

Report from the Canadian Renovators' Council

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Canadian
Home Builders'
Association



Renovation Activity Across Canada

- **Pulse Survey** – CHBA has recently released the results of their Pulse Survey. The survey notes that the majority of renovators expect their renovation activity to increase or stay stable in 2011. Canada wide, the average size of reported contracts was \$50,000 with an average duration of 8 weeks. Renovation contracts reported in Alberta were larger on average. 13% of homeowners in Alberta plan to renovate. The Pulse Survey also found that the underground economy is a growing critical problem for renovators. This is driven in a large degree by the introduction of the HST in the east and the west and the removal of the renovation tax rebate.

Marketing Initiatives

- **Renomark Update** – Renomark is now available in 32 markets in Canada and three in Alberta. The Renomark program will be conducting audits in Calgary looking for items such as proof of liability insurance, bonding, WCB coverage, and insurance.
- **The Silver Economy** – Nova Scotia has done work on the number of people who will be turning 65 in the next few decades. Statistics Canada indicates that 1,000 people per day are now turning 65. By 2031 seniors will account for up to 25% of the population, double the current share of 13%. This highlights new markets for renovators in the areas of barrier free, accessibility, and visit ability. Some research on this market has also been done by Mary-Ann Sage of Mount Royal College in Calgary.

New Resources for Renovators

- **CHBA Guide for Renovation Councils** - The CHBA is assembling a guide on how to start a renovator council at the local CHBA level.
- **NRCan Eco Energy Retrofits** – NRCan noted that providing information to clients on rebates was a good way to generate business.
- **CMHC Resources** - Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has a series of fact sheets entitled “Renovating for Energy Savings” available free of charge in PDF format on their [website](#). They deal with problems and opportunities for various styles of houses such as duplexes, raised bungalows, etc. These are excellent resources to prompt homeowners with renovation ideas coming from a reputable unbiased third party.

Legislative, Code and Business Issues

- **Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA)** – There will be no more combined audits for GST/HST. There is also a new method for logging business travel based on a three month sample log book. The CRA has increased its audits of construction companies to target the underground economy.
- **COR in Manitoba** -The Manitoba Home Builders' Association requires their renovator members to be COR certified for safety. MHBA is looking at modifying the COR program for renovators to exempt them from wearing hardhats and safety boots in private residences.

Education Initiatives

- Nova Scotia is setting up a certification program for Renomark builders.

Technical and Environmental Items

- **Work on Building Code Changes for Energy Efficiency** - Decisions on the scope of the changes to the next version of Part 9 of the Building Code is underway. The standing committee recommends that the EnerGuide requirement be on average instead of minimum; that Energy Star windows be used instead of a window and door to wall ratio; that HRVs not be mandatory and that air tightness meets a level of 2.5 air changes per hour based on testing or a series of prescriptive requirements.
- **EnerGuide Rating System Revisions** – Work is underway to revise the EnerGuide rating system to move it from a numbered scale to a scale based on actual energy consumption in gigajoules.
- **Asbestos in B.C.** – Due to WCB regulations for protecting workers, renovators in British Columbia are obligated to test drywall joint compound on projects prior to 1980. If asbestos is found full remediation must be done, adding thousands of dollars to renovations. This is driving renovation underground in B.C.