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The SAM Award Winner for Custom Home, Single-detached, between 2,500 and 4,000 sq. ft.: Coastal Construction, Victoria, B.C.

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STERLING HOMES

2011 NATIONAL SAM AWARDS

The 2011 SAM Award theme—Create and Transform—captured the imagination of new home builders, renovators and developers across Canada. Winners were announced at the 2012 CHBA National Conference in Mont-Tremblant, Quebec on March 17.

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Lock it, Leave it, Locate it... This month, resident expert Jon Eakes looks at some of the latest and greatest gizmos and gadgets to help you protect, cover, find and maintain your equipment.



Economics Matters



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Canadian Companies Optimistic About Economic Outlook for 2012

TORONTO — A recent survey conducted by Hays Canada, a national recruitment consultancy, indicates that most Canadian companies are optimistic about the economy in 2012. According to data collected from 1,300 organizations in November and December 2011, 81 per cent believe the economy will continue to strengthen/remain static, with 39 per cent of companies planning on increasing staff levels this year. Filling these new roles may be challenging with 77 per cent of companies citing “availability of suitable/skilled candidates” as the biggest challenge in attracting top talent. The data is being released as part of Hays Canada’s 2012 Compensation, Benefits, Recruitment and Retention Guide. For more information, visit www.hays.ca.

Skilled Labour Shortage Remains a Concern in Ontario



TORONTO — While there are generally positive feelings about construction business growth through 2012, there remains concerns about securing the right workforce that can do the jobs that need doing, says a recent survey conducted by the Ontario Construction Secretariat (OCS).

The survey found that 42 per cent of Ontario contractors are expecting a decrease in the availability of skilled construction tradespeople this year. Interestingly, more than half of the contractors in Northern and Eastern Ontario are concerned about the availability of labour, and those two regions have the highest expectations for business growth in 2012.

According to the Construction Sector Council, Ontario is facing a shortage of nearly 100,000 skilled tradespeople by 2019, with acute shortages expected in trades like boilermakers, construction managers, gasfitters, industrial instrument technicians, millwrights, pipefitters and welders.

Multiple Starts to Moderate, Singles to Level Off, Resales Stable



*The point estimate for total housing starts is 190,000 for 2012 and 193,800 for 2013. Economic uncertainty is reflected by the current range of forecasts which varies from 164,000-212,700 units for 2012 and 168,900-219,300 for 2013.

OTTAWA — According to CMHC’s First Quarter 2012 Housing Market Outlook, for 2011, housing starts came in at 193,950 units. Looking ahead, multiple starts are expected to moderate while single starts will level off; starts are forecast to be 190,000 for 2012 and 193,800 for 2013.

Sales of existing homes through the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) are expected to remain stable in 2012 and rise slightly in 2013. For 2011, resales came in slightly over 456,000 units. Moving forward, 457,300 resales are forecast for 2012 and 468,200 for 2013.

Amendments to Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety Act

REGINA — On December 13, 2011, the Government of Saskatchewan introduced Bill 23, legislative amendments aimed at improving workplace health and safety in the province and eliminating all work-related injuries and illnesses.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 is being amended in response to consultations and review by the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety’s Occupational Health and Safety Council. The Council consists of both labour and employer representatives.

The legislative amendments included:

- An increase in the maximum fines and range of penalties for Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) violations;
- Establishment of procedures related to the effectiveness of occupational health committees and programs;
- Enhanced duties required of employers and other parties on training and supervision of employees and maintenance of equipment; and
- Increased investigative authority for OHS officers, specifically the introduction of Summary Convictions.

These amendments will improve compliance which leads to improved time loss injury rates, reduced workplace injuries, potential cost savings for employers, and increased workplace productivity.

For more information regarding Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety and the full list of amendments visits lrws.gov.sk.ca.



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New Home Builders Embrace Next Generation Technologies

LONDON / ST. THOMAS, Ont. — A select group of London and St. Thomas Home Builders' Associations member home builders are taking energy efficiency to the next level by building new Discovery Homes in London and area. The homes will incorporate a number of new innovative energy-efficient technologies as part of a new Technology Adoption

First "All Pink" Home in Lethbridge Raises Funds for Local Youth Sports



LETHBRIDGE — CHBA-Lethbridge & Region home builder, Ashcroft Master Builder, together with PinkWood and Lealta Building Supplies, both CHBA Material or Product Suppliers, recently joined forces to build the first "All Pink" mould, moisture and fire resistant home in

Lethbridge. The framing materials for the house are all factory coated with Pinkshield 5000, a coating proven to resist mould, moisture and fire.

On top of the obvious benefits, Ashcroft, along with their trade partners, have set a goal of raising \$20,000 for local youth sports organizations. To date over \$8,000 has been raised and the donations continue to pour in. In addition to this, PinkWood donates a portion of their sales proceeds to The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

Pilot (TAP) coordinated by EnerQuality Corporation. The Ontario Power Authority (OPA), Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN), Enbridge Gas Distribution and Union Gas are also contributing to this initiative.

The innovative selections are the culmination of NRCAN's Local Energy Efficiency Partnership (LEEP) next-generation technology identification and selection process. Through LEEP, local home builders have found, assessed and selected the energy conserving technologies that could work best in their construction processes and provide sound performance for their home buyers. The aim is to find the technologies that can be more regularly incorporated into mainstream construction as builders move towards higher performance housing.

Ontario Home Builders' Associations in Hamilton-Halton, Niagara and the Greater Toronto Area have also embraced the LEEP and TAP initiatives.

New Online Link for Award Winners at HomeBuilderCanada.com!

PIERREFONDS—At Home BUILDER Magazine, we receive many announcements from Home Builders' Associations across Canada regarding regional and provincial awards of excellence in building and renovation. To ensure that these well deserved awards get the recognition they deserve, we've added a separate link: Check Out Award Winners on our website, www.homebuildercanada.com. C'mon, take a peak and help these worthy recipients celebrate a job well done!

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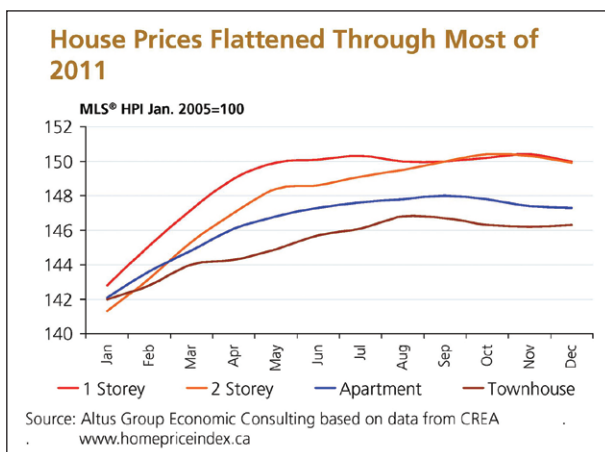
By Peter Norman

Canadian Housing—Myths and Realities

Canada's housing sector generally, and in many markets across the country, is struggling and faces many challenges. Emerging concerns about housing prices, consumer debt, and bank mortgage stability are progressively dominating headlines, and a cocktail of myths and realities seems to be making the substance of public debate very murky.

Total Canada-wide housing starts slowed to 199,900 units seasonally adjusted at annual rate (SAAR) in the 4th quarter of 2011, according to CMHC, down about 3 per cent from the 3rd quarter. Total full-year housing starts ended up at just below 194,000 units. Single-family housing starts, in particular, continue to lag significantly relative to activity prior to the recession, with the exception of Saskatchewan, where housing starts topped 7,000 units in 2011 for the first time since 1979.

Housing prices have emerged into the public debate in recent months suggesting that elevated prices could indicate a bubble. But in contrast to this view, recent house price performance has been very stable at best and in many parts of the country low or stagnant house prices may be a greater concern.



New housing prices rose 2.2 per cent in 2011 and fell in some provinces. Even Saskatchewan, where new home prices more than doubled in the decade leading up to 2008, has seen little change in price since. The new Canadian Real Estate Association's MLS Home Price Index conducted by Altus Group shows that in 2011 existing

home prices rose by 4.3 per cent—not materially different than wage inflation—and that the average annual increase in house prices over the past five years has been well below 5 per cent per year. Price growth has slowed or turned negative for all house types in recent months (see chart).

While new house prices have declined significantly since before the recession in some parts of the country, such as in B.C. and Alberta (down 4% and 8% respectively), they have risen sharply in others, such as Manitoba and Newfoundland (up 13% and 23% respectively).

Housing performance going forward into 2012 and 2013 will be heavily influenced by the state of the economy. International events continue to influence prospects here in Canada. Evolving conditions in Europe, a slowing of growth in Asia and still relatively weak growth in the U.S., are all having an influence on Canada. Canada is

expected to turn in a relatively weak performance in 2012 (1.8%) with associated slower job creation and income growth.

Healthy job growth is critical to the housing market. Recent data may seem buoyant—there were some 265,000 net new jobs created in 2011—but the job creation engine was slowing significantly by the end of the year and Canada's three largest provinces each saw employment levels decline in the 4th quarter.

Going Forward

This column has warned about troubling demographic trends in labour markets since the recession: The youth segment of the market remains deeply in recession with reduced jobs, high unemployment and falling participation rates. Jobs for those under the age of 25 were decimated by the recession and have failed to come back. Recent data show even more deterioration.

The weakness in youth employment has been persistent for so long that it is now clearly affecting housing demand. Combined with an array of policy measures (such as tighter mortgage insurance rules) that have disproportionately hit younger buyers, this trend is showing up in lower first-time buyer interest and activity.

Preliminary data from the CHBA Pulse Survey (Jan. 2012) show that builders across the country are reporting significantly reduced first-time buyer traffic at sales centres. Similar findings emerged from the 4th Quarter Altus Economics Buying Intentions Index.

Interest rates remain a key determinant of housing performance in the quarters and years ahead. Interest rates (such as the Bank of Canada's key overnight lending rates, government bond yields and fixed and variable rate mortgages) remain at very low levels by historical standards. Moreover, commitments by the U.S. Fed to keep interest rates low into 2014 (likely also putting the Bank of Canada on hold), virtually guarantee that mortgage rates will remain at low levels into the near term future.

Low interest rates historically support stronger housing demand, which is positive for the forecast. However, the current environment may not be so easy to interpret. While posted interest rates remain low, there is some evidence that banks are becoming less generous with rate discounting. This, combined with an array of other tighter rules around mortgage lending, has significantly increased the cost of borrowing for many, especially first-time buyers.

Going forward, expect Canada-wide housing starts to soften in 2012 as both single-family and apartment starts decline, with Alberta being the one bright spot. In 2013, total housing starts will likely remain flat, as improvements in single-family mask declines in apartment starts. Higher housing starts in Alberta and Atlantic Canada in 2013 will be off-set by flat or declining starts in the remaining provinces.

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.

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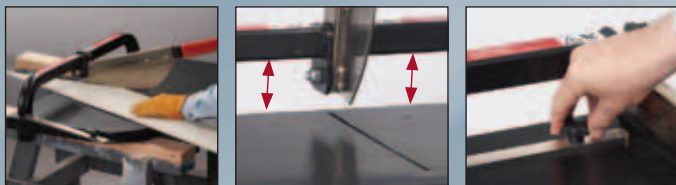


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By Wahid Meref

The ICF wall was shown to reduce the peak in heat gains to, or losses from, the room.

Energy performance of insulating concrete form (ICF) walls

The National Research Council's Institute for Research in Construction (NRC-IRC), in collaboration with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), evaluated heat movement through two identical insulating concrete form (ICF) wall assemblies. The walls were tested at the NRC-IRC Field Exposure of Walls (FEWF) facility in Ottawa.

While ICF technology dates back to the late 1960s in Europe, ICF construction has become common in North America over the last two decades. Generally, modern ICFs consist of stackable formwork made of expanded (EPS) or extruded (XPS) polystyrene foam, which is filled on site with concrete, and then remains in place to provide permanent insulation.

The objective of this project was to monitor the field performance of ICF wall specimens in order to understand and quantify the impact of the thermal mass of the concrete in the ICF wall system on heat losses and gains.

Methodology

The two identical ICF wall specimens were installed side by side in the FEWF test bay, located on the first floor of a two-storey research house facility (Figure 1), with western exposure. A climate control enclosure (Figure 2) provided controlled indoor conditions (21°C, 30% humidity), and the exterior walls were exposed to the naturally occurring Ottawa climate (with an average of 4602 heating degree-days °C (Environment Canada, 2010)).

The expanded polystyrene ICF forms were assembled and temperature sensors (thermocouples) were then installed on the interior of the form prior to pouring the concrete. The ICF wall specimens measured 1828 x 1676 mm (approx. 6 ft x 5.5 ft) and featured 152 mm (6 in.) thick concrete surrounded by 64 mm (2.5 in.) of EPS foam on all sides, and 51 mm (2 in.) of EPS foam on the base.

Observations

In general, the measured heat transfer and temperature data revealed that the mass of the concrete added very little to the overall R-value of the ICF (RSI 3.77

(R21.4)) under steady, outdoor temperature conditions. However, during transient conditions, the concrete significantly moderated heat loss to and from the interior, providing an apparent five-day buffering or moderating temperature effect. By doing so, the ICF wall was shown to reduce the peak in heat gains to, or losses from, the room.

This means that the concrete mass in ICF walls has the potential to reduce the peak heating requirement of the furnace in winter, and the peak cooling requirement of the air conditioning system in summer. This may have implications for the sizing and cost of mechanical equipment, provided cold snaps and heat flashes last less than five days. The buffering effect may also have the ability to reduce peak energy use on hot summer afternoons (which could produce cost savings for homeowners with smart meter pricing). In a climate where the average outdoor temperature in summer remains comfortable, with hot days and cold nights, the buffering effect of ICF walls may even enable occupants to get by without cooling altogether.

This experiment examined only a small section of ICF wall on a west-facing façade. To predict the effect of ICFs on heating and cooling equipment and energy use, it will be necessary to test an entire house and to evaluate ICFs with greater thicknesses and insulation values. The thermal performance of an entire house will be affected by other factors including solar gains through windows, and the operating mode of the house, such as the use of free cooling at night or thermostat setbacks.

The ICF specimens have been provided by an industry partner, the Ready Mixed Concrete Association of Ontario (RCMAO).



Figure 1: Installed and sealed ICF panels



Figure 2: Interior of finished ICF walls and the climate control enclosure.

Dr. Wahid Meref is a Senior Research Officer in the Building Envelope and Structure Program of the NRC Institute for Research in Construction. He can be reached at 613-993-5709 or wahid.meref@nrc-cnrc.gc.ca

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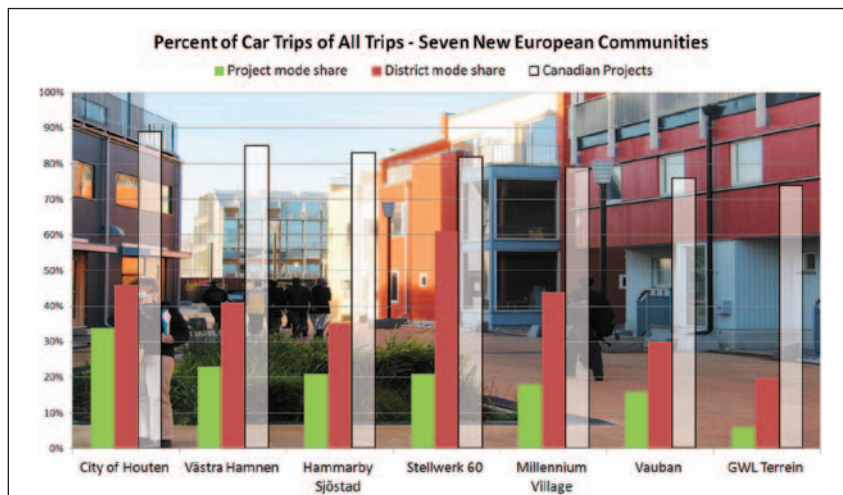
By Fanis Grammenos

Low Car(bon) Neighbourhoods

Many speak of the need to measure the sustainability of development projects in order to avoid confusion and prevent the unchecked “greenwashing.” Sustainability measurements involve aspects such as energy use by housing units, offices, and cars, as well as watershed protection and sensitive land preservation, to list just a few. But while some aspects are relatively easy to measure (e.g. electricity use), others are quite difficult and some almost impossible because they get tangled up with influences that cannot be separated easily: health, for example.

Healthy Communities

A community with affluent residents will generally have more cars and, invariably, more cars mean more driving, particularly when there are young children in the household. Some critics would quickly conclude that these residents will be less healthy due to the amount of driving and downgrade the community on that score. Research has shown that this may be a hasty conclusion¹.



The effect of driving on health, if present, may be overwhelmed by the influence of income and education (two of several factors), both of which correlate with better health. Until there is a sure way of separating the influence of each factor, we can defer the health-via-driving judgement.

Measuring watershed protection (another item on the green list) is easier, given that rainwater outflow can be calculated using the subdivision plans, weather data and soil conditions. Assigning scores to a project gets complicated, however, when the size of the site enters the picture. Larger sites, usually suburban, have more opportunities to dissipate rainwater than smaller “Centertown” redevelopment ones. Small water retention numbers may indicate serious site constraints rather than lack of effort to green the project; the verdict could not be clear-cut.

We have less difficulty measuring carbon emissions, whether they come from house energy use or from driving. For building energy use, there is plenty of software to do an estimate with a proviso. Of course, once the occupants move in, the predictions can be off the mark by as much as 50 per cent or more: The real numbers emerge after occupancy. But the estimate is still a useful benchmark. For the amount of driving residents do, prediction is close to impossible; we can measure it only after built-out and full occupancy. Claims about a low car-use community any earlier are simply hopeful aspirations.

Canada vs. Europe

Unreliable as they may be, trustworthy projections about driving can be made based on precedents for which there are precise numbers: Enter the seven European projects described in a recent report². These are impressive numbers. The simple chart illustrated here lists the amount of driving in each, the amount in their surrounding district and, for shock value, the driving in some Canadian subdivisions³.

It shows that these stellar projects made substantial gains in reducing car emissions. Driving dropped by 30 to 60 per cent of the surrounding district's share of trips. By contrast, and as an indication of the potential for betterment, even the best performers among Canadian suburbs show multiple times the amount of driving of these projects and also their districts. Even the differences among them are telling: they seem relatively unimportant by comparison to the drop that the seven European projects achieve: a 15 per cent reduction in driving, at most, among Canadian subdivisions as compared to a 25 per cent drop of the lowest achiever among the seven European projects. This cross-continent comparison may be unfair because of the differences in context, but it serves to demonstrate the enormous potential for gains in our communities.

How did the European developers do it? Many tricks come into play but three top the list: (a) layouts that promote walking; (b) priority on bicycle networks; and (c) support for high-quality transit.

Next is the important element of overall density. Density and quality transit are the chicken-and-egg question of low driving communities—they cannot be separated; they must come together from day one, if the project is to reduce driving.

In Canada, including these and other recommended elements in the plan will not guarantee less driving but, if we take cues from these examples, it may usher the prospective community in the direction of a greener place.

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/>

1 Two articles on driving and health can be found at: www.planetizen.com/node/53728 and www.planetizen.com/51851.

2 The full report on the seven projects is available in PDF format at: www.itdp.org/documents/092611_ITDP_NED_Desktop_Print.pdf

3 Comparing Canadian New Urbanist and Conventional Suburban Neighbourhoods (66954)



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By Tim Bailey and Paul Cardis (above)

Respondents provide answers that are least controversial in order to avoid conflict with the surveyor.

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When experts criticize their own industry, it tells you there is a real problem brewing that deserves attention. As surveyors of customer satisfaction for over 20 years, we have noticed a disturbing trend that is leading many large-scale home builders seriously astray, causing them to lose millions each year.

The Tantalizing Offer

In the last several years, phone marketers have converged on home builders with an intriguing value proposition, namely to provide 75 percent response rates for customer satisfaction surveys. Sound good? Actually, we were also intrigued and became tempted to join them in offering this service, until we did the research and realized that this approach could seriously damage our clients' businesses. Instead, we have been sharing the research studies of the world's foremost experts from Harris Interactive, Oxford Press, and the US Census, who all warn against adopting such programs. Since space is short in this article, we will provide a quick synopsis. (A summary of this article was published at www.AvidBuilder.com.)

The Facts: Detailed Surveys Deliver More

While on the surface it may seem better to get more surveys from customers—the "more is better" principle—the fact is the survey must be shortened by 50 to 75 per cent, and a multitude of phone survey calls to homeowners must be made to achieve the goal of 75 per cent or higher response.

Shorter surveys have been sold as a benefit by telemarketing companies who often quote the book *The Ultimate Question* by Fred Reichheld as justification for eliminating questions. Reichheld's work—also known as Net Promoter Score or NPS—has come under considerable fire within the last five years. Morgan and Rego (2006) conducted an extensive study comparing various survey methods to future business success and found that short "Net Promoter Surveys" have little relationship to business financial performance. Below is a summary of the results of their study that was summarized by the consulting firm The Cicero Group.

Relationship of customer satisfaction metrics to future business performance metrics

Customer Feedback Metric	Net Operating Cash Flows	Total Shareholder Returns	Annual Sales Growth	Market Share	Gross Margin
Average Satisfaction	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
"Top-2" Box	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	Strong
Customers Complaining	None	None	Strong	None	Strong
Net Promoters	None	None	None	None	None
Repurchase Likelihood	None	None	None	Strong	None

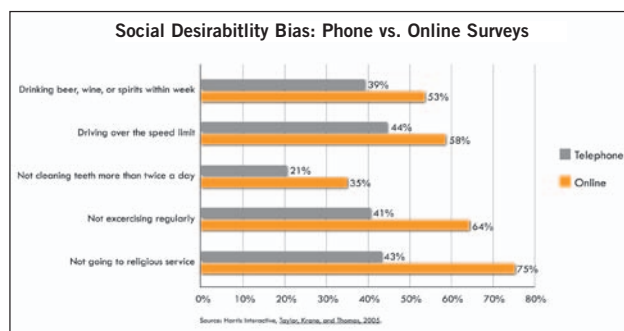
*Table adopted from Morgan and Rego: The Value of Different Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty Metrics Marketing Science 25(3), pp.426-439, June 2006

Paul Cardis is Founder/CEO and Tim Bailey is General Manager for Avid Ratings Canada, a leading provider of customer loyalty research and consulting to the home building industry. Through the Avid system, industry-leading clients improve referrals, reduce warranty costs, and strengthen their brand. They can be reached at paul.cardis@avidratings.com or tim.bailey@avidratings.ca.

The Facts: Phone-Survey Bias

Research has found that phone surveys are highly subject to Social Desirability Bias, which means respondents provide answers that are least controversial in order to avoid conflict with the surveyor. Furthermore, because these telemarketers use shortened survey instruments to measure a complicated transaction such as home building, a comprehensive customer review is simply unattainable.

The bottom line with these high response rate programs is 1) less real information to diagnose problems, and 2) customer satisfaction results that are skewed toward a positive score. Not a good situation if your company doles out bonuses to employees based on customer satisfaction. Unless, of course, you are the employee of one of these companies and then it might make sense (tongue firmly in cheek).



The graph above shows the difference between survey methodologies and the impact social desirability has on a number of commonly asked questions.

How many times have you been to a restaurant when the manager asks you, "How was everything?" You probably respond with "good" even when the meal may not have been up to par. This is social desirability at work in customer satisfaction, and it happens every day.

Contrary to the erroneous assertion that the current survey methods are broken and higher response rates are needed, what is actually needed for improving the validity of survey results is properly controlling for other sources of error, such as survey length and social desirability. It's no surprise that Morgan and Rego (2006) found that short "Net Promoter Surveys" have little relationship to business financial performance.

Conclusion

We may have entered a time when home builders may value the quantity of responses over the quality of customer research, only to find it has produced misguided results, allowing substandard performance to go unnoticed and, in some cases, even rewarding it. We are hopeful that improving communication on the issue will keep our industry from being bitten by this new type of snake oil salesperson.

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* See GAF Shingle & Accessory Ltd. Warranty for complete coverage and restrictions. The word "Lifetime" means as long as the original individual owner of a single family detached residence (or the second owner in certain circumstances) owns the property where the shingles are installed. For owners/structures not meeting above criteria, Lifetime coverage is not applicable. **Note:** It is difficult to reproduce the color clarity and actual color blends of these products. Before selecting your color, please ask to see several full-size shingles.

Meet your President: Ron Olson

Accepting and embracing change



BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

RON OLSON knows all about accepting and embracing change. As an active member of Saskatchewan's local and provincial home builders' associations since 1974, including serving as a Saskatchewan representative on CHBA's national Board of Directors, Olson has served on a variety of national committees; most recently, he was the vice-chair of the Urban Council, which addresses land development and city growth issues across Canada.

Currently, Olson is the General Manager of **Boychuk Homes**, a family-owned business based in Saskatoon. The corporation, Boychuk Construction, has been a member of Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association since the early 1950s; during the company's 65 years in business they have built more than 7,000 new homes for Saskatoon families, and have taken the lead in developing several residential subdivisions in the city.

Olson also has the distinction of being the first CHBA President to come from Saskatchewan, a province currently experiencing record

population growth and strong economic conditions. We sat down with him to find out more about the man, and his plans during his term as CHBA president.

Home BUILDER Magazine: It's quite an honour to be voted into the position of CHBA president, but you're also the first member from Saskatchewan to assume the role. Why do you think it has taken 68 years for a Saskatchewan new home builder to be voted into the position, and do you think that decision will impact your province in any significant way?

Ron Olson: You have to put things in perspective. Traditionally, Saskatchewan in a good year will build 6,000 houses. One of the boroughs of Toronto builds more houses annually than we do across the whole province. In recent years, however, Saskatchewan's robust economy and active housing market have made headlines across the country. Our province has also led economic growth per capita in Canada for the past three years.

As a consequence of being national president, I think there will be more attention provided to Saskatchewan as a province. Anytime that we have Saskatchewan people on the national scene, it helps raise the profile of our province and helps to make Saskatchewan a better place to invest in, to live in, and to do business in.

HBM: Saskatchewan is having record migration, immigration, and population growth. What sort of challenges does this bring to new home builders?

RO: In Saskatchewan, we are into a learning curve between what buyers want and need; we've never seen this influx of immigration or migration. Builders are learning to redesign their plans to work with the various cultural mores.

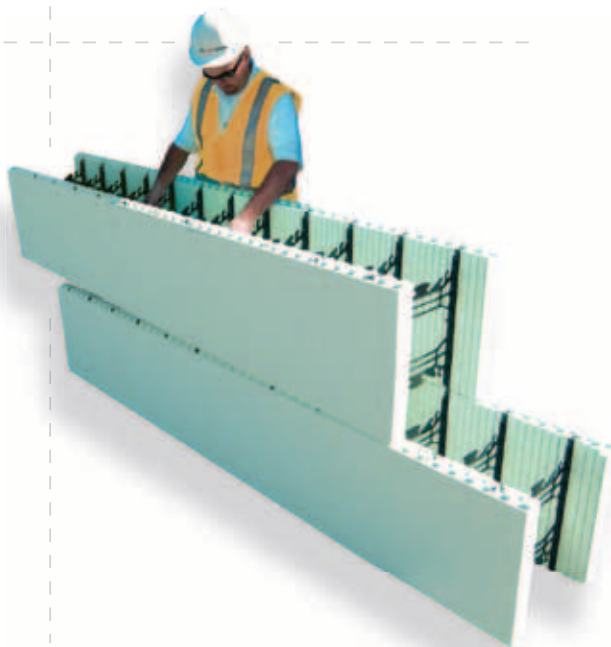
CHBA has been a tremendous support over my 35 years of membership.

Another direct result of rapid growth is the costs and funding of infrastructure. Those costs are on the backs of the people who buy those houses across Canada. An individual homeowner in some jurisdictions is paying over \$40,000 in levies, fees and taxes that are tacked onto the purchase price of a new home and lot. Saskatchewan homeowners are paying approximately \$25,000 in levies, fees and taxes per property. GIC (government imposed costs) are the fastest growing cost in new homes. This will certainly be a priority issue for me over the coming year.

HBM: RenoMark has been embraced by virtually every HBA across the country, a testament to both the program, and the individuals and companies registered within it. That said, is the underground economy still alive and well?

RO: Unfortunately, the underground economy remains a significant problem in the ► 22

how do you build your walls?



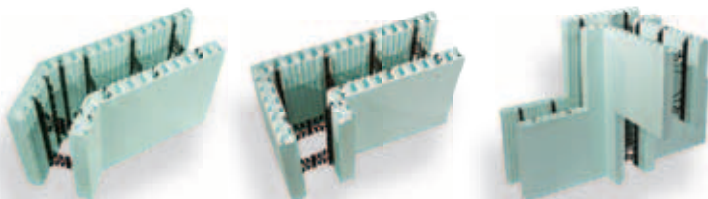
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HST in B.C.



After three long years of angst, B.C.'s provincial government is doing the right thing...

BY PETER SIMPSON

Mention the acronym HST in B.C. and the immediate reaction will be to LOL or scream OMG.

In my more than 46 years in and around the media, I can't recall any public-policy rollout that has befuddled, aggravated and divided taxpayers as much as the harmonized sales tax.

By the time the battered HST retreats to the GST/PST system on April 1, 2013—April Fools Day—four excruciatingly long years will have passed—enough time to earn a university degree.

Harken back to spring, 2009. The finance ministers of Canada and Ontario inked an agreement to harmonize the federal and provincial sales taxes in the Yours-to-Discover province.

Toronto's BILD called the HST "a massive tax grab." OHBA said it was a "poison pill." CHBA joined both associations in expressing members' concerns by sending letters to Prime Minister **STEPHEN HARPER**, urging him to ensure harmonization was neutral for new homes and renovation.

Meanwhile, on the Wet Coast, politicians were readying themselves for a May provincial election. The Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association (GVHBA) sent a questionnaire to all candidates, asking them to state their positions on tax harmonization.

The NDP responded that harmonization was not in its plans. The Green party did not respond. The Liberals wrote that harmonization would "make it harder for future provincial governments to lower or raise sales tax rates, which reduces flexibility. In short, a harmonized GST is not something that is contem-

plated in the BC Liberal platform."

Soon afterwards, the Liberal party formed another majority government.

A month later, federal and provincial finance ministers met in Meech Lake, where, you can bet, they discussed the \$4.3 billion Ontario stuffed into its pockets for jumping on the HST gravy train.

B.C.'s then-finance minister, **COLIN HANSEN**, must have salivated at the prospects of securing a similar sweet deal for his deficit-conscious government. On June 6, 2009, I wrote about all this drama in my *Vancouver Sun* column, in which I warned readers to "just watch how this story plays out."

First the government said it wouldn't, then it did. That really stung.

They didn't have to wait long. On July 23, 2009, then-premier **GORDON CAMPBELL** (now the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom) announced to great fanfare that B.C. had signed a memorandum of understanding on HST. Included in the agreement, right up there in the second paragraph, was the root of it all: The feds would toss \$1.6 billion into B.C.'s revenue bucket.

There you have it. First the government said it wouldn't, then it did. That really stung.

The home building industry is a significant contributor to the provincial economy, yet the HST application on new housing was referenced, in afterthought fashion, way down in paragraph eight of the government news

release—two paragraphs below feminine hygiene products.

The HST increased the disparity between existing and new homes, where a great number of jobs are created. And the rebate threshold was set at \$400,000, a ridiculously low amount in high-priced areas of B.C. such as Greater Vancouver, Victoria and the Okanagan.

After much prodding by GVHBA, CHBA-BC, Urban Development Institute and other regional associations around the province, the threshold was raised to \$525,000. One battle was won, but the HST war raged on.

I wrote many columns on HST. Some folks would call it relentless. The media called often in search of commentary. While acknowledging HST was beneficial to some sectors, I expressed emphatically that HST needed major adjustments related to new homes and renovation. And kudos to CHBA-Victoria's Casey Edge, who was active in the media in the provincial capital.

On July 1, 2010, HST was implemented. Despite this reality, HST supporters and opponents ferociously debated and denigrated each other. Millions were spent on rival advertising campaigns.

A year later, during June and July 2011, British Columbians voted in a referendum to extinguish the HST. Given the circumstances, it wasn't surprising. When a government asks voters who believed they were hoodwinked to choose between paying more tax or less tax, what result could be expected?

After all, 'fessing up before an issue festers is preferable to ladling out refreshing purple Kool-Aid to an unsuspecting electorate. (Kids, ask your parents about Jonestown.)

GVHBA, without comment or bias, unlike some other business associations, presented



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20 ► HST IN B.C.

to its 730 member companies the pros and cons of HST and asked them to vote their conscience. Associations—national, provincial and local—must always remain non-partisan. It is sheer folly to do otherwise.

The referendum result fuelled uncertainty and anxiety. Prospective home buyers and homeowners contemplating renovation sat on their wallets, waiting for clarity on the transition rules.

B.C.'s current finance minister, **KEVIN FALCON**, met with GVHBA leaders in November. He said he was working expeditiously to release the transition rules, that he was waiting for the feds to complete their work, and that he was as frustrated as we were.

On February 17, 2012, industry leaders were summoned to Victoria, where Falcon announced the transition rules, and much more. Finally, after all the angst, the provincial government did the right thing.

Effective April 1, 2012, the new housing rebate threshold will rise from \$525,000 to \$850,000, capturing 90 per cent of all new homes in the province. The rebate was hiked

from \$26,250 to \$42,500. Moreover, new secondary recreational homes will be eligible as well, providing a boost to the prospects of beleaguered builders outside the Greater Vancouver and Capital regional districts.

Four days later, on February 21, 2012, Falcon

presented his budget speech. Included was a measure that provides relief for first-time buyers of newly built homes. Property virgins can apply for a refundable income tax credit of up to \$10,000. This welcome measure will also create construction jobs.

However, we were disappointed that, apart from a \$1,000 tax credit for seniors to install mobility assists in their homes, renovation, worth \$7.6 billion to B.C.'s economy this year, was not addressed.

We will continue to oppose provincial, regional and municipal policy that doesn't make sense, and support policy that does. Membership, and righteous persistence, can indeed make a difference. 

Peter Simpson is the president and chief executive officer of the Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association.

Effective April 1, 2012, the new housing rebate threshold will rise from \$525,000 to \$850,000, capturing 90 per cent of all new homes in the province.

18 ► BUILDER PROFILE

construction industry. Renovator members of CHBA estimate that at least 30 per cent of renovation jobs are undertaken on a "cash deal" basis. We are working closely with Canada Revenue Agency to reduce the amount of in-cash transactions that are being done. We hope to see more aggressive action on their part and other levels of government in the near future. Certainly governments need the money!

HBM: The building industry is very intense. What do you do to "get away from it all?"

RO: I'm an avid outdoorsman. I've owned a fly-in fishing lodge for the past 15 years on Cree Lake in Northern Saskatchewan. I've also been a pilot all my life; one of my greatest joys in life is flying.

HBM: You've been an active member of CHBA for many years. What benefits have you

personally derived from that experience?

RO: CHBA has been a tremendous support over my 35 years of membership, a source of so much information, a forum to talk with others in the industry. As well, the CHBA represents our industry extremely well to all three levels of government, enabling us to operate viable businesses and meet the expectations of our customers.

HBM: If you had one message to pass along to CHBA members across the country, what would it be?

RO: We live in a great country with enormous potential. Today we must embrace change and create new opportunities, just as we have done in the past. This is what our industry is all about and makes us proud of what we do. 

2012 CHBA National Conference

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

In his inaugural address, CHBA president Ron Olson tackles tough decisions.

MONT-TREMBLANT, Que. — Municipalities that avoid hard decisions about financing infrastructure are being “irresponsible and unfair” in shifting the burden to new home buyers, said CHBA President **RON OLSON** in his inaugural address to the 69th national CHBA conference, noting that in many cases the costs of operating and maintaining Canada’s cities are not matched by sound financial planning and responsible use of revenue sources.

Instead of financing through property taxes and broad-based user fees, Olson said, municipalities increasingly are transferring budget shortfalls into the mortgages of new home buyers through development-related levies, fees and charges. The transfer amounts to more than \$5 billion each year. He compared this practice to the financing choices of some European nations. “In the Greek case we call it a sovereign debt crisis. Here in Canada, it’s called an infrastructure deficit. But it’s really the same thing. We haven’t been paying for what things cost.”

Government-imposed costs are a key factor in escalating home prices. “We are in a historically low interest rate environment: Mortgages are cheaper; houses are not. Confusing lower interest rates with improving housing affordability is a fundamental error—one that can lead to economic calamity in the future.”

In many communities, single-family homes are becoming the exclusive domain of upper income Canadians, despite evidence that the vast majority of Canadians aspire to home-ownership.

Olson called on the federal government to adjust thresholds of the New Home Buyer

Rebate for the GST/HST which has remained unchanged for decades, noting it would be his top priority to contribute to the consultations on a long-term infrastructure plan, initiated by the federal Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. He further noted governments are guilty of “silo-thinking” in

the many things they want from the residential construction sector, ranging from increased energy efficiency to more affordable housing for low income earners. “No attention is given to the cumulative costs involved for home purchasers and there is no capacity in place to set priorities.”

RICHARD BAIN

Getting the Pulse

About one third of new home builders across Canada say that rising costs due to the price of serviced lots is a critical problem. In Manitoba, the problem is reported by 50 per cent and in Ontario by 44 per cent of builders.

This is one of the key findings of the Winter 2012 Pulse Survey of new home builder and renovator members of the Canadian Home Builders’ Association (CHBA). The survey was conducted in December 2011 and January 2012 with the assistance of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Natural Resources Canada.

The survey finds that the level of concern about rising costs due to lot prices has increased from 27 per cent a year ago to 32 per cent today. The number of new home builders concerned about shortages of serviced lots has crept up from 16 per cent a year ago to 21 per cent nationally, 40 per cent in Ontario, today.

Regulatory issues are a growing problem for many new home builders. The survey finds that nearly a quarter of new home builders report more onerous municipal approvals and standards are a critical problem, up from 19 per cent a year ago. Concerns about more onerous building code requirements and environmental regulations have also increased over the last year.

New home builders expect the price of a new single-detached home will go up over the next year in all regions, according to the survey. Nationally, 63 per cent of builders expect prices to increase, 89 per cent in Atlantic Canada, 76 per cent in Ontario, and 41 per cent in British Columbia.

The underground economy remains a critical

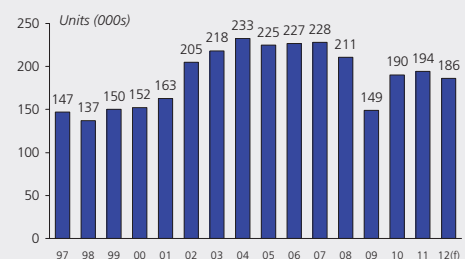
problem for CHBA renovator members. Work in the underground economy is believed to be most prevalent in Ontario and British Columbia.

New home builders across Canada expect housing starts this year will moderate somewhat, moving closer to household demographic requirements. The survey reports that new home builders forecast 186,000 units will be started in 2012, compared to the 193,950 units started in 2011. Renovators expect stable or increasing activity in 2012.

While the employment pattern varies from region to region, 24 per cent of all respondents to the survey report higher employment compared to a year ago. Most builders are optimistic for the future: Two-thirds see no change in the employment pattern, while the balance expect to hire more workers.

A total of 373 new home builders and renovators responded to the 45th Pulse Survey. Results were tabulated and analyzed for the CHBA by Altus Group Economic Consulting.

Total Housing Starts, Canada



Source: CMHC (historical) and Pulse Survey (forecast)

Saskatchewan

Strong and Confident



*An interview with Alan H. J. Thamarat,
President & CEO, CHBA-Saskatchewan
and Saskatoon & Region HBA*

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK



According to the Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation's *Housing Market Outlook, First Quarter 2012*, Saskatchewan's economic growth over the next two years is expected to exceed the national average, making it one of the fastest growing provinces in Canada.

That expanding economy, combined with employment opportunities and low unemployment rates, will continue to attract migrants to Saskatchewan, through both international migration and inter-provincial movement. In 2012 and 2013, net migration to Saskatchewan is forecast to be over 10,000 migrants each year.

We sat down with **ALAN THOMARAT**, President & CEO, CHBA-Saskatchewan and Saskatoon & Region HBA, to comment on some of the key issues facing the province's residential construction industry.

Home BUILDER Magazine: Media reports continually mention Saskatchewan as "booming." Tell us a bit about Saskatchewan's economy.

Alan Thamarat: Saskatchewan has just started to see sustainable economic growth, which in turn has led to an increase in ag-biotech, mining, oil and gas, research and development, construction and manufacturing, among the key sectors driving this growth. The individuals and firms involved in these industries make purchasing decisions that drive the rest of the economy: farmers, mining companies, and the manufacturers processing

the primary resources purchase the bulk of the non-resources and business services within the province.

Enterprise Saskatchewan, the government ministry that works to foster the environment that encourages the province's economic development, has conservatively recorded more than \$100 billion in expected major capital projects in the next 10 years—and this total does not include expenditures in energy exploration, major agricultural land development, public infrastructure or smaller scale commercial activity.

Regional and urban development and housing market plans have to be adaptable and flexible.

HBM: Saskatchewan is at the top of the country in terms of the low unemployment rate, population growth rate, manufacturing and retail expenditures and building permits (construction). How has this growth impacted the residential housing industry?

AT: Record population growth has driven housing starts to 7,000 across the province—the highest level since the 1970s. Birth rates are at positive levels for the first time in many decades. We are also seeing significant immigration (especially from India, China, the Philippines, and the Middle East) as well as migration from other provinces.

As an Association, we work with our industry and government partners to highlight the

benefits of growth in our communities, many of which are growing for the first time in decades. The business community in Saskatchewan is strong and confident, encouraged by the diversity in our industry sectors and markets and the sustained economic growth.

HBM: What are builders, and the Home Builders' Associations within Saskatchewan, doing to accommodate that cultural diversity?

AT: CHBA-Saskatchewan and our major locals in Saskatoon and Regina, and our seven Regional Councils work closely with very timely data compiled by the Conference Board of Canada (CBOC) and the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) to assess both short and long term needs and demands of the market, while recognizing those needs are very diverse for different people.

For example, we have the needs of an aging population contrasted with a large immigrant population, where it's not uncommon for three generations to live together. Those families are looking for multi-unit housing or affordable single-family housing while seniors are considering lifestyle changes. Regional and urban development and housing market plans have to be adaptable and flexible, built using sound market intelligence and sensitive to emerging demands of our young families and the growing immigrant population.

HBM: How difficult is it to hire skilled trades?

AT: We are working closely with the Governments of Saskatchewan and Canada to encourage investment in training our skilled workforce to ensure that lack of skilled employees is addressed given the opportunity in our economy and businesses.

The Province has worked very hard at the high school level to promote the building and mining sector, technical trades and the variety of different careers these industries support.

Within our own HBA, we established a Training Services Division in 2003. We have another training program, called Bridges & Foundations Career Development Corporation, established to assist Aboriginal workers, including First Nations and Métis people, with their own issues settling into urban environments. We offer similar transition and training support and services for new Canadians, immigrants from around the world excited to be in Saskatchewan. As an Association, we've taken a very holistic yet aggressive approach to managing labour market concerns to support Saskatchewan's growth.

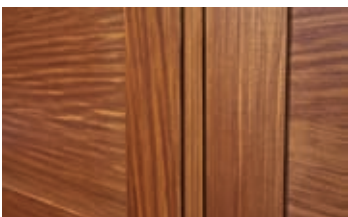




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CHBA Recognizes Winners of the 2011 National SAM Awards in Mont-Tremblant



create and transform

BY JUDY PENZ SHELUK

The 2011 SAM Award theme—Create and Transform—captured the imagination of new home builders, renovators and developers across Canada, and as you'll see from these images, the bar has been set very high for the coming year.



GRAND SAM
Geranium Homes Limited, Markham, ON
Creative, concept and production:
McBrain Sharp Marketing & Communications



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Portrait Homes, Richmond, BC
"Silver Ridge"

GREEN HOME
Denim Homes, New Minas, NS



MARKETING EXCELLENCE
Watermark Development LP, Calgary, AB "Watermark at Bearspaw"
Creative, concept and production: Applied Communications

CHBA 2011

AWARDS PROGRAM



2011 award winners display their trophies at the CHBA 69th National Conference in Mont-Tremblant.

The Canadian Home Builders' Association is proud to announce the winners of the 2011 National Awards Program, which recognizes the outstanding work of volunteers and member Home Builders' Associations across Canada.

Association Award Winners:

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

Individual Award Winners:

- Beaver Award:
John Hrynkow, CHBA-Edmonton Region
- Maple Leaf Award:
Marty Hope, CHBA-Calgary Region
- Gordon S. Shipp Award:
Gary Friend, Greater Vancouver HBA
- William M. McCance Award:
Rick Gratton, CHBA-Alberta
- Riley Brethour Award:
Richard Luciani, BILD
- Canadian Renovators' Council Award:
Grant Sakiyama, Manitoba HBA

Executive Officers' Council Awards:

- Dave Stupart Award of Honour:
Peter Simpson, Greater Vancouver HBA
- Ken McKinlay Award:
Stu Niebergall, Regina & Region HBA
- Susan Chambers Award of Recognition:
Paul Pettipas, Nova Scotia HBA

***Congratulations to all the
National Awards Winners.***



26 ► “The quality and creativity they have demonstrated is truly remarkable and exciting. We are very proud to see our industry represented by these fine projects,” said CHBA President, **RON OLSON**.

Winners were announced at the 2012 CHBA National Conference in Mont-Tremblant, Québec on March 17. [To access the full listing of 2011 SAM finalists, visit www.chba.ca/SAMS.]

NEW HOME

Production Home, Single-detached, under 1,500 sq. ft.

Sterling Homes ‘Edmonton’ Ltd., Edmonton, AB “Oakshire”



Custom Home, Single-detached, between 2,500 and 4,000 sq. ft.
Coastal Construction, Victoria, BC

Production Home, Single-detached, between 1,500 and 2,200 sq. ft.

Doug Tarry Homes, St. Thomas, ON “The Kenwood”

Production Home, Single-detached, over 2,200 sq. ft.

Geranium Homes Limited, Markham, ON “Forest Trail Estates: The Alderley Model”



Production Home, Single-attached

Abstract Developments Inc., Victoria, BC “Terra Verde”

◀ **Custom Home, Single-detached, under 2,500 sq. ft.**

Whitestone Developments Ltd., Halifax, NS




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CHOICE OF FLOORING:
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Homescape Building & Design Inc.,
Summerland, BC

►
Multi-family Housing Project
Adera Development Corporation,
Vancouver, BC



HOME RENOVATION

▼
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Pioneer Craftsmen Ltd.,
Kitchener, ON



Any Room
Harald Koehn Construction Ltd., Vancouver, BC

Addition
TQ Construction Ltd., Burnaby, BC

► 30

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Amsted Construction Ltd., Stittsville, ON

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Watermark Development LP, Calgary, AB "Watermark at Bears paw"
Creative, concept and production: Applied Communications

Best Brochure/Kit

Empire Communities, Vaughan, ON "Rain Condominiums"
Creative, concept and production: Montana Steele Strategic Marketing

Best Sales Office

Camroft Felcorp Inc., Toronto, ON "Imperial Plaza"
Creative, concept and production: Montana Steele Strategic Marketing



MARKETING



◀ **Best Print Ad**

Greer Home Builders, Lethbridge, AB "Love Shack Introduction"
Creative, concept and production: Artrageous Advertising



Best Direct Mail Promotion

Brookfield Homes (Ontario) Limited, Markham, ON "Pathways in Caledon East"
Creative, concept and production: BAM Builder Advertising & Marketing Inc.

Best Website

Madison Homes, Toronto, ON "The Madison"
Creative, concept and production: G. Ryan Design



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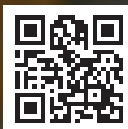
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Ron Olson
President, CHBA

The stability of housing markets is critical to the financial wellbeing of all Canadians.

Building the Future

As I “take the stick” as CHBA’s President, I want to recognize, and thank, the Association’s leadership team: your Executive Board and Board of Directors. The CHBA is very fortunate to have such talented and dedicated volunteers working on behalf of all members across the country.

As we move forward over the coming year, I will rely on their insights, advice and commitment to make our Association stronger, and ensure that the CHBA remains a highly effective voice for members.

The recent CHBA National Conference in Mont-Tremblant was a tremendous success and a great experience. The business sessions were informative and thought provoking, the social events were great fun, and it was great to rub shoulders with builders and colleagues from across the country. These events always drive home the strength and diversity within our industry and Association.

Focusing on the Future

In my Inaugural address at Mont-Tremblant, my remarks centered upon the pressing need for governments to focus on the future when it comes to housing.

Our industry is vital to Canada’s economic performance, as the last few years have shown so clearly. It is no less the case that the stability of housing markets is critical to the financial wellbeing of all Canadians—those who hope to buy a home, and those who already own one.

Government policies that threaten housing market stability put the financial security of all Canadians at risk. The scope of this risk has been demonstrated, very starkly, in many other western nations since 2008.

I believe there are three overarching goals that everyone—governments, our industry, and our customers—can agree on:

- Our communities must remain great places to live,
- Homes, which are Canadians most important financial asset, must remain a solid investment, and,
- Our cities must be put on a sound financial footing.

Increasingly, these three goals are interlinked, but the last one—sound municipal finances—is a key to continuing to achieve the other two.

Why? Because housing affordability and choice are essential conditions for maintaining both the quality of our communities and the stability of housing markets. And dysfunctional municipal finances are the single biggest threat to both of these vitally important conditions.

As new home builders and developers, we know firsthand how escalating government-imposed costs are eroding housing affordability. Most of these costs arise at the municipal level.

We also know that land use and planning regulations are forcing the market away from the type of home most Canadians want to own: a single-family home. Again,

municipal actions play a large part in this unfortunate situation.

And we are all too familiar with the ever-growing array of demands that governments and advocates are placing on new development to subsidize community-wide services and address a wide range of social needs. All too often, municipalities are the authors of such misguided policies.

The CHBA’s message is clear. When governments assume, through their actions, that our industry and our customers will always be there to “pick up the bill,” they are putting the financial future of all Canadians at considerable risk. This must stop.

Looking Behind the Numbers

For too long, elected officials have been quick to dismiss our industry’s concerns over deteriorating housing affordability. They point to healthy start numbers in recent years, and those forecast for the coming years, and simply assume the best.

They need to take a closer look at current housing market conditions, because there is a lot going on “behind the numbers,” and this tells a very different story.

Solid “headline” start numbers owe much to robust condominium development in Toronto and Vancouver. Most other markets remain subdued.

Single-family home starts—a key indicator of the underlying health of the market—remain some 25 per cent below their pre-recession levels. Employment growth has not seen the quality of jobs recover fully from 2008 levels. And income levels remain worryingly stagnant.

Simply put, historically low interest rates have made mortgages cheaper, while homes continue to become more expensive. Combined with ever-more restrictive planning regulations, there is a real risk that single-family homes will become the exclusive domain of only upper-income Canadians.

Equating the effects of low interest rates to increased housing affordability is dangerously wrong. Government actions based on this misguided thinking place housing market stability at risk.

In summary, housing affordability continues to deteriorate, housing markets are far from solid, and we face many economic and financial risks beyond our control.

This is not the time for governments to feel complacent about our industry’s capacity to continue the “heavy lifting” required to keep Canada’s economy on the tracks. It is the time to take corrective action to head off preventable shocks that could undermine housing market stability.

Drilling Down to the Real Problem

Ever-increasing government imposed costs on new homebuyers, and market-distorting development

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Property taxes and user fees must reflect actual costs, not re-election ambitions.

regulations—the “hidden killers” of housing affordability and choice—are often symptoms of a more fundamental problem, unsustainable municipal finances.

Far too often over the last decades, municipal governments have avoided the real costs of providing and maintaining core infrastructure services, in order to keep property taxes and user fees artificially low. The so-called “infrastructure deficit” we hear so much about is a direct, and deliberate, result of such fiscal mismanagement.

Not “paying the bills” has led to two unsustainable trends: growing liabilities related to core infrastructure, and the resulting and ever-increasing array of community-wide costs being transferred into the mortgages of new home buyers.

How significant are these costs? In the mid-1990s in my community of Saskatoon, our company sold a house lot for about \$35,000. Today, that just covers the municipal levies on a lot.

There are practical solutions to this situation. Property taxes and user fees must reflect actual costs. Use of “smart” debt to finance revenue-producing infrastructure is simply good business management. And a more realistic and pragmatic discussion about infrastructure investment, among all levels of government, is long overdue.

I’m pleased to note that we are seeing movement on this last issue, following the federal government’s initiation of consultations to develop a Long-term Infrastructure Plan for our country. As your National President, delivering our industry’s views to this important inter-governmental consultation will be a high priority for me.

CHBA members are determined, experienced and innovative businesspeople. We are willing and able to deliver the range and quality of homes Canadians want, within a highly competitive marketplace.

For us to “do our job,” governments must do theirs. They must apply the lessons from the financial meltdown

and recession, get their books in order, and stop forcing new home buyers to underwrite public services and amenities that should be paid for by all taxpayers.

Great cities require efficient and well-maintained infrastructure: roads, water and sewage services, transit, a healthy environment, and the other basics that make a city work.

Success going forward will require pragmatic plans and budgets. It means recognizing our challenges, being honest

about their causes, and realistic about what needs to be done to overcome them. And it means getting on with the job now; not continuing to avoid what we all know needs to be done.

More than anything else, these have been the lessons of the last few years.

Celebrating the First ‘Next Generation’ R-2000 Home

In mid-February, I was very pleased to represent the CHBA at the opening of Canada’s first R-2000 home, built to the new “next generation” 2012 Standard launched this year.

I joined the Honourable Gordon O’Connor, Minister of State, in congratulating Matthew Sachs and the Urbandale Construction team for their excellent work.

Located in Kanata, in the western section of Ottawa, the Urbandale R-2000 home delivers energy performance 50 per cent above the old R-2000 Standard. With this new Standard in place, innovative R-2000 builders like Urbandale are, once again, leading the way forward in high-performance design and construction.



National Building Code Update

In February, the CHBA addressed the Executive Committee of the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes about the need to deal with provincial moves to apply energy efficiency requirements to home renovations, as well as the need for a policy on climate change effects. The CHBA is concerned about the erosion of consistency among provincial building codes and the need for provincial governments to renew and reaffirm their commitment to the National Code Development Process.

Immigration

During a recent interview on CTV’s Question Period, federal Immigration Minister Jason Kenney said that the federal government is planning to update the point system for the Economic Immigrant Program to make it more proactive, more conducive to younger workers, and more accommodating of skilled trades. CHBA President Ron Olson has written to the Minister expressing CHBA’s longstanding concerns regarding the point system for the Federal Skilled Worker Category of the Economic Immigrant Program covering language requirements and other obstacles related to arranged employment, education and employment experience. The CHBA has requested a meeting to discuss these concerns and to offer recommendations as part of the federal review.



Plenty to smile about: Ron Olson (*left*), Matthew Sachs (GM for Urbandale) and Minister O’Connor share congratulations at the opening of Canada’s first house built to the 2012 R-2000 Standard.

Housing Market Outlook Canada Edition *First Quarter 2012*

Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation
www.cmhc.ca



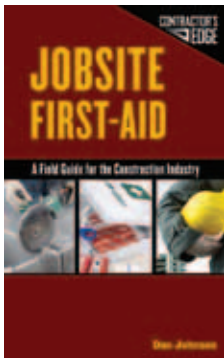
CMHC's invaluable reference on trends and outlooks for new home, resale and rental markets is available in a free downloadable PDF format online and on our website, www.home-

buildercanada.com (Recent Publications of Interest).

Jobsite First-Aid

A Field Guide for the Construction Industry

By Dan Johnson
Cengage Learning
www.nelson.com

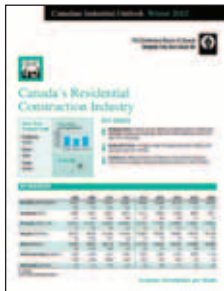


In 2010, the construction industry accounted for more fatal work injuries than any other sector. *Jobsite First-Aid* provides a clear, systematic approach to safety training that will better prepare contractors, construction workers and all other jobsite personnel for possible emergency situations, from minor burns to a life-threatening event. This new reference guide also includes detailed preparedness information that companies can use to help prevent and divert jobsite accidents and steps to regain control and return the jobsite back to normal in its aftermath.

Jobsite First-Aid was designed specifically for quick reference, and facilitates quick and easy access to important information. It is packaged to easily fit into any toolbox, glove box or desk drawer, so that it can be easily accessed when needed, and was created using durable laminated materials, making it suitable for use on jobsites. \$19.95.

Canadian Industrial Outlook Winter 2012

The Conference Board of Canada
www.conferenceboard.ca



Canada's residential construction industry can expect two modest years in 2012 and 2013 – but a cooling market should not be mistaken for a housing bubble collapse, according to The

Conference Board's Winter 2012 outlook.

The report is available in a free downloadable PDF format at www.conferenceboard.ca, and on our website, www.homebuildercanada.com (Recent Publications of Interest).

Botany for Designers

A Practical Guide for Landscape Architects and Other Professionals

By Kimberly Duffy Turner
W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
www.wwnorton.com

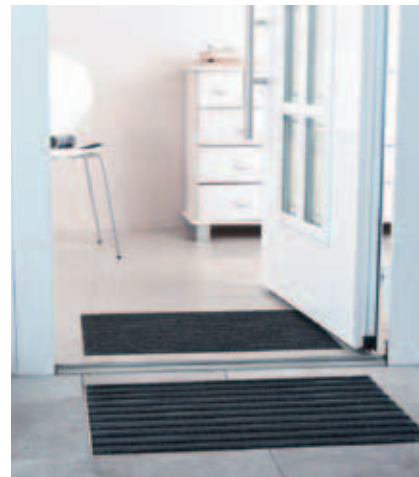


What do you need to know about how plants grow and function? How can you determine appropriate plants for a particular site? How can you use their distinct design

features effectively? What are the real design considerations to keep in mind? Buy a copy of *Botany for Designers*—it's like a Botany 101 course that walks readers through all the answers, equipping them with the ability to be not just an informed landscape designer, but also an effective planting designer.

A chapter on green design outlines some of the sustainable trends in botany: the role of LEED certification in landscape design; mitigating environmental problems with plants and open space; the emergence of green roofs and vertical gardens; biomimicry; and sensitive material selection. With more than 150 colour photographs and schematic drawings illustrating key strategies, *Botany for Designers* is a go-to guide to inspired, well-designed landscapes. \$52.

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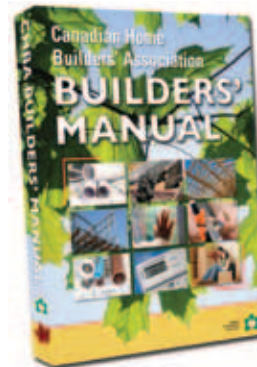
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For those who need to know how to build homes in one of the toughest climates on earth, the CHBA Builders' Manual is the most authoritative guide you will find for building superior energy-efficient housing.

This newly expanded and updated edition, based on the building techniques proven by R-2000, offers over 400 pages of concise information and easy-to-follow illustrations. Completely revamped with new illustrations including an expanded section on renewable energy and a brand new section on home automation.

CHBA Builders' Manual — the definitive guide for home building in Canada.

For more information, contact:

CHBA – Builder Manual Sales

Phone: 613-230-3060

E-mail: sales@chba.ca

www.buildermanual.com

Lock it, Leave it, Locate it...

The underlying theme for this month's issue of *Home BUILDER Magazine* is transportation, so we thought it might be fun to look at some of the latest and greatest gizmos and gadgets to help you protect, cover, find and maintain your equipment.

Lock it down

With an open pick-up truck, or open doors on a van, your tools are open to theft as you go in and out of a site. The **Stanley Fat-Max Xtreme Portable Truck Box** ties them down, yet leaves the whole box portable. It has a 42-gallon capacity, water resistant box, good internal organization, large wheels and extendable handle—and then it gets better. A docking rack bolts down to the bed of your truck and the box just slides in and key locks into place. It doesn't bounce around and only you can get it out of the truck. The lid locks with a keypad combination lock making it easy for you to open and close securely, and it has a siren if someone else attempts to open it.



Record a vehicle's location and find it again

If the problem is finding your truck on a new or large site, or even finding your work location away from the truck, you will want to find a smart phone app to help. Car locator apps allow you to click in your GPS location, and then later be directed back. Most even keep track of time spent to remind you of parking meters that need feeding. Most allow recording of multiple stop points, like car, the hotel or the work site—or three truck or supply locations around a large construction site if you like.

"**Find My Car**" is a surprisingly good free app for Android that I have used.

Remember that GPS doesn't work inside most parking garages and when first turned on it takes a bit of time for the GPS to lock in, so turn it on before you arrive so it is ready when you want to leave the vehicle.

Check permissions on all apps. The more features it has, the more potential for hacker problems. For instance, some want total access to your contact book or calendar and although that could be convenient for sending your location to someone else or pre-mapping a future trip, it also opens up potential hacker problems. Other apps allow you to grab your GPS and then manually MSN or e-mail it out to someone you want to join you; a bit more trouble but you control the communications.

For higher tech with iPhone 4S and higher, supporting Bluetooth Smart, you can get a just-released hardware/software combination. Whenever you power down your car, the Bluetooth device in the car automatically tells your phone to insert the GPS coordinates and time into your phone. You don't have to remember to record anything, and it walks you back to your car. I am not sure how well that

works when you are buried in a parking garage or how much extra battery you may use leaving your GPS on. www.FindMyCarSmarter.com

Place a tracker in a vehicle and keep track of it

As a cross between fleet control and spyware (know where your teenager is with your new car), there are a large variety of GPS devices that can be installed in vehicles (or other mobile equipment) and then followed in real time back at a home base. Google "Car Trackers" to find the latest.

Lojack.com is a web service that I have used for years to track my laptops. They have now merged with the **Boomerang** system to extend their service from stolen computers to stolen vehicles and equipment. This is the system that has developed the closest working link with police departments for quick response to stolen material. You phone in a theft report and they immediately tell the police where to pick it up. More and more police cars are actually equipped with Lojack tracking devices that can allow them to follow that stolen moving vehicle.

Track a whole fleet of vehicles for service and maintenance in the field

ToolWatch.com is one of several Cloud applications for complete management of mobile and fixed equipment. With a full equipment management database application on the Cloud, you can log in from any cell phone or laptop and see the full status of all equipment. In the field you can use a special bar code scanner to directly update information on any piece of equipment via cell phone communications.



**TOOL
TALK**



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

Moen Canada Conducts Reno Survey

OAKVILLE — **Moen Canada** recently conducted an online survey, querying 1,200 homeowners (age 25 and older) across Canada about their remodeling activities throughout the past year and their intent to remodel within the next six months.

More than half of homeowners completed interior painting (54%) or gardening/landscaping projects (61%) in the last 12 months. Bathroom and kitchen remodeling activity also remained significant, at 25 and 17 per cent, respectively.

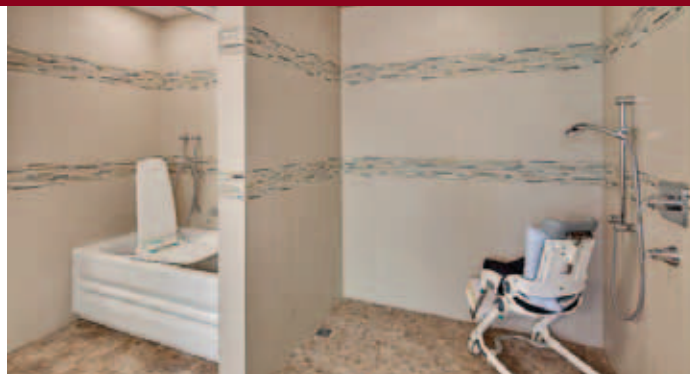
Top kitchen remodel projects completed included: installing a new faucet (62%), painting (60%) and new lighting (55%).

Top bathroom remodel projects completed included: painting (69%), installing a new faucet (68%), sink (56%) and lighting (53%).

According to the survey, 14 per cent of homeowners plan to complete

Greater Vancouver Gets Reno Ready with Spring Events

GREATER VANCOUVER — If you are a contractor, trade or supplier to the multi-billion dollar renovation industry, mark your calendars for these popular GVHBA events. The Spring Consumer Renovation Seminar will be held in Vancouver on Tuesday, May 15 and the Parade of Renovated Homes, presented by FortisBC, will be held throughout Metro Vancouver on Sunday, June 10.



2011 SAM Awards winner. Any room, renovation.
Harald Koehn Construction Ltd., Vancouver, BC.

a kitchen remodel soon, with new countertops (62%), painting (49%) and installing a new faucet (39%) on their prominent project to-do list.

The outlook for bathroom projects is also positive; more than 18 per cent plan to remodel within the next six months. Projects topping that list include painting (78%), installing a new faucet (62%) and adding new lighting (52%). www.moen.ca

Virtual Renos on Parade

WINNIPEG — Some of Manitoba's best and brightest renovations are now posted online in the form of a virtual tour. Links include Bath, Electronics, Fireplaces, Fitness, Flooring, General Renovations, Home Energy, Interiors, Kitchen, Landscaping, Lighting, Pools and Spas, Stone, Veneers, and Windows and Doors. Check out <http://winnipegwomen.net/dreamspaces/virtual-parade>.

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VANCOUVER — At this year's BC Home & Garden Show (February 22 to 26), **Penfolds Roofing Inc.**, a member of Greater Vancouver HBA, debuted the EcoRoof Medium Shake and Slate systems. Available in a variety of different colours, the environmentally friendly product will keep an average 400 tires from the landfill for every home and features a transferable, non-pro-rated warranty for the first 50 years. Ideal for reroofing existing homes which have cedar shakes or asphalt shingles, the shake are especially attractive for homes that have a shiplap deck, as they can be installed on this type of roof deck without having to install plywood.

Habitat for Humanity Canada Partners with ARXX

COBOURG, Ont. — Habitat for Humanity Canada (HFHC) has entered into a partnership with BILD member ARXX Building Products. The partnership will provide several elements which can contribute to the success of HFHC builds, including discount pricing, training and support and national distribution of ARXX Insulating Concrete Forms (ICFs) to all of HFHC's affiliates.

The 2012 Skills Canada National Competition

EDMONTON — The 2012 Skills Canada National Competition will take place May 13 to 16, 2012 in Edmonton, Alberta. The event brings more than 500 competitors representing over 40 trades from all provinces and territories to compete in Canada's only national, Olympic-style, multi-trade and technology event of its kind for young skilled trade and technology students and apprentices. The Competition provides an opportunity for students to be tested not only against industry standards, but against their peers from across the nation in their chosen discipline, and attracts school groups and young career-seekers. www.skillscanada.com.

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- Enter your company's name, province and HBA, then click on Find Now.
- If information on your company does not appear, or needs updating, email the details to membership@chba.ca so we can make it right.



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***Home BUILDER Magazine:
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New Mobile App Offers Quick Contractor-Liability Clearance

RICHMOND, B.C. — WorkSafeBC is releasing a new mobile app that gives employers, contractors, and even homeowners the ability to easily access clearance letters — anywhere, anytime. Clearance letters are notices that tell employers or homeowners whether a firm, contractor, or sub-contractor is complying with WorkSafeBC's registration and

payment requirements; employers or homeowners that hire a contractor who is not in compliance could be liable for outstanding premiums.

The app allows employers to request new clearance letters from WorkSafeBC, and to review existing clearance letters, requests, and contractor profiles, all from their smartphones or tablets. Sub-contractors can use the app to show on-the-spot proof that their WorkSafeBC registrations and premiums are up-to-date. It will automatically email updated clearance information back to the offices of the employers and contractors after they review it in the field.

The clearance letter mobile app is available on the WorkSafeBC website; people using smartphones will be automatically directed to the mobile app. 

CALENDAR

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

March 29

Passive Solar, Low Energy and Net Zero Housing in New Brunswick
Efficiency NB
Sussex, NB
www.efficiencynb.ca

March 29 - April 1

Regina Spring Home Show
Regina, SK
www.reginaspringhomeshow.com

April 13

8th Annual Green Toronto Awards
Green Living Enterprises
Toronto, ON
www.toronto.ca/greentorontoawards

April 24-26

The Kitchen & Bath Industry Show
Chicago, IL
www.kbis.com

2012 National Infrastructure Summit

REGINA — Registration is now open for the 2012 National Infrastructure Summit, being held September 10 to 12, 2012, in Regina. Presentations include how municipalities can become “Smart Cities,” using real-time data to resolve issues on a more proactive basis with fewer service disruptions.

Also featured is the Morph My City Challenge. Divided into two prizes, the challenge invites teams to submit long-term, step-by-step designs, using an undeveloped Regina green space or canola field (Greenfield Prize) and an existing Regina neighbourhood (2040 Prize), and morphing them into innovative, long-term, sustainable urban neighbourhoods.
www.nisummit2012.ca 

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