



PRESS RELEASE



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Golden Opportunity for Quebec Exporters

MONTREAL, Québec, September 21, 2004 — While wood-frame housing currently accounts for 5 – 6 per cent of the total construction of single-family homes in France, that figure is expected to triple in the next 5 years to reach a market share of 15 – 20 per cent, according to the report entitled "Housing Export Market: Opportunities and Contacts in France" released today.

The report, commissioned by both Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and La Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ), contains a number of key findings that will help the Canadian housing industry export its technology more effectively. By 2009 – 2010, a minimum of 30,000 single-family homes are expected to be built using wood-frame construction. Paul Poliquin, Director of CMHC International in Quebec, explains: "By demonstrating how wood-frame construction can carve out an important place for itself in the French market, this study illuminates a bright future for Canadian housing exporters."

Quebec companies have made significant inroads in France in recent years; as André Filion, Director, Industrial and Nunavik development department, SHQ, elaborates: "This is the result of a sustained effort made by several Quebec manufacturers and organizations that support the housing industry, such as Q-WEB. The SHQ is proud to have been associated with this concerted effort during the past four years."

This year, CMHC International and the SHQ are helping exporters seize this momentum and capitalize on potential opportunities by organizing their first joint commercial mission to France, to be held from September 28 to October 4. The mission will begin in Paris, where a delegation of 7 Canadian companies (6 from Quebec, 1 from Ontario) will meet with French builders and promoters.

The Canadian contingent will then visit Angers, where they can attend the first-ever "Les États Généraux du Bois dans la construction", a conference that will address economic, technical and strategic issues surrounding the systematic use of wood in construction. At Angers, Canadian companies will also benefit from a full schedule of matchmaking sessions to be held from October 1 – 4 during Le Salon Maison Bois, an annual event showcasing the value of wood in housing.

The growing interest in wood-frame housing is largely due to an attitudinal shift amongst French consumers, who are more willing to explore a range of options before building or purchasing a home, preferably one that is environmentally-friendly. Furthermore, the French government and the national construction industry recently launched an awareness campaign promoting the qualities of wood for home-building: its energy-efficiency, its insulation and sound-proofing properties, its flexibility for both design and renovation, and its rapid construction (wood-frame homes can be completed in 3 – 4 months, while concrete homes, the traditional method of residential construction in France, have a finishing time of 9 – 12 months).

In addition, French consumers who wish to learn more about wood-frame construction now turn to the Internet, and as the Internet searches are conducted in French, the websites that are most frequently consulted are those of Quebec-based companies. The growing visibility of Quebec housing manufacturers on the Internet has helped them increase their

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exports of prefabricated homes to France by nearly 65 per cent in the last five years, from \$2 million in sales in 1999 to \$3.25 million in sales in 2003. Several renowned Quebec manufacturers of prefabricated housing are already active on the French market, and the potential to increase these volumes is still present, because the French industry's supply of wood-frame technology is not yet sufficient to meet the growing demand.

The Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) is the agency responsible for housing policy and programs in Québec and acts as the main advisory body to the Government of Quebec in this area. Its mission is to facilitate access to suitable housing for all Quebec citizens, promote the improvement of housing conditions and encourage the development of the Quebec housing industry by helping it increase productivity and evolve technologically to effectively meet demands of both domestic and foreign markets.

CMHC International, a division of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, provides invaluable assistance to the Canadian housing industry by supporting its efforts to export its products and services around the world. Furthermore, it promotes the excellence of Canadian housing expertise by sharing experience and knowledge in housing finance, housing policy and analysis, housing technologies and assisted housing with the world.

Please note: A summary of the study is available upon request.

For more information and interviews:

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