

Eco scruples

Ottawa companies are among provincial winners for promoting and building green

Sheila Brady, The Ottawa Citizen
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John Corvinelli, a small-volume, second-generation builder from Russell, picked up top honours at from The EnerQuality Corp. for building green.

Two of Ontario's largest builders and one of its smallest operations earned green kudos earlier this week, as the housing industry recognized top performers with finely honed eco scruples.

The EnerQuality Corporation took over the annual gathering of the Ontario Home Builders' Association in Toronto Thursday, honouring large and small corporations that built environmentally friendly homes across the province during the past 12 months.

John Corvinelli, a second-generation builder from the eastern community of Russell, earned top green honours for small-volume builders. Corvinelli surprised locals last fall by winning the Citizen's prestigious People's Choice Award at the Design Awards hosted by the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association.

Small volume means companies that build fewer than 50 homes a year. Corvinelli is perfectly happy overseeing the sale, design and construction of 19 homes in 12 months. He is on the job site every day and has been known to push a broom to clean away debris.

"John is a quite a bundle of energy," says Ross Elliott, owner of Homestead Building Solutions (www.homesteadsol.ca) and an energy evaluator who regularly tests Ottawa-area homes to see if they meet energy and air standards for R-2000 and Energy Star ratings.

"He takes a personal interest in his houses from start to finish and with the homeowners. He builds a very good quality product," says Elliott, who was named energy evaluator of the year in 2007 by EnerQuality. It manages the Energy Star program, testing and then labelling homes as energy misers. The program promises to cut a home's energy consumption by 30



per cent when compared to a house built to the Ontario Building Code.

Elliott has tested Corvinelli's homes. "He puts his mark on everything," he says, suggesting the builder easily surpasses Energy Star requirements by approaching the R-2000 program's additional standards.

"I am on site and I do it all so there are no mistakes," says Corvinelli, 44, who estimates he has built about 100 homes in and around Russell.

The son of a builder, he ran a hardware and lumber store for 11 years in Russell, investigating and selling materials to builders who were putting up 60 homes a year.

"You learn a lot and you learn to build efficiently," says Corvinelli, who estimates it adds two per cent to the price of a house to meet Energy Star ratings. "It just makes sense because the home is well-built and will deliver savings for years to come."

Corvinelli joined the Energy Star program when it was introduced in 2005.

"He is a small, conscientious builder who is giving his customers great value," says Michelle Coté, account manager for the EnerQuality Corporation. Coté esti-

mates there are 305 registered Energy Star builders in Ontario, with 100 new builders signing up since April 2007.

Tartan was also honoured Thursday for enrolling the 10,000th Energy Star home, with EnerQuality donating \$10,000 in Tartan's name to Habitat for Humanity. Tartan will hand the money over to the local National Capital Region offices of Habitat for Humanity and its Women Build program planned for this summer.

Tartan, often in partnership with Tamarack Homes, has consistently built Energy Star homes. In its Stittsville community of Jackson Trails, the program is a standard offering.

EnerQuality officials expect builders will enrol another 10,000 homes by this time next year, a sign the green building movement is catching fire, says Coté.

It's companies like Reid's Heritage Homes, which builds in communities across southern Ontario, and Mattamy, which is based in Toronto and has opened sites in Ottawa, that are making real headway, she says.

Reid's picked up three green honours at the awards ceremony, including one for building innovation and excellence, one for leader of the year and the third for best green marketing.

"Energy Star is an integral part of the company culture at Reid's," says Coté. "The company is totally committed to the concept of building green. It makes a huge difference."

The company's website (www.reidsheritagehomes.com) is a slick affair, packed with information that is easy and entertaining to read.

Reid's builds Energy Star homes and has a LEEDs (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) home that is attracting buyers and other builders looking to find an edge in a tough market.

Mattamy, also no slouch in the green parade in the Toronto market, won honours in the large builder category for its hugely successful community of Hawthorne Village in the Toronto-area community of Milton.

Here in Ottawa, the Mattamy team is still evaluating whether to make Energy Star a standard feature. Energy Star is an optional feature at the builder's Kanata site, where 16 per cent of buyers opted in. In Barhaven at Half Moon Bay, 19 per cent of buyers opted to add Energy Star along with cosmetic upgrades such as granite counters or hardwood.

Energy Star should be a slam-dunk. Listen to the experts and they say your energy savings will pay off the granite and hardwood. Come winter, that makes good cents.

Sheila Brady is the Citizen's Homes Editor. You can reach her at sbrady@thecitizen.canwest.com.

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