

## "Leaking"----- The pain of home owners & The panic of buyers

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Speaking of the leaking, we have to say the notorious BC "leaky condo". We've all heard the heartbreaking stories. And most of us know someone who was affected by the "leaky condo" crisis that blindsided homeowners and caused them immense hardship and loss. Between 1983 and 1998, a massive failure of the building envelopes in coastal BC homes allowed moisture to enter walls and reap havoc in rot, mould and leaks. Although the damage was most prevalent in condominiums, it also hit rental units, co-ops, townhouses, high-rises and single-family homes. When all is said and done, an estimated one to two billion dollars — most of it paid by homeowners — will have been spent to clean up the mess.

Several coincidental changes played a role in the disaster. From building codes to consumer protection programs, the processes in place to ensure quality building practices failed. Rapid economic expansion and a boom in housing construction led to a dramatic increase in land prices, squeezed profit margins, and a shortage of qualified developers and builders. In this fiercely competitive market, hungry developers looked for cost-effective building techniques and new housing solutions. They began to model California dwellings and to emphasize lifestyle marketing and exterior design (faced sealed system) at the expense of solid construction practice. The new designs ignored the traditional features suited to a rainy climate and instead limited or eliminated overhangs, minimized wall thickness, and incorporated ineffective building envelopes made of substandard materials. Along with inappropriate designs and shoddy workmanship, this lack of guidelines and accountability led to a systematic failure of the building process that resulted in the deterioration in the quality of construction and the ensuing tragedy.

Rather than face sealed system, Rain screen wall assemblies are the best method for controlling water penetration. These designs deflect most of the water at the exterior cladding, but also have a cavity through which any water that does get past the surface wall is allowed to drain. Water entering the wall cavity typically runs down the backside of the cladding and exits at flashings and weep holes. The combination of a larger drainage cavity and vent paths to the outside improves the drying ability of the wall.

Residential structures in Vancouver have been built using rain screen technology since 1999. The result is that properties entering the market since then are much more effective at preventing moisture penetration into the building components.

No matter Condo, Town house, Detached and whatever type of building envelope is used, if moisture does enter the wall and the problem is identified early, it can be remedied relatively inexpensively. If left unattended, repair costs increase dramatically. Even if a building survived the crisis period without any complaints doesn't mean that it won't leak in the future. Regular inspection and maintenance of the building envelope by a qualified professional is crucial.

