highlands, British Columbia, a community just north of Squamish alongside

the Sea to Sky Highway, is **RICHARD LUTZ** AIOC, president of **Alpine Timberframe & Design**, a custom home builder and supplier/fabricator of timber structures.

Selling Green

Demographically, the age of a home buyer has not proven to be a deciding factor in buying green; rather, it comes down to the need to facilitate the education, promotion and informational aspects of energy efficient homes to the general public.

"When clients enter the market to purchase a new home, they tend to first look at just the monetary part of the home and use that as a price point comparison," Corvinelli said. "One challenge is that many Energy Star features are hidden within the envelope of the home, and may not be visible to the naked eye. However,



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once a client comes into the office, we are able to educate them that while a green home can be slightly more expensive at the outset, the price will be offset by ongoing lower operating costs."

Another solution is to offer clients energy efficient options. "We provide our clients with simple choices in regards to environmental impact, sustainability, energy efficiency and their relative costs throughout the design and construction of the home," Lutz said. "They are then able to make educated choices based on their wishes and budget. We do, however, always use products such as low VOC paints and finishes and formaldehyde free products wherever possible. There are so many little things we as builders can do that do not cost any more. Many tout these as green products, but they should actually ► 30



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Through careful design and material selection, Alpine Timberframe's structures are built to last many years.

28 ▶ just be common good practice.”

Continuing education, training and licensing at the builder level and within the trades are equally important. At Alpine Timberframe

& Design, for example, employees participate in continuing education through the Built Green program, manufacturers’ workshops, and other initiatives. “When we conduct our

own in-house blower door tests, we have our employees and the sub trades all involved by looking for air leakage,” Lutz said. “This turns into a bit of a ‘witch hunt’ and clearly demonstrates the importance of air sealing.”

“There are so many little things we as builders can do that do not cost any more. Many tout these as green products, but they should actually just be common good practice.” — Richard Lutz, Alpine Timberframe & Design.

The Future of Green

So what about the future of green, including legislation? “We simply cannot continue building homes the way we were with regard to energy efficiency and long term durability; the cost of a home to the average Canadian was

YOU CAN'T STOP THE RAIN. YOU CAN, HOWEVER, OUT-ENGINEER IT.

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One example of energy savings through renewable energy is found in a solar heating unit manufactured with recycled content.

simply crippling when you factor in heating/cooling costs and the short life expectancy of the building,” Lutz said. “I believe the government has a duty to legislate what many may seem as drastic changes to the building codes. However, with appropriate education it is quite achievable—there are many exam-

“One challenge is that many Energy Star features are hidden within the envelope of the home, and may not be visible to the naked eye.”
— John Corvinelli, Corvinelli Homes Ltd.

ples of properly trained, good builders across the country being proactive and taking many of these steps already without any difficulty. Much of this will also force product manufacturers into providing more sustainable and energy efficient products.”

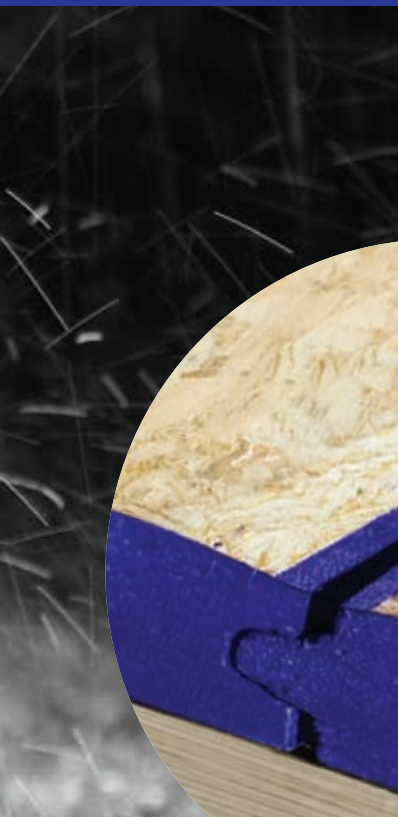
There’s no argument from Corvinelli, who



CORVINELLI HOMES LTD.

The mechanical room houses key influential components necessary for energy efficiency, indoor air quality and conservation.

further suggests that green homes should be a standard across Canada. “I strive to build more feasible sustainable green housing for the average homeowner at a budget-friendly cost, in all the homes I build. My ultimate goal is to construct every home to net-zero energy standards by implementing innovative, no maintenance, renewable energy technologies.”



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CHBA Conference



BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

Canadian
Home Builders
Association



BANFF, Alta. — The 68th National CHBA Conference was held at the Fairmont Banff Springs in Banff, Alberta, over the weekend of February 25 to 27, 2011. Once again, the sold-out Conference brought together Canada's community of residential housing expertise.

At the opening ceremony, outgoing CHBA president **VICTOR FIUME** presented the Presidential Award of Excellence to Federal Revenue Minister **KEITH ASHFIELD**. Fiume also presented a second Presidential Award of Excellence to **KEVIN LEE**, director of the housing division at

NRCan's Office of Energy Efficiency.

The Call to Inspiration

Saturday started with an Opening Breakfast, featuring **REX MURPHY**, the host of CBC's Cross Country Checkup and weekly contributor of essays on diverse topics to CBC TV's The Nation. Rex shared his perspective on why inspiration is an essential resource



in dealing with today's political and economic uncertainties.

Inaugural Address

Incoming CHBA president **VINCE LABERGE** of Edmonton laid out the Association's priorities on the first day of the Conference. In his Inaugural Address, Laberge said that policies that lead consumers or governments to use new homes as a source of funds threaten access to homeownership and the financial well-being of homeowners.



Laberge also cited a new Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) report, showing that total government-imposed costs on a modestly priced home amount to 13.4 per cent of the selling price; in some municipalities, the costs total more than \$100,000 per home. Contrary to claims that the GST and HST are "tax neutral" for most new home buyers and owners doing renovations, Laberge said, "this is simply not true."

After Laberge's address, Minister Ashfield spoke about the federal government's housing priorities.

Chaos & Junk

Saturday speakers included **JEREMY GUTSCHE**, the award winning author of *Exploiting Chaos* and founder of **TrendHunter.com**. Gutsche's message is clear: whatever you do, don't assume great things can't come from times of economic turmoil.

Sunday's breakfast offered the insights of **CAMERON HAROLD**, the innovative business leader who founded **1-800-GOT-JUNK**. Harold's message: Regardless of whether or not you believe you will ride an emotional rollercoaster running a business, you will. ▶ 34

RICHARD BAIN

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32 ▶

Awards Recognize Contributions to CHBA

The 2010 CHBA National Awards, celebrating CHBA's inspired voluntary leaders and the accomplishments of local and provincial Home Builders' Associations, followed Harold's presentation.

The prestigious Beaver Award, presented to the outstanding builder member of the year, went to **GARY FRIEND** of the Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association

J. ROSS GURNEY of the Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association won the Maple Leaf Award as the outstanding non-builder member for 2010. **PETER GREENWOOD** of the CHBA of Central Nova won the prestigious Gordon S. Shipp Award in recognition of leadership, dedication, and continuous lengthy service to the CHBA at the national level.

Economic Session



The CHBA's economic session focused on trends that will influence the new home building and renovation industries in the future. **PETER NORMAN**, Senior Director **Altus Group Economic Consulting**, CHBA Economist **PETER ANDERSON** and **BOB DUGAN**, Chief Economist with CMHC's Market Analysis Centre, were featured on the economic panel that took place after a presentation by **ANDREW COYNE**, national editor of *Maclean's*.

The final business session was presented by **DON BELL**. Bell, one of the founders of WestJet, knows that "when you win the hearts and minds of your people, they can deliver amazing results — from improved productivity, to better quality, to memorable and authentic customer service." In his session, Bell built on the lessons that made WestJet one of the world's most successful airlines, and focused on ideas that can be adapted to any business enterprise.



BC Builders & Renovators Excel at SAM Awards

Presented by **Schlage** and **Trane**, British Columbia new home builders and renovators took home more than half of the industry's National SAM Awards, including the coveted Grand SAM Award. The Grand SAM Award was won by **ParkLane Homes Ltd.** of Vancouver. The award is presented annually to a CHBA builder member for combined excellence in both the building and marketing of new homes. The firm also won the award for the best single-detached home over 2,200 square feet in the production category.

Empire Communities of Thornhill, Ontario, won the Marketing Excellence Award for its Schoolhouse project. The award goes to the CHBA builder member whose single project combines the best overall achievements in marketing. The award is based on the cumulative score attained in at least four Marketing Award categories.

Natural Balance Home Builders of Vancouver won the Green Home Award, presented to a new home builder or developer member for outstanding environmental performance in a new single-detached home.



Next year's National Conference will be held from March 16 to 18, 2012 at the Fairmont Tremblant in Mont-Tremblant, Quebec. Stay tuned for updates. 🏠

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 Ingersoll Rand

The Plant Encyclopedia

The global guide to cultivated plants

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

Imagine being able to design gardens and landscapes using a database comprised of 1.25 million plant species. That's the goal of The Plant Encyclopedia, a not-for-profit wiki developed by **Aden Earth**, a Toronto-based digital technology company focused on horticulture. The passionate group of specialists is made up of business, technology, and horticulture professionals.



The Plant Encyclopedia started with the Aden Earth team installing the platform Mediawiki (the same platform that's behind Wikipedia). The effort has grown and has integrated sophisticated new semantic web technologies, specialized to plant reference, with a branch-

ing structure of categorization. Essentially, this branching structure mirrors scientific plant categorization and actually uses binomial nomenclature and the Latin names of plants to build the structure of each page and the architecture of the entire website.

"The goal is to make available the sum of humanity's horticultural knowledge, open across the planet: It is the first truly global guide to cultivated plants," said **BEN ZLOTNICK**, CEO & founder of Aden Earth. "Now even a novice gardener can add to the eco-botanical knowledge and make that information openly available around the world. The benefit to the ecology of the planet, and the landscapes in which we all live, is obvious, from creating beautiful environments through gardens, to growing food locally, to endangered plant propagation."

Designed for fast and easy reference, passionate gardeners, horticulturists, and botanists around the world will author the plant pages and upload images. The website automatically structures information into the proper scientifically accepted branches of the "tree of life," making them a fast and valuable reference all around the world. The site also includes a Garden Plant Hardiness Zone Map, which uses satellite thermal image data originally gathered by various agencies over the period of a decade to track climate change.

Currently The Plant Encyclopedia is in beta testing phase and lists more than 25,000 plants. March 2011, 300,000 more plant pages will be "seeded" by Aden Earth. To find out more, visit theplantencyclopedia.org.

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Smart Solutions



At first glance, this month's entries might not seem to have much in common — in fact, technically some aren't even considered tools. But they actually share a common bond: each one offers a smart solution, and in the case of our first entry, a stylish one...

Sharp Dressed Man

OK, so this one is definitely not a tool, but it does use your **Milwaukee** 12v power packs. It is a heated jacket conceived for construction sites (while advertising the Milwaukee brand, of course) that provides full heat for up to six hours. Even with the worst of this year's cold weather over (we had to test it), it has three heat zones and three power settings — keeping you functioning in varying degrees of cold weather. It came out in the middle of this winter and is living up to its claims. You might even think they invented it for Canada. The battery holder is on the backside and the touch controller on the front. Switch out to any 12-volt Milwaukee battery. www.milwaukeetool.com.

Diamond Studs

Can diamonds be a contractor's best friend? We use a lot of diamond tipped cutting tools, but have you taken a look at the diamond-studded sharpening tools? Fishermen use diamond honing slips for their fish hooks all the time because the hooks tend to dig into all



other stones. One of the great advantages of a diamond sharpening tool is that it keeps its shape. Another is that it removes material far faster than other stones, and comes in as wide a variety of grits as you might need.

The **DMT** Diafold Whetstone is small enough for quick on-site sharpening of carbide router bits and folds into its protective handle. Chisels and all sharp edges, carbide or steel, can be touched up on the job.



The **DMT** Convex\Concave slip is a wired and wonderful tool for sharpening and honing inside or outside curved chisels in a smooth stroke without changing the shape of the sharpening surface. It provides radii from as small as 1/16 inch to 1 inch curves. The 600 diamond grit sharpens rapidly, the 1200 grit hones to a razor edge.

The variety of diamond sharpening surfaces available is amazing, far more than you see at Lee Valley and well worth a visit to www.dmtsharp.com. You will find many of these stones at speciality knife stores and fishing stores in Canada.

Getting a Grip

They may look like just another pair of vise-grips, but the **Irwin** VISE-GRIP Fast Release (CR) Locking Pliers gives three times more locking power by using a second leverage action at the end of closing the handle, which grips tighter as you push. You will notice a slight movement forward of the lower jaw — that's what gives it the extra grip without extra hand power. The one-hand release uses that last leverage point to allow opening the grip without using a lot of force. www.irwin.com.



If you like well made Canadian products, you will love the **TASK** SocketPro adjustable hex socket. Designed and made in Canada, six adjustable slides move in on a screw drive to give you anything metric or imperial from 3/8 inch to 3/4 inch. Made as a hand tool, you can drive it with a drill, but not with an impact wrench. It even grips bolts and nuts that have been stripped by sockets or vise-grips. You can see the SocketPro in action on a YouTube video at www.KobraTools.com/socketpro.

It's coming to Canadian Tire at the end of April with an introductory retail price point of \$19.99. www.task-tools.com.



Natural Born Leader

This new kind of water heater saves homeowners approximately \$320 a year* in water heating operational cost. The footprint is similar to a standard tank model, and it uses existing water and electrical connections.

Set yourself apart by installing the GE Hybrid water heater and giving homeowners the energy savings they're looking for. For more information call 1-855-742-6112

*Based on DOE test procedure and comparison of a 50-gallon standard electric tank water heater using 4881 kWh per year vs. the GE Hybrid water heater using 1856 kWh per year.



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Underground Economy a Growing Concern among Renovators

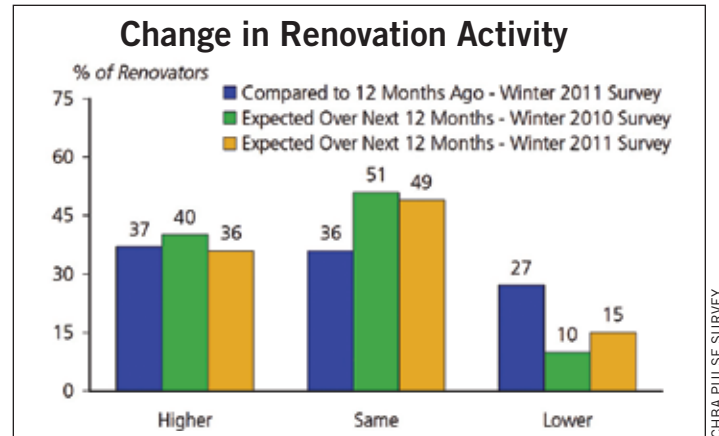
BANFF — The underground economy—work undertaken on a “cash deal” basis—is a growing critical concern of renovator members of the Canadian Home Builders’ Association. The 44th Pulse Survey of new home builders and renovators was conducted by the CHBA in December 2010 and January 2011 with the assistance of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Natural Resources Canada. The survey was tabulated and analyzed on behalf of the CHBA by Altus Group Economic Consulting.

While legitimate renovators have long been concerned about the underground economy, over the last two years the number who reported it as a critical problem has risen from 17 per cent to 54 per cent today. On a national basis, 84 per cent of renovators estimated that at least 30 per cent of small repair jobs are undertaken on a “cash deal” basis. Sixty-nine per cent said that at least 30 per cent of small renovations of less than \$5,000 are done that way.

In general, work in the underground economy is believed to be most

prevalent in Ontario for all sizes of renovations as well as new home building; in British Columbia and Atlantic Canada for renovations. Increasing builder liability, consumer confidence and shortages of trade/labour are also critical problems for some renovators.

The complete survey is available online at www.chba.ca/about/pulse-survey.aspx.



TOOLTALK

38 ▶ Bits & Blades

This month's drill and blade of the month both go to Bosch.

The **Bosch** Straight shank rebar cutter is a drill bit that will cut through rebar up to 36 times faster and last twice as long as other rebar cutters. It has a unique flute geometry that employs a steep spiral design that quickly removes debris. A relief hole is incorporated into the cutting surface to dissipate heat and facilitate slug removal. Users simply drill with a carbide bit until making contact with rebar. They then use the rebar cutter in rotary mode to cut through the rebar until contacting concrete again. Once rebar is cut, just switch back to the carbide bit to complete the hole.



Bosch has upgraded its diamond cutting blades in a highly competitive field, claiming five times the cutting life for their new blades with 20 per cent more speed. Their design objectives were to reduce excessive blade wear and prevent segment cracking. With the increase of tile applications, Bosch enhanced the continuous rim blades with an increased area of usable segment rim height versus previous blades. This feature enables improved wet or dry chip free cutting of ceramic, porcelain and granite with grinders or tile saws available in sizes from four to ten inches in diameter. www.boschtools.com.

RBC Poll: Renovation Nation Struggles to Stay on Budget

TORONTO — House-proud Canadians are investing in their homes, but some are struggling to keep the related costs in check, according to the seventh annual RBC Renovation Poll taken in the fall of 2010. Two-thirds of Canadian homeowners completed a renovation in the past two years and while 68 per cent of Canadian renovators established a budget, only half managed to stay within it.

Many also indicated that hindsight is 20/20 and expressed some regret in the way their home improvements were completed. Twenty-eight per cent cited exceeding budget as their biggest renovation mistake, followed by using the wrong contractor or trades people and DIY. For those intending to renovate in the next two years, the two most popular planned renovations are bathrooms (38 per cent) and exterior renovations (32 per cent), including yard and deck improvements. The vast majority of Canadians (92 per cent) view renovations as a means to increase the value of their home. www.rbc.com

Renovators Report Increase in Activity

BANFF — Renovators report increases in activity in the past year – about one-third of CHBA renovator members (37 per cent) say their renovation activity is now higher than 12 months ago, compared to only 27 per cent reporting a decline. On balance, renovators expect further increases in renovation activity over the next year. In all regions, renovators generally expect stable or improving activity levels.

Overall, the average size of contracts reported by renovators responding to the Winter 2011 Pulse Survey is \$50,000, with the average duration of renovation projects about eight weeks. Project sizes are typically smaller in Eastern Canada than Western Canada. Requests are up on average for energy efficient improvements, kitchen and bathroom renovations.



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



Vince Laberge
President, CHBA

Governments, at all levels, have become far too reliant on extracting cash from new home buyers and those renovating their homes.

It's Time for Changes

Last month's CHBA National Conference in Banff was a huge success—great business sessions, terrific social events and an impressive turnout of industry members from across the country. The strength of our industry, and our Association, was very clear.

As I begin to settle into my term as CHBA President, I want to express my gratitude to Victor Fiume for his strong leadership over the last year. Victor, you did a great job, and we appreciate your tremendous efforts.

The Case for Change

In my Inaugural Address to members, I focused on the need for change so that our industry can operate to its full potential and deliver to Canadians the homes they want.

Over the last two years, new home building and renovation played a key role in keeping Canada's economy on the rails. Beyond a doubt, governments at all levels now understand, very clearly, what an economic powerhouse our industry is.

The era of government stimulus is over. Interest rates will inevitably return to more normal levels. So the critical importance of housing affordability and choice is very clear.

Current housing forecasts cover a broad range, plus or minus some 35,000 starts in 2011. Where we end up—in terms of housing activity, jobs and economic impacts—will depend, in large measure, on choices that governments make. There is a lot at stake.

Household Debt and Housing Costs

Earlier this year, the Minister of Finance took actions to rein in expansion of household debt; particularly home equity-based borrowing that could create real problems for households when interest rates go up.

These actions were prudent—homeowners should be discouraged from using their homes as an ATM machine to finance vacations, and other personal consumption.

However, the Minister addressed only part of the problem: Governments are also in the habit of treating new homes, and new home buyers, as a 'cash cow.' This is resulting in larger mortgages and higher levels of household debt.

Strong new housing and renovation demand over the last two years was the result of historically low interest rates and government stimulus; the cost of building and renovating homes continues to increase. And much of these increased costs are imposed on consumers by governments.

Government-imposed Costs are Both Direct and Indirect

We are all too familiar with the growing array of government-imposed costs on each new home we build and sell. The various taxes, fees, charges and levies our

customers have to pay amounts to 13.4 per cent of the cost of an average-priced new home. At the extreme, this adds up to more than \$100,000 per home. And it continues to go up.

Many of these costs are for community infrastructure and services that deliver benefits to the whole community over a period of decades—but are paid for by a few new home buyers, through their mortgages.

Between 1995 and 2007, municipal reliance of development charges virtually doubled. And with every increase, both provincial and federal governments took in ever more GST and HST—so all levels of government have a direct role in inflating new home costs.

More recently, in addition to the direct costs imposed on new housing, there is a disturbing trend toward forcing homebuyers also to pay indirect or "stealth" costs. These occur when a development is required to finance a range of social services, traditionally paid for by the whole community through property and other taxes.

Inclusionary zoning is the 'poster child' for such indirect costs; it amounts to a tax-shifting device that forces a small number of new home buyers to subsidize the provision of lower-cost housing for others.

Similar requirements imposed through all manner of dubious means, including hijacking the building codes, impose an ever-increasing burden on home buyers for a growing array of social benefits. All such indirect costs ▶



CHBA Outgoing President Victor Fiume presents a Presidential Award of Excellence to Federal Revenue Minister Keith Ashfield at the 68th National Conference in Banff

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The whole process of development and home building now takes much longer than it should.

- ▶ follow the same flawed logic, amounting to a financial shell game that shifts these costs off the books at City Hall, creating the illusion that they are somehow provided for “free”.

This is irresponsible, unfair, and involves real risks. As we saw in the U.S., off-loading social policy costs onto housing was a prime cause of the financial crisis.

It is time for governments in Canada to recognize their role in driving up house prices — and take responsible actions to change the situation.

The CHBA has pointed to prudent and workable alternatives, such as better use of debt-financing at the municipal level.

The federal government must also face up to its responsibilities, by recognizing the insidious tax-on-tax nature of the GST, by acting to index the GST New Housing Rebate, and by introducing a permanent GST Rebate for home renovations.

Governments, at all levels, have become far too reliant on extracting cash from new home buyers and those renovating their homes. This contributes very directly to rising household debt levels. And it must stop.

The Costs of Red Tape

In my Inaugural Address, I also pointed to the need for governments to get serious about cutting the red tape that drives up housing costs, while delivering nothing of value.

We all know about the growing paper burden resulting from the morass of regulations builders must deal with. Streamlining and simplifying such requirements just makes sense.

The whole process of development and home building now takes much longer than it should, and it ties up more capital for more time, resulting in fewer homes being built. In an era where greater productivity will be the key to a healthy and growing economy, this simply makes no sense.

Recently, when announcing the federal Red Tape Reduction Commission, the Prime Minister described unnecessary red tape as “a hidden tax and a silent killer of jobs.” He’ll get no argument on that from our industry.

While we welcome federal action to cut red tape, in relation to housing what is required is for all three levels of government to work together on this issue. Federal leadership can help make this happen, and it’s what I called for in my speech.

Investing — Where it is Needed

Finally, in my Inaugural Address, I pointed to a number of areas where federal investment will be critically important in the future. These include:

- Strategic investments in basic municipal infrastructure;
- Pursuing financial innovations that support new technologies and new approaches to development;
- Supporting knowledge and information transfer,

particularly market data, technical research and demonstration programs like Equilibrium;

- Continued support for environmental initiative such as R-2000, ENERGY STAR, the EnerGuide Rating System and ecoENERGY Home-Retrofit grants; and
- Investing in human resource development—making sure our immigration and apprenticeship systems work well and address the skill needs of our industry, and supporting the development of the next generation of new home builders and renovators.

Government investment in each of these areas will support a stronger and more effective housing industry, while also addressing government’s own economic priorities. These are all areas where we must work with governments to make real progress.

Stop Leaving Money on the Table

The final point I made in my Inaugural Address is that there is one area where the federal and provincial governments should extract much more money: The underground cash economy.

The current situation means that governments lose billions every year to cash operators, while our professional renovators face unfair competition and consumers continue to get ripped-off.

This is one area where we would all like to see governments collect far more tax revenue!



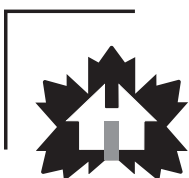
Presidential Awards of Excellence

Victor Fiume, Outgoing President of the CHBA announced two Presidential Awards of Excellence at the 68th National Conference in Banff.

In presenting the first award to Federal Revenue Minister Keith Ashfield, Fiume said he was impressed with Minister Ashfield’s grasp of the need for more effective action to combat the underground “cash” economy, particularly in residential construction. Fiume presented a second Presidential Award of Excellence to Kevin Lee, director of the housing division at NRCan’s Office of Energy Efficiency. Mr. Lee has contributed tremendously to expanding and reinforcing relations between CHBA and Natural Resources Canada.

April is New Homes Month

2011’s New Homes Month theme is “Your New Home — The Door is Open!” The campaign this year invites consumers to explore what’s possible for them in a new home. Thank you to our national sponsors Genworth Financial Canada and the Canadian Home Warranty Council.



CHBA 2010

AWARDS PROGRAM



2010 award winners display their trophies at the CHBA 68th National Conference in Banff.

The Canadian Home Builders' Association is proud to announce the winners of the 2010 National Awards Program, which recognizes the outstanding work of volunteers and member Home Builders' Associations across Canada.

Association Award Winners:

- Colonel Boss Trophy:
Regina & Region HBA
- Harry J. Long Memorial Trophy:
Regina & Region HBA
- Community Service Award:
CHBA of Central Nova
- Dave Bell Award:
CHBA – BC

Individual Award Winners:

- Beaver Award:
Gary Friend, Greater Vancouver HBA

Maple Leaf Award:

J. Ross Gurney, Greater Vancouver HBA

Gordon S. Shipp Award:

Peter Greenwood, CHBA of Central Nova

William M. McCance Award:

Steven Crowell, CHBA – Annapolis Valley

Riley Brethour Award:

Diane Bush, CHBA – Edmonton Region

Canadian Renovators' Council Award:

Peter Briand, CHBA of Central Nova

R-2000 Award:

Joseph Daniel, CHBA of Central Nova

Rooftopper of the Year Award:

Darryl Caunt, CHBA – Central Interior (BC)

Executive Officers' Council Awards:

- Dave Stupart Award of Honour:
Stu Niebergall, Regina & Region HBA;
Juanita Carhart, CHBA – Sussex
- Ken McKinlay Award:
Peter Simpson, Greater Vancouver HBA
- Susan Chambers Award of Recognition:
Peter Simpson, Greater Vancouver HBA

Congratulations to all the National Awards Winners.



9th Annual Northern First Nations Housing Conference Promotes Green Vision

THUNDER BAY — The 9th Annual Northern First Nation Housing Conference was held February 15 to 17, 2011, and once again proved to be an important, and informative, industry event for both networking and learning; a place where community leaders and housing professionals come together to meet quality suppliers, attend leading edge workshops, and collaborate with their fellow professionals in other First Nation Communities.

This year's theme was "Shelter - Conserve - Sustain" and promoted a green vision in terms of First Nation Housing. This year's confer-

ence showcased housing conservation measures and how incorporating green solutions into the First Nation Housing projects can help preserve resources for future generations. The Conference helped to build capacity amongst First Nation Communities through educating both the Administrative and Technical delegates who attended. Housing leaders utilized the conference to learn the latest technology and solutions as well as network with suppliers and other First Nation Communities.



ence showcased housing conservation measures and how incorporating green solutions into the First Nation Housing projects can help preserve resources for future generations. The Conference helped to build capacity amongst First Nation Communities through educating both the Administrative and Technical delegates who attended. Housing leaders utilized the conference to learn the latest technology and solutions as well as network with suppliers and other First Nation Communities.

Tool Talk's **JON EAKES** was on hand to demonstrate Preparing the Exterior Door Opening; Installing the Door in its Opening; Installing and Air Sealing the Door Opening; and Exterior Door Security Upgrades. Each demonstration was followed by a friendly competition. www.northernhousingconference.com

First Edition National Building Commissioning Standard

MISSISSAUGA — A Canadian Standards Association (CSA) technical committee, with representatives from government agencies, owners and the design and contracting communities, is finalizing the first edition of a national standard on building commissioning. The standard CSA Z320 is scheduled for publication in March 2011. Accord-

ing to the latest issue of Natural Resources Canada's *Heads Up Energy Efficiency Newsletter*, the new CSA standard will provide "a comprehensive process for validating and documenting the optimal performance of a completed building and its systems; it will apply to new construction and renovations to existing buildings. Included in the standard are mechanical, electrical, vertical and horizontal transportation sub-systems, as well as architectural and control systems."

NRCan's Office of Energy Efficiency (OEE) is funding the development of a web-based interactive version of CSA Z320 that will allow the user to tailor the final checklist to correspond to an individual building.

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum: Creating Opportunities in Skilled Trades

OTTAWA — The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum-Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA) has brought to light a number of key issues that affect apprenticeship training, such as perceived barriers to training; the business case for apprenticeship; and the importance of promoting apprenticeship training as a valued and respected choice for post-secondary education.

As part of its Employer Engagement Strategy, CAF-FCA conducted a study on employer support mechanisms to identify "what's out there" and what more could be done to support employers in the hiring and retention of apprentices. The result is a 36-page document titled *EMPLOYER APPRENTICESHIP SUPPORTS in Canada*.

Another recent research initiative resulted in the 104-page *Creating Diversity and Career Opportunities in the Skilled Trades*. Forecasts still show that there will be skilled labour shortages due to baby-boomer retirements; by 2017, there will be a need to train 316,000 workers to replace the retiring workforce in the construction industry.

For more information, visit www.caf-fca.org.

CALENDAR

Do you have an event you want posted on our new Online Calendar? E-mail your listing to editor@work4.ca

April 12
CHBA - Alberta Spring Builders' Forum
Edmonton, AB
www.chbaalberta.ca

April 13 - 14
Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC) National Symposium
Vancouver, BC
www.cagbc.org

April 15 - 17
Green Living Show
Toronto, ON
www.greenlivingshow.ca

April 26 - 28
Kitchen & Bath Industry Show
Las Vegas, NV
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Celebrating Excellence

CHBA's industry partners help the Association inform consumers about the real value of today's new homes and renovations. They do this, in large part, by supporting member activities like the CHBA National Conference in Banff. These industry partners have demonstrated their support for a vibrant housing industry. On behalf of all members, the CHBA thanks these partners and salutes their commitment, professionalism and contribution.

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