



John Cummins, M.P.
Delta-Richmond East
www.johncummins.ca

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The Smoking Gun CMHC Under Pressure to Cover-up Wet-Wall Problem

OTTAWA-- “A smoking gun exists. There is now clear and unassailable evidence that not only did CMHC know full well there was a serious wet-wall problem caused by the federal government’s energy conservation measures but that CMHC was under pressure to cover up the problem to protect the National Energy Program,” said John Cummins, M.P. (Delta-Richmond-East)

On August 27, 1981 the CMHC President advised Mickey Cohen, the all powerful Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines & Resources, of “*the apparent close relation between various energy conservation attempts and high levels of moisture accumulation*” causing damage in the exterior walls of homes.

On November 13, 1981 the CMHC President sent a second letter to the Deputy Minister of Energy noting Cohen’s “*concern about having energy conservation associated with moisture problems arising from various forms of house construction.*” The CMHC President acknowledged the need to avoid creating alarm about the energy conservation measures in the National Energy Program: “*I agree we must avoid creating the impression that conservation measures will necessarily entail excessive moisture problems or indeed other construction or occupancy problems.*”

Clearly the Deputy Minister of Energy wanted to shutdown all talk about energy conservation measures being a source of the wet-wall problem. In 1981 at the height of the National Energy Program the Deputy Minister of Energy was very powerful: what he wanted he usually got.

While there was an unmistakable acknowledgement from the CMHC President that he understood the Deputy Minister’s caution was an order to stop pointing his finger at energy conservation measures as the problem, he seemed hesitant to deny the existence of the wet-wall problem. He reminded the Deputy Minister that the wet-wall problem existed and ought not to be denied:

“Nevertheless, I feel it equally important for us to collectively face up to the reality that conservation practices associated with energy conservation measures do, in fact, increase the hazard of moisture induced structural damage. We must, therefore, in the interest of conservation measures, continue to explore how to diminish this hazard.”

“These documents recently became available to me under the *Access to Information Act*,” said Cummins. “I believe that as I undertake further investigation of CMHC records they will confirm that the demand from the Deputy Minister of Energy to CMHC to tone down its accusations had the effect of corrupting CMHC’s efforts to address the wet-wall problem.”

Contact: John Cummins, M.P.
(613) 992-2957, (cell) (604) 970-0937, (604) 940-8040