



# CANADIAN CONSTRUCTION JOURNAL

May/June 2023

## Exclusive Interviews



**CLAY**   
CONSTRUCTION INC

**LARRY CLAY - ONE OF BC'S MOST KNOWN & TRUSTED BUILDERS**

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of a great  
builder  
are great  
people



**J. ZSIROS**  
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**NetZero Pioneer Jim Zsiros**



A Continuing Look at  
Last Year's  
& Current Nominees

**PLUS  
MORE**

Hara Homes  
maison d'etre







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Our expansive training and experience with lifesaving protocols will save you time and money with a professional approach.

Our philosophy: Everyone goes home safely to their families at the end of each shift.

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# CANADIAN CONSTRUCTION JOURNAL

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# ***Editor's Note***

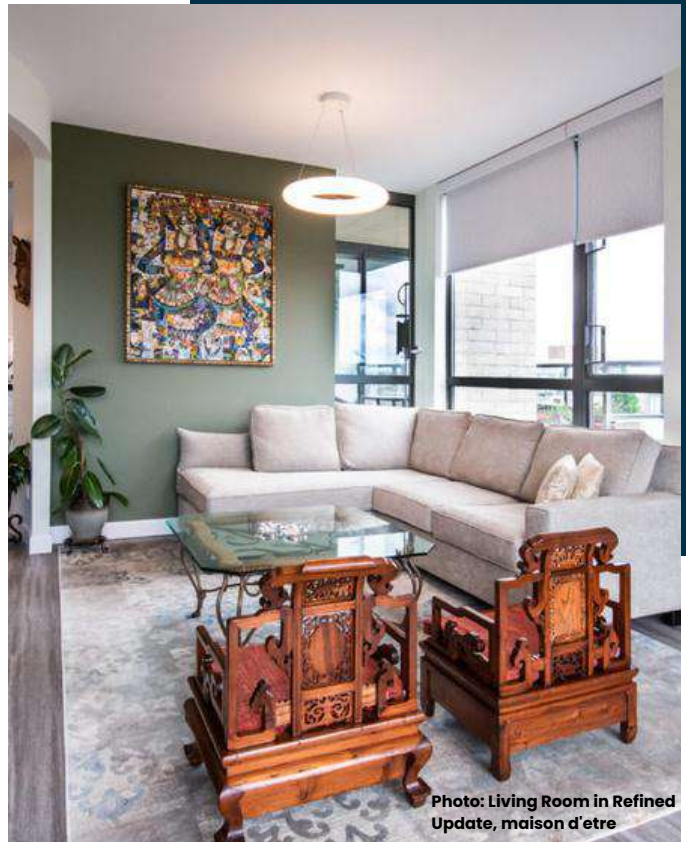


Photo: Living Room in Refined Update, maison d'être

Spring is here and we are excited to really delve deep in the residential sector of British Columbia. Following many members of Canadian Homebuilders' Association British Columbia (CHBA BC), we continue our ongoing spotlight on the prestigious Georgie Awards. The Georgies go out to the best of the best in the residential sector in British Columbia in nearly 50 different categories. Moreover, the Award Ceremony itself is arguably the biggest and most lavish ceremony in Canadian construction, having won the BizBash's 10th Annual Event Experience Awards in the Best Non-profit Event Concept—Budget Under \$250,000 category.

With the 2023 Georgie Awards having just taken place three days ago, we are proud to continue spotlighting CHBA BC members throughout our next several issues.

In sharing this issue you help promote a number of charitable causes, including NightShift Street Ministries, which "cares for the holistic needs of others, 365 days a year, by building relationships and restoring lives through outreach, counselling, education and transitional housing."

NightShift has been providing "nightly outreach for people stuck in the cycle of poverty, addiction and homelessness in the Whalley neighbourhood of Surrey since 2004. [It] does this with hot meals, warm clothing, conversation, basic nursing and counselling, and most importantly, unconditional love."

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# ***In this Issue***

This month, and for the foreseeable future, our focus is on homebuilders in British Columbia. We continue our coverage of finalists and winners of the prestigious Georgie Awards, which honour the best of the best from CHBA BC's membership.

We begin this issue with a recap on the history and importance of the prestigious Georgie Awards, and then leap into coverage on some of 2022's finalists and winners, before unveiling the finalists and winners of 2023 in upcoming issues.

To begin, we talk with a former president of CHBA BC, Rob Capar from **maison d'être design-build inc.** Rob walks us through some of his iconic builds, including his 2022 nominated condo renovation. And although we will not be covering **maison d'être's** 2023 projects in this issue, we would like to congratulate Rob and his team on their 2023 Georgie win! Stay tuned for more on his 2023 Georgie Award-winning project.

We follow this with an interview with a former president of the national CHBA, Larry Clay from Clay Construction. Larry talks to us not only about how to build homes, but about how to build a successful brand and business too. He explains the importance of getting one's name out there through organizations, such as the CHBA. Larry also stresses the importance of giving back to the communities in which he works; he does this by volunteering his time with NightShift Ministries.

Next, we chat with Raman Hara of Hara Homes about his 2022 Georgie Award-winning home in Burnaby, B.C. as well as his 2019 Ovation Award-winning project.

We follow Hara Home's article with a Q&A on Mesa Glass, one of Hara's key suppliers and subcontractors. Zack Chamberlin tells us all about his unique glass designs and installations.

Next is a 2022 double Georgie Award winner: J. Zsiros Contracting. Jim Zsiros explains how he pivoted into Net Zero and Built Green homes, helping to pioneer these innovative techniques on north Vancouver Island.

Zsiros' homes rely on high-grade materials and services in order to be built to Net Zero and Built Green standards. As such, we sit down with four of his suppliers and subcontractors to learn about how they help Zsiros' homes reach the highest levels on the B.C. step code.

Island Truss, Island TimberFrame, Island AeroBarrier, and EnerTech each join us for separate Q&As wherein we learn about what they do in general, and what they do for J. Zsiros Contracting in particular. The Q&As run the gamut of construction: from traditional large timber framing and truss installation to cutting-edge energy efficiency thermal scans.

Finally, we leave B.C. and the Georgie Awards for our one Ontario interview in this issue. We chat with Ian Cunningham from the Council of Ontario Construction Associations about what the organization does, and how to get high school grads and college/university grads to enter a career in the trades at a young age. Moreover, Ian talks to us about the importance of Helmets to Hardhats in filling the labour gap in Canada by placing Veterans into jobs in the skilled trades.

*All this and more inside!*

Paul Harrison,  
Editor-in-Chief



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**CANADIAN**  
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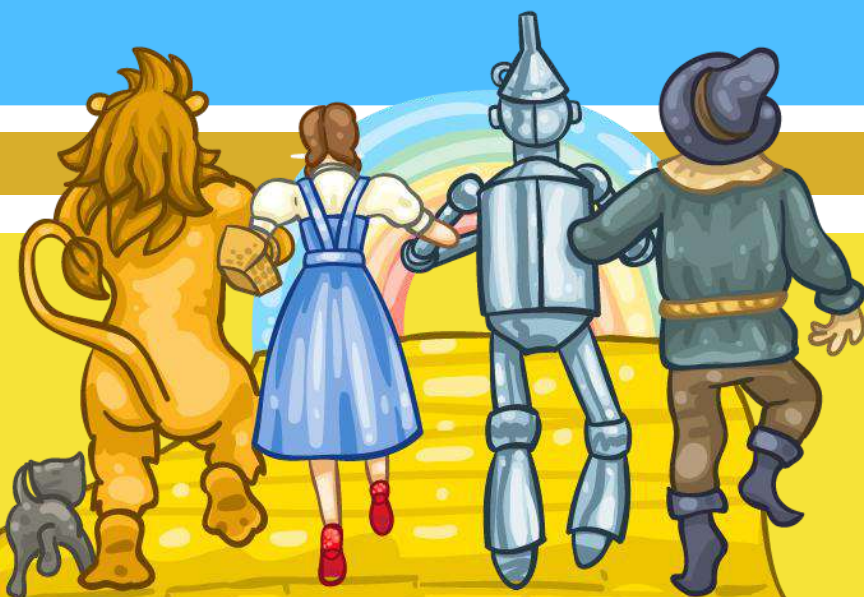


**Georgie**  
AWARDS



# 2022 & 2023

## PART 2: INTERVIEWS & MORE



*The*  
**ROAD**  
*To the*  
**GEORGIES**

**CHBA BC**

**MAISON D'ETRE  
CLAY CONSTRUCTION  
J. ZSIROS CONTRACTING  
HARA HOMES**



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Power Tools Accessories  
Ladders  
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Paint Sundries

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Mouldings  
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# CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION BRITISH COLUMBIA

**The Canadian Construction Journal is proud to announce our coverage of this year's Georgie Awards®.**

We continue with spotlights on some of last year's finalists and winners in this issue, and we will then be moving into coverage of 2023's finalists in May/June as we focus on **The 2023 Georgie Awards!**

## **About the Canadian Home Builders' Association of BC**

The Canadian Home Builder's Association of BC (CHBA BC) is the leading advocate for the residential construction industry, representing 2,200 member firms through our eight (8) locally affiliated home building associations. Our members are small- and medium-sized businesses who are builders, renovators, tradespeople, service professionals, and suppliers.

We are essential to supporting the province's housing needs and economic prosperity. In 2021, as one of the largest sources of employment in the province, the residential construction industry provided over 200,000 on and off-site jobs, over \$14 billion in wages and almost \$28 billion in built investment value in British Columbia.

## **For media inquiries, please contact:**

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[www.chbabc.org](http://www.chbabc.org)





# Georgie AWARDS



## The History

Georgie Awards® was established in 1992 by a group of industry professionals who decided to start a housing awards program, not for economic benefit, but to provide value to the residential construction industry and communities throughout British Columbia.

In 1992, entry into the awards was open to all builders, renovators, and developers in the province of British Columbia. In 2001, in order to manage and strengthen the integrity of the program, the Georgie Awards® was changed to a CHBA BC members-only recognition program which it continues to be today.

Over the years, categories, criteria, price points and square footage for categories have changed and have been adjusted to keep pace with the housing market. In the last few years, there has been a strong consumer and industry demand for enhanced energy efficiency requirements in new homes and renovations. As a result, that requirement has not only been added as criteria to most categories, but specific categories have been created for the demand. As the years progress and the housing market continues to fluctuate, categories and criteria will be amended.

**In February 2023, the Georgie Awards was named a winner of BizBash's 10th Annual Event Experience Awards in the Best Non-profit Event Concept—Budget Under \$250,000 category.**

## 10<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL BIZBASH EVENT *Experience* AWARDS **WINNER**

**Best Nonprofit Event Concept—Budget Under \$250,000**  
**Georgie Awards Gala 2022**  
**Canadian Home Builders' Association of BC**

## Event Recognition

The Georgie Awards® is BC's premier housing awards program. It requires months of preparation and garners much attention from media, builders and other industry professionals.

Previously, the gala has been recognized by BizBash as one of the most influential annual events in Vancouver in 2019. The event also landed a finalist position at the Canadian Event Industry Awards, recognized across the country, for 2019, and was the 2020 winner for Best Event Produced In-House by an Association, Board or Committee.

## **2023 Georgie Awards® will “Follow the Yellow Brick Road” to Celebrate Excellence in B.C.’s Homebuilding and Renovation Industry**

**BURNABY, BC (January 26, 2023)** – The Canadian Homebuilder’s Association of BC (CHBA BC) announced the list of finalists for the 2023 Georgie Awards® today. Now in its 31st year, the Georgie Awards® are B.C.’s most prestigious homebuilding, renovation, and real estate awards.

The 2023 awards will feature nearly **50 categories** grouped into six focus areas: Residential Construction – New; Residential Construction – Renovation; Interior Design, Merchandising and Landscaping; Sales and Marketing; Special Achievement Awards; Grand Georgie Awards®.

The highlight of the Georgie Awards® is the unique theme that provides the setting of the event and is eagerly anticipated by gala attendees. This year’s edition is sure to enchant as guests are transported down the yellow brick road to **a magical world ruled by a wizard.**

“To win a Georgie Award® means your company has been recognized for excellence in homebuilding with a commitment to quality, durability, the latest building techniques, and design trends. To be named a finalist for this coveted award is a great achievement,” said Neil Moody, CEO of the Canadian Home Builders’ Association of British Columbia. “This has been a year of change in residential construction with the pressures of a higher interest rate environment. It’s important for us to gather together to celebrate our accomplishments and look forward to the next phase for our industry.”

To be eligible for a Georgie Award®, the company must be a CHBA BC member, and the submitted project must have been built, renovated, developed, created, and marketed from January 1, 2021 – November 1, 2022. The finalists and winners are selected by a judging panel of out-of-province industry professionals and the results are verified by an independent accounting firm.

The Georgie Awards are one of the year’s “must attend” events for the residential building industry and the gala is a sellout year after year. A limited number of tickets for the Georgie Awards® Gala have just been released and are expected to go fast. Purchase your gala tickets now to avoid disappointment. Tickets for the 2023 gala at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver on **Saturday, May 20, 2023**, are available for purchase here.

The Georgie Awards® would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors, including Platinum sponsors, Telus and BC Housing. A full list of sponsors is available here.

**A list of all the 2023 Georgie Awards® Finalists follows.**





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maison d'être



design-build inc.

## Transforming Spaces Across Vancouver



2023  
winner

By: Paul Harrison





# maison d'etre

**Rob Capar is the owner and president of maison d'etre design-build inc, a Vancouver-based company specializing in residential condo and house renovations. He has held this position for 28 years.**



## Back to the Beginning

Initially, Rob got into renovations by helping his dad around the house and cabin. "My two uncles were also in construction, one in building and the other in teaching construction." In spite of this involvement, Rob chose a different route. He went to university and after graduating, entered the corporate world. "But I soon discovered that this career path was not for me. It actually made me physically sick. I found myself gravitating back to what I liked doing - renovations and working on the side. After a couple of years, it went from being a sideline to a full-time enterprise where I hired some other people to work with me. Initially we did small projects like painting, minor repairs, then bathroom and kitchen projects. This led to our doing entire condos and houses."

Although Rob claims that he hated working in an office while in the corporate milieu, he now quite enjoys his own office at **maison d'etre**. "Now I'm on my computer much more as well as meeting potential clients and making future plans together. My hands don't get very dirty anymore."

In addition to running his company, Rob served as Past President of CHBA BC. "We actually did the design for the CHBA BC office building."



## Houses & Condos

Since Rob's company does both commercial and residential renovations, he claims that one's approach in doing these projects differs. With house or condo renovations, the project is driven by the homeowner and the project is very personal. Rob explains: "With a condo there are more restrictions than with houses. We are limited in our amount of space and where plumbing and lighting fixtures can go."

### The Process

"First, we sit down with our client(s) and develop conceptual drawings and plans for their consideration. Once they finalize their selections, we put together a budget allowance to assist them in refining their project or design elements."

"You can't expand the space, but even so, these renos require more innovative detailing and are sometimes more fun to do. With a commercial project, there is less of an emotional factor to deal with than there is when doing residential projects." Rob continues: "When doing residential renovations, we are dealing with the owners, who intend to live in the house for several years, or even decades. There is a more personal, emotional component involved."

"Usually, we can stay within the budget, unless the client decides to do more than was originally intended. Or sometimes there are unforeseen issues that come up. If we can come in under budget, this is an added bonus."

"It's great to get positive feedback from our clients, even years later. One of our client families had young children when we worked for them. The children were two, four and six years old when we did the housing project."

Recently I ran into the owners, who said that their children were now grown and that the youngest had just graduated from university.

"The house had served the needs of a very young family, then catered to their teenage years and beyond." It makes Rob happy knowing that his company has helped people realize their housing dreams, and in some way, helped to shape their lives. "You deserve to live in a home you love" is a good tag line for **maison d'être**.

### Subcontractors & Partnerships

As for the people who help Rob's company, he states that he has a core group of vendors and subcontractors. "We've been working with two main electrical companies, two main plumbers and two main painters for the past 20 year or so. There's a bond of loyalty and friendship that's developed over the years. We get together at our annual Christmas parties and often reminisce over the houses and condos we worked on years earlier."

Rob knows that a company's reputation is important. You have to plan realistically and price properly. When Rob served as President of the CHBA-BC, he worked to develop a licensing program for new home builders. "Unfortunately, there are some unlicensed, unscrupulous builders who take advantage of homeowners. The customer wants to know that the builders they employ are honest, industrious and have integrity."





## Recent Projects

Regarding recent projects, Rob tells of one he completed in West Vancouver. "We did the pre-planning and design work during the first year of Covid. The home was outdated and in need of some repairs. We built an addition and created a second master bedroom with an accessible bathroom, just in case the clients should ever have to use a walker or wheelchair in the future. In addition, we constructed a massive pantry for storage since the kitchen was an open concept one and needed more room. The clients like to entertain and needed extra space.

"We've entered that project in the current Georgies, so we'll see how that goes. But we did enter it in the National Kitchen and Bath Association Awards for Western Canada, and the pantry and bathroom both won for the best designs. We're quite proud of that recognition within the design industry."

## Advice to Future Clients

When asked about any tips he has for staying on budget, Rob stresses the importance of pre-planning very carefully. With the materials pre-ordered and selected, and major contractors providing quotes, this only leaves around 20% of the project open to construction variables. "I love having happy clients, especially when the project runs on or under budget, when it's on time and when we deliver the look the client wanted."



Since **maison d'être** brings over 28 years of knowledge and experience, they give their clients many options before going ahead with a project. They discuss the design and any new ideas the client may not necessarily have thought about beforehand. New types of lighting and heating are just some examples. "There's nothing worse than having a completed project, only to find that something could have been done a different way."

“YOU DESERVE  
TO LIVE IN  
A HOME  
YOU  
LOVE.”

# maison d'être

## Advice to Homeowners

Rob offers some advice to those seeking to renovate, or build new homes: "In conclusion, when looking for a company, choose one that shares your vision and has a sense of what you are trying to achieve. Also choose one that will help you understand your options and provide relevant information. The clients must understand their options so that they can make the final decisions. Then, if for any reason, they are disappointed, they know that it was their decision, not the contractor's. Always keep the clients involved in the entire process."



## AWKWARD TO FUNCTIONAL

### maison d'être project



"It's satisfying to drive by renovations that our company worked on years before and see that the homes still look great. Some people, who renovate their homes, only do so in order to sell them and make a quick buck. We stay away from those projects." Instead, Rob likes working with people, who have a stake in their homes, and who want to live there for a long time. They understand the importance of working with a reputable company, such as **maison d'être**.

For more information on maison d'être, visit <https://maisondetre.ca/>





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# From Gym Teacher to Master Builder



**An interview with Larry Clay**

## **Humble Beginnings**

Larry Clay is the founder and president of Vancouver-based Clay Construction. He came to the world of quality custom homebuilding from a career in teaching. As any teacher knows, teaching is about relationship building. It is precisely this approach that is at the core of Clay Construction. A proud family man, Larry says about his company: "having run Clay Construction for almost 20 years, we find ourselves in a very unique position with having won some key awards and having some pretty cool leadership opportunities...we're surprised to find ourselves here, but we're loving it."

Larry's first love was teaching, something he was drawn to from a young age. He followed his instincts, became a teacher, and taught for 17 years. Married and with six children, money was always tight, so almost from the start of his teaching career, he would take jobs in construction to make extra money. From 1989 on, Larry was in construction, working evenings and weekends. During summers, he could be found building homes and as word started to spread amongst friends, he found himself building more and more homes and selling them. Though he loved teaching, there were many opportunities to be had in the area of homebuilding, so he decided to leave teaching and start his own homebuilding company. As Larry explains, "being a teacher has really helped my journey as a builder. One way in particular is by being a life-long learner. I have always learned, always studied, and I enjoy doing that. That was the first step in establishing a brand."





## Refining Skills & Winning Awards

To successfully establish oneself as a homebuilder, Larry points to three things that helped Clay Construction. Number one is to become educated; when clients ask about better building practices: study and become an expert in the field. In other words, know your subject matter and know your craft. Clients want a healthy, comfortable, efficient, quiet home, so being prepared and being the most well-informed person they talk to is fundamental.

Number two is to win awards; going after awards establishes you as a credible, high-quality company. Awards, such as the Georgies, which Clay Construction has won twice for best custom homebuilder in the province of British Columbia, carry a lot of credibility.

Number three is leadership; as Larry says, "if you are a leader, there is a sense of accountability and people trust you." Chairing a committee, or chairing a board, or becoming president of your board – whether local, provincial, or national – all adds to the credibility and professionalism of a builder. To build a brand without involvement in the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) is next to impossible. It is important to get involved whether locally, provincially, or nationally. It is the quickest way to build a strong brand.



## Quality, Integrity & Transparency

Clay Construction started in 2003 as a spec builder and by 2009 had transformed into a custom homebuilder. Larry says "if there are three words that sum up our business, they would be quality (we don't sacrifice on quality), integrity, and transparency. Integrity is another area that is really important to us; we're not going to compromise on integrity, we're going to always do what is right. Last is transparency; we show our clients all of the invoices, all the quotes, daily logs, pictures and videos; we have a very transparent process that helps them trust us, which is important to us."





## Building Relationships

Over nearly 20 years as a quality custom homebuilder, what Larry Clay values the most are the relationships he has created with his clients. It does not matter whether he is working on a complicated build or a simple build, every home has people attached to it, and it is the relationship with those people that is of utmost importance.

As Larry says, “you’re managing relationships through this project and, in the end, we end up with a home, but more importantly, I want to have a relationship with my clients.”

Clay Construction’s focus on relationship building extends even further through Night Shift Ministries, where, once a month, for the past eight years, they help to feed the homeless in Surrey, B.C.

## Leading the Way in Energy Efficiency Builds

The province of B.C. is at the forefront of energy efficient builds with the newly required Energy Step Code. The Code presents a challenge to new homebuyers in terms of the added costs affecting affordability.

The Canadian Home Builders’ Association, of which Larry is a recent past president, is doing a great job leading the way in achieving Net Zero affordability. One of the hardest things to do, and the one that requires the most skill, is achieving a high level of airtightness.

Clay Construction has set a goal of one air change cycle per hour (1.0 ACH 50) on all new homes. This focus on airtightness requires that drywallers, plumbers, framers, and almost everyone involved, know what changes are required of them in performing their part of every build to maintain the air control layer.



### Outlook is Bright

What does the future hold for Clay Construction? More and more people are seeking them out to perform retrofits in order to achieve higher energy efficiency. They will continue to build custom homes of the highest quality.

Their team is also growing and becoming stronger with the addition of two of Larry's sons, Isaac and Adam, as well as well-known passive home builder, Shaun St-Amour, VP of Operations, and Daniel Preston, VP of Project Management. For Larry Clay, the future of Clay Construction is bright.



**For more information on Clay Construction, visit their website at <https://clayconstruction.ca/>**

*For information on how to donate to Nightshift Ministries, visit their website at <https://nightshiftministries.org/>*





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OTHER FIND HOPE AND PURPOSE.**



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HARA HOMES

# *Building Boutique Homes*



By: Greg Akeson





# Hara Homes

## Building Boutique Family Homes in Vancouver



**Raman Hara**  
Owner of  
Hara Homes

### History

Raman Hara is the owner of Hara Homes, which has been in operation since 2012. The company deals with new construction, single-family homes, and duplexes in Vancouver and Burnaby, but they service most of the Lower Mainland. The company began by building custom homes and single-family homes. Prior to this, Raman was involved in his family's construction business dating back to the late 90s. He founded his own company because he wanted to focus on single family homes in the Burnaby and Vancouver areas. Raman Hara's aim is to provide the best quality of home at the most affordable price.

### Design & Vision

Each project begins by meeting with the client to discuss the client's vision for his or her home. This includes the style of home, the interior style, additional features such as solar panels, artificial turf, ways to optimize views and sightlines; the list goes on. Next comes the design phase. Hara Homes works with a variety of designers. Each designer has his or her own style. Working with the designer, Hara goes in the direction requested by the client and bases the design of the exterior and interior off the client's needs as well as their vision. Hara works closely with Kapoor Home Design out of Surrey, B.C., Simplex Homes out of Vancouver, and Sarah Gallop Design, who is an exceptional and thorough designer.





## Design Workflow

For most of the spec homes built by Hara, materials are not chosen by an interior designer. The interior design is done mostly in house for spec homes built for resale. The reason designers are outsourced for custom homes is because the designer works with the client, while Hara Homes works out the particulars wanted by the client. This process creates a better, smoother workflow for Hara.

## Tips for Staying on Budget

When it comes to tips for staying within a budget, Hara recommends having a detailed plan on how much you are expecting to spend on certain items. Hara works closely with the client and reviews each item to make sure they are not going over budget as per the expectations of the client.



## Surround Yourself with Great People

Hara's advice for fellow professionals is the following: "this doesn't just play within the construction industry, but it plays with any sort of industry in general. Surround yourself with great people who know more than you. For example, I can know the entire process of building a house, but I might not be the best plumber or electrician. Make sure you surround yourself with great people who can make your product better."





## Hara & Mesa Glass

## Ovation Award Winner

Hara Homes was the Ovation Award winner for 2019 for best single-family detached home under 2,400 square-feet for the project named Union. The awards are organized each year by the Homebuilders Association of Vancouver and entries are judged by a panel made up of builders, renovators and designers from outside the Vancouver area. They also won a Georgie Award in 2022 for a custom home valued under \$1,000,000 for the project named Ranelagh in Burnaby, B.C.

The Ranelagh home showcases bright, open, uncluttered, but cozy spaces, with clear sight lines and full windows to allow for ample natural light. Mesa Glass is proud to contribute high quality glass for showers, mirrors, and railings/enclosures for Hara's projects; these glass features can be seen throughout the Ranelagh home and help to contribute to the spectacular view from rooftop balcony. The exterior of the home is accentuated at night by recessed soffit lighting. In the kitchen, an island provides an abundance of counter space. Granite countertops provide a solid, seamless look and give the impression of roominess. A large, well-lit walk-in closet in the master bedroom helps to remove clutter from both the master bedroom and the master bathroom.







Hara's commitment to master craftsmanship and aesthetics ensures that accolades and awards will continue to pour in, and that Hara will continue to set the building standards in the Burnaby area.

For more information on Hara homes, visit <https://www.harahomes.ca/>



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# AN INTERVIEW WITH ZACK CHAMBERLIN

From Mesa Glass Co.

BY: PAUL HARRISON

## Introduction

**How long has your company been in operation? How did it get started? What led you to found/join the company?**

We just started this company about two years ago. We left a long-standing glass company to start Mesa Glass. We saw a gap in the industry for a high-end glass company that comes in with a fresh attitude, attention to detail, and a desire to shape the way projects are looked at.

**Tell us about what your company does in general?**

We design, measure, and install custom glass systems. We specialize in high-end frameless railings, showers, mirrors, wine enclosures, and more.

**What is the nature of the work you do for Hara Homes?**

We have installed custom interior frameless glass railings for Hara Homes.



 **MESA GLASS CO.**

From Mesa Glass Co.

**Are there any key vendors, suppliers, subcontractors, or partners who help you with your work?**

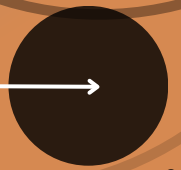
We work with Garibaldi Glass, Mx Glass & Mirror, Sterling Glass Hardware, Hi-Tech Glazing Supplies, Vancouver Glazing Hardware Inc., Cascade Aqua-Tech, and a number of other subcontractors/vendors. Notably, we work with Raincity Welding & Fabrication to help us with high-end custom welding.

**Walk us through the process you go through when a builder calls you. How do you go from the consultation to the design, through to the delivery and installation?**

When a builder calls us on a project, we always try to invest the time and effort it takes to build a lasting relationship, as well as a deep trust that is so valuable in this industry. We offer up all our resources, including engineering and welding, to take stress off the project. We always take as much time as we can designing, measuring, and installing to ensure it's a product that lasts, and exceeds expectations.



 MESA GLASS CO.





From Mesa Glass Co.

Looking through your website, I see you have done a lot of impressive work. Are there any particular projects that stand out for you?

One of our latest projects that we did in Langford is a full house project, with five showers, exterior railings, and almost 100 feet of high-end interior frameless stair railings.



Do you have any exciting new projects on the horizon, or any others that you might have just wrapped up?

Right now, we are in the midst of doing a project at the Capilano Suspension Bridge. We are doing frameless railings that look over the canyon for this project. We are really excited about getting that completed!



# J. ZSIROS

CONTRACTING LTD.

## NORTH VANCOUVER ISLAND SPECIAL SPOTLIGHT:



interviews with the areas  
leading contractors & builders:  
helping build  
a bright future  
in beautiful  
B.C.





**TWENTY YEARS OF  
BUILDING DREAM HOMES  
ON VANCOUVER ISLAND**



**2022 GEORGIE NOMINATED PROJECTS**

**CARRIAGE HOUSE ELEGANCE**

**&**

**BLACK & WHITE LUXURY**

**BY: PAUL HARRISON**





## **Twenty Years of Building Dream Homes on Vancouver Island: An Interview with Jim Zsiros of J. Zsiros Contracting**



### **History**

Jim Zsiros worked in the construction industry for many years, but it was not until 2002 when he decided to go into business for himself, and thus, J. Zsiros Contracting was born. Since then, Zsiros and his team have been building beautiful homes all over the northern end of Vancouver Island. But beauty is just one part of what J. Zsiros Contracting brings to their projects. Over the years, Jim has increasingly come to specialize in energy efficient homes.

While British Columbia has imposed an energy step code on new builds in recent years, J. Zsiros Contracting aims to go above and beyond what the provincial regulations require. As such, Jim has come to specialize in Net Zero and Built Green homes, achieving the highest standards in energy efficiency. A true pioneer in the residential construction industry, J. Zsiros Contracting built the first Net Zero home on North Vancouver Island. It should come as no surprise then that they are heavily decorated with awards and accolades, including three Georgie awards in 2022 (Best New Small Scale Home and Best Innovative Feature – New or Renovation, both for the Carriage House Elegance, and 05. Custom Home Valued under \$1,000,000 for Black & White Luxury – Net Zero).



## Learning the Art of Energy Efficient Building

Going back roughly a decade, Zsiros was already far ahead of the curve. As the province introduced the step code, which entailed more stringent rules governing new construction, Jim began to think about the future of housing. Would the step code drive up the cost of homes so much that Jim's grandchildren would one day struggle to afford houses? Was it possible to build highly efficient homes, while not letting the cost run wild? "I wanted to try a new path, instead of just building traditional houses." Jim recalls. "I moved away from money-driven builds, and started thinking about how to help the industry and where it was going. I began to really focus on my local area. I also wasn't feeling professionally challenged with what I had been doing, so this change was necessary.



***I moved away from money-driven builds, and started thinking about how to help the industry and where it was going.***





## Learning the Art of Energy Efficient Building

"In 2008, I completed my Built Green builder training course and have built several Built Green Platinum level homes since. About seven or eight years ago I started upgrading my education by taking professional construction courses. In 2018, I successfully finished my Net Zero training course, and received my Net Zero builder qualification after completing my first Net Zero build. At that time, I began the practice of resourcing material. Instead of building-materials going into landfills, we could use timbers from old barn tear downs, or material that we would recut for flooring or wall features: that's what I started doing. I was combining new products with repurposed products. Doing this re-energized me. I was excited to get up in the morning and put these new techniques to use."

By the time the step code was coming into place, Jim was fired up about taking energy efficient techniques and technologies to new heights. "I really wanted to learn more because this is where we should be going in the province. And so, I just started educating myself, getting involved, and meeting other builders throughout the province. This led us to be one of the first companies [in B.C.] to jump all over Net Zero. I recently took and completed the Built Green Net Zero course, which has led to our being able to do a double label on one of our new homes through Built Green and CHBA's Net Zero programs."

## Expert Advice for Clients

Needless to say, J. Zsiros Contracting has gained a reputation for their expertise in energy efficient homes. This expertise extends beyond just the physical building of the home; there is a financial component too. Jim explains: "When customers come to me, they want an energy efficient home, and an environmentally conscious one. So, if their budget allows it, we avoid using VOCs (volatile organic compounds) – sourcing material with no VOCs can get a little bit expensive. Then, I try to figure out what rebates are available provincially, locally, federally, etc."

"Recently, we saved our client about \$14,000 through rebates; this was on the Georgie-winning Carriage House. With another Georgie-winning home (Black and White Luxury Home), the clients saved about \$21,000 on local, provincial, and hydro rebates for building a Step Five Net Zero build. These savings essentially paid for the client's solar panels in full."

☞☞ ***Instead of building-materials going into landfills, we could use timbers from old barn tear downs...*** ☹☹





There is a gamut of rebates available, and Jim is pleased to help his clients access whatever money is available locally, provincially, and nationally. For example, on recent builds, the permit costs were refunded to the builder, and subsequently passed on to the clients.

"These rebates are dependent on the step code level achieved. The higher the step code achieved, the higher the rebates. There are also often rebates available for Energy Star-labeled appliances, such as fridges, stoves, and ovens; this can also include hot water tanks, heat pumps, and HRVs (heat recovery ventilators).

"After I've had an initial discussion with a client to outline what they are looking to build, I consult with my energy advisor, engineer, and architect or house-plan designer.

"Based on those conversations, we will design and plan the house according to the client's budget. Then I will source available products and advise the client about availability and price points. Based on this, the clients can decide if they wish to achieve step four, or step five, and so on."



**Black and White Luxury**

**&**

**The Carriage House:**

**2022 Georgie-Winning Projects**



## Education

Central to Jim's mastery of Net Zero and Built Green builds is education; courses offered by the Canadian Homebuilders' Association, for example, have given Jim the foundation to achieve the highest standards. Jim ensures that he is not the only member of his team who receives Net Zero and Built Green education as he also pays for the rest of his team to attend these courses. For Jim, this is a sound investment in his company's future. "I feel the only way you can put a good product out is to invest money in educating the team. It might look like you are losing a lot of company time by putting the team on a course for three days, but it's well worth it. They learn so much that their productivity increases greatly because of the course, and suddenly, your work-efficiency has dramatically increased. This really does save money in the long run. Education is a great investment."

As B.C. moves into higher step codes, Jim knows that this education will become integral to everyone else in the industry. "Everybody, from plumbers to electricians to inspectors will start taking courses to make sure they are educated correctly. This is important to be successful going forward."

Zsiros draws a comparison about this need for education in the industry: "It's like when my dad was a mechanic in the 1950s. Automobile technology would change, and they always had to go back to school to account for these changes. Eventually, cars became computerized and ran differently. Mechanics had to update their education to keep up with changes."



"That's the way housing is going too. There's a lot of components now; we're dealing with energy advisors, for example. So now, instead of having a set of plans drawn up, you have to look at your property. The planning stages now involve an energy advisor, the customer, the builder, the architect, and engineer, and together they design something that's going to work with the customer's budget. So, there's certainly more planning involved than there used to be."

In 2022, Jim completed his course of studies and prerequisites in the CHBA Education Program and was awarded the Certified Master Builder designation.



## Sharing Information for the Advancement of Knowledge

As energy efficient building has become more common throughout British Columbia, it has become easier, and in some cases, even cheaper, to do. Jim remarks: "Over the last three or four years, I've built relationships with other builders in B.C., who do what we're doing, and this has been great. We help one another. There are even books available that help you. For example, when you put two, four, or six inches of insulation on the outside of the walls, what types of screws do you use? Where can you get certain materials? What kind of solar panels do you want? There's a whole bunch of information now. Whereas when we were doing it several years ago, we were pioneering it and trying to do the best we could with what we knew. Now, we have a system that works for us in our area, and every year, we keep perfecting it. I don't change it. I just keep improving it and then we get better and faster at it."

One thing that has really helped with the sharing of knowledge has been the CHBA. Various members work together to ensure that information is shared through meetings, and through the Association's courses. "Whether it's national, provincial, or regional CHBA organizations, they all have lots of information. They offer top-notch courses. Their courses have really improved our business and professionalism."

For this reason, Jim is happy to give back to the Association; he has served as the Vice Chair for the CHBA-Vancouver Island and he will be taking on the role as Chair and President.

## Partnerships and Shoutouts

Of course, J. Zsiros Contracting's work would not be possible without some key partners, vendors, suppliers, and subcontractors. Jim notes: "My energy advisor, Jeffrey Robinson, from EnerTech Solutions out of Victoria is a rock star! EnerTech provides energy modeling on a lot of houses for us. If the numbers and the prices don't look right, Jeffrey works with me on sourcing materials to better insulate the house."

Paul Moquin and his team at Island AeroBarrier are also integral to Zsiros' energy efficient homes. Island AeroBarrier seals any cracks in the home to ensure that it is entirely airtight. Their work with Jim on the Black & White Luxury home led to his being awarded the CHBA Golden Blower-Door Award on account of the home's air tightness.

In addition, Carl Tessman and his team at Island Timber Frame provide Jim with timber that has a timeless quality. Island Timber Frame also plan their timber components to work with Jim's high standard of energy efficiency, which requires planning integration with framing systems so as to maintain a high R-value and airtight envelope.

Moreover, Charmaine Barclay and her team at Island Truss provide roof and floor beam systems on many of J. Zsiros Contracting's projects. They have been working with Jim since he founded his company, over 20 years ago.

Finally, Jim works with Vent-Air Heating and Refrigeration for mechanical and heating systems, Complete Plumbing, Slegg Building Materials, Slate for shingles and tiles, Net-Zero Solar for top-quality bifacial solar panels, which draw in 40% more energy, and Starline Windows. All these partners and subcontractors make J. Zsiros Contracting's award-winning homes possible. As Jim holds: "To me, it's all about relationships. It's not always about the cheapest price. If you can build good relationships with key suppliers and key tradespeople, then you always get quality work."



## Future Projects

J. Zsiros Contracting has many new and exciting projects underway. They have been working on a renovation of a 1970 house in the Comox region. It was completely gutted to turn it into a more energy efficient environmentally conscious house. The windows are to Passive House standards; no VOCs were used. The plan is to enter it for the 2024 Georgie Awards. Jim has another large project in Qualicum, which will be certified Net Zero by both Built Green Canada and CHBA, as well as another Net Zero house on the waterfront in the Royston-Courtenay area

Jim explains: "The house in Qualicum will feature a ground mount solar panel system, whereas the home in Royston will be roof mounted."

Regarding the Royston project, due to the possible proximity of First Nations historic sites, we are involved with Provincial authorities in order to ensure there is no encroachment. The home is being situated and designed to comply with Provincial floodplain regulations, which has involved extensive engineering and design challenges. These challenges appeal to Jim: "I'm looking forward to this job."





## Tips for Others in the Trades

When asked for a tip for others in the industry, Jim adds: "Just keep educating your team members. Don't look at it like you're wasting money. It's an investment, and I know it is well worth it. I can't overemphasize this point. I think that speaks strongly to the CHBA and Built Green Canada and the courses they both offer. I'm not trying to sell these associations because I'm a member. Continuing education in our profession will benefit the clients and the industry as a whole. Education is an investment that will pay dividends for all."

“ Education is an investment that will pay dividends for all. ”



## The Philosophy of Building

Becoming a life-long learner has allowed Jim to surmount the challenges of a changing industry. "I like what we do. I like building for the future and for the environment. While it's nice to win awards, we're really here to challenge ourselves. We've won a lot of awards, but some of the most gratifying awards we have won were when we were nominated by our clients and won a Better Business Bureau award for our commitment to client satisfaction. Our customers matter to us."

**For more information on J. Zsiros Contracting, visit**  
**<https://zsiroscontracting.ca/>**

# AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARMAINE BARCLAY

President of Island Truss

BY: PAUL HARRISON

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## Introduction

My name is Charmaine Barclay, my company is Island Truss (1983) Ltd. located in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. I am the sole owner and President of the company and I oversee the day-to-day operations. We are a roof truss manufacturing business and a supplier of various engineered wood products; we supply Vancouver Island and the surrounding gulf islands.



**How long has your company been in operation? How did it get started?  
What led you to found/join the company?**

The company has been here since the late 1960s, and my late father, Jim Barclay, bought the company in 1983, so this makes it our 40th year in operation. I worked for my father for a few years after graduating from college. I then pursued a banking career for many years and came back to work in the family business in 2006 when my father's office manager was looking to retire. My father unfortunately passed away in 2009 and I took over the company then.





## Roofing on the Island

### Tell us about what your company does in general.

Our main product is roof trusses, which are fabricated in our 20,000 sq ft shop on an assembly line. First of all, we design the roof system for the customer based on plans that are provided to us, generally through email; sometimes, the customer comes to our site for one-on-one service. Our qualified designers work closely with various engineers to ensure designs are done correctly before they hit the production floor.

Once a job is ready for production it then goes to the shop to be built. We purchase lumber in various lengths, which is brought into our saw shop and is cut to specific sizes and cuts. From there, it goes onto carts that are wheeled over to an 80' jig table; the pieces are assembled by a crew of skilled workers who put it altogether by hammering nail-on-plates into the wood to join the pieces together. We can have two separate set-ups going at the same time.

Once the truss is together, a gantry press runs over the truss, pressing the nails firmly into the wood. Ejector arms then come out from the table and eject the truss onto the finishing rollers, which roll the trusses outside the building. They are then handled by a team who lift the truss onto the carts and band them in order and label them. They then get the trusses ready for shipping; we provide delivery service by crane truck to various job sites all over the island.



## Roofing on the Island

**What is the nature of the work you do for J. Zsiros Contracting?**

**Did you work with J. Zsiros on either of his 2022 Georgie award winning project – either Carriage House Elegance or Black and White Luxury (Net Zero)?**

We have been providing roof systems, floor and beam systems to J. Zsiros Contracting for over 20 years and we did work on both the 2022 Georgie winning projects for J. Zsiros Contracting.

**Are there any keys vendors, suppliers, subcontractors, or partners who help you with your work?**

We deal with various suppliers of material, such as Mitek Canada, Canwel Building Materials Ltd, and Canadian Engineered Wood Products; Poland Crane Services Ltd subcontract to us for crane/delivery service.

**Do you have any exciting new projects on the horizon, or any others that you might have just wrapped up?**

As single-family home sales have slowed, we are seeing more demand for multi-site projects now and are currently working with a few developers/contractors on higher-density-type projects.





Millwork in the Land of Lumber

# AN INTERVIEW WITH CARL TESSMAN

Island Timber Frame, Vancouver Island

BY: PAUL HARRISON



## Introduction

**To begin with, what is your name, and what does Island Timber Frame do in general?**

I am Carl Tessmann – a partner in Island Timber Frame.

Blending old world workmanship with the latest manufacturing technologies, we at Island Timber Frame design and build custom prefabricated structural timber systems. Since our inception in 2001, we have worked with architects and builders all over the world on a wide range of projects, such as custom homes, resort developments, and elaborate commercial and civil structures.

Timber frame is becoming a staple design feature in projects of all kinds, from traditional to ultra-modern. With lifestyle being a major influence in design taste, we see the demand for timbers increase as customers bring their connection to the natural environment into their projects.

As evolving design sophistication balances style and taste with new building technologies, energy efficiency, structural requirements and build logistics, we face the interesting challenge of choosing the right material, finish, and joinery detail for the project, while integrating timber components with a range of new building systems. Timber frame components – either manufactured or solid – seem to shine in these complex structural systems due to their beauty, versatility, and natural structural qualities. When timber alone fails to meet structural requirements, precision structural steel offers the perfect complement.



Island  
TimberFrame

The logo for Island TimberFrame features a stylized orange mountain range graphic above the company name. The word "Island" is in a smaller, sans-serif font, and "TimberFrame" is in a larger, bold, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a dark background.

## Millwork in the Land of Lumber

**How long has your company been in operation? How did it get started? What led you to found/join the company?**

Island Timber Frame opened in 2001. The original founders/partners (two Swiss Gentlemen), Paul Schaffhauser and Stefan Pletcher, met at a CAD course and subsequently joined forces to start Island Timber Frame. They saw a need in North America for properly planned, prefabricated timber construction and chose Vancouver Island for base, due to proximity to high quality fibre.

**Tell us about what your company does in general?**

We work with homeowners and builders to plan and pre-fabricate timber structures and components in residential, commercial, and civil projects. We also build custom solid Douglas Fir doors, stairs, trim packages, mantles etc.



**What is the nature of the work you do for J. Zsiros Contracting? Did you work with J. Zsiros on either of his 2022 Georgie award winning project – either Carriage House Elegance or Black and White Luxury (Net Zero)?**

Yes, we work with Jim on many of his projects, supplying timber frame components and custom doors mostly. But we are working on a project with him now, featuring a more extensive timber frame package, doors, and stairs. Because of Jim's focus on energy efficiency, we have to plan the timber components to work with his high standard of energy efficiency; this requires planning integration with framing systems that maintain a high R-value and airtight envelope.



## Millwork in the Land of Lumber

**BC Lumber is world famous for its quality and beauty and is also one of Canada's primary exports. Perhaps more importantly, it's a renewable resource. Do you have any metrics on how your products and services benefit our environment?**

We are located in an area that produces the nicest Douglas Fir and cedar timber in the world. Our timbers – generally second or third growth material – come from managed forest that will continue to produce the same product for years to come. So, what better way to create a unique west coast architectural feature on your project than choosing a material that is timeless in its design, as it will be available for generations to come?

**Looking over your other projects, it's almost impossible for me to choose my favourite – they are all spectacular. But tell me a bit about the barn recording studio; it's stunning and is used for a rather unique purpose.**

The Barn was a project that was secondary to a primary residential project on the same property. The owners wanted to create structures that looked naturally aged and would blend in to the landscape. Their choice of finishes, both inside and out, resulted in a look and feel of a generational estate, rather than a shiny new project. They also wanted to choose finishes that aged gracefully and were low maintenance.

I don't know much about the recording studio. It isn't an advertised business. I suspect it is one of those places quietly used in the inner circles of the music industry, rather than a business with a sign on the street.





## Millwork in the Land of Lumber

**And I'd love to hear about a few of the hotels and inns you've work on too.**

As for hotels and commercial projects – we have done many from Ontario to British Columbia and down in the US. These project use timber primarily in exterior detailing and landscape structures. But sometimes interior detailing is prevalent too.

I think what sets us apart from most larger timber suppliers is our detailed approach to planning and pre-fabrication. We work between the GC, architect, engineer, and site contractors (foundation, framing etc.) to ensure a detailed set of shop drawings is produced before any cutting is done. This ensures that the package fits perfectly when it arrives on site; this prevents costly delays due to modifications and additional cutting that might be required.

We often help to plan and manufacture the steel components as part of the overall package; this way, they can be dry-fitted with the timbers before it all arrives on-site.

Our goal is to ensure a smooth, hassle-free installation for any package we produce.

**Do you have any exciting new projects on the horizon, or any others that you might have just wrapped up?**

We just received final images for the Gorge Park Pavilion in Victoria. This is a spectacular project we worked on designed by Iredale Archtiects (Richard Iredale) and built by Knappett Projects. We did all of the interior and exterior timber work.



For more information  
on Island Timber  
Frame, visit

<https://islandtimberframe.com/>





# AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL MOQUIN

President of Island AeroBarrier,  
Vancouver Island



BY: PAUL HARRISON

**How long has your company been in operation? How did it get started?  
What led you to found/join the company?**

Island AeroBarrier has been in operation for four years. Before this, I owned a residential and commercial building inspection company that also provided energy modeling, infrared thermography, and indoor air quality testing. When I first heard about AeroBarrier, I knew that it would be a game changer for the building industry as the typical processes of getting a building tight can be time consuming and costly, with no guarantee of success.

In terms of energy savings, you get the biggest bang for your buck when you improve the airtightness of a building before you start to do other upgrades, such as windows or additional insulation.

Air-sealing not only saves energy, but also makes the home more durable as it prevents moisture-laden air from getting into the wall assembly. Any moisture here can condense into water, and thus, support mold and rot.

**Tell us about what  
your company does  
in general?**

Our focus is only on stopping the movement of air. In doing so, we are able to reduce energy waste, control moisture, reduce noise, and eliminate pathways for odors or pests.

**Island**  
**AEROBARRIER™**



## Explain to me the sealing process? What is the sealant composed of?

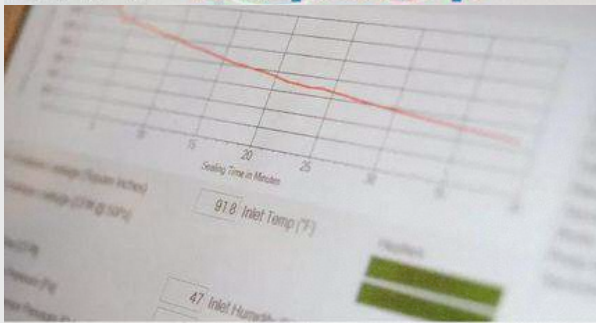
The sealing process involves setting up nozzles inside of the building. After a preliminary blower-door test is done, the building is pressurized, and the nozzles atomize a water-based sealant that is both Built Green and Green Guard Gold certified. The air escaping from the building carries the sealant to the unwanted openings where it accumulates to form a seal. The progress is monitored on a computer in real time. Once the desired target has been achieved, a final blower-door test is completed, and a report is generated that shows the pre and post seal results. The average seal takes between two and three hours to complete. Once we are finished, people can go back in and resume their work.



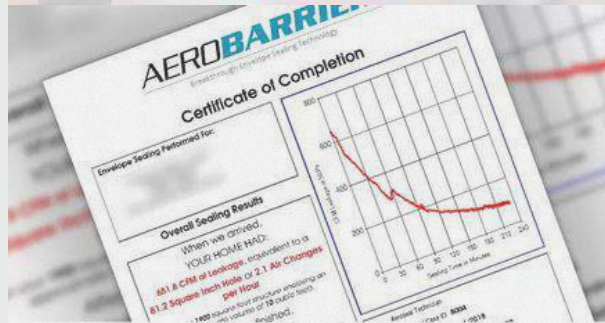
**STEP 1 - Setup & Prep**



**STEP 2 - Pressurize**



**STEP 3 - Seal & Monitor**



**STEP 4 - Pre & Post Report**

What is the nature of the work you do for J. Zsiros Contracting? Did you work with J. Zsiros on either of his 2022 Georgie award winning project – either Carriage House Elegance or Black and White Luxury (Net Zero)?

Jim is a great builder that is always trying to raise the bar. We sealed the Black and White home for him, which led to his being awarded the Golden Blower-Door Award on account of its airtightness; he also won a table full of other awards for this project.

We sealed the home down to 0.11ach50 (single point, positive pressure), which was easy as it was already at less than 1ach50 when we started. During the post construction test, it tested “as operated” at around 0.35 if I recall correctly. The increase in leakage is caused by differences in the test methods. We test with the intentional openings sealed and closed, and an “as operated test” does not do so. The additional leakage would be attributed to leakage at intentional openings, such as exhaust dampers.





## Environmental boons aside, do you have a rough estimate for how much a person can save by finding, and fixing, energy leaks in their homes?

We are asked this a lot and it is a difficult question to answer as every home is different with regards to the utilities that they use (such as gas or electric), the rate that they are paying, and how leaky the place is to start. I have seen numbers that state that up to 30% of your heating/cooling energy use could be attributed to air leakage in older homes. Utility bills are, for the most part, a bunch of fees (storage, transportation, municipal fees, and taxes, tacked onto the energy that you use). The cost of the gas or electricity may only be 25% of your total bill.

The real benefit of air-sealing is the improved comfort that you will notice in a tight home or compartmentalized multifamily building that also has a good ventilation system, such as an HRV or ERV. A tight home is quieter. Sealing all of the gaps is like closing thousands of small windows to the outside or attached neighbors. The temperature remains more consistent, and the HVAC system does not need to kick in as often. By sealing the home or apartment unit, we are also able to stop pollen, smoke, and other pollutants from outside from entering. If you live in a multifamily building and can smell your neighbors' cooking odors or smoke, then you are living in a building that is not well sealed.



Leaking air transports a lot of moisture with it. This moisture can condense within a wall assembly and cause the structure to rot. This damage will eventually need to be repaired, and to do so will mean tearing the wall or floor assembly apart to remove, and then replace, the damaged materials.

We also see builders "value engineering" the cost of AeroBarrier into their builds. For example, by making the building very tight (with good ventilation), they are sometimes able to go with a lower cost option elsewhere. In one case, a builder was able to substitute triple glaze windows for double glaze windows. This was on a five storey, 60-unit apartment building, so the money saved on the windows was more than the cost to seal all the units.

## Can you apply the sealant on any house, or do you normally work on new builds or houses undergoing major renovations?

Most of the work that we do is for new construction, but we are seeing growth in the renovation market as more people are becoming aware of us. The majority of seals are done after drywall but before finishes are installed; we can, however, also seal finished but un-occupied homes. Sometimes this is done on existing homes when purchased before the new occupant moves in. Other times we are brought in to rescue a builder when they find out that they failed the blower-door test at final inspection. The downside of sealing a finished home is that there is a lot of preparation required to protect non-vertical surfaces so that our sealant doesn't settle on them.



Do you have any exciting new projects on the horizon, or any others that you might have just wrapped up?



This past year has been an interesting one for us. A client was building a DNA lab and wanted to guarantee that contaminants could not get in. We also sealed a spray booth that is used for painting aircraft parts. The paint booth was inside of a building and people were complaining about the paint fumes leaking into the rest of the building. Sealing the booth solved the issue and, as a bonus, they said that the cost to operate it in the bake cycle had been greatly reduced. Once the furnace brought the booth up to temperature, it did not need to cycle on and off like it use to do prior to being sealed.

For more information on Island AeroBarrier, visit  
<https://www.islandaerobarrier.ca/>

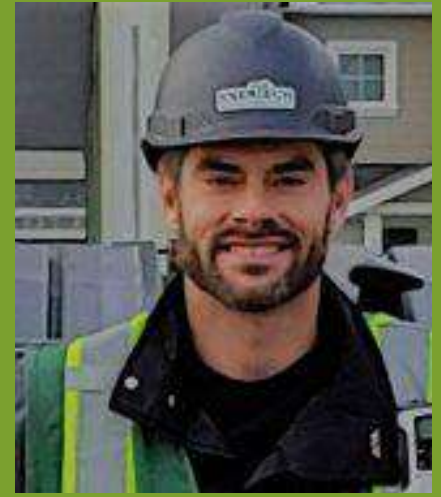


Energy Consultants on Vancouver Island

# AN INTERVIEW WITH JEFFREY ROBINSON

From EnerTech Solutions

BY: PAUL HARRISON



## Introduction

**How long has your company been in operation? How did it get started?**

**What led you to found/join the company? What kind of growth has EnerTech seen since its founding?**

EnerTech was founded in 2015 out of a passion for helping others build high performance homes. Our team now consists of eight highly dedicated employees. On the front end, we have four registered Energy Advisors (EAs), with one additional EA in training; and on the backend, we have three amazing admins, who help to run the business from the office.

**Tell us about what your company does in general?**

EnerTech Solutions is a Vancouver Island-based energy efficiency firm that provides advisory services for both homeowners and developers. EnerTech is committed to providing accurate information to Canadians on their energy use and assisting with identifying ways of improving the health, comfort, and efficiency of their homes.

EnerTech delivers incredible services to our incredible clients. Some of our services include:

- EnerGuide evaluations for new and existing homes.
- Step Code consulting and compliance reporting
- Air tightness testing
- Heat loss / heat gain calculations (F280 load calcs)
- TECA ventilation checklists
- Thermal imaging inspection and reporting
- Air system design and commissioning
- Net Zero consulting and advising

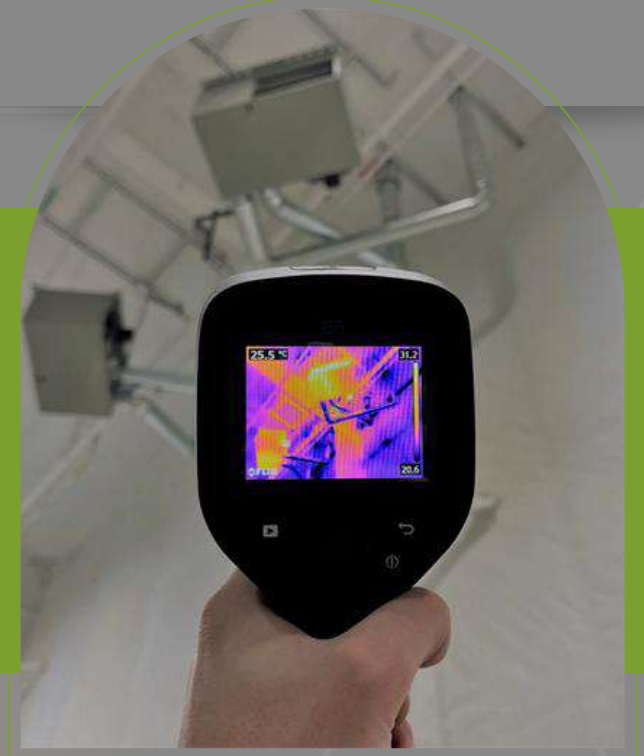


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## Energy Consultants on Vancouver Island

### Explain to me the blower door testing and Hot2000 Energy Modelling Consultation? What do you use your thermal imaging for?

Home energy professionals use a blower door as a diagnostic tool to determine how much air is entering or escaping from your home. HOT2000 is an energy simulation and design tool for low-rise residential buildings. This software is developed by Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) to support the EnerGuide Rating System, ENERGY STAR for New Homes, and R-2000 residential energy efficiency initiatives. Energy modeling is used to predict the annual energy consumption of the home and can be used to determine areas of energy use and heat loss of the home. Thermal imaging is used by the EnerTech team to hunt down the areas of heat loss and /or air leakage locations in your home.



### What is the nature of the work you do for J. Zsiros Contracting? Did you work with J. Zsiros on either of his 2022 Georgie award winning project – either Carriage House Elegance or Black and White Luxury (Net Zero)?

Yes, EnerTech works with J. Zsiros on his high-performance homes. First, EnerTech will optimize the modeling to achieve the highest energy efficiency on the market: Net Zero homes. Net Zero homes produce as much energy annually as they consume. The idea is to reduce the energy consumption of the home's envelope and mechanical equipment to the point where offsetting with solar makes sense financially. We take pride in working with clients, like J. Zsiros Contracting, to meet their individual needs.

One recent success is helping J. Zsiros Contracting to achieve Net Zero certification on this new build in Victoria, B.C. The project also reached Step Code level five, the highest step in the B.C. Building Code, as well as Built Green Platinum certification (achieving 216 checklist points). Key features included triple-glazed windows, complete air barrier, extra insulation in the attic, exterior walls, foundation wall, and under the slab, and a solar array that supplies all of the house's electrical needs. EnerTech guided the initial planning and helped ensure targets were met during and after construction. The planning metrics were all achieved!

For more information on the project we did with J. Zsiros Contracting, visit <https://enertech.solutions/project-showcases/>



## Energy Consultants on Vancouver Island

### Are there any key vendors, suppliers, subcontractors, or partners who help you with your work?

EnerTech is deeply entrenched as a leader in an industry of high-performance housing; we work with many like-minded trades and partners. We are fully committed to assisting in any way possible.

### Environmental boons aside, do you have a rough estimate for how much a person can save by finding, and fixing, energy leaks in their homes?

Air leakage in the home is generally the low hanging fruit of energy savings. The most effective way to find the air leakage / heat loss areas is having EnerTech run the blower door while performing a thermal image inspection of the home. Our thermal photos allow heat losses to be spotted easily.



### Tell me about CACEA, the Canadian Association of Consulting Energy Advisors? How long has the association been around? How many members does the association have?

Founded in 2017, the Canadian Association of Consulting Energy Advisors (CACEA) is a national association that promotes and supports Energy Advisors (EA) across the country. We are focused on elevating the professionalism, leveraging opportunities for our members, and fostering collaborative relations with stakeholders in the building and energy sectors.

### Do you have any exciting new projects on the horizon, or any others that you might have just wrapped up?

EnerTech is honored to be working with high-performance builders and developers up and down Vancouver Island.

We are very excited to not only be working with front running leaders in our industry, but also very delighted to be working with those that share our passion for building better.



For more information about EnerTech, or to book consultations online, please visit <https://enertech.solutions/>





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# Looking at the Future of Construction in Ontario



An Interview with Ian Cunningham  
of the Council  
of  
Ontario Construction  
Associations



By: Greg Akeson



## Home at COCA

The Council of Ontario Construction Associations (COCA) has been headed by Ian Cunningham for the past 14 years. COCA is a federation made up of construction organizations representing more than 10,000 construction businesses and more than 400,000 employees. As such, it is the largest and most representative group of ICI (industrial, commercial and institutional) and heavy civil construction employers in Ontario.

## Starting Out

Originally from Kingston, Ian attended Queen's University and afterwards became a small business owner. He eventually got involved in the Kingston Chamber of Commerce where he rose to the rank of Chair. His experience in Kingston brought him to Toronto where he got a job at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC). There, he was the Senior Vice President and at times the interim President, a role involving a lot of government relations work. It was after this, while working at an association in Mississauga, Ian became aware of COCA, interviewed, and got the job as President. His greatest professional achievement was his involvement in the passing of the province's new Construction Act which came into effect between July of 2018 and October of 2019. Under his leadership, all parties were unanimous. As Ian says of himself, "I would describe myself professionally or work-wise as a professional association executive with a lot of experience in government relations work."

COCA is not dissimilar to the OCC in that it is a federation of other associations. The OCC represents approximately 150 other local chambers and boards of trade, while COCA is made up of around 30 construction associations. Some are local mixed trade associations, some are prime contractor associations, and some are provincial trade associations that are the employer bargaining agents with their affiliated unions. Between the OCC and COCA, the work is very similar, with government relations making up the bulk of Ian's workload. This includes working with the Ministry of Labour on occupational health and safety issues, Employment Standards Act issues with the WSIB, and The Construction Act which resides with the attorney general. He also liaises with his members and with senior officials at Queen's Park to make sure the laws, regulations, and public policy environment in Ontario supports success in the ICI and heavy civil construction sector. The goal of this work is to bring broad prosperity across the province. In doing so, COCA is involved with a lot of partnerships such as with Skills Ontario as well as many other organizations. Ian recognizes that collaboration is the key to success: "we understand that our views are our views, but we can't influence the government if we only represent our singular views; we have to try to persuade others, or align our issues with others, in order to influence the shape of public policy."



Council  
of Ontario  
Construction  
Associations



## Ever-changing Climate

The last few years have not been easy both socially and economically, but while many industries suffered during the pandemic, the construction industry fared better than any other sector in the economy. The only hiccup was early on when there was a full-scale shutdown, but soon after, the industry was deemed to be essential and bounced back at full speed. While the industry was very busy, productivity and profitability were hampered by the additional costs of PPE, sanitizing, and distancing. That being said, the industry as a whole embraced the new protocols and as such WSIB claims were exceedingly low during the pandemic.



## Shortage of Skilled Labour

Perhaps the biggest ongoing issue facing the construction industry is the shortage of skilled labour. There are shortages in every trade such as masonry, boiler making, elevator technicians, carpenters, and the list goes on. The Ontario government's recent infrastructure investment to the tune of \$145 billion over the next 10 years, while an impressive amount, makes up only a small percentage of a huge industry, to put things in perspective. Part of the problem of growing the workforce lies in enticing young workers and high school students into the construction trade. Kids need to be shown what is available, what are the benefits, and what it is like to work in construction. Parents and teachers must also be convinced that skilled trades are valid career paths. Employers must be enticed to take on apprentices. Today, there is a very small minority of employers who take on apprentices. Completion rates also need to be improved. Community Colleges are in the business of selling seats, but do not always follow through to make sure those students end up in the trades. In addition, construction sites are not what they used to be; they are safer than ever. Perhaps one remedy is the mobile trades and technology truck from Skills Ontario, who have partnerships with every school board and college in the province. The trailer expands to about 500 square feet with virtual reality headsets so students can get hands-on experience in the trades.



## Veterans: Sought-after Commodity

One source of new skilled labour are military Veterans. Veterans are fast becoming a sought-after commodity in the construction industry as Ian points out: "the reality is these people who come out of the military are highly disciplined, hard working, show up on time, and believe in a hard day's work." As such, COCA became involved with Helmets to Hardhats (H2H) and Good Shepherd Ministries through their support of an application for funding made by H2H to the Ministry of Labour to support homeless Veterans. As Ian says of H2H: "I can't help but think about how innovative H2H has been with its different programs to appeal to different types of Veterans and their families and cadets, not only in the trades but in administration and recently in management training. This initiative is creating management personnel for the construction industry."



## Promoting H2H

Ian's trusted reputation helps promote H2H amongst COCA's membership. He ensures that all the monthly data produced by H2H is circulated to COCA's huge membership network, some 10,000 general and trade contractors, who employ approximately 400,000 workers, both union and non-union. He meets quarterly for updates on the program with Joe and Brother David from Good Shepherd Ministries and then communicates those updates to the board at COCA.

## Construction Life

For those who choose a life in construction, it can be hard work, and therefore not for everyone. The ideal candidate for a career in the construction industry is someone who enjoys physical work, teamwork, working with their hands, and someone whose learning style is not learning from a book or from a teacher, but from experience. Ian describes the journey of a typical construction apprentice as such: “the average age of a construction apprentice is 27 or 28. Their typical journey begins with leaving high school, maybe they try a year at university and realize it’s not for them. Then, maybe they go to a community college and don’t like that either. Finally, they bump into a friend or relative who has a construction company, who offers them a job. They try it out, like it, and register to be an apprentice, but the journey there amounts to almost 10 lost years of productivity.” Through such initiatives as Ontario’s Skills Development program, there is a drive to rectify this problem of lost productivity time.



For more information on COCA, visit their website at <https://www.coca.on.ca/>

For more information on Ontario’s Skills Development Fund, visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/skills-development-fund>





# CANADIAN

## CONSTRUCTION JOURNAL

Join us again next issue for our ongoing coverage of past and current Georgie winners as we speak with the 2023 finalists and winners in the wake of the Georgie Awards.





# CANADIAN

CONSTRUCTION JOURNAL



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**May/ June Issue**