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August 9, 2005

**Hon. Joe Fontana, P.C., M.P.**  
Minister Responsible for CMHC  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

**Re: Moisture Induced Problems in Housing**

In May 18, 2005 I brought to your attention the letter from the President of the CMHC to the Government of British Columbia, dated August 27, 1981. The head of CMHC made it very clear that CMHC understood that the moisture induced problems were closely linked and in fact driven by the federal government's energy conservation measures for building construction.

"There is an apparent close relation between energy conservation attempts and high levels of moisture accumulation. In some cases, structural deterioration of the wall resulted. The worst conditions have been encountered in *coastal areas*..."

The CMHC President makes note of the need to address the role of the National Building Code in creating the wet wall problem:

"I have already written to the Chairman of the Associate Committee on the National Building Code, giving him the same information and requesting that he, with the Associate Committee NBC and the Provincial Advisory Committee NBC, take a lead role in providing a focus and impetus towards developing the regulatory standards and technical measures necessary to prevent such problems."

**(i) What action did CMHC take in those early days to address what were obvious flaws in the federal government's national energy conservation program with regard to building construction?**

**(ii) What measures did CMHC take to effect changes in the National Building Code as regards moisture accumulation and the inability of the wet wall to dry, particularly in coastal areas like the lower mainland of British Columbia?**

The CMHC President also committed CMHC resources toward addressing the wet wall problem:

"I have committed substantial CMHC resources, both staff and money, towards seeking measures which will reliably diminish the problem in the future. Among the steps we are taking, are surveys to determine the exact nature, extent and severity of the moisture induced problems, as they are manifested in different parts

of Canada.”

**(iii) What were the results for British Columbia of CMHC’s survey of the nature, extent and severity of the moisture induced problems?**

**(iv) What resources did CMHC actually commit in the 1980's when it became aware of the wet wall problem?**

Minister, in your letter of July 21, 2005 you state that the Barrett Commission exonerated the National Building Code and by implication CMHC:

“The Barrett Commission determined that the leaky condo problems were not code related, stating it had found no evidence that building envelopes constructed according to the building code would fail.”

Your letter does not indicate just what information CMHC provided the Barrett Commission with regard to CMHC’s knowledge of the wet wall problem such that Mr. Barrett came to such a conclusion.

CMHC documents made available to me under the Access to Information Act indicate that CMHC was aware of moisture buildup and the inability of the wall to dry. The documents reveal CMHC believed that national energy conservation programs and the related changes to building design contributed to this moisture problem.

**(v) Did CMHC provide the Barrett Commission with these documents?**

**(vi) What additional documents did CMHC make available to the Barrett Commission outlining its awareness of the problem? (Please list the specific documents provided the Barrett Commission.)**

I will look forward to your reply to these six questions.

Yours truly,



John Cummins, M.P.  
Delta-Richmond East

cc. David Barrett