



Home Energy Labelling: Protecting homebuyers

Homes in B.C. differ in size, location and design — visible characteristics that affect value. But homes also vary in air tightness, amount of insulation and heating system performance. These characteristics might not be visible, but they can save money, increase comfort, improve indoor air quality and boost resale value. Before making one of life's most important purchases, homebuyers should know what's under the hood of a home.

Energy labelling can tell homebuyers what they need to know when it comes to energy efficiency. This includes:

- A standardized rating, for a quick gage of overall efficiency
- A description of insulation levels, heating systems and air tightness
- An estimate of annual electricity and gas consumption
- Custom energy upgrade suggestions with an estimate of potential energy savings and rating improvements.

Part of the solution

With 35 per cent of B.C.'s community carbon pollution coming from buildings, improving the energy efficiency of B.C. homes is key to tackling climate change. Energy labelling is one of many policies and programs needed to ensure that buildings meet the highest standards of energy efficiency. Others include:

- Grant programs such as LiveSmart BC and rebates from utility companies
- Financing programs such as Pay-As-You-Save (PAYS) BC
- Rezoning and permitting incentives for energy efficiency and on-site renewable energy
- Building code improvements and efficiency standards for existing buildings.

The 5 big benefits of home energy labelling

- 1 Reward energy efficiency**
Increases the value and saleability of new homes.
- 2 Improve health and comfort**
Early identification of heating system and envelope problems to improve indoor air quality and reduce risk of mold.
- 3 Create Jobs**
Stimulates local employment in the home energy sector and increases household spending power by reducing energy bills.
- 4 Protect the Environment**
Helps create a conservation culture, reducing carbon emissions, local pollution and the need for energy supply infrastructure.
- 5 Improve program delivery**
Provides data to help policy makers design programs to improve the quality of buildings.

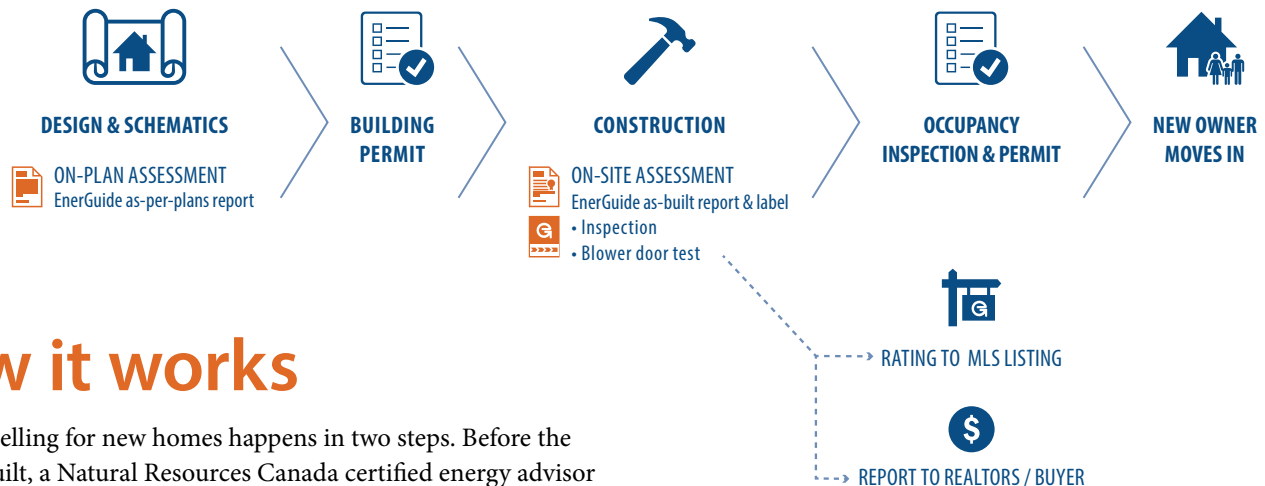
Home energy labelling for new buildings

Labelling programs allow consumers to easily compare the efficiency of different cars or electric appliances. Shouldn't the same information be made available for a home?

A labelling requirement for new buildings ensures new homes get an energy assessment before they're sold, and that the resulting rating is made available to realtors and prospective buyers. This allows buyers to consider energy efficiency when deciding on a new home.

Many other jurisdictions require energy labelling at the time of sale, including most countries of the European Union, with U.K. and Denmark leading the way since 1995 and 1997. And, various cities in the U.S. also require labelling, such as Austin, Texas, Washington D.C., and Berkeley, California.

Energy efficiency labelling of new buildings would be a simple and effective first step toward the broader adoption of this policy for various types of buildings in B.C.



How it works

Energy labelling for new homes happens in two steps. Before the house is built, a Natural Resources Canada certified energy advisor uses a computer model to estimate energy use based on the plans for the new home. Based on the modeling, the advisor can provide the builder and homebuyer with recommendations to improve the energy efficiency of the home, with estimates of the associated energy savings and improvement in rating.

Local governments in B.C. can protect homebuyers by asking builders to submit energy assessment reports with their permit applications, and to post the label visibly on the home. Realtors and

potential buyers then have access to this information, and local governments can use it for building inspections and long term community energy planning.

A labelling requirement for new homes can be implemented by amending your local building bylaw. A ready-made model amendment is available at: www.pembina.org/pub/2523

What can you do?

Let your community leaders know that you support energy labelling in B.C.:

- 1. Getting a home built?** Ask your builder to get an EnerGuide pre-assessment based on the design plans, it will provide you with recommendations to improve the energy efficiency of the home which could save you energy and money for years to come.
- 2. Contact your MLA** and ask that the Province adopt a labelling requirement.
- 3. Ask your municipality** to support a labelling requirement by amending their building bylaw.

See greenbuildingleaders.ca for more information.

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