

## **Mandatory home energy audits?**

Last week, the Ontario government unveiled proposed legislation that would, among many other admirable green initiatives, make home energy audits mandatory for anyone who wants to sell their home in this province. Ontario REALTORS® are opposed to this idea, for several reasons:

Many sellers will face pressure from homebuyers to either spend a lot of money improving the energy rating of their home, or lower their sale price, while sellers who can afford retrofits will demand a premium sale price. The net effect will be to drive up the cost of housing while stigmatizing less-efficient homes.

Many seniors rely on the equity they have built in their homes for retirement. They may feel obligated to either spend their savings on energy retrofits or lower the asking price of their home in order to compete with newer, more efficient ones.

Although the law will create some jobs in the auditing and construction fields, it will also discourage many homeowners from selling their homes, thus reducing the consumer spending that the sale of a home generates. That's bad news for an already-depressed economy.

In fact, the current nature of the provincial economy means that workers need to go where the jobs are. When workers move to find new employment, the sale of their home is one of their first priorities. A home energy audit is an obstacle thrown up in front of them, making that process even more difficult.

Finally, consider that condo owners have very limited ability to improve the energy efficiency of their units. Condo owners can't change elements that are common to all condos in the building, including insulation, windows, and heating and cooling systems. Would condo owners be exempted from the mandatory audits?

REALTORS® are not against improved energy efficiency. In fact, REALTORS® actively support the federal government's ecoENERGY retrofit program, which provides grants to homeowners who have their homes audited and complete energy-efficient upgrades. It's a great program, and the federal government has promised more funding for it in the recent federal budget. Many provinces, including Ontario, provide matching grants to double the amount that homeowners can receive in rebates. It's a good program and it works: in the first year of the program over 40,000 energy audits were completed, and demand continues to grow.

Improving the energy efficiency of your home is a great idea. It saves money on utility bills, and it's good for the environment. But it should be done when it's financially feasible for a homeowner to do it, not necessarily when it comes time to sell one's home. Making energy audits mandatory places undue pressure on homeowners to do just that. REALTORS® in Ontario will continue to ask the provincial government to reconsider this legislation, so that homeowners can choose to retrofit when it's right for their home and their circumstances.

*Readers are encouraged to send questions or request topics to be discussed in this column.  
Please send your requests to [info@thenewsemc.ca](mailto:info@thenewsemc.ca)*