The Human Resources & Labour Relations Issue

With stories on cannabis in the workplace (and on site), goal setting, performance-evaluation best practices, and community benefits. All these, plus a profile of two GVCA members that won WSIB Awards.
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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Take Your Company's Temperature

As business owners, we often get so wrapped up in our own business affairs that we lose sight of the very people that make our organizations great.

These great people need guidance, direction, comfort and information. They want to be included, consulted, rewarded and recognized. If you haven't taken the time to pay attention to the mood and temperament of your organization—your company's culture—you could be in trouble.

Culture happens whether we set it or not. In the absence of direction, the blanks get filled in, and staff as a group develop their own culture. You only need one person unhappy, one negative nelly with a strong personality and all of a sudden, you are trying to find replacements for people in key positions. Don't let this happen. Look for subtle hints of unhappiness, discontentment and negative attitude. These could be symptoms of possible stress, family, money or health problems. They may have little to do with the work environment, but you and your organization will take the brunt of it.

Maybe you are just a happy person, and assume that everyone else is content, but that may not be the case. Take the temperature, walk around, listen to how your staff communicate with each other and with your customers.

Make it a monthly effort at a minimum to make sure your work environment is healthy.

As business owners, we often get so wrapped up in our own business affairs that we lose sight of the very people that make our organizations great.

From Good to Great!

We are all pretty good at what we do, but how often is someone in awe of what we do?

Going from good to great takes effort, thought, perseverance, commitment and passion—and sometimes outside help.

If you are a small firm without active working partners, you probably don't have anyone to talk to except your furniture. You could however easily have a working group that could provide advice to you, bring you a different perspective from the industry, or be a sounding board for your new ideas.

Hanging out with people smarter than you is necessary. You can easily assemble a group of trusted advisors such as your lawyer, your banker, an insurance agent, and a successful business person. If you were to meet with this group four times a year, and use them as your board of directors, you would get a leg up on running your business, and collect important advice on how to increase sales, reduce costs, expand your market, or improve in some other way. If this group can't help you, you should be rethinking who you hang out with, and who your business partners are.

GVCA is always here to help you by connecting you to specific people who can advise you. Call me anytime.
GVCA’s Crystal Ball Report is a unique and insightful member service. Updated daily by GVCA staff, the report tracks planned projects during the pre-bidding phases, following them from concept to design to prequalification, construction and completion.

**Super 8 in Port Elgin New Addition**

Microtel Inn & Suites Port Elgin, ON

Value: $8,000,000–$10,000,000

**Project details**

The owners of the Super 8 in Port Elgin are happy to announce the addition of another hotel to Saugeen Shores. The new property will be located to the south of Super 8’s current location, 5129 Highway 21, in Port Elgin. The property will be developed and operated by the Evans-Kuperus family along with Master Built Hotels. It will feature urban construction design, providing guests with modern accommodations with complimentary high-speed Internet, hot breakfast, upscale fitness centre, swimming pool with waterslide and meeting room facilities.

The hotel will be fully accessible and features the latest in safety and security in guest rooms and public spaces, including two electric car charging stations. The 68 guest rooms and suites will feature a compact refrigerator, microwave and in-room coffee maker, with select rooms featuring a full kitchen, separate bedroom and living room, ideal for extended stays.

Saugeen Shores Council approved site plan bylaw on October 9.

For more information or to have your project profiled, contact GVCA’s pre-bid reporter Rob Agley at rob@gvca.org.

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**Market Snapshot Q3 2018**

Waterloo Region & Guelph is home to one of the fastest growing tech talent markets with growing office and industrial markets. There is currently 425,286 SF of space under construction in 10 buildings across the 4 cities. There has been a slight increase in the number of buildings under construction this quarter with additional construction planned to begin in Q4 2018.

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For more market statistics and information please contact: Courtney Jones, Research Analyst, courtney.jones@cushwakew.com
Employers, rightly so, want to be able to track and predict how many personal emergency days their employees are taking for personal illness, family emergencies and bereavement leave, and how this is impacting the business' bottom line. Employers have turned to studies such as the World Health Organization’s Workplace Health and Productivity Questionnaire (HPQ) which have shown that employees are absent from work an average of four days per year. The associated cost? Close to $150 billion annually in the US alone.

However, as overwhelming as these numbers may be, absenteeism represents only a fraction of the costs associated with presenteeism, a real but often ignored and untracked phenomenon. Presenteeism occurs when employees show up to work but don’t perform at their full capacity due to illness, stress, mental health conditions or lack of engagement. Employees who come to work sick are also likely to infect others leading to further instances of presenteeism. The same aforementioned study conducted by the WHO showed that employees were unproductive on the job for 57.5 days per year – almost three working months which equated to a staggering cost of $1,500 billion annually in the US.

Clearly, it’s time that employers begin to track and manage not only absenteeism, but also presenteeism rates in their workplace. But how?

**Measuring Impact**

To begin, employers need to get a sense of the extent presenteeism is impacting their employees’ productivity. Formal surveys can be administered; the HPQ Short Form Absenteeism and Presenteeism Questions is a great free tool, and more options are available for purchase online. These formal surveys however may not capture all of the information that employers want to know or allow them to identify the primary root causes driving presenteeism in their specific workplace. Informal surveys conducted in-house may deliver more relevant data, however employees may be hesitant to provide full disclosure to their employer regarding their personal productivity rates and issues impacting their ability to work to capacity.

Luckily, many of the symptoms of presenteeism are in fact observable and employers who “take the pulse” of their organization can begin to identify areas of concern. Ask:

- Do you see or hear employees at work who are clearly ill?
- Are project and work deadlines being missed?
- Do employees seem to care less about work outcomes?
- Are employees repeatedly taking additional or extended breaks and lunches?
- Has the behaviour or conduct of employees changed? Are they more irritable, more subdued, less focused?
- Has the morale in the workplace worsened?
- Have you noticed an increase in benefits utilization which may indicate an increase in health concerns?
- Is there an increase in workplace accidents, injuries or illnesses?
Reducing presenteeism

While the answers to these questions may not provide employers with an exact rate of presenteeism, they will provide an indication of how illness, stress, mental health conditions and engagement levels are impacting employee’s productivity. From there, it is time to take action. While the plan will differ from employer to employer, best practices to reduce presenteeism rates can include:

- Develop and implement a workplace wellness strategy that includes an emphasis on physical and mental well-being, work-life balance and stress reduction techniques.
- De-stigmatize mental health conditions. Help employees feel comfortable discussing the impact that chronic stress, depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions may have on their work. Provide support rather than judgment.
- Provide your employees with an Employee and Family Assistance Plan to allow them to access resources related to counseling, financial and legal assistance, child and elder care, career planning, and health services.
- Allow employees when possible to work from home when ill.
- Develop and implement a workplace engagement strategy that formally tracks employee engagement. Gather feedback from employees through surveys and focus groups on what is driving engagement (both positively and negatively). Develop a plan to address employee concerns and communicate this plan to employees.

This article was written by Christine Holman, CHRP, HR Generalist at RLB LLP. Contact her at 519-822-9933 or visit rlb.ca.
Cannabis was decriminalized on October 17, and on the eve of legalization the rules about where cannabis may be consumed were poised to change. The proposed changes highlight interesting policy choices made by the PC and Liberal governments of Ontario.

As I write this, the applicable rules are those passed by the previous Liberal government as they appear in the Cannabis Act 2017 and Smoke Free Ontario Act, 2017. Liberal policy as reflected in those acts was to treat the public consumption of recreational cannabis like the consumption of alcohol, only with even more restrictions. The consumption of recreational cannabis in any form is prohibited in any workplace, public place, or in any vehicle.

The PC government has introduced Bill 36 – Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018 to amend the Cannabis Act 2017 and Smoke Free Ontario Act, 2017. PC government policy as reflected in Bill 36 generally treats the consumption of recreational cannabis like tobacco. The smoking of recreational cannabis is generally permitted anywhere you could smoke a cigarette, except in motor vehicles.

Should cannabis be regulated like alcohol or tobacco?

The consumption of alcohol in public is generally prohibited in Canada. The traditional rationale for prohibiting drinking in public is that it is needed to help maintain public order. The prohibition is thought to discourage the overconsumption of alcohol in the first place, and it tends to reduce the anti-social behavior that can accompany public intoxication.

Mind if I Smoke?

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The modern restrictions on the smoking of tobacco are driven by the health concerns of non-smokers. It is generally accepted that second-hand smoke is a carcinogen, and the objective of the Smoke Free Ontario Act is to prevent non-smokers from being exposed to tobacco smoke.

To me, cannabis is unlike alcohol in the sense that it does not pose a particular threat to public order. Smoking a joint does not put you on the pathway to public mayhem the same way as submerging yourself in a bathtub full of Purple Jesus, or so my acquaintances tell me. From that perspective, the PC policy of treating cannabis like tobacco makes sense.

**In the context of the workplace, however, cannabis is just like alcohol because they raise similar issues concerning impairment, safety, job performance, drug testing and human rights.**

An employer’s perspective
In the context of the workplace, however, cannabis is just like alcohol because it does not pose a particular threat to public order. Smoking a joint does not put you on the pathway to public mayhem the same way as submerging yourself in a bathtub full of Purple Jesus, or so my acquaintances tell me. From that perspective, the PC policy of treating cannabis like tobacco makes sense. These issues will come up regardless of rules regarding consumption. One virtue of the Liberal policy is that it would tend to minimize the consumption of recreational cannabis to the extent that was possible through restrictions on where you could smoke, vape, or eat cannabis. If the overall levels of consumption of cannabis are reduced, then it stands to reason that workplace issues concerning cannabis would be reduced somewhat too.

If the PC policy of liberalizing the rules concerning consumption of recreational cannabis tend to increase the consumption of cannabis overall, employers may find themselves feeling hungover.

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*Frank Carere is a labour and employment lawyer at Madorin, Snyder LLP in Kitchener. This article should not be relied on as legal advice.*

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With the end of the year approaching, part of your attention as a leader and a manager will turn to performance reviews. These are important tools for two reasons. First, they ensure that your people are meeting their job requirements. Second, they give staff an opportunity to provide important feedback on the work they’re doing and the overall climate of the company.

Think of performance reviews as ways to strengthen your relationship with your employees and to create open channels of communication. They help you check the pulse of our organization and they give your people valuable feedback about their role in, and their contributions to, your business.

Performance reviews can be formal or informal—just as you like—but they should be taken seriously and they should be conducted with care. Plan closely to maximize effectiveness.

**Have You Reviewed Your Performance Review Habits?**

**Here are some best practices.**

1. **Be a coach.**
   
   A coach’s job is to improve the performance of the team. You’re not a judge when you conduct a performance evaluation. That role suggests you’re there to assess. What you really want to do is guide your people along the path that yields the best outcomes for you and them.

2. **Be systematic.**
   
   Have a system in place—the same system for everyone. Be direct, factual and detail-oriented. Talk about things you can measure. And document details. Doing all this sounds robotic, but it helps you track employee performance from review to review, which is critical for assessing ongoing performance.
A performance review is not a one-way street. It’s an open and honest discussion in which both sides share their opinions. Listen to learn—not just to be polite. Ask questions. And above all, be comfortable with the uncomfortable. Reviews aren’t always sunshine and roses.

3. Have a discussion.

Focus your questions on those that matter most to your company. Ask people to highlight the accomplishments they were most proud of, the goals they have for the next performance period, their own development goals, the obstacles that might keep them from their goals, and most importantly, how your performance as a manager helps or hinders them in achieving these goals.

6. Ask better questions.

Praise good performance—never downplay it. Don’t ever attack someone’s work. Focus on the outcomes they created. And always chart clear paths for success, even in difficult situations.

8. Be positive.

Ask direct and clear questions that lead to clear and direct answers. Be specific about the examples you bring to the table. Doing so allows people to understand exactly what is—and is not—expected of them. Avoid words like “always” and “never”. They’re generalizations and although they seem strong, they actually provide little in the way of useful information.

9. Don’t wait.

It’s well and good to think of performance reviews as annual (or semi-annual or quarterly) processes, but the fact of the matter is that if you wait too long to raise an issue with an employee, you may cause more harm than good. If you’re communicating regularly with your people, issues will come to the forefront as they arise—and you can (and should) deal with them then. There should be no surprises for anyone when performance review time rolls around.

11. Be clear.

Ask direct and clear questions that lead to clear and direct answers. Be specific about the examples you bring to the table. Doing so allows people to understand exactly what is—and is not—expected of them. Avoid words like “always” and “never”. They’re generalizations and although they seem strong, they actually provide little in the way of useful information.

12. Agree on the next steps.

A performance review is time wasted without an action plan. Set clear next steps for the employee to help him or her improve performance. Build a plan around what should happen next. Set goals and deadlines so everyone understands what has to happen next.

13. Book the next meeting.

Put the next meeting on the calendar. Doing so does a couple of things. It commits you both to the next meeting, and it shows your employee that you’re serious about his or her growth.
You can't underestimate the importance of organizational goals—especially in turbulent times. Goals set and measured are goals achieved and treasured. And achieving meaningful annual goals requires setting a high bar, well in advance. December is a great time to do that.

I know that after a long year, and during the home stretch to the holidays, it's easy to get stuck in reactive mode, and to tell yourself you'll think about goals "later." Don't! End-of-year/start-of-new-year goals and resolutions are just what the doctor ordered. They refocus us on the big picture, and reconnect us with our ideals. They energize us.

Case in point: Recently, I completed a series of CEO calls focused on goal-setting, as part of my executive coaching practice. The process was as illuminating as it was invigorating so I wanted to share the exercises we went through together.

My hope is that they will help you make the most of the season: get out of your default-reactive mode…and raise the bar on your proactive goal-setting mode for 2019. Because, once in place, your short list of business goals and objectives will seriously increase your odds for success by helping you and your team focus on what's really important—a nd tune out the rest.

### Setting business goals: Make it real and keep it simple—and achievable

No matter what, or whom, you lead, the first rule in setting goals is to assume that your organization's existence depends on them. (Because, in a very real way, it does.) The goals you pick will focus your department or organization on where to spend the vast majority of energy, attention, and efforts next year.

This exercise recognizes that your organization is a mosaic of people—and that its success and sense of cohesion are intimately tied to the hearts, minds and actions of the professionals that choose to come to work every day. Your people.

Set aside some undisturbed time to reflect on what's most important to you and your employees in the year ahead, and periodically revisit those goals. Be thorough and clear, and pick a short list—no more than five key goals for the year ahead.

Below you'll find some tips on how to design your goal shortlist for the new year. As you read through them, keep in mind that some of these can take the form of one-on-one interactions, and some will be more appropriate for executive team discussion once you've gotten your initial responses.

1. **Think bottom-up and top-down.**

   No one employee—including no leader—has all the answers. So you should not only identify your business goals, but ask the people reporting to you to do the same—and then ask them to repeat the exercise with their reports, and so on, throughout the organization. This will be essential data for setting goals that are credible and achievable.

2. **Clean out your blind spots.**

   Every organization has them—and so does every leader. Here again, you can and should draw on your colleagues and reports for help. The questions below are designed to help you and your employees find the blind spots that can lead your organization or group astray—so you can clean them out and chart a clear course forward:

   - What have we tried to achieve in 2018 that we must accomplish in 2019, and how will that be rewarding to you and your team?
• In thinking about our outcomes (results, quality, customer engagement, etc.), what targets are we hitting—and which ones are we missing due to our own actions as executives?
• What am I not hearing or dealing with as a leader that I need to address?
• Is there anything I can do to get out of the way of—and indeed, accelerate—our success?

3. Lessons learned this year... to incorporate into next year.
The turn of the year offers a perfect opportunity for a business to evaluate its performance, and adjust course. Consider these questions:
• What new lessons has 2018 taught us—and what lessons from 2018 and prior years have we yet to fully address? Are there endemic issues that need to be looked at?

• How has our business ecosystem—market, products, customers, providers, partners, costs, competition or regulatory landscape—changed since last year? How well did our strategy track in response to—or in leading those changes? And what do we need to adjust in 2019?
• How have our SWOTs (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) evolved in 2018—and what should that mean for our goals in the new year?
• What are the most relevant metrics for today? What do success, neutral and failure look like in 2019? What should our measurable goals be going forward?

4. Make them relevant to your bigger picture.
Once you’ve settled on your goals for 2019, ask yourself: how aligned are these goals—and our people—with our organization’s business plan and three-year strategic priorities? With its larger mission and vision? This is a good opportunity to check your direction before plunging into the new year.

5. Communicate!
Decide the best way to package your goals, and then communicate them throughout your organization. How will you cascade these messages, and ensure everyone is crystal clear on the goals you’ve worked so hard to design?

When it comes to setting business goals, don’t settle for “doable”
The turn of the year offers a perfect opportunity to set your course for the next 12 months—and beyond. So don’t settle on “doable” for 2019. Use these tips to hone down and choose the right three to five goals that will have you feeling like you hit it out of the park where it really matters.

David Peck is a Senior Executive Coach and Head - Western and Central US Regions for Goodstone Group, LLC, a global executive coaching firm. He also writes the Leading Others Well blog, and is author of Beyond Effective. He can be reached at dpeck@goodstonegroup.com.
I was recently asked why I chose a career in Health & Safety (H&S). For me this was a very good question because I could have, and have done, many other things, but my focus has shifted towards health and safety evermore as my career evolves.

I guess for me it starts with my concern for the people around me: concern that someone will get hurt or worse. I have noticed H&S even back from my time as a paperboy when people did not shovel their driveways and I slipped with 50 pounds worth of papers and flyers over my shoulders in negative 20-degree weather. That hurt.

My concern grew when I worked briefly in factory environments and shops and saw H&S placed far further down the line on a regular basis. I had been on the joint health and safety committee in just about every workplace. I often made sensible suggestions that sometimes placed certain managers and supervisors on their toes because to do the job safely wasn’t quite as easy or quick as they desired.

I was 20 when I made my first work refusal for a Cambridge textile warehouse. My supervisor asked me to climb on the roof and knock the ice away that was hanging off the 40-foot roof over the entrance. No gear and no training and no assistance provided. I refused, got laughed at, was called names. I believe my supervisors saw this as a challenge to their authority rather than my wanting to stay alive. They started asking me to do increasingly dangerous tasks where I would be forced to do a work refusal. This gave my supervisors the chance to say that I was just being difficult and refusing to do everything. Of course management had to back them up or admit that a productive supervisor had a problem with their H&S.

At this time I taught myself the law. I started taking night classes in health and safety and left that employer, but the H&S bug had caught me. I also had a burning desire to help people with mental health issues especially in a residential care setting and with a focus on
I often made sensible suggestions that sometimes placed certain managers and supervisors on their toes...
Cannabis and Impairment

Causes of impairment

Legal and illegal substances
- Alcohol
- Certain medical conditions
- Fatigue
- Life stresses

Impacts of impairment

- Inability to concentrate, think clearly, and make decisions
- Dizziness, drowsiness, disorientation, and confusion
- Slowed reaction times and lack of coordination
- Confrontational and aggressive behaviours, disinterest

What the law says

Each province and territory can opt to set more restrictive laws over the federal rules about minimum age, possession limits, and where cannabis can be used.

Check with your jurisdiction here: http://bit.ly/cannabislaws

Employers are responsible for developing hazard prevention programs, which includes addressing any potential hazard in the workplace, including impairment.
Cannabis and Impairment in the Workplace

We often think of impairment as a result of substance use or an addiction or dependence to alcohol or drugs, whether legal or illegal. However, impairment can be the result of any number of issues, from fatigue to medical conditions, to traumatic shock and life events. Regardless of the source, impairment at work can affect our ability to do our jobs safely.

The legalization of recreational cannabis in Canada on October 17 has heightened the focus on issues regarding impairment in the workplace. This infographic outlines its effects, what employers and workers need to know, and the key elements of an impairment policy.

**Impairment policy tips for employers**

- Define impairment.
- Address impairment from both recreational and medical cannabis as well as other causes in your workplace policies and programs.
- State if the item is allowed on premise, and if so, under what circumstances.
- Educate workers on your policies and programs, and ways that the workplace can help and provide support, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Train workers, supervisors and managers on how to identify signs of suspected impairment, and how to respond appropriately.
- Describe when accommodation will be considered (for example, workers with medical needs or disabilities).
- Explain how disciplinary actions will be conducted, when necessary.
- Seek legal advice before testing workers for substances. Testing typically doesn’t reveal the level of impairment and is not generally supported by human rights legislation.
- Encourage employees to self-declare if they feel that they may be impaired, and that this statement can be made without fear of stigma or reprisal.

**Worker responsibilities**

- As per policy, declare anything that might impair your ability to do your work safely.
- Work in a safe manner.
- Follow education and training.
- Report concerns to your supervisor.

[CCOHS.ca](http://www.ccohs.ca)
Scott Higgins has seen the future and is intent on building it.

His company, HIP Developments, has changed the face of downtown Kitchener and Waterloo with such notable projects as the Post Office site in Waterloo, the 90 King Street North site in Kitchener, and the Gaslight District project in Cambridge.

Higgins is passionate about the KW Region. He opened GVCA’s PACE Symposium on October 30 by discussing just what needs to happen to create a high-functioning team.

“You need to know your community and your market and you need to hire consultants that know your community and market. People like working on projects that matter and with owners that care and can deliver,” he said. “Your team must collaborate well, have a shared vision, and function with mutual trust and respect.”

Everyone involved needs to be transparent on project timing, tender, specifications and drawings from the get go. There also needs to an efficient payment-certification and fund-release system in place.

“To me, procurement implies stewardship over a process rather than a vested interest in the result,” he said. “It can’t be about team procurement. It has to be about team performance. Change the culture by changing the language.”

**Three changes to cure common problems**

GVCA president Martha George spoke next: about three changes that can fix common construction problems. Her advice to the attendees comes from 13 years’ experience in communicating with association members.

“Clarity has to cut across everything we do—from design of a project through to the bidding documents, project award, on-site work, and completion. Everyone on the team must clearly see the project vision and what the end results and goal are,” she said.

Open, honest communication with a desire to solve problems and share information is paramount, she added.

“Choose your projects carefully and work with the general contractors and trades that you trust. You need clear information that is upfront and readily available and you need to be very careful with market prices.”

**Procurement: IPD and Lean**

Paul Eichinger, vice-president of MTE Consultants, acted as moderator for a panel discussion about the integrated project delivery (IPD) and Lean construction processes. He asked Art Winslow of Graham Construction, “How can owners ensure the value they receive respects their budget?”

Winslow responded that choosing a project-delivery method is the owner’s prerogative. At the end of the day, the preferred method always comes down to budget and objectives and the need to find the best value for that budget and the best team that meets those objectives.

“I have been immersed in Lean and IPD for the last seven years, working with owners at the schematic design level very early on in the project,” he said. “I have found that often times the owners do not really understand what they need—but they can learn if they are challenged by the right team.”

The is key to success, he added, it is not necessarily about getting the right price. An owner really needs to understand what their objectives and values are. This will usually dictate what delivery method they will choose.
Winslow then explained a bit about the key difference between IPD and Construction Management. The latter, he said, is a relationship contract based on trust and respect. Contractors are obligated to be collaborative and creative, and if they do not perform in this way, they are actually in breach of their contractual obligations.

“We the owner is looking for the best team that collaborates well and bring the best value to the project,” he said. “My main frustration with design teams is that they think differently. Contractors think linearly while design teams will challenge and engage the team often to provide positive changes and better results.”

Before turning the discussion over to David Dow of Diamond Schmitt Architects, Eichinger asked what can be done to improve design integration. Dow commented that in the design integration process, the most important thing is the adoption of technology and trying to improve efficiency. Technology, he said, has opened up massive opportunities for everyone in the construction industry. Yet, given the complicated nature of buildings today, success is not assured unless teams collaborate.

He pointed to IPD as a model in which time and effort spent on administration and preparation at the beginning pays off long term.

“The IPD model is not nirvana,” he said. “Things will still happen, but the atmosphere created is one of cooperation and less finger pointing. Record keeping during the process is essential if you want to improve things along the way. There still seems to be a lot of psychological hurdles, such as cost sharing, that people in the industry need to get over.”

Intelligent buildings

Peter Crawley of PCC Integrates, a company that specializes in smart buildings and smart technology, stated the real challenge now is to build an efficient workplace environment that responds to digital transformation.

Building infrastructure is now shifting to Power over Ethernet technology and zone cabling. This is a standards-based approach to support convergence of delivery. It creates a flexible, future-proof infrastructure for voice, data, building devices and wireless access points.

“We are now using power over Ethernet lighting with catalyst switches and sensor-based access to workplace analytics with fixture-level visibility,” he said. “By converging five networks into one, we gain greater energy efficiency.”

Crawley said there is now a demand for new customer experiences and a basic workforce innovation mandate for improved efficiencies.

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Peter Crawley of PCC Integrates, a company that specializes in smart buildings and smart technology, stated the real challenge now is to build an efficient workplace environment that responds to digital transformation.

Building infrastructure is now shifting to Power over Ethernet technology and zone cabling. This is a standards-based approach to support convergence of delivery. It creates a flexible, future-proof infrastructure for voice, data, building devices and wireless access points.

“We are now using power over Ethernet lighting with catalyst switches and sensor-based access to workplace analytics with fixture-level visibility,” he said. “By converging five networks into one, we gain greater energy efficiency.”

Crawley said there is now a demand for new customer experiences and a basic workforce innovation mandate for improved efficiencies.
Bill C-344, a proposed community-benefits requirement making its way through the Senate, has elicited vocal opposition from the Canadian Construction Association (CCA). The bill would enact a number of unfair changes to the procurement process. While the industry waits on the final decision, many companies continue doing the community work they’ve always done—regardless of government policy. These four stories highlight just a few of the many ways southern Ontario benefits from the construction industry.

Supporting the next generation of tradespeople
The Cowan Foundation is a philanthropic body with many ties to the industry. It has a formidable record of charitable work. This October, the Foundation unveiled one of its largest donations to date. It pledged $4 million, which is the highest private donation Conestoga College has received in 50 years, to support the College’s $58 million expansion of their Waterloo Campus.
“The idea for the project began when many Syrian refugees were coming to Canada,” says Maureen Cowan, chair of the foundation board. “We asked, what can we really do to help all newcomers so that they can have successful lives here?”

The answer, the board decided, was to support language training, career counselling and skilled trades training that would lead to meaningful work. The companies owned by the Cowan family, including The Guarantee Company of North America and Cowan Insurance Group, work closely with many construction companies, and a common concern in recent years has been lack of skilled labour.

“Society at large has tended to focus more on general university education as opposed to trades education,” Cowan explains. With an entire generation of tradespeople approaching retirement, securing workers for the future is an ongoing challenge.

The Conestoga project will provide the skilled trades training and career counselling, not only to newcomers to Canada, but also to anyone seeking a
career in the skilled trades.

The new campus will bring to life the vision of Dr. John Tibbits, President of Conestoga College. He has long wanted to see the college support the skilled trades even further by offering state-of-the-art facilities and programming. In his honour, the Cowan Foundation dubbed the new campus the John W. Tibbits Campus of Conestoga College. The expansion will accommodate more than 2,500 additional students each year.

**Promoting the region's charitable causes**

S.G. Cunningham is a family-owned construction business that has operated in Waterloo for more than 30 years. Sisters Georgia and Beverley have supported many charitable initiatives over the years.

“Georgia has spent 30 years being so active in the community,” says Beverley. “She’s shared her leadership and her vision, and it naturally inspired our Cunningham Corner project.”

The project, which is still in its fledgling stages, began when the company purchased a former car dealership to become its new office. The intersection is a bustling part of the city. The Cunninghams immediately thought about erecting a sign to act as a sort of urban bulletin board.

Georgia says, “We thought, wouldn’t it be great if it could be a fabulous corner where not-for-profits would be able to let us know what they’re doing for the community?”

Early discussions of the idea gained support from St. Mary’s Hospital Foundation, the local food bank and others. The only obstacle is securing the necessary permissions from the city council. A by-law restricts third-party advertising to the city council. If all goes well, the sign will go live in 2019.

“What I love is that we’ve all really put aside our business hats,” Beverley says. “We just want to do something with this amazing property that we’re blessed to have our business on.”

**Providing youth mentorship through athletics**

Three years ago, the National Basketball League of Canada had 10 franchises. Jason Ball, president of Ball Construction, saw an opportunity to give back to the community by making it 11.

“We had attended a championship game in London and the arena had probably 7,000 people in it,” Ball explains. “It had the atmosphere of the NBA, and so many other great things. We decided to put up the money to start a franchise in Kitchen-Waterloo.”

Ball Construction put forth 52 percent of the cost, with the remainder provided by two partners. The KW Titans were officially founded in 2016. The

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Cowan Insurance donated $4 million to Conestoga College, and named the school the John W. Tibbits Campus of Conestoga College.
first year, Ball and his partners put most of their effort into building awareness of the team. As support builds, the franchise is able to do even more. Each game promotes a regional charity initiative.

This year, the carpenters’ union teamed up with Renos for Heroes to raise funds in support of accessible housing for veterans. Much of the team’s community work, though, is focused on youth mentorship.

“Every year, we have the players visit schools to visit kids,” says Ball. “All the players are trained in suicide prevention, mental health and bullying.” The players spend time in the gym shooting hoops while also providing support in these areas.

“We’ve had teachers send letters to say thank you,” he says, “There’s just a lot of great interaction.”

**Giving children the gift of reading**

Paul Seibel, president of ACL Steel, has a very talented daughter: Amy Seibel published the children’s book *You're All Mine* last year. Paul decided that he wanted to share his daughter’s talent in a way that would benefit the community.

This November, Paul will donate more than 80 copies of the book to children of GVCA members. The books will be given out at a children’s Christmas party that GVCA began last year to great reception. Amy Seibel will attend to read from the book and do signings, which Paul feels is a great opportunity for the children.

“I think it’s always nice for them to see someone other than construction workers that are there,” he says.

ACL Steel also covers the attendance fee for all of its employees, so that all the employees’ children will have an opportunity to take part.

“We really like to support the GVCA,” says Paul. “There’s always so many things going on.”

In fact, the Christmas party donation is just one example of ACL Steel’s community contributions. The staff are long-time participants in the Ride for Cancer, as well as a number of other events that donate to cancer research. ■
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Last March, part of a floor under construction at Oregon State University collapsed after it became ‘de-laminated’ (unglued) at one end. It was a 4- by 20-foot panel of cross-laminated timber, or CLT. Ironically, it was part of a new building that will house the university’s College of Forestry. While no one was injured, the incident has raised questions (once again) about the risks of CLT.

CLT is a type of ‘engineered’ or ‘manufactured’ wood, where two-inch-thick boards of wood are glued and pressed together to form larger wood panels. To make CLT, boards are stacked, one on top of the other, with each layer running at a 90° angle to the one above / below it. This is done to strengthen it.

Developed in Europe in the 1990s, CLT is now being used more in North America. While some argue that it is strong and environmentally friendly, more people are taking a harder look at its structural performance, its risk related to fire, and the health and safety of occupants within it.

The fact that CLT is glued together raises concerns regarding water. Fire may have a more devastating impact on property, but it’s water that causes the most building damage overall (think flooded basements and leaky roofs). It’s therefore conceivable that a material made with layers of glue could, over years and decades, become unglued.

CLT is also at risk of structural degradation due to ‘rolling shear failure’, which is cracking within the wood. It happens when CLT panels — usually flooring — are under heavy load-bearing pressure. The pressure causes layers in the panels to break down and separate. Often, they are inner layers, resulting in compromised durability that wouldn’t be visible to occupants.

The threat of fire is perhaps the greatest concern surrounding CLT, especially in light of incidents such as the 2017 tragedy at London’s Grenfell Tower, and similar cladding-related fires that have ravaged skyscrapers in Dubai. Building and fire officials around the world are now shining a harsher light on seemingly cost-effective but potentially more flammable building materials.

In lab-based testing, CLT initially chars on the outer layer, reducing the burning effect on the inner layers. Commonly, CLT panels have a two-hour fire rating, meaning that it takes two hours before fire fully penetrates the inner layers and destroys its strength. However, experience has shown that a fire set in a lab does not always mirror real life. Today’s building fires are fuelled by an abundance of man-made materials, from foam-filled couches and acrylic rugs to polyester curtains. These materials can burn hot and fast enough to cause floors to collapse in 20 minutes. Which begs the question: Can CLT withstand these conditions?

The consensus among many firefighters is that there hasn’t been enough testing to accurately determine how CLT performs in the real world. And in fact, the International Building Code (IBC) has been reluctant to recognize CLT as a structural material, resisting pressure to increase the maximum number of storeys allowed in CLT-constructed buildings.

Now, due to industry lobbying, it appears that codes in the U.S. are moving in this direction.

Regardless, expert bodies such as the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) are pushing back. The IAFC recently issued a statement rejecting proposed building-code changes allowing CLT in tall wooden buildings. In the statement, the IAFC noted that “the changes are overreaching and lack true technical support for many concepts proposed.” The IAFC questions a great deal of the assumption made regarding how CLT holds up in
real fires. “The fire service has a duty to respond to incidents for the life of the buildings. These proposals appear to not be in full disclosure and lack aspects of technical support and justification for the concept as a whole.”

While the performance of CLT may be in doubt, there have been broader concerns about the testing of wood products in general. In 1999, the UK Timber Frame Association (UKTFA) conducted a study that found timber framing to be fire-safe (timber framing had been prohibited in England following the Great Fire of London in 1666).

The study involved igniting a six-storey timber building in an aircraft hangar. The flames had moved through the first two storeys, at which point firefighters put them out. The UKTFA neglected to say that later that night, the fire reigned. By the time firefighters arrived back at the hangar, all six storeys were, according to BBC News, “completely burned out. Brickwork cracked and the heat was so severe the fire officer evacuated his men for fear the building was about to collapse.” News of this ‘second fire’ was kept under cover until 2003, “by which time,” says the BBC, “timber framed buildings, which are cheaper to make, were already sprouting over London for the first time since 1666.”

It’s a fact that wood is limited in its ability to resist fire. Now, however, some scientists are also casting doubt on its eco-friendliness. A recent study — conducted, in fact, by Oregon State University — points to the clear-cutting of forests by the lumber industry as a major cause of carbon pollution. Forests are natural filters that absorb large amounts of carbon; when they are cut, the carbon is released. One scientist who contributed to the study says “we’ve been giving wood too much credit” as a green building material.

In other words, it may be healthier to keep the wood ‘alive’ than to cut it down and build with it.

CLT has attracted significant negative attention from a health standpoint following controversy that erupted in 2016 over laminate wood products from China. It was discovered that the products, mainly flooring, contained extremely high levels of formaldehyde. Tens of thousands of consumers were affected, and worried homeowners hastily ripped out floors to get rid of it.

In response to the scare, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) studied the issue. The CDC’s follow-up report stated: “Our calculations show that if homes already contain new materials or products that release formaldehyde, the new floorboards could add a large amount of additional formaldehyde to what is already in the air from other sources. This additional amount of formaldehyde increases the risk for breathing problems as well as short-term eye, nose, and throat irritation for everyone.”

While manufacturers have worked to address the problem, the fact remains that much of today’s engineered flooring contains some formaldehyde. Formaldehyde is a carcinogenic gas that is released over time. Although it is present in many household materials, ranging from paint to insulation, the potential increase resulting from using CLT as a building material can push levels significantly higher.

Regardless, entire buildings are being built of CLT, and it is being touted as comparable to concrete in terms of its strength and durability. That comparison, however, does not appear to be reflected in building insurance. A study conducted by Boston College on behalf of the U.S.-based National Ready Mixed Concrete Association found that builder’s risk insurance cost 22-72% less for concrete buildings, and commercial property insurance was 14-65% lower.

Clearly, CLT remains controversial. Concerns related to building strength, fire resistance, and health and safety continue to chip away at CLT, with organizations such as the IAFC publicly opposing its widespread use.

All of which indicates that advocates likely will continue to face resistance — and will have their work cut out for them.

Paul Hargest is President of the Canadian Concrete Masonry Producers Association.
GVCA Members

Win Gold & Silver WSIB Awards

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board’s (WSIB) Small Business Health and Safety Leadership Awards recognize outstanding health and safety programs in small businesses with fewer than 50 employees. WSIB supports small businesses that believe workplace health and safety is a priority.

S.G. Cunningham won the gold level award. Beverly Cunningham says her team was excited just to be shortlisted for the award.

“When we won, it reinforced a strong sense of achievement and sent a ripple of pride throughout the entire company,” she says.

“We’ve been working on developing

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Georgia Bolger and Beverly Cunningham accept the Gold Small Business Health and Safety Leadership Award.
best practices in safety, and it was wonderful to be recognized. Many companies aspire to high standards, but this award acknowledges that we are actually performing at an exceptional level. That means so much to our clients, to our team and to the professionals at WSIB. We’re so pleased and we believe this will propel us to even greater heights.”

Zero Environmental won the silver level award. Michaela Zehr says the company is honoured to be presented with the award.

“Health and safety have always been a top priority in our business and we strive to blaze the trail for others as well,” she says.

“As a company that works with hazardous material daily, we feel an immense obligation to our workers, our community, and the environment to practice safety in all elements of our work. Winning this award allowed us to expand our health and safety program even further and give back to our conscientious and hard-working employees.”

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Leigh Ann Stinson and Michaela Zehr accept the Silver Small Business Health and Safety Leadership Award.

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**Health and safety have always been a top priority in our business and we strive to blaze the trail for others as well.**

– Michaela Zehr, Zero Environmental

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