



Richard Lind  
President, CHBA

## When It Comes to Building “Green”, We’re Already Leading!

The recent surge of interest in “green building” by consumers, the media and our political leaders should be good news for CHBA builders across the country. Through our Association, we’ve been leading the way to more energy efficient and environmentally responsible new homes and renovations for over two decades.

The CHBA’s role in the development of the R-2000 Initiative in the 1980s stands as one of the first green actions undertaken by an industry sector in Canada, and we should be proud of this heritage.

Today, R-2000 continues to play a significant role, setting the standard for environmentally-oriented new home construction across Canada. R-2000 building science also provides a solid and tested foundation for other successful industry-led new home labelling programs such as Built Green™ and EnergyStar™, which offer meaningful options to new home buyers. At this year’s CHBA Annual Meeting of Members, the Association’s Position on the Environment and Guidelines for Developing Environmentally Responsible Housing were also approved by members.

So, when it comes to the environment, our commitment is clear and the record of achievement set by CHBA members is impressive.

### If it’s not broken . . .

With Canadian’s growing enthusiasm for greener homes, our members are in an excellent position to deliver new homes that offer improved environmental performance based on sound building science, and at a reasonable cost.

This is no accident. It results from our Association’s commitment to market-driven, voluntary approaches to green building, our commitment to R&D-driven innovation and industry professionalism, and our ongoing efforts to promote environmentally-responsible housing to consumers through the national R-2000 Initiative and regional new home labelling initiatives.

This is an effective system, and it is producing impressive results. For example, in Alberta, Built Green™ has enrolled some 5,000 homes since 2004 and the program has seen the average performance of participating builders increase by one level each year. In 2004, virtually no homes qualified for Built Green™ Gold certification. In 2007, nearly half of all homes built under the program will be certified as Gold or better. As well, due to builder demand, Built Green™ will soon introduce a new Platinum certification for new homes achieving an EGH rating of 82 or higher.

This impressive achievement is market-driven. It results from professional new home builders responding to competitive pressures and consumer demand. Built Green™ was initiated by Alberta new home build-

ers based on what made sense in their market. It is, by definition, sustainable and affordable — and it provides consumers with the choices they want.

In Ontario, we are likewise seeing an increasing number of home builders adopt EnergyStar™ as their green label. In Ottawa, Urbandale, a well-established production builder, has recently announced that it will soon be building only R-2000 homes.

We have a well-developed system of green building initiatives across Canada that are working well. There is nothing that needs to be “fixed”.

### LEED for Homes: unnecessary and unwelcome

This sort of industry-led progress stands in sharp contrast to what others, mostly outside of our industry, would propose in relation to “green housing”.

One such development is the proposed introduction of LEED for Homes. CHBA members are familiar with LEED certification in the ICI sector, where it has existed for a number of years — not without some controversy. A LEED standard for single-family houses is under development in the U.S., and the Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC) has announced that it intends to bring LEED for Homes to Canada. There are a number of troubling aspects to CaGBC’s plans.

First, LEED for Homes is not needed. Our industry already has both a leading-edge program (R-2000) and regional initiatives (e.g. Built Green™ and EnergyStar™). Another initiative will simply confuse the public. Further, it will offer little or no benefit to anyone except an array of technical consultants who sell their services under the LEED designation.

Second, experts have raised serious questions about the proposed Leeds for Homes point system. In a recent issue of Architect magazine, Peter Pfeiffer, a principal of Barley & Pfeiffer Architects in Austin, Texas, noted: “It’s very complicated to rate a house through LEED. One has to strive to find that sweet spot between something that’s verifiable and authentic and something that’s acceptable to the building market; they haven’t found it yet. It takes an awful lot of effort and money, and you have to ask, what is the homeowner getting for this?”

Third, LEED for Homes does not represent a consensus-based approach, open to all interested parties and managed by a recognized standards-setting organization. LEED for Homes was not even developed in Canada. The CaGBC is dominated by engineers, architects and other technical consultants. This does little to reassure those of us who build under Part Nine of the Building Code that our needs, and those of our customers, are properly understood and respected.

Fourth, we are already seeing the use of LEED certi- ▶

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► fication by municipalities in a manner that circumvents the discipline of Canada's Codes and Standards system. Based on its published material, this is something that the CaGBC advocates. However, it is the wrong approach.

Canada's world-class building standards system operates through a transparent process based on:

- sound, peer-reviewed research,
- proper and full consultation with affected parties,
- rigorous cost-benefit analysis,
- consensus-based decision making, and
- clear communication strategies for transmitting information.

The LEED process does not meet any of these criteria. Also, when LEED certification is adopted by municipalities as a requirement, this amounts to regulation through the "back door". This is wrong and the CHBA strongly opposes such actions.

### Let's continue to lead

The CHBA is committed to providing Canadians with real environmental solutions — ones that preserve both choice and affordability. Our industry has over two decades of leadership developing effective green building initiatives that work. We intend to stick with these important and effective initiatives and continue to provide Canadian home buyers with what they are asking for: energy-efficient, environmentally responsible "truly green" new homes and renovations.

### Fast Start on MP Campaign

The CHBA summer campaign to contact federal Members of Parliament is getting into gear, with one meeting held already in Vancouver, and one major event held in Greater Toronto. Arrangements are being made for future MP meetings by local Associations in Sudbury, Edmonton, Hamilton-Halton, and Central Nova (Halifax). Others may have initiated action but not yet reported in.

CHBA First Vice-President John Hrynkow has pointed to the summer as providing a major opening to move the CHBA agenda forward and also to work to have Association positions reflected in the federal party platforms that are being formulated in anticipation of a fall election campaign. "It's time for us to make the case on GST indexation, human resources and immigration, infrastructure investment, and the underground economy," says Hrynkow.

Campaign toolkits have been sent to all local and provincial HBA Presidents and Executive Officers to equip them to make a strong case to MPs. A CHBA campaign "war room" is up and running, and has already responded to several requests from local HBAs for information. Fact

sheets are being distributed to local HBAs on economic impacts of our industry in large and small urban areas across Canada. The CHBA National Office is also reaching out to MPs in Quebec, Prince Edward Island and the northern territories.

### It's Time to Think SAMs!

The CHBA invites new home builder, renovator and developer members to participate in the 2007 CHBA National SAM Awards, presented by American Standard and Trane Canada. The CHBA National SAMs are the benchmark for excellence in our industry; a reflection of our entrepreneurial drive; a measure of the innovative spirit and the technological know-how of our members; a showcase for the diversity and choice that our customers enjoy every day in the marketplace.

The SAM Awards honour outstanding performance by Canada's new home builders, renovators, residential developers, and new home sales and marketing professionals, recognizing:

- Excellence in new homes and renovation design and construction
- Distinctive community development
- Innovative technology and construction techniques
- Outstanding marketing and sales activities

The deadline for entries is November 2, 2007. All of the information, including entry forms, competition guidelines and tips from the judges, are available online at [www.chba.ca/SAMS](http://www.chba.ca/SAMS).

### Radon

The limit for radon, announced recently by the federal government, will affect all areas of the country. Comments are also being sought on an additional proposal to set the limit for new houses at 100Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, which is half the limit for existing houses. The CHBA participated in a pilot workshop on radon convened by Health Canada in June where builder concerns were presented. First and foremost, builders do not want the purchase and sale process disrupted or prolonged unnecessarily. The CHBA will seek changes to the National Building Code to simplify radon requirements for new homes.

### Transport, Infrastructure and Communities Portfolio Reorganized

A major reorganization of the Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities was announced by the department's Deputy Minister in June. It appears the main change is that various responsibilities of the Cities and Communities Branch are to be absorbed into the other branches of Infrastructure Canada. The changes are welcome from a CHBA perspective because they help to consolidate management over massive federal infrastructure funding, now standing at some \$37 billion over the coming years. The Association enjoys an excellent working relationship with this Department and looks forward to expanding cooperation in this new context.



The Manufacturers' Council held a special work group meeting on June 26 in Toronto to focus on green building. CHBA members are also encouraged to visit the Council's new Web page, found in the Members' area of [www.chba.ca](http://www.chba.ca).