



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ALBERTA

March 12, 2009

Honourable Ray Danyluk
#104 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Ray

Dear Minister Danyluk,

I am impressed with your changes to Alberta's building codes to increase the fire safety of future homes. You have acted in the best interest of Albertans, and we are now leading the country by bringing forward amendments to our fire code that will be the norm nationwide in another two years. Albertans will appreciate these changes.

However, I remain concerned about the fire safety of some of the province's existing home inventory – including those homes that have been built with vinyl siding but without gypsum barriers, and those that are only 0.6 metres away from the property line. These homes and their occupants are still at risk; neighbourhoods constructed this way have fallen victim to “fire-jumping,” i.e., flames leaping from house to house. This has already happened in Calgary, Camrose, Edson, Edmonton and Fort McMurray.

What steps, if any, will the government take to ensure that these existing homes will be retrofitted to meet the new fire code?

I assume that when homeowners renovate they will be required to bring these buildings up to code. That only works, though, if appropriate permits are issued and the rules are enforced. Do you have plans to increase enforcement?

We may be able to fast-track this retrofit because of the renovation tax credit offered by the federal government. Do you have any plans to encourage homeowners to take advantage of this credit? Further, would the provincial government consider a similar or matching tax incentive?

The code changes relative to multi-unit buildings are commendable. Have you considered ways in which these may be applied to existing buildings - for example, installing sprinklers on balconies?

There are currently thousands of homes that do not meet the new standards you have introduced. I urge quick consideration of these proposals for the safety of all Albertans.

Dave Taylor

MLA, Calgary Currie