



**Report to the Technical Research Committee
Ottawa, Ontario - October 23, 2009
Submitted by Rick Gratton – September 15, 2009**

Provincial / Local TRC Networks

Provide a brief overview of any TRC-related communications with members since the last TRC meeting including written or verbal reports given and any input received. In those provinces with a provincial and/or local TRC committees, please describe their membership and if they have met since the last report.

- The Alberta Housing Industry Technical Committee (AHITC) is designed to align with the national and provincial chapters of the home builders' associations as well as with strategic partners in the housing industry such as the Alberta New Home Warranty Program, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Alberta Municipal Affairs, Alberta Building Officials Association, and the municipalities of Edmonton and Calgary. The role of the committee is to identify, investigate and resolve technical issues affecting the residential construction industry in Alberta. AHITC is coordinated by CHBA-Alberta and the committee meets on a quarterly basis. Each of the 6 local home builder associations in the province also have their own regional technical committees, with a local representative from each also occupying a seat at AHITC. The local committees consist of a variety of members in the industry with a technical background and typically meet on a monthly basis.
- TRC's update regarding radon gas requirements in the upcoming National Building Code has sparked concerns from Alberta builders, as radon gas hasn't been proven to be a concern in our province. Independent testing by some builder members do not report the existence of radon gas above the 200 becqueurel level in newly built homes. Alberta Health is currently conducting field testing on government owned structures in the province (schools, hospitals, offices, etc) for radon gas, but have no intention of testing for radon gas in homes given Health Canada's plans to conduct telephone surveys on the issue in 2009 and 2010. CHBA-Alberta members have been asked to participate in the National Research Council's online survey of the proposed radon gas requirements in the 2010 NBC prior to the October 30th deadline.

Priority Technical Issues

Provide a brief description of any technical matters of concern to members, such as: performance problems of products or systems, Code interpretation issues, waste management challenges, radon testing, non-conforming or counterfeit products, new requirements for energy efficiency, sprinkler advocacy, etc. Identify any emerging issues or trends such as prefabrication, innovations in mechanical systems, home automation, etc.

- Concerns regarding surface failures on driveways and flatwork (concrete spalling) have arisen around the province, with a debate on whether the problem occurs due to the usage of road salt in the winter or the actual chemical composition of concrete additives are creating the issue. AHITC is currently examining this situation.
- The Alberta Government is expected to propose changes to the Alberta Building Code (ABC) to require homes be built to an EnerGuide 80 rating in 2011/2012. CHBA-Alberta has concerns that this is a serious deviation from the historic use of the ABC, which is intended to regulate the minimum standard for building safety. CHBA-Alberta is in the process of establishing meetings with the provincial government in an attempt to have collaborative involvement with the development of these "green" codes.
- The amendments to the 2006 Alberta Building Code addressing high-intensity residential fires (HIRF) included clarification on how to calculate the 10-minute fire department response time performance objective. It has been brought to the attention of Alberta Municipal Affairs (AMA) that some subdivision developments that have already begun work and have already installed the service mains and water lines are unable to meet the requirements of the HIRF-related amendments without significant hardship. With that in mind, AMA has issued an exemption to the 10 minute rule for these communities throughout the province.



- After hearing several complaints from new home consumers regarding building envelope failures, the Alberta Government undertook the study of homes with moisture damage in 2007 and proceeded to consult with industry stakeholders in 2008 to determine a course of action that would simplify the resolution of new home consumer complaints regarding moisture control. A government action plan was expected to be released this past summer, but has been delayed for the time being.

Provincial/ Local R&D Initiatives

Provide an update on any local initiatives of a technical nature such as demonstration projects, field research, smoke alarm promotion, LEEP, along with a summary of any partnerships involved, goals and outcomes.

- CHBA-Alberta, Alberta Construction Association (ACA) and Alberta Environment conducted industry focus group sessions around the province in March, April and June to solicit feedback on the provincial governments C&D Waste Reduction initiative. Generally speaking, there has been good support for the program from CHBA members, with some necessary tweaks to be made before the regulation goes to Cabinet for approval in Fall 2009. Regulation requirements will most likely come into effect in Fall 2010. CHBA-Alberta and ACA are developing the framework for a Delegated Administrative Organization (DAO) to work at arm's-length from government to administer the program upon the effective date.
- With the release of the new edition of the Alberta Building Code (2006), AHITC retained an engineering firm to redevelop and certify a second edition of the lateral bracing guidelines. The objective of the guidelines is to provide cost-effective, practical, generic designed construction details for residential concrete foundation walls, certified by a structural engineer registered in the province of Alberta. These guidelines allow builders to identify and implement structurally appropriate details for the construction of residential concrete foundation walls in various configurations commonly encountered without duplicating engineering design services for each project. CHBA-Alberta made a submission to the provincial government in late August for Standata consideration at their November 2009 Building Technical Council meeting. When (and if) the Standata is issued for usage around the province, CHBA-Alberta will be making the Lateral Bracing Guidelines available to members for usage.

Technology Transfer

Report on builder forums and other technology-focused training and educational events, what sessions worked well and what didn't.

- CHBA-Alberta and the Professional Home Builders Institute of Alberta (PHBIA) have developed a half-day Building Envelope Forum with topics regarding proper window/door installation and wall assembly details. The forum is to be held on September 23rd in Edmonton and September 24th in Calgary, and will have leading experts from the Alberta Government, CMHC, NRC and local engineering firms as speakers/presenters on these building envelope subjects.

R-2000 and Other Green Labels

Provide a brief description of provincial and/or local CHBA involvement in R-2000 and other labels, if any. Summarize goals and activities and any issues arising.

- BuiltGreen is a successful industry-driven voluntary program that is the recognized standard for "green" residential construction practices in Alberta and British Columbia. It benefits the home builder, the home buyer, the community and the environment, and is an opportunity for everyone to choose a "green" future by using the EnerGuide Rating Scale to accomplish energy efficiency and environmental targets. There have been over 11,500 homes enrolled in the program since BuiltGreen was launched in late 2003.
- Recent developments involving the BuiltGreen program include the hiring of a new Executive Director for the BuiltGreen Society of Canada who started on September 1st, and CHBA-Alberta is also in the process of hiring a Coordinator to administer the program for Alberta.
- Ongoing discussions with the Alberta government have yielded potential exemptions for BuiltGreen builders from having to pay a C&D Waste Reduction deposit (approximately \$2000 per home) for an upcoming initiative that will otherwise affect all applicants of building permits.