

- Voiceover: You're listening to Real Life Renos with Karen Brown and Melissa Schenk. The show where this dynamic duo gets real about your life because change happens to more than just your home.
- Melissa Schenk: Hello everyone. I'm Melissa.
- Karen Brown: And I'm Karen.
- Melissa Schenk: And on today's show we are going to talk about one of my very favorite topics, Karen, that you know is renovations with the one and only Gary Sharp. Now Gary is the director of Renovators Services with the CHBA, that would be the Canadian Home Builders' Association. Now, Gary has been involved in the construction and renovation industry for more than 25 years in a variety of capacities, which I'm sure he's going to share with us in just a moment.
- Melissa Schenk: Now he's a licensed professional engineer in the province of Ontario and he became CHBA's first director of renovator services in June, 2015. Now he also is the staff lead that's responsible for the Home Modification Council that recognizes the specialized need of the aging in place population and people with disabilities. Gary's responsible for many different things, including the updates to the CHBA's bestselling Builders' Manual and I know he's working on also a Renovators' Manual as well. Hey, good morning. Welcome, Gary.
- Gary Sharp: Good morning. Nice to be here, thank you.
- Melissa Schenk: Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to be here. Now I wanted to kick start this off with a little bit about you. How did you, with your background in engineering and all the other parts in construction, get involved with the CHBA?
- Gary Sharp: Well, I think construction has been in my blood, my father was a general contractor in a small town in Ontario. I was on construction sites from a very, very early age and was involved with building and renovation. Went on from there to university and eventually moved to Ottawa after university to start doing some work with renewable energy. It wasn't long after doing some work with solar and wind energy that the R-200- program was being developed and I got involved with R-2000 and spent a lot of time doing R-2000 houses and doing energy evaluation work on R-2000 houses, working on the R-2000 standard, went on as well to do what was a program called Advanced House and in advanced houses, these were houses that you passed the energy of R-2000 so a lot of my time has been spent in the energy efficiency of housing, making housing more and more energy efficient.
- Gary Sharp: So that's how I got involved with the Canadian Home Builders' Association. They initially hired me to help out on some of these projects and eventually they offered me a position there and so I took that position back in 2015. I've been

involved with the Builders' Manual for probably the last 20 years at least, in looking after the upgrades to that document. A new product that we're trying to get completed right now is the Renovators' Manual and hopefully we'll have that done soon and I think it's going to be a very popular document on its own.

- Melissa Schenk: Maybe you can distinguish this. How would you say a builder is different from a renovator just in your opinion?
- Gary Sharp: Wow. Well, renovators ... this has been part of the challenge in developing the Renovators' Manual. In many cases it's much harder to be a renovator than it is to be a builder because essentially what's happening with the builder, is he's starting with a bare piece of ground and he is constructing the house on it. We can tell a builder how to build the house, or we can describe different wall systems and different technologies and we can say build it like this and it will work. We know that because we've built them and we've tested them at the National Research Council and at Natural Resources Canada.
- Gary Sharp: The renovator on the other hand, is taking a product that's already there, opening it up and looking to see how well it's survived and if the walls are full of rot, or if the walls are in good shape, that tells you a lot about how the house was functioning. So now the renovator wants to make some changes to it, if he wants to improve the energy efficiency, let's say, and the renovator has to now apply the building science to what they are going to do to that home and make sure that that house is going to be durable in the long term.
- Gary Sharp: So no one's ever really tested an existing house with these changes to it. It's all been learning on the fly and so renovators have to be very well versed in building science in order to make the proper renovations.
- Karen Brown: Perfect. That's a really good way of describing that distinction. Looking at the Canadian Housing Industry on a more macro level, can you give our listeners a bit of a peek inside what's currently happening in the Canadian housing industry?
- Gary Sharp: Well, our association is approximately 9,000 members in size. So these are corporate members, people join our association as a company, not typically as an individual and in the housing industry across Canada, there are approximately 180,000 new housing starts every year. There are about 1.1 to 1.2 million people employed in our industry and our industry is responsible for approximately \$150 billion worth of economic activities per year and that's in new housing and renovation.
- Gary Sharp: Renovation is responsible for about 78 billion of that. So renovation is responsible for more for more economic activity in the housing industry than in new housing and it makes sense when you look at Canada for example, we have approximately 14 million houses on the ground. We're adding to that housing

supply by about 180,000 houses a year. So there's many, many existing houses out there that need to be renovated for one reason or another.

Melissa Schenk: Well and I find it really interesting too that a lot of the talk we always hear about in the news or in general is new home build, which you're telling us now renovations is really where it's at, or where it's going to be going. Do you see the trend shifting? Obviously it sounds to me like there is going to be a heck of a lot more work eventually in renovations than in new builds because at one point we're going to max out on what we can do with new building.

Gary Sharp: Yeah. Again, I'm not sure, I mean at some point the older housing stock will tend to come down, new housing stock will replace it, but in the interim, renovations will be made to existing housing stock. One of the areas that we're trying to gear up for now, while there's couple of areas that we're gearing up for, but if we look at Canada's climate change commitments, in order for Canada to meet its climate change commitments and carbon reduction targets, one aspect of that is building more efficient new housing but you can't ignore the 14 million houses that are already on the ground. Those houses will also need to be renovated in order to make those more energy efficient.

Gary Sharp: So renovation is going to be a big deal in achieving those climate change targets. So, that's one side. The other side is that we have a a gray wave coming. We have the baby boomer generation, the oldest baby boomer is now 73 years old and as that group of people, and there's approximately 20 years worth of baby boomers coming, as that group moves into their elder years, once they start to need some modifications to make it easier for them to in their houses, that's going to be another big group of renovations that will be required as well.

Karen Brown: Now we know statistically that 90% of people not only want to age in place, but many of them have to because there simply aren't other places for them to go. How ready are we?

Gary Sharp: Well, that's part of what we're trying to ensure, that our renovators are ready. At this stage, I would say we are not ready for the wave of people that are coming, but we can see it coming and we're trying to make sure that our renovators who are interested in providing services in that market sector are ready to provide those services because renovations for aging in place are not the same as typical house renovations. For a client who is aging in place, typically the renovations are specific to that client and they are very specific renovations that that client needs for mobility.

Gary Sharp: So for example, if someone is aging and they want to have some changes made, they've got some mobility issues, typically what we would do as a renovator would be to have that client assessed by an occupational therapist. That occupational therapist will not only assess the client, but they will assess the house and between the renovator and the occupational therapist,

recommendations will be made for what changes need to be made to that house in order to make it easier for that customer to age in place.

- Karen Brown: Now, that assumes that some event has taken place. There's also this big group of people that nothing has happened to them yet, but we want to prevent that.
- Gary Sharp: Right. I have seen the market, the aging in place market, the way we've divided that market up, is it typically there are people currently who have no immediate needs. There are people who have a progressive need, so that would be things like macular degeneration, or dementia, or things like that. Then there are people who have a traumatic needs and those are folks who have had a heart attack, had a stroke, had a car accident, something like that where all of a sudden they have become disabled. So there's a huge opportunity with those people who have no immediate need because something has happened in their life, let's say their kids have now gotten married and moved away, or they've gone off the university and they're now empty nesters and they say, "Hey, I want a new kitchen."
- Gary Sharp: So they phone a renovator and say, "Come on out and make me a new kitchen." That's a great opportunity at that point for the renovator to look at those customers and say, "Okay, you have no immediate needs, but let me give you some ideas on things that we can do." So for example, a pantry that pulls out of the cabinet so that everything is below shoulder level. You don't have to get on a stepladder in order to get things out in the pantry. Or a built in wall oven where the door opens the hinge to the left, or hinge to the right, not hinged at the bottom so that you can get very close to the oven when you reach in to take out the turkey or whatever you might be doing. So those kinds of things to have the house ready in the event that there is a need in the future.
- Karen Brown: And those are things-
- Gary Sharp: And many of these things are very convenient as well. The roll-out pantry it much easier than running around with a stepladder to try and get up and get things down-
- Karen Brown: Like what I do now.
- Gary Sharp: ... and the same with the oven or ... yeah.
- Karen Brown: Right and those are things that are aesthetically very beautiful. I mean, they look like a natural part of the design, but functionally they matter so much.
- Gary Sharp: Yes and so that's the type of thing that we're trying to prepare our renovators for, so that they have a good understanding of how to work with the aging in place customer.

- Melissa Schenk: Beautiful. Okay, I want to shift gears for just a moment and talk about something called C-CAPS certification. A lot of our listeners wouldn't probably know what a C-CAPS certification is, but Gary, can you explain what the CHBA is about to embark on, or has just commenced basically with a certification program of aging in place?
- Gary Sharp: Right. Okay, part of what is going on with aging in place interestingly enough, is that the Americans actually, their baby boom started five years earlier than the Canadian baby boom. So when the soldiers came back from the war in the United States, that's when the baby boom started. In Canada, there was about a five year timeline, so the Americans actually developed a course through the National Association of Home Builders there called the Certified Aging in Place Specialist. This course was very well-known in the United States, a lot of American renovators have taken that course, like I say, it's quite well-known. So here in Canada, we don't have anything quite like that. So we talked to the association in the United States and we made an arrangement with them that we could take their course and we could Canadianize it. So we have Canadianized of course we have the C-CAPS, which is the Canadian Certified Aging in Place Specialist course. So we now have completed the development of the course and we are about to embark on launching that course and providing training for any of our renovators who are interested in taking it.
- Karen Brown: Now, what's the major issue that being C-CAPS certified is going to address?
- Gary Sharp: Well, the C-CAPS certification, what that is going to address is the types of renovations that I had mentioned earlier there, for people with no apparent need, or no immediate need, people with progressive conditions and people with traumatic conditions. So, for example, if someone has a progressive condition, we want to make sure that people are getting the right renovation for that condition. So if you have a mobility need right now and it is a progressive need, meaning that it will get worse, you may ask for a ramp to be built so that the person in your family can get into the house, whereas that ramp may only be useful for a few months. In which case, the correct renovation would actually be a lift. So a little platform that you would move the wheelchair onto and then it would bring you up to the front porch and then from there you could get in the house. So part of it is making sure that the right renovation is being done for the client so that they're not wasting money on things that are only temporary.
- Melissa Schenk: So with the C-CAPS certification too, it sounds like there's going to be a lot of problem-solving for the people taking the training just to ... exactly like what you just said, Gary. "Hey, you maybe would've put in the ramp, but the better solution would be the lift." Is it going to teach people how to communicate with clients better to service their needs then? Is communication a part of that part of the training?

- Gary Sharp: Yes, communication is a big part of that training, but also the recognition that there are other people who would be involved in each case. So certainly for the progressive disorders and for the traumatic disorder, there would be an occupational therapist would be part of the renovators team to help evaluate the client and make sure that the client is getting the correct renovation. There'll also be equipment manufacturers, so people who make lifts, or people who make chairlifts, or people who make elevators, for example. So all of these people will be involved in making sure that the correct renovation is done and that the equipment is installed correctly. Because one of the things that we've found in renovating for the aging or disabled client, is that one size does not fit all. So going in and putting in a grab bar in this location, it may work for some cases, but it won't work on all.
- Gary Sharp: So it's important to have an assessment done so that in the case of a grab bar, for example, that it's actually put in the right place. Should it be horizontal, should it be on an angle, should it be vertical? Should it be at the front of the tub, should it be in the back of the tub? Should there be a tub at all, or should it be a walk-in or a rolled-in shower? So all of these kinds of questions are answered in a team environment=
- Karen Brown: That's really fantastic.
- Gary Sharp: ... in order to get the best for the client.
- Karen Brown: That, I would think, would be of some comfort to the renovator him or herself because they don't have to be all things to all people but they do have to know how to build a team, which is a different kind of team than they would be pulling together to do a regular renovation.
- Gary Sharp: That's right.
- Karen Brown: If they have to pull in their OTs and designers and equipment manufacturers, as opposed to electricians and plumbers.
- Gary Sharp: Right. They're still going to need the electricians and plumbers.
- Karen Brown: Sure, but they know how to do that.
- Melissa Schenk: Team expansion, team expansion.
- Karen Brown: Team expansion, yes. Perfect. Now, what made the Canadian housing industry decide that this course needed to be certified as opposed to just offered?
- Gary Sharp: Well, I think that the American course has been called the Certified Aging in Place Specialist, and that name has stuck with us as well. I don't know that the final decision has been made, whether it will be a certification. I believe that it

will be, but at this stage, I don't know that the final decision has been made on that.

- Melissa Schenk: For a renovator that has gone through the C-CAPS program, how would a homeowner know to ask for that? Is there a plan of attack or an approach in place for something like that?
- Gary Sharp: Sure. Through our website at [chba.ca](http://chba.ca), we have a few different things that we're doing there. Essentially there'll be three programs. One is, we have our Get It In Writing! campaign and the Get It In Writing! campaign is something which we use to educate homeowners on the importance of working with a contract. Make sure that you get a contract and for any job that you're going to do and that helps to protect them from the fly-by-night type operators. The other part that we've got, is a program called RenoMark. What RenoMark is, is a program within the Home Builders' Association where renovators have agreed to abide by a renovation-specific code of conduct. So when you hire a renovator who is a RenoMark renovator, that means that that renovator is going to treat you correctly from a business point of view. He's going to get a contract, he's going to get building permits where those are needed, he's going to be paying his workman's compensation insurance and he's going to be paying for liability insurance for the job site, so that you as a homeowner are protected from risk.
- Gary Sharp: The next part of that will be the C-CAPS certification. So essentially what you would be looking for is a RenoMark renovator with a C-CAPS certification. The C-CAPS certification will mean that he or she has skills in that area of home modification for aging in place and persons with disabilities. So through that, through our website, we're promoting those three things to try and protect consumers. So Get It In Writing! and RenoMark are to protect consumers from fraud and RenoMark and then whatever certification on the end, in this case C-CAPS, is to help them get someone who is qualified to do the work that they're looking for.
- Karen Brown: Now this program, as we've been discussing it, focuses mainly on the aging population, but this program is also good for broader categories. People who have injuries, other kinds of disabilities, brain injuries, that kind of thing, correct?
- Gary Sharp: Correct.
- Melissa Schenk: Okay, so I wanted to ask you one last question. What are the CHBA's main goal for 2020 in terms of the Home Modification Council? What's your main goal, Gary?
- Gary Sharp: Well, the Home Modification Council started two years ago, in October of 2017. At that time, the two key things that came out were that the Home Modification Council needed to have a training course, we needed to get the training course

done. The second thing was that we needed a public-facing portal where the public could come to our website, they could find out information about aging in place and they could find out about different products, different materials, maybe even different research that is going on at the medical and university level and that ultimately, they could find a renovator who could complete their renovation for them.

**Gary Sharp:** So we now have the training course done. We are actively creating the portal as we speak. So the next step is to get the training course out there and educate as many renovators as are interested in taking our course. So for 2020, the goals will be to complete the portal and run as many training courses as we can.

**Melissa Schenk:** Beautiful. Okay, thank you so much Gary, for taking time out of your busy schedule with us today. I know you're constantly traveling across the country. I know you're an Ottawa, here, there, and everywhere. As the C-CAPS certification, the program unfolds, remember what Gary said, get it in writing, look for a RenoMark renovator with then the C-CAPS certification that'll be coming out. We're going to post all of that information and also the CHBA website details. We'll put that on our show notes for you so that you can contact the CHBA and obviously a RenoMark renovator when you're going to do your renovations as well coming up. Thanks so much for joining us today and we look forward to you being with us for our next podcast, coming up on the next episode of Real Life Renos.

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