Canadian Home Builders Annual Meetings and show February 2009

The convention component of these meetings was held on February 28 and 29th at the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City. The trade show was sponsored by CASA, HFSC and Blazemaster. It was staffed by Shannon Violo from CASA and Sean Tracey from NFPA. Sean has provided the following report of his two days at the trade show.

*Canadian Home Builders Annual Meeting in Quebec City was attended by Sean Pearce (CASA), Shannon Violo (CASA), and Sean Tracey (NFPA). The HFSC booth was set up. CASA was a platinum sponsor of the event and also was offering 10 min phone cards to builders that left their name for the kits. Some general observations:

  · A presenter reported that material costs for home builders were down 15% over last year

  · Builders and others at the booth seemed generally very cordial and some were asking questions. Several custom builders were also interested for their rural projects.

  · Bruce Clemmensen Chair of CCBFC was present and stopped by for a very good discussion. It is understood that he is stepping down this year from this and a search committee will be struck for his replacement. Discussion was good and he was open on this.

  · Adair Chow – the codes member staff on Part 9 also stopped by. She has retired and her duties have been picked up by Frank Lohman. She is working part time to represent the manufactured housing industry. She informed us that the CCBFC shall be sending out an RFP to compile the information related to residential fire sprinklers. No great details on this but the important point is they are seriously looking at this for the next code cycle (2015).

Traditionally the days leading up to the trade show are filled with quarterly Canadian Home Builders meetings, I had the opportunity to sit in on the National Marketing meetings on Wednesday February 25th. The agenda for this meeting included presentations Peter Norman from the Altus Group. Altus is an economic consulting group retained by the CHBA to survey their members and report back. Much of their report focused on the current economic conditions in the Canadian housing market. They have reported steady population growth across the country yet a substantial reduction in housing starts in every province other that Sask. Job rates have slowed, interest rates are dropping yet by comparison Canada is far better off than the US. Canadian starts are down approximately 50 000 units while in the US they’re down near
900 000. All of this news combined with an already hostile builder reaction to fire sprinklers has created renewed hesitation to accept fire sprinklers in this industry. This has not dampened the Canadian Fire Chiefs, Politicians are starting to address the need for sprinklers in various occupancies across the country. Recent fatal fires are impressing on politicians the need to protect everyone from the devastating loss fires can cause. Interestingly Mr. Peter Norman from Altus verbally reported that in the first part of 2009 construction costs were down approximately 15%. Additional reports suggested that builders should not expect recovery to begin until late in 2009.

Discussion with other members of the CHBA provided insight into new potential arguments; one person suggested that in the event of an ice storm the sprinklers would freeze, when I suggested that everything in the home would freeze and that you could drain the sprinkler system, the response was that Blazmaster pipe is not rated for air.... The same individual shared their interpretation of the recent NRC release stating that fire fighters should not enter a home anyway so the fact that floors can collapse as early as 5.5 mins is irrelevant. If everyone is out, and smoke detectors will get them out, then insurance will look after the rest. After giving this person a fire fighters perspective they graciously ended the conversation.

On Thursday February 26 I sat in on the Economic Research Committee meetings, much of the information had been briefly touched on at the previous day’s meetings. There was a presentation from Mr. Peter Anderson, who is an economist that will be attending CASA’s AGM in June to provide all of our guests with an economic overview. Mr Anderson suggested that it could take 12 months before we start to see any signs of recovery but held some optimism in the relief spending if it was allocated carefully, both in Canada and the US.

A presentation was also provided about Fintrac. Fintrac is a federal agency that records all financial transaction over certain dollar amounts. The builders were advised that cash transactions over $5000.00 now have to be reported to Fintrac. There is a belief that improperly attained funds are being used to pay for large assets in an effort to launder the money. All industries now have to report large cash transactions to Fintrac.

The next CHBA meetings are scheduled for May 28 – 31 2009 in Ottawa, Ontario.
Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition Meeting Notes

March 10 2009

-API and contractor members have been removed from the HFSC web site in conjunction with the new C3 Status as per Government instruction C3 is our equivalent to Non-Profit Status.

**Prince George’s County, Maryland Project**

- Conducting a study in Washington one with a sprinkler ordnance and one without. The study will compare housing starts in two similar communities in an effort to show that fire sprinklers do not adversely affect home sales.

**FM Global Research Project**

Environmental tests on the benefits of Sprinklers scheduled for September over two days, report should be published by Christmas of 2009-03-10 tests include; water consumption, water toxicity, air quality testing.

NFPA has produced a video on home fire sprinklers, visit you tube and search Why Home Fire Sprinklers are Important [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=In-Xsa1bi6E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=In-Xsa1bi6E)

IBS Builders Show 2009 report: 555 leads from the show, gifts given away, 1 flat screen TV, 68 tool boxes, 20 digital cameras, 294 baseball hats, Ron Hazelton ran the game show guests then were able to pull a slot machine to win a prize.

**New projects**

Fire Service eblasts

60 second powerpoint type videos to the fire services

Program directed at the real estate industry

Sean Pearce
National Marketing Manager
Canadian Automatic Sprinkler Association