

Building Performance Institute of Canada

Objective

Homeowners retrofit and renovate their existing homes to increase energy efficiency and to improve existing spaces in order to keep up with changing lifestyle needs. Dollars spent on retrofits and renovations surpass the dollars spent on new home construction every year. Existing buildings offer the largest opportunity to reduce energy consumption. Energy efficiency therefore needs to be included in any retrofit work done by the homeowner and, in addition, the homeowner needs to be encouraged to undertake energy efficiency improvements even if they are not doing any renovations.

Needs being addressed

The homeowner faces two barriers to energy efficient work: First, the homeowner is either unaware or unsure of the work that could and should be undertaken. They may not be cognizant of the home's energy usage and uncertain as to what to do to correct the situation. Second, even if the homeowner is able to determine what they would like to do to improve the energy efficiency of their home, they do not know where to find a contractor who can undertake the work. Homeowners commonly turn to the yellow pages or the Internet in search of a contractor, without any knowledge as to their previous work or skills. Others turn to their friends and relatives for recommendations, trusting that if their friends were happy with the work completed, that they would be too.

Homeowners also face potential problems when the contractor does not have the direction that standards and specifications provide. The most common phrase used by the contractor is: "This is the way that I have always done it." This mindset leads to many problems. There are a number of television programs that magnify the substandard work currently being carried out in the marketplace. Contractors do not understand that homes are systems and changing one thing can impact others, both immediately as well as down the road.

Performance metrics

Building Performance Institute, Canada (BPI-Canada) is setting performance metrics for contractors and their work. In turn, contractors will be able to understand and apply building science principles to each job, as well as change their mindset to the "house as a system" approach. The education and increased contractor knowledge will have a ripple effect down to the homeowner who will then understand the approach and be able to apply it to all decisions made regarding renovating their home.

BPI-Canada applies a complete quality assurance, performance based program in order to reduce current issues presently being found when renovating and retrofitting existing homes in Canada. This program ties the manufacturer, contractor and installer together to produce proper and desired results.

Effective research needs to be done by the manufacturers to ensure that the products will work as intended. Standards and specifications are required to ensure that the materials and products are consistent and the desired performance is achieved. Materials and products that have been tested to prove they meet the applicable standard are then identified and listed on the BPI Canada website. Contractors who have demonstrated they can retrofit homes to produce the desired results are identified and listed on the BPI Canada website. Installers are properly trained and their knowledge, skills and abilities are confirmed through a certification process that has been accredited by the Standards Council of Canada to the International

