

Training programs keep contractors ahead of the competition

Since the oil crisis of the early 1970s, many thousands of Canadians have improved the energy efficiency of their homes. The experience and knowledge gained in building science during this flurry of activity has led to a more sophisticated approach to building and renovating homes for energy efficiency.

Contractors who want to stay ahead of the competition are looking for training programs to keep up to date with the new techniques being developed. In the end, however, it is homeowners and home buyers who will reap the benefits of a more professional industry.

With support from Energy, Mines and Resources Canada (EMR), industry groups such as the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA), the National Energy Conservation Association and the Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI) have developed courses for their members in such areas as building R-2000 homes, retrofitting existing homes for energy efficiency and improving heating system performance with "total tune-ups".

R-2000

R-2000 super energy-efficient homes are built to standards that far exceed even the toughest provincial construction codes. The attention to detail and state-of-the-art techniques used to construct these homes means R-2000 builders must undergo special training.

This training is now being delivered through R-2000 Builder Workshops sponsored by the Canadian Home Builders' Association. About 1500 builders across Canada vol-

untarily participate in this program each year, and many others regularly take refresher courses. Although the HRAI provides training to the sub-trades who design and install ventilation systems, certified R-2000 builders generally train the other sub-trades they use "on-site". In addition to builders, the CHBA trains R-2000 quality assurance personnel.

While efforts to date have focused on training people already working in the field, a major thrust is now underway by the CHBA and EMR to have R-2000 training incorporated into the design and building courses offered by universities, community colleges and technical institutes. More than 100 such institutions offer courses to the construction trades and professionals (such as architects and engineers). Institutionalizing R-2000 training will provide graduates with the skills to build energy-efficient homes when they begin their careers in the residential building industry.

This is also the aim of the Quality+ Housing Program, which is being delivered by EMR and home builders' associations across Canada. Quality+ is a training and education program designed to familiarize teachers and course participants with the innovative features that set energy-efficient homes apart from conventional houses. In addition to information from the R-2000 Home Program, the course features educational material developed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the HRAI and others.

Several provincial governments have also initiated formal builder

education programs. These include the governments of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec. As well, a National Education and Training Advisory Committee has been established for the residential construction industry to coordinate efforts and to share knowledge, educational materials and techniques from across Canada.

The renovation industry

Courses are also available to help renovators incorporate energy efficiency into their projects.

To keep their customers' houses running smoothly, tradespeople are being encouraged to learn the basic building science principles which govern how a house operates as an interacting set of heat, air and moisture flows. Course developers believe that with some basic training in these "house as a system" principles, tradespeople will be able to plan and carry out more effective and problem-free jobs.

The training program consists of a series of courses covering state-of-the-art techniques in such fields as air leakage control, conventional insulation, energy-efficient window, door and siding systems, and whole house renovation. As a result, building tradespeople are learning how to offer a more comprehensive service which ensures optimum levels of comfort, safety and energy efficiency for their customers.

Furnace tune-ups

Heating system contractors are also being trained to carry out "total tune-ups" as a way to offer their customers better service and to

keep themselves ahead of the competition.

This new comprehensive approach to furnace servicing is helping homeowners to reduce their heating costs and to increase their comfort by ensuring that heating systems are operating at peak efficiency. In a total tune-up, all aspects of the heating system, including controls and distribution, are examined, cleaned and adjusted by trained contractors so that the system is delivering heat as efficiently as possible.

Benefits for homeowner

D.I.Y. Videos — Help for the renovator

Do-it-yourself expert Jon Eakes has developed a new educational tool for the Canadian "hands-on" homeowner who needs straight-forward and accurate help with renovation projects.

Using video as his medium, Eakes has produced a series of videocassettes for in-home, step-by-step instruction covering the most popular how-to subjects. The series, *From House to Home*, will consist initially of 12 different titles. The first three *Renovation Zone* tapes: *Basic Insulation Projects*; *Special Insulation Projects*; and *Ventilation & Heating Projects*, cover that major concern — energy efficiency. *Renovation Zone* is also the name of Eakes' successful TV show, whose development was supported by Energy, Mines and Resources Canada.

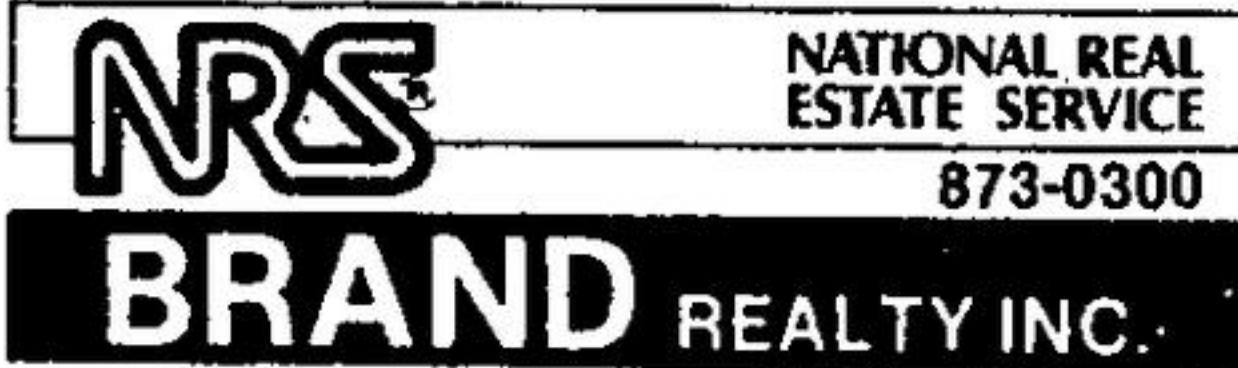
Experienced contractors find that the courses improve the quality of their work by giving them access to the most up-to-date technologies and procedures. In addition, the courses offer an ideal opportunity for people interested in entering the building trades to get the training they need for success.

Overall, the courses are increasing the level of quality assurance that tradespeople can offer their customers.

As more builders and renovation contractors take the courses, homeowners and buyers stand to reap the benefits of improved techniques and better service.

Eakes, who was also popular as TV's "Mr. Chips", emphasizes that his videocassettes have the Canadian content needed by Canadian do-it-yourselfers. "U.S. videos available are of little value north of the border because products, building codes, climate, insulation and ventilation techniques aren't the same," he explains.

Interface Productions (Eakes' company) is distributing the *From House to Home/Renovation Zone* series through HomeStar Communications Inc. of Toronto, who will stock the tapes at lumber and building materials retailers, hardware stores, and bookstores. Each video is 66 minutes long and the suggested retail price is \$19.95.



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