

BUILDER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION



ECONOMICS:

**Prospects for 2013—
Down but Not Out**

**Brookside Farmhouse:
An R-2000 Renovation**

Building an Online Presence

**Market Report:
Quebec: A Soft Landing**

**Builder Profile:
Gilles Desjardins, Brigil Homes**

**Tool Talk:
Comparison Chopping**

**Customer Satisfaction:
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HOME OWNERS HELP BUILD GENUINE PARTNERSHIPS.

In more than 500 communities across Canada, independent Home Hardware Building Centre and Home Building Centre Owners build thriving relationships with their customers. In Ponoka, Alberta, Grant Jorgenson of Jorgenson Homes is living proof. Grant has brought virtually all of his business to Sommer Home Hardware Building Centre for almost three decades. For Gary Colyn and the staff at Sommer such loyalty is a direct result of the ability to understand customer needs and the flexibility that local, independent businesses can offer. Both these award-winning businesses know the importance of collaborative partnerships – supported by massive buying power, job site deliveries, credit services, Top Notch Rewards, project packages, home and cottage plans and many other programs to help builders succeed.



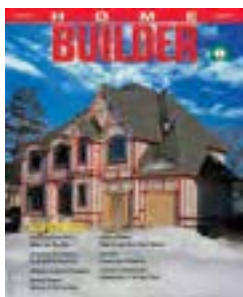
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Construction continues in Montreal, Quebec. Photo by Nachmi Artzy.

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Brookside Farmhouse: An R-2000 Renovation

When Steven Crowell looked over the 1857 "Brookside" farm home Paul and Linda Dennison wanted to renovate, he had two instant thoughts: "This is a great old structure – but it leaks air and energy like a sieve" and, "We can make it R-2000!"

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Building an Online Presence: How to Construct an Effective Website

Whether we're planning to buy a new home, or looking for a renovator, the first place we're likely to go is online. For small businesses, especially, an effective online presence is necessary.



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TOOL TALK: A Cut Above

From chain saws to caulking guns, this month, Jon Eakes take a look at five new products that have been developed with the professional builder or renovator in mind.

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SAM Awards & CHBA Conventions / Outdoor Living / Landscapes & Decks

A look at the highlights of the 2012 SAM Awards and CHBA National Conference in Lake Louise, Alberta. We'll also take a look at what's new in exterior building products with an emphasis on landscaping and decks.



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CMHC: Ten Trends & Their Effects on the Housing Market

OTTAWA — In its *Fourth Quarter 2012 Housing Market Outlook*, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation addressed 10 key factors and their effects on housing market activity:

Mortgage Rates: Short-term mortgage rates and variable mortgage rates are expected to remain near historically low levels, which will help support housing demand. The outlook assumes that mortgage rates will

Young Canadians Want More Financial Info about Buying a Home



OTTAWA — In a recent Nanos Research survey for the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA), over 63 per cent of Canadians indicated a “major need” for more information about the financial details of buying a home. That figure rose to 70 per cent for respondents between the ages of 18 and 29.

Consumers have a new tool to help navigate the complexities and financial implications of purchasing a home. CREA the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) launched the Homebuyers’ Road Map. Launched to coincide with Financial Literacy Month, the Homebuyers’ Road Map will help Canadians better understand the home buying process, as well as appreciate the importance of negotiating with lenders and researching government programs.

To access the Homebuyers’ Road Map, visit www.crea.ca and click the Buying or Selling? tab.

rise modestly in 2013.

Employment: Employment is forecast to grow 1.9 per cent in 2013, which will support Canada’s housing sector.

Income: Growth in incomes is expected to continue, albeit at a moderate pace due to modest economic growth in Canada and global markets, but still will support housing demand.

Net Migration: Canada is expected to attract more immigrants (net international migration), which will push net migration up and positively impact housing demand in the medium to long term.

Natural Population: Canada’s low birth rate should lessen the demand for additional housing stock in the medium and longer term. Population aging, however, will impact the type and tenure of housing demanded.

Resale Market: Resale market conditions for 2013 are expected to be balanced in most local markets. The average MLS price is expected to grow at a rate close to inflation, or slightly below, through 2013 in most regions. Housing starts are expected to reflect recent moderation in MLS sales, as trends in activity on the resale market typically lead trends in new home construction.

Vacancy Rates: Vacancy rates across Canada’s metropolitan centres are expected to decline to 2.0 per cent in 2013 due to high immigration. Low vacancy rates are expected to help support the multiple starts housing segment, through expansion of the rented condominium market.

Stock of New and Unoccupied Units: The ratio of the stock of unoccupied new units to population, a simple gauge to assess potential overbuilding, is close to the historical average.

Changes to Mortgage Insurance Rules: The recent measures for government-backed mortgage insurance will help ensure the sustainability of housing market activity and help stabilize house price growth. New measures announced for government-backed mortgage insurance will moderate housing activity.

Royal LePage House Price & Market Survey


TORONTO — The **Royal LePage House Price Survey and Market Survey Forecast** released on Jan. 8 showed the average price of a home in Canada increased year-over-year between 2.0 and 4.0 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2012. Compared to 2012, fewer homes are expected to trade hands in the first half of 2013, which should slow the pace at which home prices are rising. However, by the end of 2013, Royal LePage expects the average national home price to be 1.0 per cent higher compared to 2012.

While home sales volumes slowed in the second half of 2012, house prices, for the most part, held firm. Some consumers delayed their entry into the market during 2012, faced with economic uncertainty as governments in both the U.S. and Europe struggled with debt management plans and as homes in some regions became less affordable. In the fourth quarter, standard two-storey homes rose 4.0 per cent year-over-year to \$390,444, while detached bungalows increased 3.6 per cent to \$356,790. National average prices for standard condominiums increased 2.0 per cent to \$239,374.

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WRHBA Donates Life Saving Defibrillator to Local Hot Spot

WATERLOO REGION — Each year the Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association (WRHBA) donates funds raised at its Annual Fall Charity Golf Classic to a Charity of Choice.

This year WRHBA chose to align itself with The MikeyNetwork, which is committed to placing "MIKEYS" (Public Access Defibrillators) in as many locations as possible so that people affected by sudden cardiac arrest might have a second chance at life. Time is of the essence for a victim of cardiac arrest, and a MIKEY can bring a life saving shock within minutes—even before emergency services personnel can arrive.

The proceeds from WRHBA's 2012 Fall Charity Golf Classic allowed the Association to purchase two MIKEYs. WRHBA President **BRIAN CAMPBELL** was honoured to present one to Golf's Steak House and Seafood Restaurant, the Association's monthly dinner meeting venue, in honour of their good community stewardship.

The second MIKEY found its home at the Association's Waterloo office. The unit itself is portable, which allows staff to bring it to all of the Association's events. Annually, WRHBA hosts over 2,000 members of the association and guests from within the community. The wellbeing of the community at large is always at the forefront of the WRHBA, and they invite all companies and associations to consider purchasing a MIKEY through The Mikey Network's website, www.mikeynetwork.com. 🏠

BILD Members Raise \$30,000 for Habitat for Humanity Toronto

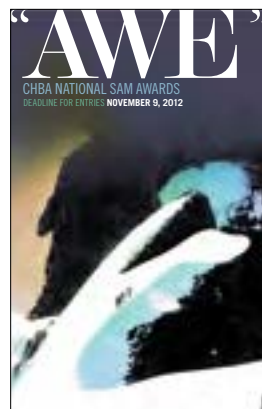


GREATER TORONTO — A change in venue and a new theme proved to be successful for the Building Industry and Land Development Association's (BILD) fourth annual Party for Humanity, which raised more than \$30,000 for Habitat for Humanity Toronto.

The event was attended by more than 450 industry professionals, who arrived at the Warehouse in Downsview Park dressed in their favourite white pieces, in accordance with the Party's "White Out" theme. Fundraising efforts were aided by a silent auction, raffle and a "wardrobe tax" for those whose attire lacked the mandatory white piece.

BILD's Party for Humanity is one of four major fundraisers for Habitat for Humanity Toronto. The Association has supported the charity since 2003 and has since raised more than \$535,000 toward its goal of building affordable homes for low-income families. 🏠

2012 SAM Finalists Announced



OTTAWA — Congratulations to all of the Finalists named for the 2012 CHBA National SAM Awards, Presented by Schlage and Trane. This year's SAM Award theme—Awe—speaks to the ingenuity, imagination and creativeness that drives new home builders, renovators and developers to build homes and communities that are truly awe-inspiring. Winners will be announced at the 2013 CHBA National Conference in Lake Louise on March 8. Visit www.chba.ca/SAMS to access the full listing of 2012 SAM Finalists. 🏠

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By Peter Norman

Prospects for 2013—Down but Not Out

With the close of 2012 and the dawn of 2013 increasing attention is being focused on the potentially changing fortunes in the housing sector. Certainly the second half of 2012 featured some slowing of activity levels in many markets in Canada. Moderating resales and resale prices and lower new home sales in some markets will lead to more modest housing starts in 2013.

Sharply weaker first-time-buyer affordability remains a key concern, as continuing deterioration in youth labour markets and recent changes to mortgage regulations have affected this segment in particular. Moreover, continued slow (but steady) economic growth, the shadow of international financial risks, and generally lackluster income growth are also eroding confidence.

Perspective, however, is everything. It is still a pretty steady market. Modestly weaker housing demand is leading to a “soft landing” for housing starts, but calls for a more massive housing market correction are premature. Moreover, inasmuch as housing data are showing some

slowing, they are doing so from pretty modest levels. Canada’s housing sector has continued to struggle since the onset of the recession over five years ago, and analysts that characterize recent events as a “bubble” that may be “bursting” are overstating the rise in the market, and fretting too much about the potential fall.

Total Canada-wide housing starts moderated to some 222,900 units seasonally adjusted at annual rate (SAAR) in the third quarter of 2012, according to CMHC, down about 3 per cent from the second quarter. Final full-year housing starts are not yet in, but based on preliminaries, ended up at just below 215,000 units. The gradual trend decline in starts since a peak in the second quarter was due primarily to apartment starts receding. Apartment starts have moderated from recent highs, but single-family housing starts still lag significantly relative to activity prior to the recession.

Key Trends to Watch for in 2013

Expect lower, but still respectable housing starts: Canada-wide housing starts are expected to moderate to about 190,600 units in 2013, which is down some 11 per cent from 2012, but will be more in line with underlying demographic demand. Lower housing starts will come primarily from the apartment segment, which was more elevated in 2011 and 2012. Next year will be a

more typical year for apartment starts, while the single-family segment will continue to languish well below pre-recession peaks.

Expect modest housing prices: Moderating demand will have a dampening effect on new and existing home prices across the country. As supply responses will vary from market to market, so too will price trends, where some markets may see modest price declines and others modest rises. Media and some analysts may continue to raise the specter of a housing crash, but on net homeowners have little to worry about in terms of the safety of the equity in their homes. New home prices will continue to be influenced by rising development charges, regulatory burden and increasing costs of building code compliance. Building materials costs continue to rise modestly. Any moderation in overall new housing prices will come from narrower builder margins.

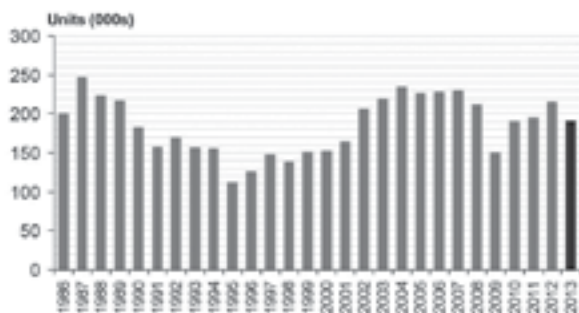
Look for continued low interest rates: The prime rate and Canadian mortgage rates, which are at historic lows, will continue to be so through 2013. With limited inflation pressures, international financial uncertainty and the continued soft economy in the U.S., there is little indication that either the Bank of Canada or bond markets are likely to raise interest rates anytime in the foreseeable future. Given still-wide spreads between typical chartered bank mortgage rates and government bond yields, it would not be inconceivable to see even lower mortgage rates on offer some time in 2013.

No material improvement in first-time buyer activity: This critical segment of the home buying market has been largely sidelined since the recession, and recent changes to eligibility rules for federally-backed mortgage insurance aimed squarely at the first-time buyer will continue to keep this group sidelined through 2013. Very weak youth and young adult labour market conditions for the past five years has also negatively affected the economics of potential first-time buyers.

Housing performance will be strongest in the prairies: Expect to see the brightest performance from housing across the country in Alberta and Saskatchewan in 2013 where energy sector gains and other economic factors continue to draw in healthy migration internationally and from elsewhere in the country.

On net, expect a slower but steady year ahead for the new housing market in Canada. Builders should anticipate tighter margins as cost pressures combine with increased competition from resale supply, but housing demand will generally be steady leading to an average year in terms of total housing starts. ■

Canada-Wide Housing Starts Lower in 2013, but Still In Line with Historic Pattern



SOURCE: ALTUS GROUP ECONOMIC CONSULTING BASED ON CMHC

Peter Norman is a member of the CHBA Economic Research Committee and is Chief Economist at Altus Group (formerly Clayton Research), the leading provider of independent real estate consulting and advisory services.



By Fanis Grammenos

Studies have shown that exercise and play in the early years build an affinity that can last a lifetime.

Fanis Grammenos heads Urban Pattern Associates, a planning consultancy, following a 20-year research career at CMHC. He can be reached at fanis.grammenos@gmail.com and his work viewed at: <http://blog.fusedgrid.ca>.

The Hopscotch Proof

Two widely reported, and most likely related, trends have planners and parents concerned: the increasing number of overweight children and the growing number of hours that kids spend looking at a screen, be it a television, a games console, a laptop, a tablet or a smartphone. Among them, these endless arrays of devices take most of the free time children have after school. Add to these trends the tendency for kids to be driven or bussed to school and you get what has been coined as “nature deficit”; kids growing up not connecting with their natural surroundings. Over the long run, the outcome could be physically unfit and socially maladjusted young adults. The warning statistics are all around us.

Is there a way out of this unhealthy cycle? Can neighbourhoods be laid out so as to avoid these unwelcome results? Evidence from research pronounces an unequivocal “yes.”

Getting Social

Many pieces shape the puzzle that forms the complete answer; one has to do with what draws people out of their houses and prompts them to socialize with neighbours. Since 1980, several studies have shown that the great inhibitor to socializing on a street is traffic—the heavier the traffic, the less the socializing.

Invariably, the less the socializing, the fewer friends both adults and kids can make, lowering the attraction to get out of the house. The latest, 2008 study, showed that people on a cul-de-sac had four times as many friends and twice the number of acquaintances than residents on through streets with heavy traffic. It seems intuitive and proof confirms it.

A second piece paints a picture of what streets young kids play most on. Once again, research shows it's the cul-de-sac. Children on a cul-de-sac spent 50 per cent more time playing than kids on other streets. But playing on the street is not the end of the story. Other studies have shown that exercise and play in the early years build an affinity that can last a lifetime. Furthermore, pals tend to participate in activities with friends more frequently than on their own. After all, what kid wants to play street hockey by themselves?

A third piece of the picture is about “magnets” that will pull kids out of their homes and send them walking to school, the corner store and other destinations. A study found that of all the elements which would attract kids of all ages, the strongest common force was the presence of open space.

Another piece of the puzzle, though not the last, is how parents feel about letting kids play

on the street or walk to school or ride their bicycle. Often, they feel uneasy about letting them go and, justified or not, their fear limits the range of activities that kids can engage in.

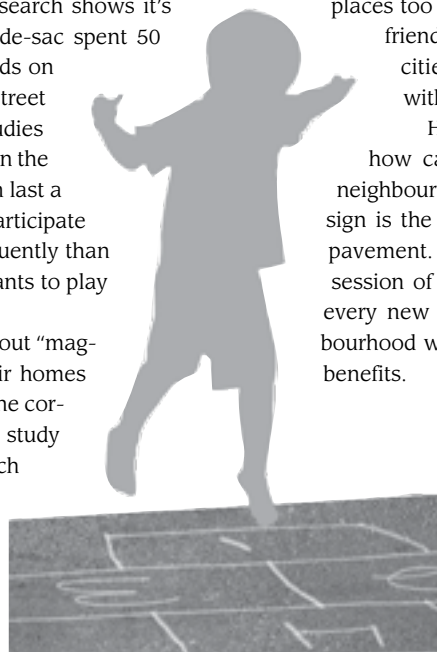
The Features

With these four pieces of knowledge from the field, we can now sketch out the essential elements of a child-friendly neighbourhood and, beyond that, a child-friendly district. Here's how:

- There should be no through streets in an area the size of about 10 city blocks. Such a feature will give kids plenty of room to move around in a low-traffic, low-speed environment. Parents will socialize and kids will play. Parents' insecurity will fade. The easiest way to create that feature is by using *connected cul-de-sacs* and crescents.
- Every such neighbourhood area should have at least one open space, whatever its size. That would grant a safe haven for play—a magnet. Its land value will be fully recovered through higher values for the homes around it. Real estate research shows cul-de-sacs and open spaces command higher home values.
- Allow for bike and foot paths separated from the road that lead to school or other places with as few road crossings as possible. That will appease parents about letting their kids walk or ride to school and widen their horizons.

Can all this be achieved with a layout? Yes, by selectively fusing well known elements of available community plans. A number of examples of this fusion exist and plenty of advice is accessible. And these techniques are not just for planning new neighbourhoods; existing places too can be transformed to create child-friendly environments. Initiatives in many cities have changed neighbourhoods with positive results.

Having done all this creative work, how can you tell you succeeded? Is the neighbourhood truly child-friendly? One sure sign is the chalk hopscotch marks left on the pavement. They signal that the kids took possession of a street and were having fun. And every new family that moves into the neighbourhood will be heir to its physical and social benefits.



For referenced studies and design solutions visit www.fusedgrid.ca or e-mail fanis.grammenos@gmail.com



By A. Laouadi (above), H. Saber, A. Galasiu, and C. Arsenault

Predicting the Performance of Tubular Daylighting Devices

Tubular daylighting devices (TDDs) are used to collect and channel daylight from the roof of a building into interior spaces. They are an alternative to conventional skylights and have the advantages of energy efficiency (small area relative to the amount of useful light they can admit), lower solar heat gains, and relative ease of installation.

Straight TDDs are popular, but non-linear light guides with bended sections are sometimes needed to suit the geometry of the building. TDDs for residential use have been available for more than two decades and manufacturers have been continuously developing new technologies to enhance, in particular, lighting performance.

Until recently, these companies have not had reliable and accurate calculation methods and design tools that would allow them to predict the energy performance of installed TDDs, to show compliance with building energy codes, and to rate existing and innovative products.

In an effort to help manufacturers improve the design and installation of their products, researchers at NRC Construction developed and validated a model capable of computing the U-factor, Solar Heat Gain Coefficient and Visible Transmittance of TDDs with and without bends.

How TDDs Work

A typical TDD consists of three parts: a collector located on the roof to gather sunbeam light and diffuse skylight; a hollow pipe to channel the collected light to its intended destination; and a ceiling diffuser to spread the light indoors.

The collector is usually made of single or multiple transparent plastic domes, and may include geometries or some optical elements to enhance the light output of the TDD, especially at low sun altitude angles.

The pipe can be straight rigid, elbowed rigid, or flexible, and is typically made from an aluminum sheet with a highly reflective interior lining. Pipe materials with a reflectivity of 99 per cent are typically available. The pipe may be fully or partially insulated at the ceiling or roof level to suit a particular type of building. Pipe diameters typically range from 254 to 559 mm (10 to 22 in.) and, for residential applications, runs as long as 9 m (30 ft) are available. The diffuser is typically hemispheric or planar with single or double translucent (opal) or clear prismatic glazing.

The light output from a TDD will vary according to time of day, daylight availability, building location, roof orientation and exposure, and tube length. A typical

device can illuminate an area of 14 to 28 m² (150 to 300 ft²). This area of coverage is dependent on the height of the ceiling. The higher the ceiling the better the light will be able to spread.

NRC Research

The objectives of the NRC research were to develop:

- Methods to compute the solar optical characteristics (transmittance and layer absorptances of each TDD component) and solar heat gain coefficients (SHGC) at all relevant oblique incidence angles, and thermal transmittance (U-factor) under a variety of environmental operating conditions in commercial and residential buildings; and
- Ways to assess light diffusion over the lighted space to optimize illumination while reducing glare.

The researchers were able to develop models to predict light transmission, solar heat gain and thermal performance for a range of TDD sizes, orientations relative to sun direction and configurations. The models are sufficiently accurate to address the various geometrical and optical complexities of TDD products.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that manufacturers use the models to develop TDD product ratings instead of relying on the costly measurement procedures currently available. The addition of the TDD models to fenestration design tools or the ASHRAE Load Toolkit will help design professionals select site-specific, energy-efficient products.

Implications for Builders

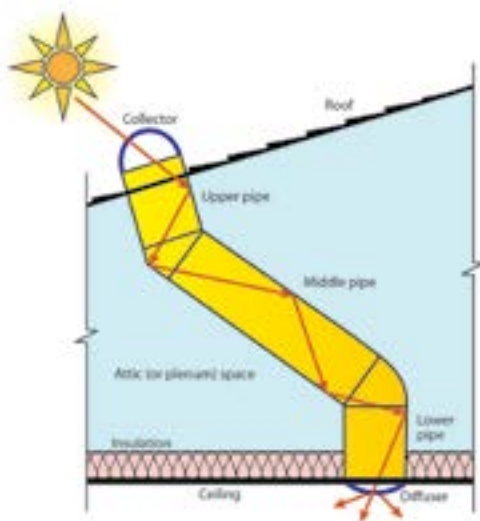
Once manufacturers begin to employ the models, builders will be able to select TDDs for a specific building type (residential or commercial) and location that will comply with building energy codes and energy efficiency standards (such as ASHRAE 90.1, and ENERGY STAR). If the models are adopted by rating fenestration councils, TDD manufacturers will start adding product performance metrics such as U-factor, SHGC, Visible Transmittance, lighting output, and daylight coverage area to TDD product packaging.

When selecting TDDs, builders should consider:

U-factor: Residential TDDs should have double- or triple-pane ceiling diffusers with a U-factor of 2.5 W/m² °C (0.44 Btu/ft² °F) or less.

Solar Heat Gain Coefficient: For heating climates, TDDs should have a moderate to high SHGC.

Visible Transmittance: Since typical TDDs may transmit about 50 per cent of admitted sunlight in summer, products with the highest visible transmittance should be selected. ■



Typical tubular daylighting device for residential buildings.

Dr. Laouadi and his colleagues are part of a research team at NRC Construction. Dr. Laouadi can be reached at 613-990-6868 or aziz.laouadi@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca.

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BRIGIL HOMES

Building in two very different provinces

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

GILLES DESJARDINS, Brigil's founder, was 19 years old when he built two buildings of six units each in Gatineau, QC, taking care of the construction, the administration and the leasing of both buildings.

Since that time, the company has weathered through three recessions to become one of the largest home builders in Quebec, with more than 7,000 residential housing units in Ottawa and Gatineau. The experience and expertise gained in the past 28 years, as well as working in two provincial housing markets, has provided a unique perspective.

"There is definitely a difference between Ottawa and Gatineau," said Desjardins. "For example, a \$500,000 home for sale in our luxurious project in the Vieux-Port (Hull) represents a million-dollar home in the Glebe, which is minutes from downtown Ottawa. A house in our Rivermead project in Aylmer sells for \$400,000—\$150,000 less than in Kanata. Prices are 30-40 per cent lower in Gatineau."

It isn't only the price that's different. "Ottawa's population prefers separate dining rooms, large great rooms for having people over and a smaller living room for everyday use. In Gatineau, the population prefers larger lots. In contrast, we can find a new home only seven minutes away from the Parliament buildings, but in Ottawa, this is not the case."

Regardless of provincial differences, Desjardins is quick to point out that quality of product—and of life—exists on both sides of the river. "We are blessed in the National Capital

region to have parks, bike paths, rivers and a renowned school system. We have all the same commodities of the big cities such as Toronto and Montreal, with the same tourism features as Mont-Tremblant and the Laurentiens."

Partners by Association

Being a member of two provincial home builders' associations (Greater Ottawa HBA

"In Gatineau, construction workers are governed by the CCQ. In my opinion, this creates a false shortage of workers." Gilles Desjardins, founder.

and APCHQ - Outaouais) has also played a large part in Brigil's success. In fact, Brigil is one of the few companies to have received platinum and diamond accreditations from the APCHQ, as well as the prize for entrepreneur/builder of the year.

"To be a member of home builder associations, there are rules and criteria that must be followed, such as quality control," said Desjardins. "For the last 20 years, Brigil has been a proud member of the APCHQ, which allows us to offer a level of security to our customers. In Ontario, the same concept is used by CHBA and its provincial and regional associations, thus ensuring that quality is offered and consumers are protected. Both associations also work tirelessly with government to promote and protect the residential housing industry."

Skilled Trades

Ontario home builders may lament about the shortage of skilled trades, but Desjardins says it is much easier to find workers in Ottawa than in Gatineau. "In Gatineau, construction workers are governed by the CCQ," explained Desjardins. "In my opinion, this creates a false shortage of workers. It is mandatory that the workers speak French to be able to complete the CCQ exams. In Ontario, there is more flexibility to the home builder to ensure that the workers are qualified and that quality craftsmanship is ensured. With fewer entry barriers there is bigger workforce to pick from.

"Those challenges aside, Brigil has a team of 125 people who are motivated by excellence. We have established relationships, based upon performance and professionalism, with hundreds of suppliers and more than 350 sub-contractors, all sharing the same values and contributing to the development of many small businesses."



scolaire des Draveurs de Gatineau to facilitate the building of schools.”

Desjardins also remains very positive towards the economy of the National Capital region. “We have a very educated, multi-cultural population filled with embassies that engages in interesting commercial foreign

exchange. With the strong public sector, our economy is a lot more stable than many other areas of the province, and the country; we are in a great region to find employment. The construction sector has always been a respected industry in both provinces, and Brigil is proud to be part of it.”

Giving Back and Going Forward

Since its beginnings, Brigil is proud to have contributed millions of dollars toward the development of its community. “Brigil gives substantial donations to various charities and organizations, including the Canadian Cancer Society, the CSSS foundation of Gatineau, the Montfort hospital foundation, student bursaries for l’UQO, the Ashbury College Foundation, Algonquin College, Cité Collégiale and CEGEP de l’Outaouais,” said Desjardins. “We even sold land for one dollar to the *commission*



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Québec



A Soft Landing



By François Bernier
Director, Economic
Research and Public
Affairs, APCHQ

The housing market in Quebec has seen a period of remarkable growth over the past 10 years. However, various indicators have led the *Association provinciale des constructeurs d'habitations du Québec* (APCHQ — Quebec Provincial Home Builders Association) to suggest that the industry is definitely at the tail end of a cycle of expansion. Indeed, the economy has already begun to cool. There are now fewer first-time home buyers, due in large part to changes made to mortgage insurance, and despite rock-bottom interest rates that probably will remain low for some time to come, demand has declined. Nevertheless, the APCHQ believes there is no reason to fear a collapse, and says that the housing sector in Quebec is headed instead for a soft landing.

Market Overview

The drop in housing starts that began in 2011 has continued in 2012, with an expected 45,000 new units, which is nonetheless a respectable result. The APCHQ is forecasting 40,000 housing starts in 2013, but the risk of a more pronounced downturn cannot be ruled out.

Given that the government is encouraging cities to build more densely, the market is quite naturally turning to condominium projects. As a result, more condominiums than individual houses are being built in urban centres. However, this type of housing necessarily entails higher inventories and longer absorption periods. In light of statistics showing that inventories and units under construction are on the rise, developers and banks are being

more cautious before beginning new projects.

Furthermore, as land grows scarcer, we are witnessing a wave of real estate speculation, fed by the phenomenon of “new urbanism,” which is based on the notion of density. In fact, developers are competing with each other to carry out the last large projects of the current economic cycle.

The challenge of affordability

Prices of both new and existing houses have more than doubled in the past 10 years. According to RBC’s housing affordability index, a detached bungalow, two-storey

We are witnessing a wave of real estate speculation, fed by the phenomenon of “new urbanism.”

home or condominium apartment is currently less affordable in Montreal than in Calgary or Edmonton, although it is more so than in Toronto. However, in the condominium market, the gap between Montreal and Toronto has narrowed (with measures of 31.6% in Montreal and 34.8% in Toronto). The challenge of afford-

ability is now a genuine concern in several markets across Quebec.

Warranty plan reform

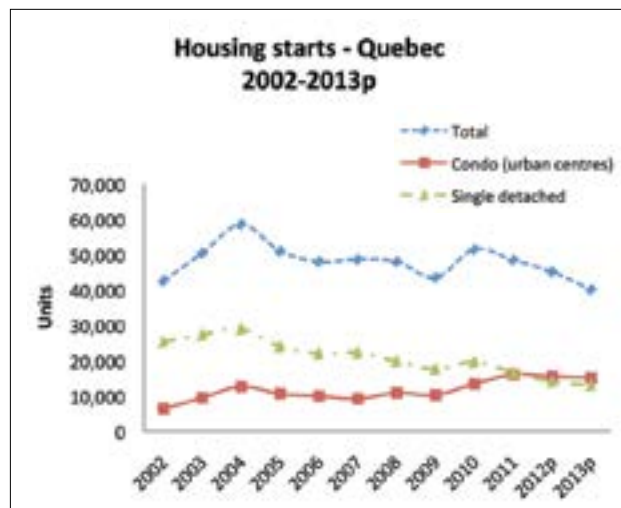
A major reform of warranty plans for new residential buildings will soon be coming into effect. The Quebec government has announced that it plans to name new bodies in 2013 to administer the mandatory warranty plan for new homes. In order to qualify, these bodies will have to be non-profit organizations. There will likely be two authorized warranty plan administrators in Quebec.

APCHQ Advocacy

Years of prosperity have the unfortunate effect of encouraging various ministries, cities and public utilities to introduce more and more regulations and add all kinds of new standards and fees, a situation that leads to a weakened industry and an unaffordable product. Consequently, when economic conditions become less favourable, the housing market in Quebec will be particularly vulnerable to a significant slowdown. The APCHQ therefore encourages the government to adopt a housing policy that sets out clear objectives and offers concrete measures so that households can continue to find adequate housing that meets their needs and incomes. In particular, such a policy should ensure that government interventions encourage homeownership (60% in Quebec vs. 68% national average, 2006 census).

About the APCHQ

Founded in 1961, the *Association provinciale des constructeurs d'habitations du Québec* (APCHQ — Quebec Provincial Home Builders Association) is a private non-profit organization representing more than 17,000 companies grouped within 15 regional associations. In addition to offering its members a variety of products and services (such as training, technical and legal advice, licensing, warranties on new and renovated residential buildings, and data management software), the APCHQ has been, since 1997, the largest manager of workplace safety prevention mutuals in the provincial construction industry, with a group of almost 4,400 companies. As the bargaining agent of the residential sector, it represents the interests of 14,500 employers. 🏠



SOURCE: CMHC, FORECAST APCHQ



Brookside Farmhouse

An R-2000 Renovation

BY ROWENA MOYES

When **STEVEN CROWELL** looked over the 1857 “Brookside” farm home **PAUL** and **LINDA DENNISON** wanted to renovate, he had two instant thoughts: “This is a great old structure – but it leaks air and energy like a sieve” and “We can make it R-2000!”

The Nova Scotia certified R-2000 new home builder and renovator has been proven right on both counts.

Before the work started, the house barely measured a 15 under the EnerGuide Energy Rating System. Following **Crowell Construction’s** deep energy retrofit, the rating skyrocketed to 87. The new building envelope, along with a ground-source direct-exchange heat pump with solar assist and heat recovery ventilator, brought heating and hot water energy consumption down to less than half of the

target set by the R-2000 program’s HOT2000 computer modelling.

The Brookside project received its official R-2000 certification at the end of 2012. **ALAN STEWART** of Sustainable Housing and Education (S.H.E.) oversaw the project’s R-2000 evaluation.

“Brookside met or exceeded all requirements and didn’t get any special accommodations for being a renovation project rather than a new home,” said Stewart. “Based on current information, this project would also meet or

exceed proposed R-2000 requirements now being drafted to take effect in 2014, including those for the building envelope.”

Steven Crowell, owner of Crowell Construction, is quick to add that the house met or exceeded requirements “in a way that makes it a candidate for a Net Zero Ready home.” He stresses that it’s time to get the word out: R-2000-level energy performance is possible in some renovations. “Not all [renovation] projects are suitable for R-2000, but some definitely are. Those should be encouraged.”

Preservation, Restoration & Performance

The Dennisons wanted to retire into the Brookside home, which had been in the family since 1947, but it was badly in need of an ► 20

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A large, green hedge maze is shown from an elevated perspective. A bright, glowing path of light leads from the bottom center towards a bright light source at the top center. Several people in red safety vests are scattered throughout the maze, some appearing to be working on it. The sky is filled with dramatic, golden clouds, suggesting a sunrise or sunset.

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Built-up walls allowed insulation close to R40, with electrical, plumbing and mechanicals installed within a new non-structural wall cavity.

18 ► overhaul. They came to Crowell with three criteria: preserve as much as possible of the original home, restore it to the way it looked in 1857, and make it perform for the 21st century.

"It was clear in my mind that the project had to meet or exceed the R-2000 Standard," said Crowell. "That's the vision I shared with the owners. They are highly informed and motivated, and they were more than pleased to know that their 150-year-old home could perform as well as or better than a newly constructed one. It's a matter of informing clients about the possibilities, measuring the value of the investment (and value often is more than a simple financial payback), identifying options and creating a design that provides the most 'bang for the buck', tailored to their specific needs and priorities."

What projects does Crowell think would lend themselves to an R-2000 renovation? "Probably it would have to be a whole-house renovation. And you need to be able to address air sealing in a practical and effective way."

Air sealing can be a big challenge for renovation projects. "If you don't have the opportunity to replace the exterior siding, windows and doors and do most of the air sealing from the exterior—as we did here—you lose your key tools," said Crowell.

Achieving R2000

The Brookside farmhouse had three major segments, all two storeys above grade:

- The main house with parlour, dining room, kitchen, pantry and small ground floor sleeping space on the main floor, and four bedrooms above
- A 10 x 12-foot connector, which needed to be replaced
- The back building, with summer kitchen and storage

Crowell was able to gut the main house and the back summer kitchen down to the original post and beam and superstructure, also keeping the exterior sheathing. His new walls use a built-up system. From the exterior inward, this consists of:

- Cement board clapboard siding
- Weather screen (which incorporates exterior house wrap sealed to allow vapour to pass, but not air; this is sealed at edges to structural framing members such as the rim joist, which can become part of the continuous air barrier)

Not all [renovation] projects are suitable for R-2000, but some definitely are; those should be encouraged.

- Original wood sheathing
- Fibreglass insulation in the original wall cavities with a nominal value of R20
- R7.5 continuous foam insulation on the inboard side of the wall framing
- Sealed 6-mil poly vapour barrier (serving also as a secondary air barrier)
- New non-structural wall, enabling another layer of R12 fibreglass insulation to be installed (Electrical, plumbing and mechanicals, including full ducting for ventilation, were placed in the non-structural wall cavity, so that the installations did not penetrate the air barriers.)

All the original windows and doors were replaced with high efficiency, low-E, argon-filled glazing. The rear extension's upper floor was given two operable roof windows, which enabled natural lighting and ventilation for the new office area without changing the original roof line of the home.

Ceiling areas were for the most part R60 blown cellulose. Sloped areas utilized a built-up design of rigid foam and blown cellulose to achieve R45. Air sealing was provided with a continuous 6-mil poly vapour-and-air barrier.

The Dennisons wanted to preserve the original fieldstone foundation. It wasn't possible to air seal that, so Crowell used a built-up floor system to isolate the basement from the heated living area of the house. Over that, they laid 3/8" spruce plywood, then did a 1.5" concrete overpour with in-floor radiant hydronic heating, covered with a finished floor of wide, 3/4" pine tongue and groove planks.

The lot was large enough to accommodate a ground-source direct-exchange heat pump system with solar assist for heating living space and domestic hot water. From late March to the latter part of October, most of that will run on the solar thermal. Solar panels were located on the roof at the back, so they aren't visible from the street.

Crowell would like to see more of these projects go through the R-2000 process. "Given the number of existing houses that need energy retrofits, using R-2000 to recognize high performance renovations seems a logical step."

CHBA's R-2000 coordinator Gary Sharp agrees. "Deep energy retrofit renovations aren't likely ever to be mainstream, but we should encourage R-2000 builders who have the training and experience—and suitable projects—to follow this path." 🏠



Walls separating the old kitchen, pantry and small sleeping area were removed to give a larger open-concept kitchen with a centre island and new cupboards in traditional style. The room extends from a desk at one end to a very functional seating area at the other.

A man with short grey hair, wearing safety glasses and a grey polo shirt, is smiling broadly. He is standing in a workshop or lumber yard, with stacks of wood and machinery visible in the background. Another person, wearing a plaid shirt and a high-visibility vest, is partially visible on the left, looking towards the man in the polo shirt.

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Building an Online Presence

How to construct an effective website

BY MILIND MEHERE

Canadians spend more time on the Internet than any other nation in the world. Whether we're planning to buy a new home, or looking for a renovator, the first place we're likely to go is online. And since that's where prospective customers start their search, an effective online presence is necessary, especially for small businesses.

But what if you don't have a company website? What if you have an existing site that needs upgrading (perhaps it's even been languishing "under construction")? Where and how do you start?

The Website Build

Begin by examining what your competitors are doing: take note of what you like about their

sites and what you don't. After that, there are three basic options when it comes to building or upgrading a website.

The most basic solution, though one I would not recommend for most, is to build your website from scratch—no templates, no help. The reason I don't advise this route comes down to two things: time and expertise. It can take an expert several days to build a site. For

the layman, this could turn into weeks. Since you are already running a business, spending your evenings trying to perfect your website can be a lesson in frustration. But if you are a programming and design wizard, this method does allow you to have complete control over all aspects of your site.

The second option is to build the website yourself using a template. There are many low cost (or even free) options to choose from: try Googling "business website templates." Some even come with tutorials to help you with the process. This can be a massive time saver over the template-free method, but it does have its limitations. Your site, while it will have unique content, may have a look and feel similar to others.

To be effective, your site must rank high in relevant online search.

For options one and two, you will also have to handle all the backend logistics like finding an appropriate website host and doing all the site updates and maintenance yourself. For the less experienced this can take a lot of time and it does add to the cost.

The final option is to hire a company to build a customized site, with a unique look and feel, designed for your specific business needs. This option can be expensive up front, but is the least onerous in terms of your own time commitment. Once you factor in the value of your own time, this solution can be cost effective and is certainly worth investigating.

What if you decide to hire a company to build a customized site? Essentially you have three options:

1 Hire an agency or professional contractor who specializes in building websites. This is not cheap (\$2,000-\$3,000 would be the low end), but these are often the most visually appealing and functional websites you will find online. Note: The cost is for only the website build; it may not include updates or site maintenance.

2 Use a local web design firm that provides turnkey solutions. The provider generally does everything for you, from registering your **▶ 24**

22 ▶ URL to building, hosting, updating and maintaining your site. They usually offer different service packages. Some of the less expensive options may, for example, require you to perform your own website updates. If your site is going to remain relatively static, this is not a bad option to save a bit of money. On the other hand, if you're looking to update your site regularly with customer success stories or new service offerings, you may want to look into the cost of them doing it for you.

3 Use a company that specializes in helping smaller businesses market themselves online. These companies help their customers increase their local online web presence (more about that later) and part of the service offering involves building and maintaining websites for their customers.

Deciding what solution is best can take time. With all the options available it can be overwhelming, so be sure to use your own network of contacts and friends to get suggestions and recommendations.

If You Build It, Will They Come?

It gets interesting once your website is up and running. Try Googling "contractor Toronto" or "contractor" with the name of your city. Did your site, if you have one, come up on the first page? Do you see your competitors? Whether we like it or not, we live in a world where, for the most part, we believe that search results validate the legitimacy of a business. If a company shows up at the top of a search, it is because their offerings match your needs.

Think about the last time you looked at search results past the first page. If you are anything like me, you're more likely to alter your search terms (say, "home renovations Toronto") than to actually venture to the

second or third page of results. In fact, 88 per cent of clicks on search results happen on the first page—if you're not there, for all intents and purposes, you are invisible.

To be effective, your site must rank high in relevant online search. This is not rocket science—all you need to come out on top is the right combination of website content, well-implemented search engine optimization (SEO) and strategic pay-per-click advertising. While not complex, there is a lot of fine-tuning involved. Are your Title tags and Description tags properly assigned? Do your pages have the right content? Are they using the best combina-

Most of us don't have the time to learn how to master SEO.

tion of search keywords? The problem is that a few missteps, however slight, can be enough to push your company's site off the first page and into oblivion.

You can certainly learn to do this yourself, but the reality is that most of us don't have the time to learn how to master SEO. Smaller companies now turn increasingly to a variety SEO services to boost their organic search ranking, but SEO is only half the battle. Pay-per-click advertising is equally (if not more) important.

This combination of building or upgrading a website, along with the requirements necessary to make sure it consistently ranks high in

relevant search results (both paid and SEO-based) can become a full-time job. Because of this, many builders and contractors are looking for a one-stop-shop solution that will take them from web strategy and design, to website build (if needed) and SEO, all the way through to pay-per-click marketing.

Working with comprehensive online marketing companies can help you build a web presence and move you up in the search rankings. This is often the most cost effective solution, because your website is so integral to the success of your marketing programs. In the end, you will need to decide how much time



and money you want to commit to your web presence.

A final note: Just because you show up on the first page of relevant search results today does not mean you'll be there tomorrow. Conversely, being on page three today does not mean you are destined to stay there. Websites need nurturing to succeed. The big decision is whether you have the time to nurture both your website and your business. If you do, it is certainly something you can do yourself. If not, now may be a good time to look for outside help. 🏠

Milind Mehere is the General Manager of Out-Rank by Rogers, a small and autonomous business unit within Rogers Communications Inc. dedicated exclusively to helping small businesses in Canada manage their online marketing programs. Previously, Milind co-founded Yodle, a U.S.-based company dedicated to managing advertising and marketing for more than 35,000 small businesses. He can be reached at milind@rogersoutrank.com.

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Free to build. The only cost is your time, but there are costs to host your site, which can run upwards of \$50/month. You would also need to maintain the site yourself.	The cost of a website template (\$150-\$300) plus your time to build the site. As with option one, there is the added cost of hosting and maintaining your site.	Pricing varies dramatically. You will need to investigate what any package offering includes, such as regular site updates, website hosting, URL registration, regular SEO and pay-per-click marketing, etc. When packaged with other services, customized sites can be very inexpensive.

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Edited by Mark Cleary

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21st Century Sustainable Homes shows the range of innovative ways that architects address the need for environmental

sensitivity in residential architectural design, whether through designing a house to make the best use of local climatic conditions, through the use of recycled or recyclable materials, or through the use of sophisticated technological systems.

Showcasing 47 projects from around the globe, with locations in Canada, U.S, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, UK, Ireland,

Spain, Portugal, France, The Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Malaysia, India and Japan, the book contains lush colour photographs, as well as detailed plans and descriptions of each house and its sustainable elements. Some of the houses in this book might be more “sustainable” than others, and some won’t work in a Canadian environment, but with 400 visuals, it’s a bit like taking a trip around the world, all without leaving the comfort of your own energy efficient home. \$35.

The Accessible Home

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By Deborah Pierce

Taunton Press

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As an architect for the past three decades, author Deborah Pierce is an expert on universal design. *The Accessible Home* features 25 new and remodelled projects from across North America, including



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Ron Olson
President, CHBA

We go into 2013 with concerns over how larger economic issues may impact new home buyers in the coming 12 months.

A Cautious Start to 2013

On the whole, 2012 was a healthy year for our industry in most parts of Canada, with new home starts running ahead of expectations for much of the year.

We go into 2013 with concerns over how larger economic issues may impact new home buyers in the coming 12 months.

Housing and economic forecasts call for a modest slowing in new home demand through the first part of 2013, with activity in the range of demographic demand. This “soft landing” scenario remains intact, but with no guarantees, suggesting the need for continued caution by builders when they plan their next projects.

As has been the case for the last number of years, concerns remain over possible economic events outside Canada, despite a partial resolution to the U.S. “fiscal cliff” issue in early January.

Over the next 12 months, both the U.S. and Europe will face on-going fiscal challenges, requiring strong political leadership to resolve, and increased pressure for action rather than stopgap measures that “kick the can down the road” once again.

Countering this uncertainty, there are positive signs that Canada’s resource export industries will continue to see growth.

Here at home, the CHBA’s year began with a continued focus on key issues of concern to our members, together with reassuring news from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

CMHC Update

We all know that CMHC plays an indispensable role in Canada’s housing sector, one that is highly valued by our industry. During 2012, government austerity and legislative measures led to some concern within the industry over CMHC’s future direction and capacity.

Following the introduction of these measures, the CHBA consulted with CMHC, and was reassured that the Corporation would continue to fulfill its role in the areas of mortgage insurance, technical research and market intelligence.

This was reinforced by strong and clear statements included in CMHC Quarterly Financial Report released late last year.

This report provided a comprehensive discussion of the enhanced governance and financial oversight regime put into place by the government.

These measures are clearly designed to put CMHC on an even firmer footing. Simply put, the government has taken steps to enhance CMHC’s mandate as an instrument of public policy. These are not measures that would be consistent with any plans to privatize the Corporation.

The government expanded CMHC’s legislative mandate under the National Housing Act, charging the Corporation with administering a legal framework for covered bonds.

Covered bonds are debt instruments issued by financial institutions that are secured by a segregated pool of high quality assets, primarily uninsured Canadian residential mortgages. CMHC’s covered bond program allows financial institutions to reach a broader investor base, and gain access to global sources of financing, ultimately providing greater liquidity in mortgage markets.

Again, this expanded mandate reinforces CMHC’s role and importance as a federal institution.

CMHC mortgage insurance business has contributed \$14 billion to the federal government’s revenues over the last decade—a significant dividend. At a time when the government is looking for ways to achieve budgetary goals, such dividends have significance.

The report also addresses CMHC’s ongoing capacity to issue mortgage insurance within its current legislated ceiling of \$600 billion. The Corporation expects mortgage repayments of between \$60 and \$65 billion per year, going forward. These repayments offset increases in CMHC’s insurance-in-force, providing more than adequate capacity for issuing of new mortgage insurance policies.

Finally, the report noted that CMHC will continue to pursue high-priority research that supports improving housing performance, and it will continue to conduct market research aimed at improving market effectiveness and strengthening community well-being. These are key capacities that the CHBA has always supported, and called for in our representations to the federal government.

During a time of austerity, it is clear that CMHC will continue to perform a strong and effective role in Canada’s housing system.

Delivering Our Message to Canada Post

2012 also saw less welcome developments from Canada Post, as Canada’s mailman moved to “tax” new home buyers for the privilege of getting second class delivery service.

To be blunt, the unilateral \$200 per-address “fee” Canada Post is imposing on new home developments is completely unacceptable.

And Canada Post’s attempt to impose it without any consultation with our industry is less than forthright.

The introduction of community mail service, or “superboxes,” in new communities in the 1990s represented a reduced quality of mail service for new home buyers. It also represented a considerable expense for new home builders and community developers, who provide Canada Post with land on which the Corporation can locate their mailboxes.

I have met with the Minister responsible for Canada Post, the Honourable Steven Fletcher, and expressed our objections to Canada Post’s “fee” in the strongest terms. I made the point that new home buyers should not be

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The unilateral \$200 per-address “fee” Canada Post is imposing on new home developments is completely unacceptable.

forced to subsidize the Corporation for second-rate mail service.

I have also questioned whether there is any statutory authority for it. And I have asked the Minister what will happen if new home buyers simply refuse to pay the “fee.” Will Canada Post refuse to deliver their mail?

I’ve written to all local and provincial HBA Presidents and Executive Officers, asking that they encourage members to write to Members of Parliament and to Minister Fletcher, making their objections to this Canada Post fee crystal clear.

I’ve also recommended that Provincial HBAs contact their provincial governments, alerting them to Canada Post’s contention that superboxes are community infrastructure—a designation within provincial jurisdiction. In claiming that the new fee is simply an infrastructure charge, Canada Post may well be encroaching on provincial authority, without permission and without regard for provincial laws.

In opposing Canada Post’s unilateral fee action, the CHBA, home builders and their customers are gathering other allies.

I recently received a letter sent to the Honourable Denis Lebel, Minister of Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities by Pat Perkins, the Mayor of

Whitby, Ontario, asking that this fee be halted.

Mayor Perkins pointed out that current growth projections for her town would see Canada Post collecting \$6 million in fees over the next 20 years, which she described as “an unacceptable burden on an already encumbered public.”

Let’s keep up the pressure!

Passing on the Gavel

This marks my last message as the CHBA’s National President, as I’ll be “passing on the gavel” to First Vice-President Deep Shergill at the CHBA National Conference in Lake Louise this coming March.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the members I have met over my term in office for their support, encouragement and hospitality.

Your friendship is deeply appreciated. I have been incredibly impressed by the quality of what you build, and by your commitment to our Association.

Thank you all. You’ve made me proud to be part of the CHBA.

Long-Term Infrastructure Plan

Over the past 11 months the Federal Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has been working with provincial counterparts to develop a long-term national infrastructure plan. The CHBA has made three major recommendations essential for the success of such a plan:

1. Account for the current state of infrastructure and report publicly and regularly on progress toward improving its quality, performance and ongoing

maintenance;

2. Coordinate priorities, investments, and implementation efforts to improve and upgrade Canada’s critical infrastructure; and
3. Recognize, measure and report on impacts on housing affordability and choice as an integral element of local infrastructure planning, program design, project decision-making, investing and accounting.

Private Member’s Bill on Firefighter Safety

The House of Commons recently adopted a private member’s bill calling for the government to specify firefighter safety as an objective of the National Building Code. In response, the CHBA has written to the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC) noting that building regulation is a provincial responsibility and suggesting that the CCBFC seek advice from the Provincial/Territorial Policy Advisory Committee on Codes on this matter.

While firefighter safety is not an explicit objective of the Code, the existing objectives address the safety of persons in and adjacent to buildings, and emergency responders are recognized as being occupants.

The existence of a separate objective for firefighters would change nothing in the capacity of the Code committees to address the issues of concern to the fire officials. Moreover, the long and onerous process for considering a new objective would divert resources from addressing these and other Code Issues.



Ron Olson meets with the Hon. Steven Fletcher, Minister of State (Transport) on Canada’s Long-Term Infrastructure Plan.



The Canadian Home Builders' Association salutes these companies and organizations for their support of the 70th National Conference.

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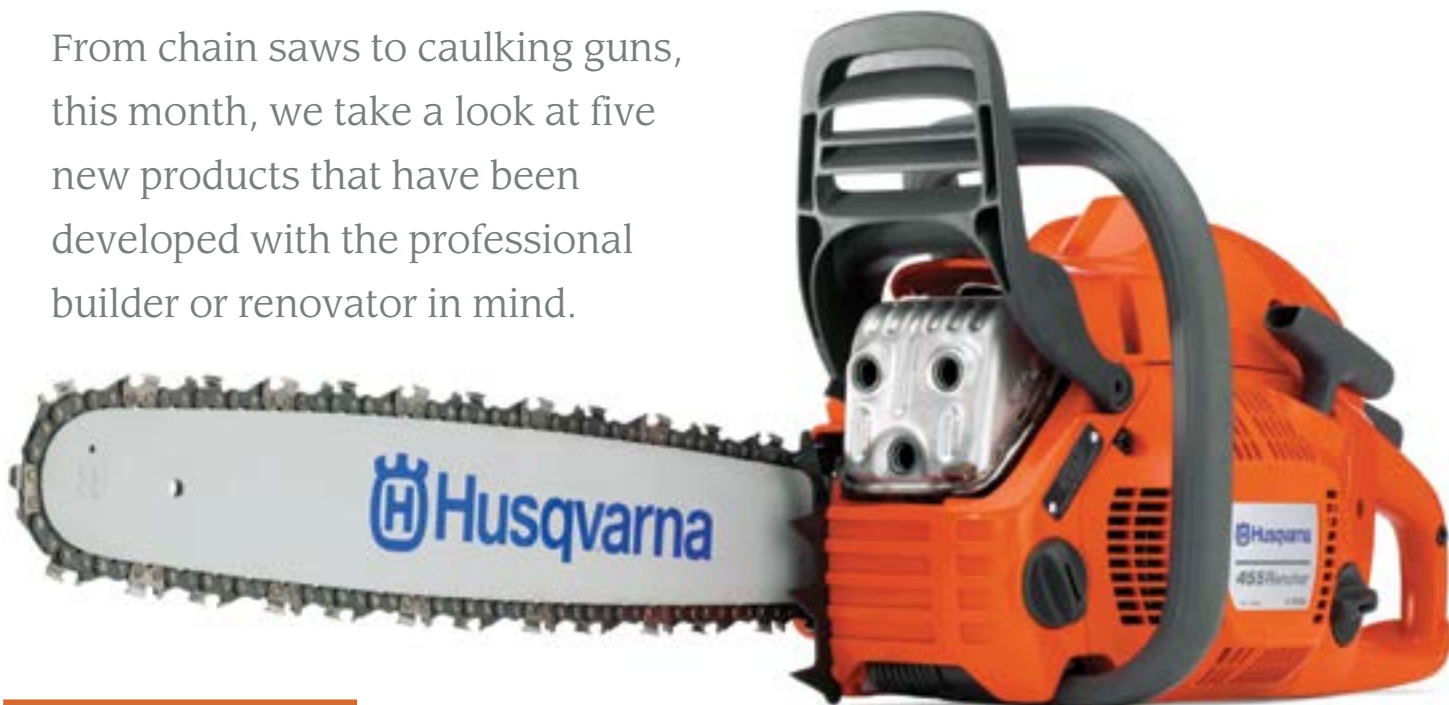
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for the 70th CHBA National Conference!
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and register online.



A Cut Above

From chain saws to caulking guns, this month, we take a look at five new products that have been developed with the professional builder or renovator in mind.



COMPARISON CHOPPING

Chain Saws

Small chain saws are generally used for cutting trees, brush and firewood, but there are times when they can be useful on a construction site, even now that we have cordless circular saws taking away some of their tasks.

I got interested in this when Oregon sent me a 40v Lithium-Ion powered 14" chain saw to test: the CS250 PowerNow saw. So I decided to try it out side by side with a similar sized quality gas chain saw from Husqvarna: the 455 Rancher.

They are both good light machines designed

for light cutting and trimming—neither one would be considered a logger's primary tool.

Power: The Husqvarna is a smooth running powerful little motor, even capable of driving chain blades far longer than 14". I was indeed impressed with the very similar cutting power of the electrical Oregon saw, which has its battery well matched to its 14" blade. On the construction site the Oregon would be a gas-free step up from a reciprocating saw for much faster cutting of beams and the like, but no nails or binding allowed.

Battery vs. Gas Can: Obviously, if you are cutting all day long, a gas can is a better option than recharging batteries. But, for just a couple of hours of cutting, the powerful 40v Lithium Ion battery, with a fuel gauge, can cut a lot of limbs or lumber. If you are only cutting occasionally, batteries are far easier to store and handle than mixing gas and oil.

Noise: The Oregon makes more noise than I expected at 90db, but that is still less than the Husqvarna's relatively quiet 2-cycle engine that runs not too far louder than 103db. When you stop the electric saw, the noise stops and



there are no idling fumes. When you start, it is as Oregon likes to advertise: "Always Ready." It is only fair to note that the Husqvarna has a great choke system and fuel pump that makes starting with a cord pull easy.

Auto Sharp: At first glance, the special "top sharpening" chain from Oregon looks like a DIY gadget that simplifies sharpening, but it forces you to buy their special chain. However, after using the saw for a while, I remembered the days of sharpening a chain tooth by tooth. With the Oregon, you pull a lever near the handle for a few seconds, while the chain is spinning, and a sharpening stone is put up against the chain. Bingo, sharp again without stopping work! That's a pretty nifty trick for a guy that's not a logger.

Cost: About \$300 for the gas model and \$450 for the electric version.



TOP GUN

Tajima Convoy Super Caulking Gun

Why is this Tajima caulking gun worth every one of the \$24 it cost me?

Sturdy build: Neither the cast aluminum handle nor the heavy steel barrel will break.

Smooth drive: Double ratchet levers prevent slip and allow small increment hand closing, while the spring-loaded release backs off the pressure with every hand movement to control the flow.

Rolling barrel: The barrel rotates, even while working, to put your nozzle at exactly the angle you want.

Long spike: The 4" cartridge spike actually reaches the seal of PL Premium cartridges.

Hooks: Both a ladder and a rope hook to hang it during work.

Pleasure: It is a pleasure to use a tool that works for you rather than you working for it.



WHEN 1/2" MEETS 12V

M12 Cordless 1/2" SDS Plus Rotary Hammer 2412

You may wonder about this Milwaukee 1/2" SDS rotary hammer being only 9 inches long, weighing only 3.9 pounds and running on only 12 volt batteries, but believe me, our tools are changing. My only problem with powerful tools getting this small is that you actually have to push harder because there is no longer a lot of weight stopping the rebound of the hammer action. On the other hand, you can actually work overhead without exhaustion.



SOMETHING ACTUALLY NEW

An Indexing Flat Pry Bar

Made to be whacked by a heavy hammer, the head on this 18" pry bar rotates and fixes to any of 14 positions, making it almost 14 different tools. Push it, pull it, whack it, this flat pry bar/nail puller will get where nothing has ever gone before. From the Crescent Code Red line of demolition tools, it is really built solid.



Home BUILDER Magazine's interactive feature on professional tools welcomes readers to air beefs, share praise and talk tools with Jon Eakes.

Send your question on-line. Visit www.homebuildercanada.com and click on "Ask the Expert".



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

Ask the Expert

TOOL TALK

Ontario Passes Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit for Seniors

Find
Freedom
in your
home.



The Healthy Homes
Renovation Tax Credit can help.

OTTAWA — Bill 2, Ontario's Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit, recently passed and received Royal Assent. The tax credit is a permanent, refundable income tax credit that will assist with the cost of modifications that improve accessibility or help a senior be more functional or mobile at home.

The credit is worth up to \$1,500 each year, calculated as 15 per cent of up to \$10,000 in eligible expenses per year. To qualify for the credit, individuals need to be:

- 65 years old or older by the end of the year for which

they are claiming the credit; or

- living with a family member who is a senior
- Income doesn't matter—seniors and their family members at all income levels are eligible.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association (OHBA) has also been in discussion with the Ministry of Finance about potential cross-promotion with RenoMark. Recently, the Ministry of Consumer Services identified the OHBA's local association network and RenoMark renovators as the source for consumers looking to renovate.

Renovation Month Contest Winner

In an electronic draw, Canadian Renovator's Council Chair **MIKE MARTIN** and **ALAN THOMPSON** of **Home Hardware Building Centre** picked the winner of a Toyota RAV4 vehicle. The winner is **COREY NEWCOMB** of Saanich, B.C. The contest was part of Home Hardware's nation-wide campaign in support of Renovation Month and the *Get It In Writing* message that included radio and television advertising, e-mails, and ads in Home Hardware flyers. The campaign reached millions of homeowners.

Does Your Reno Council Have News to Report?

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New Build vs. Old Build

OTTAWA — How much more energy efficient are new homes when compared with similar homes built in the 1970s? That was the focus of a presentation to the CHBA's Canadian Renovator's Council at a recent meeting in Ottawa by **DAVID FOSTER**, the Association's Director of Environmental Affairs.

The CHBA has carried out analysis of energy efficiency improvements in homes over time, with assistance from Natural Resources Canada's Canmet ENERGY Division. The project used NRCan's HOT2000 simulation software to determine how a typical Ottawa home performed at the time it was built, around 1975.

The result? The same 1975 home (2,100 sq.ft., two-storey, same location) built to current Code requirements, would use 66 per cent less energy over all. Its space heating energy use would fall by nearly 80 per cent.

In the coming months, the CHBA will be producing a new report on this analysis, as well as a number of fact sheets to be used by provincial and local HBAs and members. 🏠

R-2000 Net-Zero Pilot Launched

OTTAWA — Natural Resources Canada has launched a pilot project aimed at using the R-2000 Standard as the basis for houses to be certified as Net-Zero. It will use NRCan's HOT2000 simulation software to confirm that on-site renewable energy generation is adequate to offset all purchased energy use. CHBA new home builder members will be invited to take part in the project which aims to build and certify a number of R-2000 Net-Zero homes. 🏠

Cogeco Cable Acquires PEER 1 Network Enterprises

MONTREAL AND VANCOUVER — **Cogeco Cable Inc.** (TSX: CCA) and **PEER 1 Network Enterprises, Inc.** (TSX: PIX) have entered into an agreement, pursuant to which Cogeco Cable has agreed to acquire all of the issued and outstanding shares of PEER 1 by way of takeover bid. The Montreal-based company, which competes with **Rogers Communications Inc.** and **Telus Corp.** bought cable operator **Atlantic Broadband** for \$1.36 billion earlier this year to gain a foothold in the larger U.S. market.

Through the acquisition of Peer 1, Cogeco Cable will add 19 data centers to the six it operates as demand for web hosting services rises

mainly from small and mid-sized businesses. Cogeco Cable's data hosting business is expected to rise 10 percent per year organically, the company said in its most recent annual report.

Vancouver-based Peer 1 is an internet infrastructure provider and specializes in managed hosting, dedicated servers, cloud services and co-location. 🏠

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Grow a Rooftop Garden



REPKIN BIOSYSTEMS

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The Perlite Institute has developed an online, one-page guide that highlights the benefits of using perlite, a sustainable mineral, for rooftop gardens. The guide offers insight on how rooftop gardens utilizing horticultural grade perlite can reduce the heat effect of smaller, older buildings, while also treating storm water runoff, thus extending the life of roofing and creating a habitat for flora and fauna. For a free downloadable PDF, visit the library at www.perlite.org. 🏠

ENERGY STAR Considering Changes

OTTAWA — Since its inception in Canada in 2001, the ENERGY STAR Initiative has grown from 23 products to almost 60. After over a decade of steady growth, the ENERGY STAR team at Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) is focusing on how best to deliver the initiative in a way that helps manufacturers and retailers promote their ENERGY STAR-qualified products in a more efficient and effective manner.

In an effort to provide a more harmonized North American approach to administering the ENERGY STAR initiative; to provide consumers, manufacturers, and utilities with more consistent information, and to reduce administrative burden for both ENERGY STAR Participants and NRCan, the ENERGY STAR Initiative in Canada is considering changes in how products are qualified and listed. No changes are being proposed for Fenestration products and HRVs at this time. For more information, visit www.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca. 🏠

EI-Funded Provincial Training Programs

OTTAWA — The National Education and Training Advisory Committee (NETAC) is conducting a review of EI funded provincial training programs and services, and CHBA has written to provincial HBA Presidents and Executive Officers, seeking their assistance to help position the Association to make effective representations to governments.

The programs in question are extremely important for addressing the ongoing shortage of skilled people in the industry. The objective is to gain a better understanding of the programs and initiatives authorized in each province under the federal-provincial/territorial Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs). This will allow NETAC and provincial associations to assess the impact of the program activities on our industry and to make representations to the federal and provincial governments. 🏠

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March 7-9
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www.chba.ca/conference

March 15-24
17th Annual Canada Blooms
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www.canadablooms.com

March 15-24
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www.nationalhomeshow.com

March 21-22
Energy Efficient Renovations
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www.efficiencynb.ca

March 21-24
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www.reginaspringhomeshow.com

Blue Making a Comeback

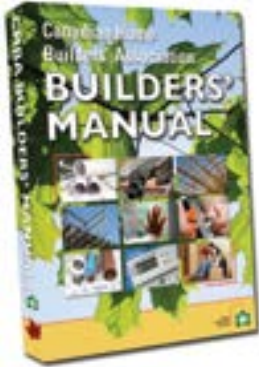
MIAMI, Fla. — **Color Marketing Group (CMG)**, a leading international association of colour design professionals, predicts that blue will dominate the colour movement for a number of years. The number of blues represented across all CMG's regional colour forecasts is a key indicator of its importance.

"Colour needs to reflect our mood, desires and state of mind. This fresh, true blue can be as energizing as it can be soothing. It's just the right hue for moving forward," said CMG's President, **MARK WOODMAN** of Global Color Research Limited.

Warmer, tropical, watery, aqueous blues with a touch of green will dominate the movement. 🏠



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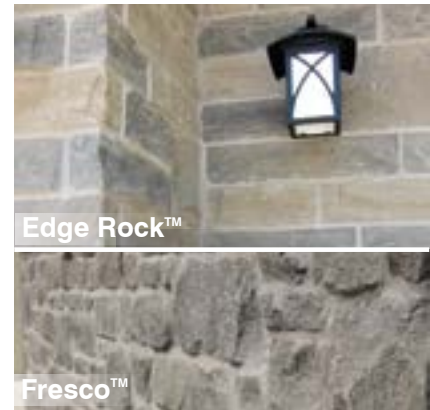
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