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Proposal to Amend the National Building Code Could Jeopardize Canadians' Health & Safety

Ottawa, December 12, 2013 – Today in Ottawa, the Cement Association of Canada (CAC) held a press conference to demand that the changes proposed for the next edition of the National Building Code of Canada (NBCC) be significantly improved to provide better safety for all Canadians.

Over the past two months and until December 23, the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes (CCBFC) has been conducting its public review of proposed changes to the 2010 NBCC, the model building code of Canada. During this period, Canadians have the opportunity to voice their opinions on the proposed code changes. One such change would increase the maximum wood building height to six storeys, from the current limit of four storeys.

The CAC contends that the construction of five and six storey wood frame buildings could present many safety concerns for Canadians. "If these taller wood frame buildings are included in the Code, Canada could see an increase in fires and put vulnerable Canadians at risk," said Michael McSweeney, President and CEO of the CAC. "Each year we are seeing numerous fires in wood frame buildings and we have seen the devastating effects of recent massive fires in B.C. and Alberta."

The current proposal has many deficiencies, and the CAC strongly recommends that a number of additional provisions be implemented. These include noncombustible stairwells and elevator shafts to provide firefighters with a safe refuge area from which to stage their firefighting and rescue operations and residents with a safe place to go so they can be rescued; noncombustible cladding and noncombustible roofing - this is fundamental to preventing a fire from spreading to adjacent buildings. Additionally, noncombustible two-hour firewalls should be mandated on these buildings along with the installation of sprinkler protection during the construction phase. Finally, the CAC believes that the protection of the lives of firefighters should be included in the NBCC.

The CAC is committed to ensuring that structures and critical infrastructure projects are completed to the safety standards Canadians deserve and believe they currently have. "Any building should be built once, built right and built to last," said McSweeney. "Building codes are minimum codes and surely Canadians deserve more than this. Canadians should demand the gold standard in Canada's National Building Code. The safety of Canadians must be the top priority."

"The proposed changes have potentially life and death implications," said Carl Pearson, a First Captain with the Thorold Fire and Emergency Services and the Past President of



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the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario. "For firefighters, our number one concern is to safely rescue people, without casualties. If these proposed changes to the NBCC are implemented, Canadians lives could be at risk. We don't want that to happen."

The Cement Association of Canada (CAC) represents the Canadian cement industry, and strives to maintain a sustainable industry as well as promote and advance the economic, environmental and societal benefits of building with cement and concrete. The CAC advocates for legislative and regulatory environments at all levels of government and it advises on technical matters important to the cement and concrete industries, such as codes, standards, specifications and best practice guides.

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For more information, please contact:

Lyse Teasdale Cement Association of Canada lteasdale@cement.ca T: 613-236-9471 ext 211 M: 613-809-0517	Lisa Kirbie Daisy Consulting Group lisa@daisygroup.ca M: 416-319-1023
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