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Ad angers pro-wood construction community

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A recent ad that took a shot at wood construction, which appeared in the Toronto Star newspaper, has left some members of the pro-wood community looking for answers from the Canadian Concrete Masonry Producers Association (CCMPA).

The CCMPA ran a full-page ad on the Star during the Canada Day long weekend that addressed a proposal to make a change in the Ontario Building Code that would increase the height limit of wood-construction buildings in the province. Proponents of this change propose to increase the maximum to six storeys rather than four.

“It’s primarily an issue of bad marketing,” said Marshall Leslie, a member of the RESCON (Residential Construction Council of Central Ontario) Technical Council, and the person who sent out an e-mail, in the form of an open letter, that addressed the ad.

“This ad contains false information, it isn’t attributed and there isn’t a link between the photograph.”

The CCMPA chose not to comment on the ad or address the open letter after being contacted by the Daily Commercial News, but said they expect to release an official statement in the coming weeks.

The ad displays a picture of a ravaged disaster scene where what looks like wood-constructed buildings have been demolished. Beneath the image, the ad reads ‘Storms. Fires. Insects. All can weaken a structure — and in some cases destroy it if it’s made of wood’.

In the letter, Leslie says the ad contravenes The Competition Act by “presenting false and misleading information” and he believes it isn’t an accurate representation of individual CCMPA members.

“I spoke to a member of the CCMPA that didn’t even see the ad, which kind of surprised me,” Leslie added in an interview.

Leslie noted he first saw the spread a few weeks after it first appeared during a RESCON Technical Council meeting when a member brought it to his attention.

“It was at the back of the first section, they didn’t even put it in the New and Homes section,” he said.

Leslie admits he is, in fact, a fan of wood, but that’s not why he has an issue with the ad. After working at previous companies in a marketing capacity, he says he looked at the ad through a marketing scope and determined it was poor marketing practice.

“If this kind of ad were to occur more often, the question is, who is the next target?” said Leslie.

“If you want to talk about wood’s problems, you could write about termites, you could write about the Great Fire of Toronto or you could write about the flooding this spring in Huntsville. You could write about a great

number of things, but you don't have to do this."

RESCON president Richard Lyall also expressed his concerns about the ad in response to Leslie's open letter.

"The advertisement is misleading, crass and reprehensible," Lyall wrote via e-mail. He added that a request to withdraw the ad was submitted but has yet to receive any response.

Leslie also hasn't received a response for his open letter.