

Habitat for Humanity

Owens Sound & Warton, Ontario



Building homes, building hope

Award-winning Habitat for Humanity project built with Advantage ICF System® supports sustainability

More than 1 million Canadians are confronted by a choice between paying a utility bill and covering the rent. It is a shocking statistic used by Habitat for Humanity to stress the importance of sustainable housing, and it is a call to action for the organization's donors and volunteers who join together to build affordable homes. Partnering families contribute 500 hours of sweat equity as their down payments and then enjoy no-interest mortgages.

When Plasti-Fab contributed to a Habitat projects in Owen Sound & Warton, Ontario, it was helping to address the challenges in more ways than one.

It seemed like a natural fit for Plasti-Fab. "Habitat for Humanity does great work in terms of what they represent to the community," says Richard Baumgartner, Plasti-Fab Sales Manager for Ontario and Quebec.

In these ten semi-detached homes, they also save cash each month by enjoying the ongoing energy savings that come with the use of insulating concrete forms (ICF). Each 1,000-square-foot living area is enclosed by six-inch Advantage ICF building block walls and a PlastiSpan Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) insulation that was incorporated into a radiant floor heating system.

Utility bills now average only \$46 per month in the middle of winter, and that includes the cost to heat water for the radiant heating system.

In contrast, Ontario's Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure says that it can cost \$1,210 per year – more than \$100 per month -- to heat a home of a similar size with a natural gas furnace.

These benefits reflect the true meaning of "sustainability," says Alan MacDonald, director of construction at Habitat for Humanity – Grey Bruce. "We look at the sustainability of the family to be able to maintain their home, and that includes operating costs."



But, the advantages didn't end there. Many of the members of the Habitat volunteer crew members have never worked on a construction project in their lives. These lightweight forms are much easier to handle than traditional framing materials, and they fit together with ease.

"Putting the blocks together is easy," MacDonald agrees. "Everybody has fun doing it."

It sure made a difference to the homeowners and impressed the judges who bestowed the 2009 Rio Tinto Alcan Sustainable Homes Programme Award, that recognizes the most successful Habitat builds in the country. When awarding the \$60,000 prize, judges cited the use of ICF as "one of the most energy-efficient building strategies available in homebuilding today".

"It was an incredible shot in the arm," MacDonald said of the honor, "and a large portion of that submission was based on the ICF."

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