

Gord Cooke, July 18, NetZero Ready Showcase Homes, Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Remarks

We are a building-science company, that offers certified energy evaluations to builders looking to build higher performance homes. For example, we help builders to programs such as the ENERGY STAR for New Homes program and the new NetZero Energy Home program offered by the Canadian Home Builders association. We're the ones who help builders optimize the amount and location of insulation. In this context, I happen to be old. I have been doing this a long time. Paul and I were talking, and he has been building homes since 1981 and I have been in the building industry since 1983. Both of us working to improve the performance of new homes.

What you do need to know is that this NetZero Energy program comes out of very important Canadian building science research that was done in the 70's. In fact, the fellow who started all of this, by the name of Harold Orr was just given the Order of Canada in recognition of the way he's changed houses. I just met him recently, and actually presented him an award in the U.S., because he is considered the father of every energy efficiency housing programs in the United States and the energy efficiency programs in Germany. So what you folks are seeing here at Acorn is the culmination of about 35 to 40 years of research done by the Canadian government and the Canadian Home Building industry.

What's really important though is that companies like Acorn are able to make this happen because clearly this was not doable 45 years ago. What is really powerful is, Lynn, as you said, tremendous teamwork. I'll go further and say, partnerships. Partnerships with trades, like my good friend, Paul Sheridan of Metro Air and Luca, the plumber and the insulators. People who are willing to accept new technologies, try them in houses, and then put them into these really amazing designs. So, what I noticed as I walked the house is that you can't help but love the design. I'd love to live here, this is really cool, the high ceilings, the beautiful bathrooms, all the amenities, and then to realize this is a house that is, frankly, from a performance perspective about 12 years ahead of its time. Lynn, as you said, all builders will be doing this by 2030. What's really cool is in that Acorn's doing it now. One because you need to be a little ahead of the curve, and two it's a tremendous learning experience. You might as well learn it now, so that you can be the most cost effective builder of these types of homes down the road.

So, I just want to give you a quick sense of what we mean by high performance. Mayor you said a little bit about the energy efficiency features and Lynn, you mentioned the phrase "the house as a system", a phrase that was coined in the 70's. It means that when making decisions about high performance homes, everything impacts everything else. Put just the right amount of insulation in the ceiling because no sense in putting in more than you need, make sure you get the walls done correctly, making sure you manage air tightness which you folks did such a phenomenal job of using the new technology called Aerobarrier, sealing up unwanted air leaks. Making sure we do basements well and why is that on my mind? Because of the tremendous storms just last night, where so many old basements in Toronto leaked, including 2 of my brothers houses. In new houses, basements don't leak! Why? Because of the important land development changes that have taken place over the last 15 to 20 years. Lynn, you would know better than anyone in your role at Acorn. So, we do better basements, then we do better windows, and then we think about better mechanical systems. Everything impacts everything else. And trying to find the cost-effective way of doing. What is so powerful is that Canadian research I mentioned earlier ensure that the same things you did for energy efficiency also simultaneously makes your homes healthier, safer, more comfortable and more durable. There is no compromises in these houses. You get a better lifestyle, more affordable because you are not paying energy bills like you used to be, and you end up with houses that are healthier, safer, quieter and more durable.

A little example, that air tightness that gives us tremendous energy savings also stops dust, and bugs and noise from coming into the house. Oh, there is a win-win-win! The same things that we did for insulation, for energy efficiency, also makes houses quieter, and less chance of condensation problems in the walls. So, phenomenal technology, this combination of building science, but then the teamwork and partnerships that took place in order to make this happen. And I want you to know, those who are in the press and those who are interested in this beautiful home, it is not a question of "if", builders are going to be doing this, it is a question of "when". And the fact that Acorn is willing to step up and work in partnerships with East Gwillimbury, because you guys have been in the leading edge of this as well, to say "we can do this" and to show the industry, to show others [that] "this is doable". Acorn happens to be a little bit ahead...12 years ahead. Kind of a nice idea. And everyone is going to have to, not have to, WANT to follow that. So, congratulations on doing such a wonderful project. Imagine a homeowner who moves in gets all the beautiful benefits of a brand new, clean home, and then has this amazing ability to live in a healthier, safer, quieter, more comfortable, and ultimately, more affordable house. Kind of cool. Thanks for joining!