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- ▶ Quebec Awakens
- ▶ Renovator Profile: Hammerdown in Winnipeg
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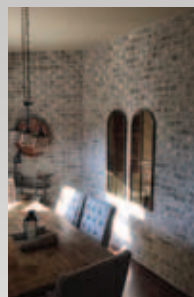
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Photography: Nelson Costa

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Nachmi Artzy
Publisher

Publisher's Note

Welcome to the 31st spring edition of Home BUILDER magazine.

Projections are solid for Canada's residential construction industry, especially in the \$74 billion-plus home renovation sector. New housing is on pace to start

in excess of 200,000 homes again in 2018.

As our readers gear up for the busy spring season we have packed this issue with facts, reports and expert opinions to help them carve a winning season and a winning strategy.

This issue profiles one of the very active renovators in Winnipeg who has captured gold provincial awards for consistently high standards in residential renovations. We hear from a London renovator and custom home builder on why contractors should heed the mobility needs of senior homeowners when planning improvements or additions.

We expose how Canadian home builders are squeezed between senior levels of government on the demand side, while local municipalities pile costs on the supply side. This issue also highlights the remarkable recovery in Quebec's new home market where starts have reached the highest level in years.

We speak to Canada's true residential renovation contractors and small builders—the independent men and women who are the backbone of the industry. It is well-known that, from the tens of thousands working in this market segment, only a small number are association members. The majority run tight, nimble operations that provide a multitude of hands-on construction services and an immense contribution to this massive entrepreneurial market. We are focused on their information needs.

We thank you all for taking the time to read and use *Home BUILDER magazine* as a tool to access market trends and make product selections. We look forward to working with you, and for you, in every issue we publish in print and online.

Nachmi Artzy

Publisher

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CREA Predicts House Prices, Lending Rates to Stay Stable

The Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) said national sales activity is projected to decline by 7.1 per cent to 479,400 units in 2018, but prices will remain fairly stable.

The decline reflects weaker sales in B.C. and Ontario amid heightened housing market uncertainty caused by provincial policy measures, high home prices, ongoing supply shortages and tightening mortgage stress tests as interest rates rise.

The national average price is projected to drop 2.3 per cent from 2017, but half of all provinces will see average price gains.

The decline in the national average price reflects fewer transactions in B.C. and Ontario; by the same token, price declines in these provinces reflect fewer sales of higher-priced homes in Vancouver and Toronto.

Toronto's existing home sales plunged nearly 35 per cent in February compared to the record pace of February 2017.

In Greater Vancouver, sales fell 9 per cent from February 2017 and were 14.4 below the ten-year February sales average.

A CREA official said, "momentum for home sales activity going into the second quarter is likely to be weighed down by housing market uncertainty in British Columbia, where the provincial budget introduced new housing policies toward the end of February."

Judging from price trends the decline in sales in both Toronto and Vancouver appears to be almost entirely in higher-end single-detached homes, as the mid-range of the market—mainly condo apartments and townhouses—remain active.

CREA does not expect to see an increase in the Bank of Canada key lending rate. "Rising interest rates are a severe headwind for consumer spending, and tighter monetary policy could derail an already fragile economy. So don't expect a Bank of Canada rate hike anytime soon," the association stated.

Consumer Debt May Have Peaked as Net Worth Grows

Consumer debt has increased in Canada—we now owe an average \$1.70 for every \$1.00 in disposable income—but net worth is increasing and debt levels may have peaked, analysts say.

BMO Capital Markets senior economist **BENJAMIN REITZES** said a recent decline in debt levels, however small, was unexpected.

"The fourth quarter [2017] doesn't have any clear seasonal trend, but the fall in the ratio is a bit surprising given the jump in home sales activity ahead of the introduction of the new mortgage rules on January 1, 2018," he said in a note to investors.

"While it's too early to tell, we just might have seen the peak in the debt ratio in Q3, as Q1 [2018] will no doubt see a sizable decline due to seasonality—in fact, housing slowed much more than usual—and higher interest rates."

Canadian household net worth increased to 870.5 per cent of disposable income, up from 862.2 per cent in Q3.

JOSH NYE, economist at RBC Economics Research, said 2018 could be an "interesting" year compared with last year because of the apparent change in direction of debt growth.

"With interest rates expected to rise further and housing regulations tightening at the federal and provincial levels, the peak in debt growth could very well be behind us," Nye said.

\$800K Home Price Gap in Canada



Three-bedroom house in East Vancouver, B.C., listed in March at \$1.88 million.



Three-bedroom house in Rogersville, NB, listed in March at \$44,900.

SUTTON WEST COAST

CAPITAL REALTY KELLER WILLIAMS

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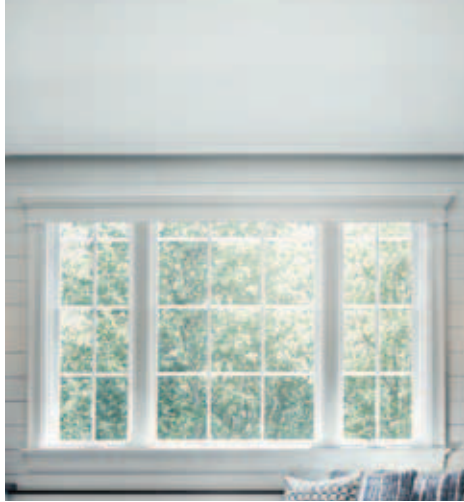
The benchmark price for a Canadian home was \$609,700 in February, reports the Canadian Real Estate Association, but the data shows that there is a cavernous price gap in the country.

Benchmark urban home prices now range from a low of \$174,800 in Moncton to \$1.07 million in Metro Vancouver. The city closest to the Canadian-wide benchmark is Greater Victoria, with a typical home price of \$642,800.

Three cities have homes priced far below the national benchmark: Regina at \$278,700, Saskatoon at \$292,800 and, of course, Moncton.

Montreal at a benchmark of \$334,600 and Ottawa at \$373,300, are also priced much lower than the national benchmark.

Greater Toronto at \$751,700, and Oakville-Milton at \$719,600, are the only centres outside of B.C. that come close to the Metro Vancouver benchmark home price.



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Builders Float Plan for Skill Shortage



The Vancouver Island Residential Construction Association (VIRCA) has floated a unique idea to address the ongoing skills trade shortage: Introduce construction training as a university selective.

The association notes that government and industry have been holding trade fairs in foreign countries, such as Ireland, to attract skilled workers.

"However there is another solution right here in our community, that might inject thousands of students into the construction industry. We have vast numbers of students pursuing university degrees majoring in the humanities and sciences. These students also choose electives. Many would enjoy practical electives in framing, welding and other skills," VIRCA posted on its web site.

The post notes that the electives would offer a more well-rounded education, and provide employable skills during the summer and immediately after graduation.

The post notes that the electives would offer a more well-rounded education, and provide employable skills during the summer and immediately after graduation.

"The students might even choose to pursue construction as a career.

We have trade schools and universities in our region with the expertise to teach the necessary skills, and young people willing and able to learn.

All we need is a flexible education system that accommodates our changing society and economy," VIRCA noted.

China to Host Passive House Conference

The 2019 Passive House Conference will be held in China for the first time.

Energy efficient construction and retrofitting experts will convene in the Chinese city of Gaobeidian next year.

"We are aware that this decision may be surprising to some. However, it is in China where the most construction activities are currently taking place, and this will continue to be the case in the coming decades," explained Professor **WOLFGANG FEIST** of the University of Innsbruck. "Each new building brings with it an additional demand for energy for heating and cooling, therefore it is extremely gratifying that China is making serious efforts to radically improve the energy efficiency of buildings. There is still a chance of meeting the climate protection objectives."

The 23rd International Passive House Conference will be held on September 21-22, 2019. The city of Gaobeidian lies around 100 kilometres south of the Chinese capital of Beijing in the Hebei Province.

Among other things, a Passive House settlement is currently being built in Gaobeidian, and upon completion it will boast about 10 million square feet of living space—the largest energy-efficient settlement in the world.



Calgary Approves Secondary Suites



BILD Calgary reports that Calgary City council has finally approved a secondary suite process after years of debate.

Council voted to take approvals for secondary suites out of their hands and make them a discretionary use across the city. Currently, there is a patchwork of regulations, with the mortgage-helper suites allowed in some neighbourhoods but not in others. This has resulted in many illegal suites across the city.

The change means homeowners can apply for a development permit at a city counter rather than apply for a land use amendment through council.

Suite owners will also be required to have their unit inspected, approved and listed on a mandatory suite registry.

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e-newsletter that delivers timely information for the residential housing market.





By Peter Norman

Don't Stress the Stress Tests: Housing Starts to Remain Stable in "Lukewarm" Market

As we move through the first quarter of 2018, conditions in the housing market are largely evolving as previously expected. Headwinds caused by the expansion of the mortgage stress tests at the beginning of the year alongside modestly higher interest rates and perhaps a general sense of economic uncertainty are manifesting into more turbulence, especially in resale markets, but a number of important mitigating factors continue to support housing demand to ensure that new housing starts remain largely buoyant and steady.

Total Canada-wide housing starts rose to about 233,400 units seasonally adjusted at annual rate (SAAR) in the 4th quarter of 2017, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), up 4% from the 3rd quarter. But 2018 is off to a slower, albeit still reasonable, start. In the first two months of the year, average housing starts were 222,500 units SAAR down about 5% from the fourth quarter. Both apartment and single-family starts shared in the decline at the beginning of 2018, but in general terms, the level of starts for apartment units continues to be relatively buoyant whereas single-family appears weak.

Geographically, the decline was broadly based with most provinces participating in the moderation; exceptions were Ontario (up 30%), Nova Scotia (15%) and Saskatchewan (4%).

Total full-year housing starts ended up at 219,760 units, endowing 2017 with the highest total housing starts in the past 11 years (since before the recession). After a surprisingly strong 2017, Canada-wide total housing starts are expected to fall back in 2018, with all regions except Alberta (which is still recovering from its recent recession) contributing to the moderation.

In 2019, total housing starts are forecast to remain pretty steady, as some improvement in single-family starts is offset by a modest decline in apartments. Quebec, Ontario and B.C. will each moderate in 2019 coming off of recent highs counterbalanced by improvements elsewhere.

The Temperature of Things to Come

The weakness so far in 2018 and the relative steady nature of the forecast is related to the "hot" and "cold" factors affecting housing demand that should combine for a "lukewarm" market.

"Hot" includes the very strong economic momentum at the end of 2017, which is setting up for some significant tailwinds for housing demand and housing starts. Job growth accelerated through the year and stood at 374,000 net new jobs on a year-over-year basis in Q4. Historically, a surge in job creation is positive for

housing demand and higher housing starts, but typically with a lag.

The lag may be longer this time around due to the "cold" conditions including emerging headwinds in form of the B-20 mortgage stress tests, modestly rising interest rates, continued price and supply constraints in major cities, uncertainty surrounding NAFTA negotiations and threatened specialized U.S. tariffs on selected products.

On net, housing markets are going to look turbulent through the first half of 2018, but expect stronger housing starts in the second half. Home buying intentions remain elevated at the Canada-wide level, and we expect that motivated buyers will drive activity later in the year once the market settles.

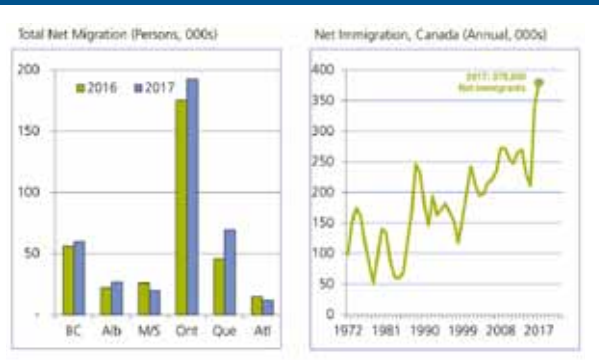
A key demand driver in the current forecast is migration. Net migration is a significant driver of housing demand (both ownership and rental) and total net migration to Canada continues to be on the rise. 2016 saw some 340,000 net new migrants come to Canada, fully 61% higher than 2015. And in 2017 the number rose a further 12% to a record of almost 380,000 net new persons. Thanks to this rise nationally, the regional pattern (which is also inclusive of net migration between provinces) shows recent gains in Quebec and Ontario with most other regions remaining about on par with a year prior (see chart).

Historically, international migration has an impact on rental markets right away as about 80% of new immigrants establish rental households upon landing. But ownership rates tend to converge with the general population over a period of about nine years. Migration has been on the upswing for several years now, but the remarkable jumps in the past two years described above are fostering stronger rental demand today and will translate into improved home sales over the next few years.

We expect that motivated buyers will drive activity later in the year once the market settles.

Peter Norman is VP & Chief Economist at Altus Group, and leads a national team of economic advisors providing policy analysis, feasibility assessment, and economic intelligence to the home building and real estate industry. He can be reached at peter.norman@altusgroup.com.

2017: The Highest Net Migration to Canada Ever



Source: Altus Group Economic Consulting based on data from Statistics Canada



By Patti Walsh

Rather than limiting yourself to just one lender, consider working with multiple lenders.

Future-Proofing the Home Building Industry

The residential construction industry is in the midst of rapid and unprecedented transformation. Evolving mortgage regulations, new building codes, increased market competition and tighter lending guidelines have made it more challenging to not only break ground but to move homes that are already built. At the same time, these changes are impacting the types of products consumers want to buy—with many demanding less expensive homes and making buying decisions based on a home's energy efficiency and environmental impact.

These industry shifts make it difficult for builders and contractors alike to prepare for the future. Since the pace of change isn't expected to slow anytime soon, conducting "business as usual" is no longer an option. Many homebuilders already know this and have recognized that to thrive in this environment they must expect the unexpected. This involves adapting to the changed landscape and capitalizing on the opportunity by finding new ways to align their operational processes with today's shifting market.

While this is a challenging task, it's by no means impossible. Below are three ways to position your business to realize opportunities, regardless of what may lie ahead.

Get creative

It's hard to thrive in today's evolving market if you're not meeting your buyers' changing needs. And in light of the most recent mortgage rule changes—where all buyers must undergo a "stress test" by either qualifying under the Bank of Canada's benchmark rate or their institution's contractual rate plus two percentage points (whichever is greater)—more buyers' needs are changing when it comes to price.

Many homebuyers have seen their buying power diminish since the new rules took effect on January 1. As a result, builders—regardless of whether they build on spec or custom build—are experiencing customer expectation gaps between affordability and desirability. In response, they must find creative ways to make homes more affordable.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to maintain profit margins while still attracting price-sensitive buyers. To reduce your costs and improve negotiating power with buyers, you can revisit existing contracts, renegotiate with your trades and suppliers, or use alternate product lines or materials.

Another option is to explore vertical integration with your supply chain. For example, consider a joint venture with a land developer to secure land position at a desirable cost, or bring traditional outsourced contract work in-house to offer an integrated solution that reduces time and cost.

Pluralize your lending partners

Whether you're having trouble landing financing due to tighter lending guidelines or because your long-time underwriter at your preferred lender retired, one thing is clear: In today's lending market, relationship doesn't play as strong a role in lending decisions as it used to.

While it's still important to establish a strong reputation with your lenders and earn their trust, the reality is that lenders often don't provide financing in the dollars, terms or turnaround they used to—meaning you may not obtain the funds you need from any one lender at any one time.

For this reason, it's important to broaden your access to capital. Rather than limiting yourself to just one lender, consider working with multiple lenders. Not only will this increase your chances of getting the amount of financing you need when you need it, but it will also reduce your risk of being left exposed.

You may also want to start looking beyond traditional lending sources, like the major banks, and form relationships with alternative lenders. While it may take more paperwork—and cost a little more—they are a good additional resource to have and can be a great option when you need quick turnaround on financing.

Strengthen your business operations

To face the future head-on—and keep pace in a rapidly-changing market—your business needs to be in tip-top shape. This includes revisiting your tax strategy to make sure it reflects the federal government's recent corporate tax changes and is properly formulated to help you reduce taxes and preserve wealth moving forward.

In addition, keep your financial information current and easily accessible to allow for quick and informed decisions. Some of the main items to monitor include your receivables, work-in-progress and progress billings. Having the right people and infrastructure are key to staying on top of this.

Relish the unknown

The residential construction landscape is changing quickly and it's almost guaranteed that the homes built in the next few years will be different than those being built today. While it's not clear what will change, you can expect that it will differ. This change can be uncomfortable, however, it also can bring opportunity. The key to future-proofing your business and improving organizational agility hinges on your willingness to not only be open to change, but to look for it. Builders who take these steps now to become more nimble will be well-positioned to capitalize on the opportunities of the future. ■

Patti Walsh is a partner with Grant Thornton LLP in Edmonton. She works with organizations of all sizes in the construction and real estate sector. Patti can be reached at Patti.Walsh@ca.gt.com or by phone at 780-401-8246.



By Mark Wessel

It's only a matter of time before you'll be building more energy efficient homes as a matter of necessity.

Mark Wessel is the principal of Bullpen PR, which has been providing marketing and PR support for home builders in Canada and the United States since 2000. The company also works in partnership with ad agencies and other marketing firms involved in the home building industry. Mark can be reached at: mwessel@bullpenpr.com

Going Green and Getting Homeowners to Do the Same

The common refrain I've heard from builders who have built Net Zero or Net Zero Ready homes in the past is that buyers 'don't get it' when it comes to the advantages of a more energy efficient home. But the reality is more and more consumers are waking up to the benefits of building green.

While a walk-in closet still tops the 'must have' list of home features according to Canadian Home Builders' Association's (CHBA) 2017 Home Buyer Preference Survey, the second most popular feature is energy efficient appliances, followed by high efficiency windows in third place and in fifth, an overall energy efficient home. In other words, three of the top five 'must haves' already pertain to energy efficiency.

Combine that with the fact that CHBA now has a formal labelling program for Net Zero and Net Zero Ready homes and a Net Zero Ready pilot program was successfully completed last year and the argument can be made that it's no longer a matter of if, but when consumer demand for greener homes will reach a tipping point. Whether you're already building more energy efficient homes or you're contemplating doing so in the not too distant future, here are some strategies and tactics to consider:

Show buyers the money. If you just focus on the technology behind a Net Zero or LEED home, chances are the average consumer's eyes will glaze over. But if you demonstrate the energy savings and extrapolate those savings over one, five and 10-year periods, chances are their eyes will light up.

Promote the value proposition. Obtaining an energy ranking for a home before you sell it has been a reality in Europe for years and it's coming to Canada as well with the Home Energy Rating and Disclosure (HER&D) program. As a green home builder, you can use this to your advantage by emphasizing the fact that your homes will have a higher value than a comparable, less energy efficient home nearby.

Play the comfort card. Homes with an HRV/ERV air exchange (currently the 10th most popular feature) and better insulation are considerably more comfortable than less airtight homes with conventional furnaces. So, make comfort a key selling point for your homes.

Position yourselves as industry leaders. There's still time to get into the green building game and position your company as an early adapter if not an industry leader by building homes that are considerably more energy efficient than code-built homes.


Add impact to your key messaging. Often lost in translation when it comes to building more energy

efficient homes is the reduced impact these homes will have on the environment. In the wake of the Paris Accord and with weekly stories pertaining to everything from global warming to increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, green home builders have an opportunity to promote the fact that their homeowners will have a reduced carbon footprint.

Make green your favourite colour. By embracing green building practices, you have the unique opportunity to promote this building philosophy throughout your marketing ecosystem—from your website to social media to your media relations program. Handled properly, it can help generate considerably more attention and demand for your homes.

Become a thought leader. Harness your passion to build more energy efficient homes and the benefits these homes have not just with prospective home buyers, but the greater community. You can do that, by among other things, actively advocating for higher building standards through your marketing materials.

Bolster your brand. The whole process of going green opens up the opportunity to not only promote your homes using some of the messaging and tactics covered off in this article, but also to dramatically rebrand your company as a market leader and your company spokespersons as trail blazers within the home building industry.

When you look at how every five years the bar for building codes across the country will continue to be raised, it's only a matter of time before you'll be building more energy efficient homes as a matter of necessity. So, there's a compelling argument to move in that direction now. 



Reid's Heritage Homes is one of the growing number of builders to embrace the green building movement by actively marketing both Net Zero Ready and Net Zero homes.

Design, build and keep the HAMMERDOWN

BY FRANK O'BRIEN



Hammerdown has been a consistent winner in the Manitoba Home Builder's Association awards for best kitchen, including this award-winning 'Medina' project.

Smart design, flexibility and an eye on trends and demographics has kept **TYSON HIEBERT** and his company, **Hammerdown Home Renovations and General Construction Ltd.**, among the RenoMark leaders in Winnipeg for 13 years.

Last year Hammerdown captured the gold award for best kitchen renovation from the Manitoba Home Builders' Association (MHBA), and the MHBA gold award for best bathroom renovation. It probably came as no surprise to the competition: Hammerdown had taken the gold award for kitchens in 2014 and 2015, and won the gold award for best basement renovation in 2015.

It is subtle innovation that may be keeping Hammerdown ahead of the pack in Canada's central city.

For example, Hiebert's team was among the first to flag black as the new silver in kitchen renovations. As the company's blog notes, "many appliance manufacturers are ditching the all stainless steel look for black stainless steel finish" and urges its customers "to hop aboard this home renovation trend."

Hammerdown was also an early adopter of quartz countertops, which are now a national rage in kitchen renovations. Now, the company is also recommending smart upgrades with any kitchen makeover, including such options as motion-sensing faucets and lighting systems controlled by a mobile phone or a tablet.

The company further advises contrasting **▶ 14**

This most common of North American superstitions originates from early African-American folk spirituality. A rabbit's foot was deemed lucky because of a rabbit's reproductive habits, so carrying a foot was thought to help with fertility. Thus you'll see many a rabbit's foot hanging from a family's minivan mirror.

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“Our primary source of new clients is from referrals.”

Tyson Hiebert

relies on for marketing.

“Our primary source of new clients is from referrals,” Hiebert said. “It must be working because we’ve been in business for over 12 years and we’ve been steadily growing and prospering.”

Hammerdown has been sharing a residential construction wave that saw Winnipeg and its surrounding region crest a 22 per cent increase in housing starts in 2017 from a year earlier. 2018 is off to a slower start in the city, with detached housing starts down 20 per cent through the first two months of the year compared to 2017.

Hiebert said he has seen fluctuating demand this year in Winnipeg, but he is confident the renovation and custom-build sector will remain strong through 2018.

“I definitely anticipate hiring to continue. My intention is to add two people to our team in 2018: one to assist in sales and another carpenter to increase our production. Our reputation that we have worked so hard for continues to allow growth,” he said. 🏠

12 ▶ dark flooring with popular white cabinets, noting that “this will help tie all the elements together.”

Such insight comes from Hammerdown’s in-house interior design team that works with clients in selecting everything from plumbing fixtures to floor tiles, paint and trim.

In the bathroom, Hammerdown’s team takes the time to design detail-by-detail, often adding thoughtful but welcoming touches such as vertical storage, in-shower shelving or benches.

The latter are part of designs that Hiebert said reflects an important demographic: older homeowners who not only want accessible features but are willing and able to pay for them.

The majority of these homeowners are empty-nester baby boomers that are either approaching retirement or early into retirement, he explained.

“These clients typically have equity in their home,” Hiebert said, with the means to pay for quality, extensive renovations.

They often prefer this to buying a new home that could be more expensive, have higher property taxes and often a smaller yard, he explained.

“Our clients are requesting a finished product that is above the standard new home build. All of our kitchens have LED pot lighting and under-cabinet lighting. Custom vinyl tile and vinyl plank are extremely popular in all renovations. The options are endless with these products. They are maintenance-free, extremely durable and budget friendly,” he said.

While Hammerdown had an impressive booth at the MHBA’s Winnipeg Renovation Show, it is word-of-mouth that the company



Hammerdown captured the 2017 gold award for best bathroom renovation from the Manitoba Home Builders’ Association.

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BY FRANK O'BRIEN

Quebec Steps Up



BRIVIA GROUP

Montreal is expected to see 19,000 multi-family starts in 2018, 30 per cent of them condos, such as this 17-unit townhouse project by Brivia Group and Tianco Group.

La belle province has its housing groove back

Quebec's housing market has awoken from a near-decade slumber to post some startling numbers. In 2017, housing starts soared seven per cent from a year earlier to post the highest annual starts—47,664—since 2000.

The province is on pace to see similar starts this year, according to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., which predicts they could remain in an elevated state into 2019.

The resale-housing sector is also on fire, with 82,600 sales through the multiple listing service (MLS) in 2017 – a four-year high – and forecast for only slightly lower sales this year, due to higher mortgage rates, according to **Desjardin**, the Quebec credit union.

“The extremely favourable economic backdrop for Quebec consumers is fueling this surge in Quebec’s residential sector,” Desjardin

stated in a recent report on the province’s housing market.

CMHC said sales of existing house in Quebec could notch as high as 88,000 units this year. Average home prices are forecast to increase by about five per cent to \$315,000 in 2018, with most of the gains seen in Montreal and Quebec City.

The Quebec housing starts and sales remain well back in third place behind Ontario and British Columbia, but Quebec does not have a foreign-home buyer tax or the series

of demand-shattering regulations that have rolled out in B.C. and Ontario over the past year.

In fact, Desjardin notes, \$1 billion in Quebec tax cuts for individuals “will help the residential sector see another bumper year” in 2018.

Quebec’s consumer confidence index is at the highest level in 12 years and many consumers are planning to make a major purchase in the coming months, the credit union adds.

Much of that confidence is tied to strong employment. Quebec’s jobless rate fell to 4.9 per cent in December, the lowest monthly rate in 40 years. Increases in full-time work accounted for almost all the 86,700 jobs added in 2017, including 26,000 in December alone.

The strong housing market is adding even more jobs. The City of Longueuil is plunging ahead with a \$500 million mixed-use, transit-linked development that will include more than 500 condos.

Montreal-based **Devimco Immobilier** will

develop the project that will be built above the Longueuil-Université-de-Sherbrooke Metro station. In total, it is expected to include one million square feet of real estate, with condos, rental housing, a hotel, office space and retail.

The project will be ongoing for years and indicative of the most hectic Montreal construction pace in decades.

Last year 24,756 homes were started in the Montreal census metropolitan area, the highest level since 2005 and an increase of almost 40 per cent from the previous year, according to the CMHC. Of that 19,400 were apartments, a third of which were condos. CMHC is forecasting up to 19,000 new Montreal apartments could break ground this year.

Outlook for Quebec Housing Starts

	2017	2018	2019
Detached houses	6,729	12,100	12,200
Multi-family	40,935	32,800	34,200
Total starts	47,664	44,900	46,400

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Montreal's rental vacancy rate is around 2.8 per cent, down from 4.1 per cent a year ago, though rents are a relative bargain compared to Toronto or Vancouver, at an average of \$840 for a two-bedroom.

CMHC notes that high immigration will underpin Quebec's housing market. Total net migration is expected to reach 46,000 annually over the next two years.

The Quebec government said it has no plans for a foreign-home buyer tax but would monitor the purchase of homes by foreign investors.

The first half of last year saw a 30 per cent increase in the number of foreign homebuyers in Montreal over the previous year, according to CMHC. But the total number of foreign buyers in the city still accounted for only 1.3 per cent of all real estate transactions in the six-month period.

PAUL CARDINAL, an analyst with the Quebec Federation of Real Estate Boards, said the number of foreign buyers is still too low to have a significant impact on Quebec housing prices.

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Kitchen Clari

Clean lines combine with lower-cost materials, better technology to redefine the modern kitchen

BY SYLVIA SHAW



Maximizing space, with pullout tables for example, combines with clean-line design to create the contemporary kitchen.

ty



Melamine cabinets. Generous storage. Laminate counters. Coloured appliances. It all sounds retro, but this year pragmatism tinged with style may define renovations for a truly contemporary kitchen.

The modern look is all open space, slick surfaces and natural light but it can be achieved without huge expense, according to top kitchen designers.

Custom kitchen designer **AyA Kitchens** of Mississauga, Ontario has outlets across the country and it works with leading design firms, such as Partisans, and Hariri Pontarini Architects. Yet AyA eschews real wood cabinets in favor of a low-cost alternative.

"Melamine offers a great alternative to wood through its natural, textured look," AyA explained in a recent statement. The designers noted that melamine's durability, low-price point and consistency in colour and grain makes it a great and affordable selection.

When designing a kitchen makeover, consider fold-away desks for those using laptops and tablets, and rollouts for garbage and recycling bins.

Designers are also reacting to the smaller spaces that many homeowners, especially in townhomes or condo apartments, have to deal with. An example, again from AyA, is the Cubi storage package. Designed in partnership with Toronto-based architectural firm Partisans, it creates more storage space within counters and cabinets.

Ikea, the Swedish furniture giant, has a large selection of kitchen storage systems, often wood units that fit neatly into existing cabinets. They are super easy to install and can help a homeowner extend storage at fairly low cost.

When designing a kitchen makeover, consider fold-away desks for those using laptops and tablets, and rollouts for garbage and recycling bins. Also, recommend an attractive table that compacts with pullouts, and lift-up doors on counters to store small appliances.

Quartz countertops have edged out granite for

kitchen counters, but renovations can capture the look and nearly the performance of quartz with lower-priced options. A top pick could be Formica's new Silver Quartzite. This stone-look laminate will serve any kitchen with a great design that is largely worry-free and much less expensive than stone. A four-by-eight-foot sheet of Silver Quartzite costs about \$80.

Likewise, hardwood floors are all the rage today, but new vinyl plank flooring is a near dead-ringer for wood. It will not warp if it gets wet, wears well and is priced much lower than any hardwood.

Do not be afraid to push the colour envelope in a kitchen makeover. Colour contrast, even black and white, can keep the clean look but with a dash of excitement. Some top renovators are now recommending black-finish steel appliances to add punch.

LG and **Samsung** were the first to bring out black stainless steel appliances, but now **GE**, **Frigidaire**, **KitchenAid**, and **Whirlpool** manufacture a full line of Black Steel. It now accounts for 30 per cent of package sales. That is a huge number and dwarfs any other finish.

Black stainless steel does not show fingerprints, like regular stainless steel, but it will scratch. You also have to be convinced that, unlike other appliances colours—you may remember the horror of turquoise—black will remain popular and not eventually date the renovation.

The best advice today for renovators is certainly capture the clean lines of contemporary kitchens, but keep the costs lower and the space at a maximum by investigating the many material and design options that are now available. 🏠



Add storage: AyA Kitchen's Cubi system adds a ton of kitchen storage with style. Ikea also has innovative storage systems that can stretch storage in smaller kitchens.



Multi-rotor drones are not for amateurs: commercial use requires a Special Flight Operators Certificate under Canadian air regulations of Transport Canada.

KARMA QUADCOPTER

Drones Top Roofing Tool

Flying eyes can improve safety and give birds-eye view for repairs

BY FRANK O'BRIEN

Video-equipped drones are being recruited for re-roofing contracts and the technical director of the Ottawa-based Canadian Roofing Contractors Association (CRCA) said they are as useful on residential projects as on large-scale commercial jobs.

"Drones offer a safety and cost advantage," said **PETER KALINGER** of the CRCA.

The drones, Kalinger said, can not only

provide a birds-eye view of a roof's condition without having to put someone up on a sloped roof, but can also provide dimensions and other data for precise estimating.

He added that U.S. drone research is equipping video drones with thermal sensors that can spot hidden water egress or insulation gaps beneath the roofing material.

The versatility of the drones was underlined

when **Victoria Aerial Survey** was recruited to provide a visuals of the most important roof in British Columbia: the B.C. Legislature.

"It was an important job for us, and our first roofing contract," said licensed pilot **DAVID CARLOS**, who founded Victoria Aerial Survey five years ago. He explained that the government's property manager wanted to check on the gold-leafed statue of Captain George ▶ **23**



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ATTACK ON DEMAND

Governments are gutting Canada's housing market by stifling demand and stalling supply

BY DERMOT MACK

The residential industry is one of Canada's biggest, a multibillion-dollar behemoth that is worth more, in straight dollar value and jobs, than most of the resource industry. In British Columbia for example, home building contributes \$23 billion annually to the provincial GDP, almost twice that of the forest industry.

Double those numbers for Ontario and include all provinces and a picture emerges of a powerhouse industry that reaches into every corner of the country.

Residential construction contributed seven per cent of Canada's GDP in 2016, according to BMO economist **ROBERT KAVCIC**.

Kavcic said the real estate industry as a whole contributed roughly 12 per cent of GDP that year.

But home building groups and the Urban Development Institute, say senior governments have introduced punitive measures to stifle housing demand while municipal governments have stalled supply.

Demand dampened

Despite the fact that residential mortgage defaults are nearly invisible, at about 0.3 per cent, the federal government has placed onerous and increasing restrictions on mortgage

lending.

In the past year, this has included:

- ▶ Two rounds of mortgage "stress tests" that have cut the buying power of a borrower by 17 per cent and shut nearly a fifth of first-time buyers out of the market entirely.
- ▶ Three rounds of interest rate hikes that have helped to boost mortgage rates across the board.

Previous measures have doubled the minimum downpayment to 10 per cent on insured mortgages of more than \$500,000 and included

a series of increases in mortgage insurance rates through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. (CMHC).

Provincially, Ontario and B.C. governments have introduced foreign buyer taxes; Ontario released a housing plan aimed at slowing demand; and the government in B.C. recently boosted the foreign buyer tax to 20 per cent, and even extended the tax to areas of the province that have few foreign home buyers.

At the same time, municipalities have slowed the delivery of new homes.

"It now takes seven to eight years for a multi-family project to be built in Vancouver," said **ANNE McMULLIN**, president and CEO of the Urban Development Institute, Pacific Region.

"While pointing the finger at foreign buyers gains public support, the biggest obstacles are still municipal permitting delay bottlenecks, which can take years, and restrictive, single-family zoning, on about 85 per cent of residential land across Metro," McMullin said.

CMHC recently identified the "weak" supply response in both Metro Vancouver and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) as a critical driver of housing affordability in both regions.

BILD GTA recently noted that "the ongoing decline in new housing inventory is a direct reflection of how difficult it is for the industry to bring product to market." The organization pointed to out-of-date zoning bylaws as well as other complexities and delays in permit approvals "that have increased dramatically ▶



Build, baby, build:
Pro-supply advocate Sonya Trauss: "The people who live near a proposed new development are the last people who should be asked if they want higher density. You are guaranteed to get a 'no.'"

▶ in recent years.”

In a recent study of B.C.’s Lower Mainland, the Fraser Institute noted that municipal compliance costs and fees add up to a low of \$4,300 per home built in Pitt Meadows and a high of almost \$78,000 per home in the City of Vancouver.

The public may be catching on that it is not big, bad developers but delays and the piling on of regulations and fees by municipal governments that are the true barrier to housing affordability.

Fighting back

This was seen in a Vancouver conference, where supply proponents called for an end to public hearings as a step in getting more homes started.

Speaker **SONYA TRAUSS** said it doesn’t matter what kind of housing is built as long as there is more of it, and soon.

Trauss, who founded the 500-member San

THE ONGOING DECLINE IN NEW HOUSING INVENTORY IS A DIRECT REFLECTION OF HOW DIFFICULT IT IS FOR THE INDUSTRY TO BRING PRODUCT TO MARKET.

Francisco Bay Area Renters Federation two years ago, said that, like in her high-priced city, Vancouver’s mandatory public hearing process “is broken.”

“The people who live near a proposed new development are the last people who should be asked if they want higher density.” Trauss told the Vancouver meeting, “You are guaranteed

to get a ‘no.’”

Trauss said more supply is the answer for Vancouver, whether it is luxury homes, high-rise rentals or low-income housing.

“You have to support building, even when it’s a type of building you hate,” she said. “You really need everything right now.”

Increasing the inventory, which should start by reducing the regulatory costs of building new homes, would be a simple fix for housing problems in Vancouver and Toronto, others suggested.

PAUL KERSHAW, a University of British Columbia professor and founder of Generation Squeeze, a lobby group for millennials seeking affordable housing, said Vancouver’s proposal to allow older houses to be converted to multi-unit rentals is a small step in the right direction.

Kershaw urged young people to “create a critical mass to provide political cover” for those advocating for higher-density residential development. 🏠

20 ▶ ROOFING



VICTORIA AERIAL SURVEY

Inspecting the roof, dome and Captain George Vancouver statue on the roof of the British Columbia Legislature was the first roofing job for drone operator Victoria Aerial Survey.

Vancouver, the iconic copper dome and the general roof condition atop the main legislative building. Like many property managers, they also likely wanted to avoid the onerous safety regulations, access permission and potential roof damage that could result in sending a team onto the sloped roof of the 116-year old structure.

Instead, Carlos carefully guided a powerful multi-rotor drone equipped with video and a high-definition camera to take detailed photos of every part of the roof.

The cameras showed, for example, that

what was thought to be bird droppings on the seven-foot-high Captain Vancouver statue was actually base metal showing through the aging gold leaf. The property managers now also have clear and close-up photos of the entire roof and the dome, which has some structural issues.

Carlos, one of the few commercial multi-rotor drone operators in the province, said most of his business comes from the real estate industry, but he believes the unmanned flying cameras are uniquely suited for roof inspections.

“They can fly high or low, they can hover and they provide high-resolution photos or videos,” he explained.

Using drones for visual roof inspections offers a number of advantages compared to using Google earth or airplanes, Carlos believes. First of all, the drones are inexpensive. Carlos estimates a commercial roof inspection by drone would cost around \$300. Drones also allow for better visuals than satellite or airplane images and avoid the safety and access concerns of putting people onto the roof. “[Drones] are cheaper, safer and can get way closer,” Carlos said.

But nothing replaces a professional inspector getting up on the roof, said **SEAN LANG**, president and senior consultant of **Inter-Provincial**

Roof Consultants Ltd. of Surrey.

“You cannot see the quality of the membrane seal at a drain, or find nails poking out of shingles unless you actually go on the roof and look for the issues,” Lang said.

Tempting as it is, contractors are not encouraged to just buy a video drone (they are available for less than \$250) and pop it into the air above a client’s house.

“They [drones] can fly high or low, they can hover and they provide high-resolution photos or videos.”

Anyone who pilots a multi-rotor for commercial use requires a Special Flight Operators Certificate under Canadian air regulations of Transport Canada and the applicant must prove he or she has the experience and the expertise to handle the powerful tool. Carlos notes they are also privacy issues with flying the drones in urban areas. 🏠

Renovation is Outpacing New Construction



BY JON EAKES

One characteristic of renovation is that contractors are more a jack of all trades, using a wider variety of tools than new construction workers and often dabbling in fields that are not their speciality. No one can keep up with the depth of changes in all the trades, and few have time to dwell at the renovation centre checking out new things—so let me raise some things that will be no surprise to a specific tradesman, but can be very useful for someone fighting with a toilet because they put in a tile floor. But first, let's look at dust—the killer of customer relations for a renovator.

Wireless Control of CT Dust Extractors

The wonderful ability to plug a tool into a shop vac and to get them both working together didn't used to work with cordless tools—until now. **Festool** is one of the first to build Bluetooth actuation into their new CT Dust Extractors (and have an add-on for their old units). They also have new batteries with Bluetooth built in; the battery ON turns the Dust Extractor ON, and then OFF. They even have a little accessory ring to put on the end of the extractor hose for manual ON/OFF right from the end of the hose—no wires. A dust-free site is a renovator's calling card for repeat business.



Toilet Flange Bolts

Toilet flange bolts are difficult to install because the head keeps falling down below its slot, and difficult to remove because the bolt is rough cut off above the nut. In addition, raising the toilet attachments because of new tiles has not been simple.



Zero Cut Bolts by **Danco** are now available in renovation centres for \$13 a pair. That's expensive for two bolts, but worth it. The bolt head, which is now a nut shaped like the old bolt heads, goes into the flange and is held in place by a plastic screw down washer. The blue locator pin goes in the nut and the toilet is placed over the locator pins, which are easy to slide into position. The blue locator has a ring to tell you to use the bolt, or the extension and the bolt. A hard plastic washer/wrench is used to drive the bolt down without overly tightening and cracking the porcelain. The cap goes on and you go home. Fantastic.

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SetFast Self-Adjusting Closet Bolts use the same concept of putting the flange-friendly nut on the bottom, but they also put a nut on the top so if the bolt bottoms out the nut lowers and you cut off the bolt as usual. I prefer the Zero Cut Bolt system and it is surprisingly half the cost. But at www.SetFastBolt.com you will find a video of the most useful renovation plumbing tool you ever bought, after the speed-way wrench, of course—the **Jam-Bar**, sold on Amazon.ca for \$47.

This thin hardened steel “fork” with teeth on one side allows you to slide under the slightly loosened old nut, keep the bolt from dropping down below the flange and prevent the bolt from turning. As easy as that you remove the old nut over the battered up bolt. These two products make taking the toilet off and then back on the easiest change-out you ever undertook.

Cutting Copper Pipe Clean in Tight Spaces

You probably all have this painful mini-cutter in your tool box. It is hard to turn the knob, and you go around and around to get



the cut. Change it for the new round automatic cutters. Snap these over the pipe, make two revolutions and you are done—no odd-shaped knob to get stuck on the wall.

If you want to use shortened blades in a recip saw or bi-metal blades in an oscillating saw, remember that you must de-burr both the outside and the inside of the cut pipe. The outside is to get it to accept a fitting. The inside is to avoid the creation of turbulence and erosion of the pipe wall one quarter of an inch downstream of the inside burr. Also, drape the tool in plastic in case water starts to fly.



Change it for the new round automatic cutters. Snap these over the pipe, make two revolutions and you are done.

Spray on Fire Protection for Plumbing Work

From Bernzomatic comes a great thermal shield gel they call Cold Coat (found on Amazon.ca) or Worthington Cold Coat Gel Spray (found at Canadian Tire online). This is a spray gel that can protect wood from the plumbing torch, or prevent heat from moving down the copper pipe—and that protects rubber washers that are close to your soldering job, or even

blocks the loss of heat to water in the pipe a foot away. In this photo you can see the gel on the plywood with absolutely no burn marks from the flame that is only an inch away. You can leave the gel to eventually evaporate. Products like this help us to solder quickly and safely with good results—keeping the heat where we need it.



We used to protect wood with asbestos sheets. Now these sheets are replaced by fire-proof cloths that do a good job but are difficult to position, especially as in this photo where the pipe is practically sitting on the wood. The gel is a replacement—better than the sheets.

By the way, do always have a fire extinguisher right on hand when soldering around any wood. Such a precaution could have saved many a building.

For working trouble free with lead-free solder, look up solder at JonEakes.com.

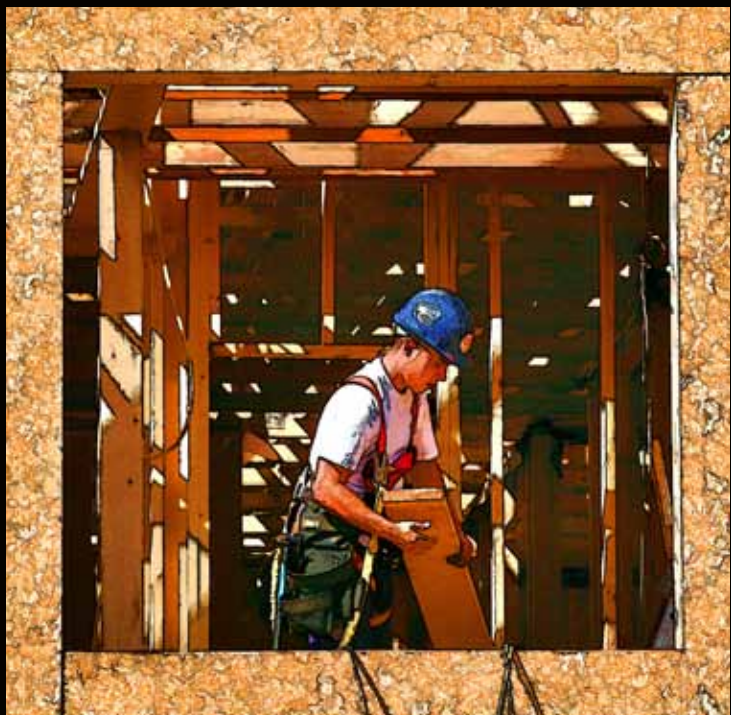


Montreal-based TV broadcaster, author, home renovation and tool expert Jon Eakes provides a tool feature in each edition of Home BUILDER. www.JonEakes.com

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Renovators Should Think of Seniors



“95 per cent of seniors want to stay in their own homes,” says Peder Madsen

PEDER MADSEN vice-president of **CCR Building and Remodeling** in London, Ontario, is advising home renovators to consider senior citizens as prime clients.

During the next 20 years the number of seniors will grow to more than 25 per cent of Canada’s population. This means more seniors who will be living and being cared for in their own homes, Madsen explained in an op-ed piece he authored for the *London Free Press*.

Renovations, he explained, can create a home that is adaptable and will evolve with the aging client’s needs.

“Removing walls and opening up larger spaces makes it easier to accommodate mobility impairments. When this is not possible, consider creating or adding flexible spaces,” said Madsen, who is also president of the London Home Builders’ Association.

A main floor den with a bathroom can also serve as a guest room for visiting family members or it can be converted to a master suite later if mobility becomes an issue, he added.

Other tips include:

- Avoid placing laundry rooms in basements; instead, try to situate them on the main or second floor.
- With a multiple-floor house, consider the possibility of installing a future elevator. “Banked or stacked closets can provide the required space for a residential elevator if properly planned.”
- Lighting needs to be bright and consistent and should be augmented with natural light from large windows or solar tubes. Casement windows are preferable to double-hung or sliding windows because of their ease of operation. Switches should be rocker style and placed no higher than 1.2 metres above the floor.
- Lever door hardware allows for universal usage. Doorways should be wide enough for wheelchair access; similarly kitchens and bathrooms require a 1.5-metre turning radius for wheelchairs.

There are many other aging conditions that require more thought and specialized renovations, such as different types of flooring for those suffering with dementia, and different colours of counters for sight-related deficiencies, he noted.

“Studies show that 95 per cent of seniors want to age in place, however it is often challenging for them to get the renovations they require,” Madsen stated.

Alberta Offers Reno Rebates



ALBERTA GOVERNMENT / CLIMATE CHANGE OFFICE

Alberta Minister of Environment Shannon Phillips checks out high-performance glazing at All Weather Windows in Edmonton.

The Alberta government is offering rebates of up to \$3,500 for home renovation products that improve energy savings.

Products include insulation for attics, basements and above-grade walls. Tankless hot water heaters and triple-glazed windows are also eligible.

To qualify, homeowners must select from a list of Alberta-based registered contractors to install eligible products. Contractors are expected to guide homeowners through the application. Rebates will go directly to the homeowner once each project is complete.

Contractors who wish to be added to the registry can apply at efficiencyalberta.ca. They must complete a short training course and meet the following criteria: be a legally registered business in Alberta; have current liability insurance; and have current Workers’ Compensation coverage.

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Modular Builders Look Past Homeless



Metric Modular completes modular homes in a factory and ships them to sites.

Manufactured modular homes have been recruited to help Vancouver deal with a homeless crisis, but the supplier fears the social link has given modular a bad name.

“One of our main challenges is typically related to things such as perception,” **CRAIG MITCHELL**, director at **Metric Modular** told

Business In Vancouver. “We have a perception in the marketplace as being trailer builders versus high-quality home builders.”

Metric Modular, previously known as Britco, is one of North America’s largest manufactured home companies.

Vancouver has had Metric build four

modular housing projects as temporary housing for the estimated 3,500 homeless in the city. With its recent proposal of approximately 50 units of temporary modular housing at Little Mountain, just over 300 units of temporary modular housing are currently in progress in Vancouver, bringing the project halfway towards its commitment of 600 units.

“Temporary modular housing is a quick and effective way to address the urgent needs of the city’s most vulnerable residents while more permanent housing is being built,” according to a city statement.

Metric Modular, which has two factories in the Lower Mainland, is looking far beyond temporary housing. It sees opportunities in multi-family building, hotels and Passive housing. Mitchell said building in a controlled factory environment would allow easier and quicker production of energy-efficient homes. #

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EV Stations Charged to Condo Owners



The City of Vancouver will soon require 100 per cent of new condominium parking stalls to have an electric-vehicle (EV) charging station—and condo owners will pay for these stations whether they use them or not.

“Is this the last straw?” said **BOB DE WIT**, president of the Greater Vancouver Home Builders’ Association (GHVBA), in listing the myriad of city costs and fees now layered onto new homes in the city.

The Fraser Institute recently estimated that Vancouver civic costs now add about \$78,000 to the cost of a new home in the city.

de Wit said builders are aware of green issues, but noted it is unhelpful to keep piling costs onto home buyers in Canada’s most expensive housing market.

The Urban Development Institute (UDI) of Canada, Pacific Region, estimates it will cost \$300 per stall to install the electric charging stations, though it noted the cost could come down as technology improved.

About 1 per cent of British Columbia drivers own an electric vehicle, according to industry estimates, the highest rate in the country.

ANNE McMULLIN, CEO of the UDI Pacific Region, wondered why condo owners and developers are being forced to pay for the charging stations, rather than BC Hydro or the electric vehicle manufacturers.

Both the UDI and GVHBA said additional costs for charging stations, which become mandatory on January 1, 2019, would be passed onto new condo buyers. Developers with an existing development permit application will be grandfathered under the new bylaw. 🏠

CALENDAR

April 8

Winnipeg Home & Garden Show
RBC Convention Centre
Winnipeg, Manitoba
www.homebuilders.mb.ca

April 11–13

NASCC: The Steel Conference
American Institute of Steel Construction
Baltimore Convention Center
Baltimore, Maryland
www.aisc.org/nascc

April 19–20

BILD Alberta Spring Conference
Fairmont Springs Hotel
Banff, Alberta
www.bildcr.com

April 26

SAM Awards of Distinction
Waterloo Region HBA
Marshall Hall
Waterloo, Ontario
www.wrhba.com

May 4

38th annual BILD Awards
6 p.m. – 11 p.m.
Universal Event Space
Vaughan, Ontario
www.bildgta.ca

May 15–16

Grey to Green
Green Roofs for Healthy Cities
Chestnut Conference Centre
Toronto, Ontario
www.greytogreenconference.org

May 23

Bold by Design:
Ontario Association of Architects Annual Conference
MTCC & Delta Hotel
Toronto, Ontario
www.oaa.on.ca

May 23–27

CSC National Conference
Construction Specifications Canada
Edmonton Westin Hotel
Edmonton, Alberta
www.csc-dcc.ca/conferences

May 27 & June 3

Parade of New Homes
Nova Scotia HBA
Halifax, Nova Scotia
www.nshomebuilders.ca

June 5–7

Building Lasting Change:
CaGBC National Conference
Canada Green Building Council
Beanfield Centre
Toronto, Ontario
www.cagbc.org

June 10

Parade of Renovated and Custom Homes
Various locations
Vancouver, British Columbia
www.gvhba.org

June 21–23

AIA Conference on Architecture
American Institute of Architects
Javits Center
New York, New York
conferenceonarchitecture.com

Montreal Boomers Buck Trend

In Canadian cities, many older residents—the so-called baby boomers—downsize and move to the downtown area to rent when they are nearing retirement.

Not in Montreal, according to a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. study.

The report looked at the influence of Montreal baby boomers on the real estate market, comparing data from 2006 and 2016.

Overall, over time, baby boomers have tended to own rather than rent. Still, it is often put forth that as they get older, many baby boomers sell their property in order to return to the rental market.

But the study found Montreal boomers have not significantly supported demand for rental housing in recent years.

Among baby boomers who were homeowners, the proportion owning freeholds was highest. However, this decreased by about 6 percentage points from 2006 to 2016, to reach 79.9%, for younger boomers and 86.1%, for older boomers. A small proportion of baby boomers, as they got older, sold their home in order to buy a condominium. This may have stimulated demand for more condominiums.

Few baby boomer households left the Montreal suburbs to settle on the Island of Montreal in 2016. Baby boomers from the suburbs therefore had little impact on demand for rental apartments and condominiums on the Island, the study found. 🏠



Calgary Luxury Home Market Improves



SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY CANADA

Calgary house listed at \$ 5.9 million.

activity in the Greater Toronto Area is projected to steady this spring, but sales of \$1 million-plus homes are projected to fall short of 2017's record highs.

The gap in performance between Vancouver's \$1 million-plus detached and condominium markets is also set to widen this spring.

Uncertainty introduced by the British Columbia government's new demand-side taxes and policies are expected to diminish activity in the detached house segment, Sotheby's concludes, while condo sales continue a brisk pace. 🏠

Sales of Calgary homes priced at more than \$1 million increased 45 per cent in the first two months of this year, compared to 2017, according to data from Sotheby's International Realty Canada.

Montreal is also seen as a "dark horse" leader in sales of luxury residential real estate this year, the Sotheby's report said.

Not so much, though for Toronto and Vancouver, the perennial leaders in high-priced housing.

Almost one year after the introduction of Ontario's Fair Housing Plan, top-tier market

Built Green registers 33,000 homes



Built Green has hit a milestone with more than 30,000 detached houses and 3,380 multi-family units now built under the Built Green banner.

With this completion, the cumulative impact of these single-family certified homes translates into more than half-a-million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions saved, according to the organization.

Built Green's programs focus on sustainable residential construction and include Natural Resources Canada's EnerGuide Rating System, the preservation of natural resources, pollution reduction and improved air quality.

The program started 15 years ago and CEO **JENNIFER CHRISTENSON** praised the "early adopters" in the home building industry that began the program and kept it rolling.

"To us, they're mavericks: those who are forward-thinking and ahead of market demand, ahead of regulation, driving innovation and an industry forward," Christenson said. 🏠

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