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November 9, 2005

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

Dear Minister:

In your letter of July 21, 2005 you reject my submission to you that CMHC was aware of the wet wall problem in home construction in 1981.

You would have me believe that the problem identified in 1981 was peculiar to Newfoundland, having as its source moisture that was internal to the building, this to be distinguished from the wet wall problem in British Columbia involving the external walls of the home. You wrote:

“It will be of assistance to you to understand that the moisture problems experienced by British Columbia residents in the 1990’s, unlike Newfoundland, were not a matter of condensation arising because of moisture *internal* to the building.”

“I trust this information will serve to assist you in understanding how very different the earlier problems that arose in Newfoundland were from those later experienced in British Columbia...”

What you have written is untrue. Your letter continues the cover-up of CMHC’s knowledge of the wet wall problem in 1981 and its failure to warn home owners of the problem in those early years.

I recently received under the *Access to Information Act* several documents that put the lie to your claim that CMHC’s knowledge in 1981 of the wet wall problem was limited to damage from moisture within or internal to the home.

In an August 27, 1981 letter to the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources the CMHC President states clearly that the problem is one that is occurring in the external wall:

“It has become evident to the Corporation that there has been a significant increase in the incidence of moisture induced damage in frame construction. The problem is most commonly encountered in single family housing and the damage appears to be occurring in the *exterior walls*.”

In a second letter dated August 27, 1981, this time to the Chair of the National Research Council Committee dealing with National Building Code the CMHC President advises that the problem is occurring in the external walls and is believed to be serious and widespread:

“The problem is most commonly encountered in single family housing and the damage appears to be occurring in the exterior walls. Reports on this matter, which have been submitted to me and which I have had the opportunity of discussing with senior technical staff at CMHC, have convinced me that the problem is potentially serious, possibly widespread and that it concerns matters of structural safety and public health.”

In your letter you deny that the National Building Code played any part in the problem and you point out that the Barrett Commission determined the wet wall problem was not code related. If CMHC was engaged in a cover-up and documents were withheld from Mr. Barrett and his staff, then the Barrett Commission’s conclusion on this point is inaccurate.

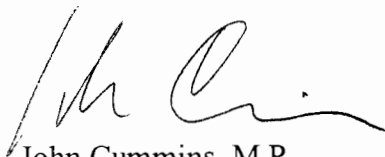
My question to you sir is, did CMHC provide the Barrett Inquiry with either of the CMHC President’s letter of warning to the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or to the Chair of the National Research Council’s committee on the National Building Code?

In August of this year I asked you if CMHC had provided the Barrett Inquiry the August 1981 wet wall letters of warning to the provinces from the CMHC President. I would remind you I have yet to receive a reply.

In August 1981 we had a CMHC President who was not prepared to hide the truth that the wet wall problem encountered by CMHC was in the exterior walls of the home. It is too bad you and CMHC Presidents since 1981 did not have the guts and honesty to tell the public the truth instead of succumbing to pressure to cover-up and to deny any knowledge of the source of this disaster.

It is my hope that you have not been intentionally misleading me. I would take no joy in learning that a Minister of the Crown would knowingly mislead a Member of Parliament.

Yours truly,



John Cummins, M.P.
Delta – Richmond East

cc. David Barrett