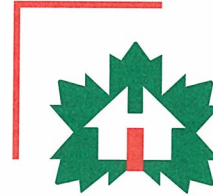


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Canadian  
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Association canadienne  
des constructeurs  
d'habitations

December 7, 2010

Chris Fillingham, Chair  
Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes  
c/o Anne Gribbon, Secretary  
Canadian Codes Centre / National Research Council  
Building M-23A  
1200 Montreal Road  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0R6

**Re: The New EnerGuide Rating System and Part 9 Houses**

Dear Mr. Fillingham:

I am writing to seek assurances from the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC) that there will be proactive and effective coordination between it and Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) concerning future energy rating methodologies for use in performance path compliance verification of Part 9 houses.

The CCBFC, through the work of the Joint Task Group on Energy Efficiency in Housing and Small Buildings (JTG-EEHSB), is developing requirements for energy efficiency in Part 9 houses. This work is informed by directions established by the CCBFC, and it is our understanding that this instructs the JTG-EEHSB to exclude consideration of energy sources and uses deemed to be outside the scope of the NBC, specifically on-site renewable energy production, and energy use associated with occupant-initiated 'plug loads'.

As you are aware, NRCan is currently engaged in a process to develop the 'next generation' of the EnerGuide Rating System (ERS), a national system that measures the energy performance of Part 9 houses. A Policy Advisory Committee formed to oversee the process includes provincial and territorial representatives, a number of whom are also code officials. Code Centre staff also observe this process, and so are fully aware of its direction and intent.

The 'Vision' for the new ERS, as endorsed by the PAC, is as follows<sup>1</sup>:

- i. *Help Canadian homeowners, industry and stakeholders, become "energy literate" regarding homes and the decisions related to them, and*
- ii. *Provide specific, readily accessible energy performance information that is widely used to support decision making in constructing, purchasing or renovating a home.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Draft EnerGuide Rating System Technical Standard, December 1, 2010. EnerGuide Rating System Policy Advisory Committee*

The rationale provided by the PAC in support of the new ERS recognizes the relationship between Canada's national house energy rating system and building codes, as follows<sup>2</sup>:

(The new ERS should be) *Seamless with any code and with any code changes*

- i) *The rating itself is not based on code. Code can change and the rating will always be constant. However, using this scale a house can be compared to code to indicate a percentage efficiency better or worse than code.*

This final point reinforces the PAC's recognition of the important relationship between the new ERS and building codes – unless directed otherwise by a jurisdiction, the new ERS home energy rating label will use the calculated energy performance of a home, modeling to current prescriptive Code requirements, as the sole point of energy performance comparison. In essence, this will mean that all rated homes, new or existing, will be rated in relation to what current codes would achieve given identical building geometry.

While final decisions on all aspects of the new ERS have yet to be made by the PAC and NRCan, development work is well advanced, and key policy decisions have been taken. The new ERS will provide a house rating based on net energy use, with credit provided for on-site renewable energy production, and factoring in plug loads. As noted, a clear goal of the ERS updating process is to provide a national house energy rating system that also supports Code development and application.

Given that the new ERS rating scheme calculates energy use in a manner that differs from that being applied by the JTG-EEHSB at the direction of the CCBFC, the CHBA has some concerns. We wish to raise these concerns now, at an early stage in the development of Part 9 energy efficiency requirements by the CCBFC, so that appropriate action can be taken.

The development of the new ERS by the federal government represents a considerable investment by all involved, and this process is supported strongly by the CHBA because we believe a robust, accurate and credible method for measuring house energy efficiency serves the interests of consumers, the residential construction industry, and governments alike.

In practical terms, the CHBA also recognizes the potential for a new ERS to provide jurisdictions with a useful and cost-effective method by which new home builders can demonstrate compliance with energy efficiency requirements in code through a performance path. Given that some jurisdictions are already considering provision of energy ratings as a mandatory disclosure for the sale of a house, it simply makes sense to ensure the same rating system supports the Code process, as intended by the ERS PAC.

If the new ERS and the model National Building Code assess the energy efficiency of houses differently, there would appear to be risk that a 'seamless' solution will not occur. The CHBA believes it is in the interests of all parties, including the CCBFC, to ensure that this does not happen.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

To this end, we would ask that the CCBFC provide the CHBA with its responses to the following questions:

- 1) Will the CCBFC provide clear and specific directions to the JTG-EEHSB that draft requirements for energy efficiency in Part 9 houses must include a performance path route that is fully compatible with the new ERS, and that will provide an acceptable basis for jurisdictions to verify code compliance based on the ERS rating of a house carried out by a qualified person?
- 2) Given that the new ERS rating will be determined using an updated version of the federal government's HOT2000 modeling software, will the CCBFC direct Code Centre staff to work with NRCAN to ensure that compliance with Code requirements can be simply and directly demonstrated using HOT2000 outputs?
- 3) Given that the new ERS rating for a newly constructed home will reflect net energy consumption, and will include consideration of plug loads and on-site renewable contributions, while Code requirements may reflect a narrower view of house energy efficiency, will the CCBFC confirm its commitment to work with NRCAN to ensure that these methodological differences do not negatively impact new home builders, their customers or persons certified by NRCAN to deliver the ERS?

Given the CHBA's ongoing involvement in both the CCBFC's work related to the energy efficiency of Part 9 houses, as well as in the development of the new ERS, we recognize significant potential for these two initiatives to be complementary, and to provide both new home builders and consumers with valuable outcomes. However, we are also concerned that, without a proactive and cooperative approach, there is some potential for misalignment between the NBC and the new ERS. The CHBA urges the CCBFC to take the action necessary to ensure such a misalignment does not occur.

Yours truly,



John Kenward  
Chief Operating Officer

cc. CHBA Executive Board