



Photo: Steven Cretney, The Pembina Institute

Home energy labelling: The beginning of a conversation

Houses in B.C. come in different sizes, locations and interior designs — visible characteristics affecting their value. They also have a wide range of insulation, air tightness and heating systems performance. These characteristics are not easily visible and their impact on energy bills, comfort, and air quality are not always understood.

Energy labelling bridges this gap by providing homeowners with the basic information needed to have a conversation about energy efficiency when making decisions about the purchase, sale or renovation of a home. This information includes:

- a standardized rating, allowing homeowners to quickly gauge overall efficiency,
- a detailed evaluation of energy systems,
- custom energy upgrade suggestions, estimating potential energy savings and rating improvement.

Piece of the puzzle

With 35 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in B.C. communities coming from buildings, improving the energy efficiency of our building stock is key to meeting our climate targets.

Energy labelling is one of many policies and programs needed to accelerate the refurbishment of existing buildings and to ensure that new buildings meet the highest standards. 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.



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An energy advisor conducts a blower-door test during an energy assessment that will help determine the house's EnerGuide rating

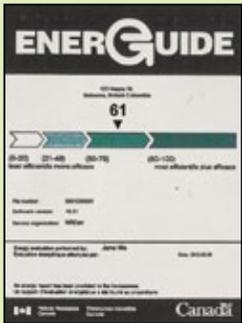
Home energy labelling at point of sale

Through other labelling programs, we can now easily compare the efficiency of different models when we shop for cars or electric appliances. Shouldn't the same information be available when we consider the purchase of a home?

A labelling requirement at point of sale would ensure that: (1) houses put up for sale get an energy assessment, and (2) that the resulting rating is available on the MLS feature sheet or other listing services advertising the home. This would allow buyers to consider energy efficiency along with other decision factors when they peruse listings, and to factor in potential energy upgrades when they consider moving-in renovations.

Considering these benefits, several jurisdictions now require energy labelling at time of sale, including most countries of the European Union (with the U.K. and Denmark leading the way since 1995 and 1997) and various cities in the U.S. such as Austin, Texas; Washington, D.C.; and Berkeley, California.

EnerGuide for Houses



The EnerGuide system rates the energy efficiency of existing and new houses on a scale of 0 to 100. A rating of 0 represents a home with major air leakage, no insulation and extremely high energy consumption. A rating of 100 represents a house that is airtight, well insulated and sufficiently ventilated and that requires no purchased energy on an annual basis. The EnerGuide rating of new homes in B.C. typically ranges between 66 and 79.

The rating is generated by a Natural Resources Canada Certified Energy Advisor. During a home energy assessment, the advisor measures insulation levels, windows, doors and air leakage and uses a computer model to estimate the home's energy consumption, and the impacts of different energy upgrades. The rating is calculated based on standard operation assumptions so that you can compare the energy performance of one house against another.

Top five benefits of a home energy labelling program

- 1 Reward energy efficiency** — Increase the value and saleability of energy efficient houses.
- 2 Catalyze upgrades** — Suggest renovations with best energy returns and provide access to grants, green mortgages and/or financing programs.
- 3 Improve health and comfort** — Diagnose heating system and envelope problems to improve comfort, indoor air quality, and reduce risk of mold.
- 4 Create jobs** — Stimulate local employment in the home energy sector and increase household spending power by reducing energy bills.
- 5 Improve program delivery** — Provide data to help policy makers design programs to support homeowners in upgrading their homes.

What can you do?

Let your community leaders know that you support an energy labelling program and join the call for home energy labelling in B.C. by signing up at:

homeenergylabellingbc.com

See greenbuildingleaders.ca for more information and updates on this project.

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