

## Report to CHBA Board of Directors

Stephen Amonson, Director, CHBA - Alberta

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While there is momentum with ongoing initiatives, the political response by government will be hampered by pending leadership race. The regulatory push in some areas is seeing push-back from government members worried about the legitimate challenge from the right side of the political spectrum. The response by ministries has opened the door to increased dialogue with industry and that has created a great opportunity for CHBA. Ministry officials, who still see regulation in some areas as necessary, now know that they need stakeholders involved if they are to move on any initiative. The massive Slave Lake fire has added a distraction and consumed the attention of the Alberta government, as would be expected.

### Issues Update

**Slave Lake Fires** – Since the middle of May, the Town on Slave Lake residents have been coping with the wildfire that damaged one-third of the town. The town was evacuated on very short notice and it may still be weeks before people are allowed to move back into the town. Currently, much of the town is without water, gas and electricity. More than 425 homes were totally destroyed and more than 100 damaged. This is a huge rebuild that is far beyond the local capacity of about 20 homes per year. We are looking at how we can augment the capacity of the local builder and help to restore the community as quickly as possible.

The **building envelope** issue is still on the government's radar and we have been working to develop a position that is helpful to government and supported by our membership. We have met with the warranty providers and another meeting is planned. It is our understanding that a proposal has been tabled by Municipal Affairs to make new home warranty mandatory. We do not know the detail of the proposal, but we expect it is similar to our proposal to government and will be announced in the next few weeks. The announcement will present changes at a high level and an industry stakeholder group will be charged with adding the detail to the proposal.

Following a consultation on the **ten-minute fire response** – This issue is getting complicated with both the cities of Calgary and Edmonton advancing positions. This is posing a challenge for our organization to deal with this issue effectively, allow regions to work with their municipal governments, but not unduly tie the hand of regions that may not be impacted. AHITC will be the focus for resolving this important issue. It may once again find its way to the Minister's stakeholder group.

We met with senior Environment officials to discuss the **construction & demolition waste** issue. The intent of his meeting with us was to test the waters with a high level discussion around a new approach for moving construction waste diversion forward. The Ministry does not feel that a complicated system of rebates was warranted and would like to take a different approach to encourage the construction sector to continue to improve waste diversion. The Ministry is looking at a voluntary approach that would establish targets for diversion and agreements with the construction sectors to work toward those targets. He envisions separate agreements for the commercial and residential construction sectors based on the different challenges for each group. The targets would be established after consultation with the industry.

We noted that there is a lack of baseline information for the residential construction sector. Most data on recycling rate, available recycling companies, facilities and the challenges/ barriers facing the industry have not been updated in at least three years. We know the situation has been evolving. He agreed that there was a need to establish a baseline and identify barriers before targets could be set. We also touched on the effect of this on renovation and the need to think of environment and energy in the context of the community.

This is a radical departure from the last initiative and we felt the industry would be better able to work within the target framework.

More recently, we have been discussing a new proposed code classification for *seniors housing*. Government is looking at options that could result in a new relaxed institutional rating or a safety enhanced residential rating. We understood that Manmeet Bhullar, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister, would be submitting a draft report to the Minister soon, but we understand this is being held up for some reason.

The Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance (CEEA) placed advertisements in the Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Herald, other dailies throughout the province and the North American Insulation Manufacturers Association of Canada (NAIMA) ran radio ads slamming the home building industry and encouraging citizens to call their MLA to demand higher *energy efficiency standards*, and that those standards be put into code. I won't go into a lot of detail, but we managed to stop the campaign. We met with NAIMA representatives at their request on April 28, 2011, and it was minimally helpful. It did, however, demonstrate that little is known about our building practices and even less is known about our political environment.

The Alberta *Condominium Property Act* is being reviewed. A multi-stakeholder advisory committee has been working with Service Alberta for the past identifying and discussing issues to be included in a consultation paper released by government. The draft consultation paper was distributed to the Advisory Group for review and it got a very rough ride. The paper is being totally reworked and the process will likely delay the public consultation until the fall.

*Workplace Safety* - A key initiative of Employment & Immigration Minister Thomas Lukaszuk is a series of safety blitzes in different parts of the construction industry throughout Alberta. Recently, a report from the blitz into forklift safety contained less than desirable results, placing more of a spotlight on this issue. Residential construction sites are scheduled to be subject to the same type of blitz in the late-summer/early-fall timeframe. CHBA – Alberta staff has been in contact with the Ministry on this issue and have made them aware of the progress and challenges facing our industry in driving safety to the sub-trade level. There is an opportunity for builders to have a constructive discussion with the Ministry.

## **Spring Builders' Forum**

On April 12, CHBA Alberta held the first *Spring Builders' Forum*. It was a one-day conference featuring Allan Gregg as the keynote speaker, an economic panel (Peter Norman – Altus, Todd Hirsch – ATB Financial and Richard Goatcher – CMHC), Tale of Two Cities Session (Mayor Melissa Blake – Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and Mayor of Edmonton Stephen Mandel), and a session on Alberta competitiveness and the speakers were Les LaRocque – Alberta Competitiveness Council, Diana McQueen - Parliamentary Assistant to the Energy Minister, and Cal Dallas - Parliamentary Assistant to the Finance Minister – both MLAs are involved in government competitiveness initiatives. The day was very well received by those in attendance. The summary and speakers' presentations are posted on the [www.chbaalberta.ca](http://www.chbaalberta.ca) website.