

## **Report to the Canadian Renovators' Council**

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### **Alberta Renovation Environment**

Renovation activity this summer in Alberta has been steady to good across the province. The industry in the south had a slow start due to an unusually wet spring and early summer. Renovators in Lethbridge report an increase in the size of renovation projects. The oil industry is beginning to grow again in Alberta and this is anticipated to positively affect sales and negatively affect the availability of trades, especially in the Edmonton area. Edmonton is seeing a migration of trades into the area from B.C and Ontario. Renovators who continue to invest in marketing and working to earn consumer confidence report very good prospects.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development in the regions varies with the strength of the renovator councils. Most regions attend local technical breakfast or luncheon sessions. Lethbridge is asking the renovation members to attend 2 technical luncheons per year to maintain their qualifications as Renomark renovators. The Professional Home Builders Institute in Alberta offers business courses for renovators. Two renovators in Alberta report in-house training as part of their weekly staff and trade meetings. One of the Lethbridge renovators has a small-scale building in their shop that they use as a training tool for their staff and trades and has instituted an interesting new hiring procedure assessing attitude first.

Succession planning is not typically considered in renovation companies. However it is coming slowly onto the radar in Alberta.

### **Consumer Activities**

Renovators continue to see the best returns from good websites and home shows. Some renovators continue to hold information sessions or "How to Hire a Contractor and renovation basics" for the public and have seen these raise the credibility bar for renovators. The CHBA - Edmonton renovator group supports each other and their trades in community events. There is a charge for attending these events with the proceeds going to charity. They find that 20% of the contacts from these events result in substantial renovation contracts. Some renovators are also connecting with their past clients through an e-mail newsletter or by phone call-backs. These may or may not include special promotional offers. Central Alberta has been working on creating public awareness of their small renovator group through print media, and bus ads. Activities planned in the province range from supplier appreciation nights, matched media between renovators and the local CHBA, a fall design and reno show in Edmonton, and a reno tour in Calgary in October.

## **Government Related or Policy Initiatives**

**Safety Blitz** - Alberta Occupational Health and Safety conducted a work site safety blitz aimed at construction workers in September. Although the industry was aware of this quite a long time in advance, garnering buy-in by sub-contractors remains a challenge for the industry.

**COR and SECOR** - Workers compensation rates were very high in Alberta for construction, but the industry, which includes renovators, has lowered the rate significantly in the past few years. COR and SECOR is not mandatory through Renomark for renovators in Alberta. Due the cost and time to become fully certified, some renovators are taking the courses and utilizing the information to build a health and safety program without pursuing a registered COR/SECOR designation.

**GST Rebate** – Renovators in Alberta would still like to see the GST rebate become a permanent initiative. It stimulates work and combats the underground economy by encouraging home owners to ask for receipts which leads to a paper trail that encourages legitimacy.

**Mandatory Warranty** – The provincial government has held two stakeholder meetings to outline what mandatory warranty could look like in Alberta. There is interest by the province to include substantial renovations under this warranty. Questions remain regarding what “substantial” entails and how new systems that would tie in to existing systems would be impacted.

## **Renomark in Alberta**

The use and success of Renomark varies across the province. CHBA - Calgary Region requires that renovator CHBA renovator members be members of Renomark. CHBA – Calgary Region has produced many resources for their renovation members from Renomark Brochures to signage and advertising for home shows. CHBA - Calgary runs a Renomark tour twice a year that generates 200-600 people in a 7 hour period and Renomark will be a feature booth at the entrance to Homexpo in January.

Although most members of the CHBA – Edmonton Region are Renomark, it is not required for membership. The CHBA Regions of Lethbridge and Red Deer have very young renovation groups and are just beginning to utilize Renomark. They are looking for ideas and materials that other areas are willing to share.

## **Technical Challenges**

**Accessibility and Visitability** – The Seniors Association of Edmonton (SAGE) has created a Service Directory that includes a section on housing. It highlights services agencies and business that serve seniors and has a link to a “Home for Life page that deals with everything from tips on hiring a contractor to suggestions on what to modify and how. Renovators in Edmonton are registering with this directory.

**Upcoming Alberta Code Changes** - There is a group of Code change proposals around accessibility/visitability that will go out for public review this year for inclusion into the next version of the Alberta Building Code.

**Upcoming Changes to Part 9 for Energy Efficiency** – Renovators across the province are beginning to look at the proposed changes to Part 9 and are starting to discuss and scrutinize the changes.