“I dream of buildings”

Rich Haldenby, University of Waterloo
School of Architecture

Shattering construction’s glass ceiling

Conestoga Roofing innovates and triples growth

Recent changes to Canada Labour Code
Turning 40 is a milestone for most of us. It signifies a change in mindset from youthful enthusiasm to staid maturity. It’s the age at which we replace our ability to get by on talent alone with the wisdom to apply our skills to the situations to which they are best suited.

The GVCA turns 40 this year—specifically on September 12—but I wouldn’t for a moment say that the same characteristics apply to our association as they do to people. In fact, in the context of other construction associations, I’d count us among the new kids on the block. Some local construction associations across the country have been in business for 100 or more years. In comparison to them, we’re 40 years young!

Our association has served its members well for four decades. As per our charter values, we have and will always continue to promote, advance, protect and represent the interests of our members, to oppose or support legislation that affects the construction industry, and to promote good feelings and harmony among those engaged in our industry.

Yet times are changing. I don’t have to tell you that. As the industry evolves, I think it is incumbent on us to shift our focus from being an entity that represents only the interests of contractors to one that includes all industry stakeholders. I’ll give you two reasons why that’s the case. The first is that the idea of construction as only a business for contractors is outdated. No building gets built these days without the contributions of an entire team. The authoritarian style of the general contractor first and foremost is—thankfully—gone. Increasingly, we all see how collaboration from the owner on down to the last supplier makes for better projects.

The second reason why I think our association needs to be more inclusive is that in order to understand the full extent of the challenges faced by our members, we need to hear from all stakeholders. To hear only one side of a story is to receive only part of the story. By changing our focus to be more inclusive, we gain a better appreciation of the full scope of the issues faced by our members. I will say that despite such change, one thing that we will never compromise is our desire to help members.

Hardly a day goes by that I don’t have a call from a sub-contractor, general contractor, consultant or supplier with a question about a project that is currently out for bid, a contract, or a legislative requirement that is either safety or a compliance issue.

The best part of my job is being able to help members, or direct them to someone that can help them. The challenges in the industry continue to be many. The ground is always shifting under our feet and we need to continue to be nimble and knowledgeable so that we can be up to speed to help our members.

Here’s to 40 more great years!
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Everything old is new again

I’ve been lucky enough to work in our industry for 35 years. I started at Ball Construction in 1979 and haven’t looked back since. During that time, I’ve seen the latest trends come and go. I’ve watched people celebrate great successes and I’ve seen people lose sleep over seemingly insurmountable obstacles. And do you know what I have learned through all this? It’s that challenges, at their core, don’t change much.

Think about that for a moment. I’m not trying to be cynical. I really do think that our industry sees and reacts to cycles that occurred five, 10, 20, 30 or even 40 years ago. Take infrastructure spending, for example. In the 1950s, Canada was rife with it. Government could not spend enough money to keep construction busy and to meet the insatiable demand for new schools, roads and hospitals that Canadian communities demanded. A lull followed. A long lull, if you will. In fact, it would not be until the late 1990s and early 2000s before governments again put the focus on infrastructure spending—once the facilities they built 50 years ago reached the end of their serviceable life cycles. And here we are today, toward the end of what has been a very profitable, very necessary and well sustained period of public-sector spending on roads, schools and hospitals.

Infrastructure spending isn’t the only cyclical trend I can point to. At one time or another, we all worried about succession planning, competition from abroad, the impact of technology, and the poor quality of construction documentation. And yet, in turn, we overcame each. True, every one of these shifted our industry slightly in one way or another (communication has been permanently changed by email, for example), but none brought the doom and gloom (or instant success) that we feared or hoped for initially.

So what’s the take-away here? It’s this: cycles come and go. They always have and they always will. Those who stay in business longest and are most successful are able to see these cycles as they develop and apply the lessons they learned from the last cycle to the current one. What did we learn from succession planning 30 years ago that we can apply to today’s apparent crisis? How did we local contractors differentiate ourselves from major multinationals 20 years ago? Will BIM really transform the way our industry works?

I’m not saying that the answer to every one of today’s questions has its roots in the past. Some simply do not. What I am saying is that it pays to keep a careful eye on trends and to meet each with a measured reaction. Don’t get too excited by the highs; don’t get brought down too far by the lows. Ride out the latest wave by doing what you do best. Before you know it, you’ll find that you’ve gained the wisdom to react to each with confidence and intelligence.
Employers know that not every aspect of this new technology is positive. Studies suggest access to the internet during business hours can reduce workplace productivity by up to 40 percent as employees turn their minds from work to social interaction and play. Workplace bullying and harassment is also on the rise due in part to the ability of colleagues to reach each other secretly via the internet rather than publically by the water-cooler. Left unmanaged, internet misuse and abuse in the workplace can devastate an organization’s good name and result in legal liability.

Bruce Power LP learned this lesson well in September 2009 when articles splashed across the Toronto Star and Globe and Mail reporting that at least 40 employees and contractors had been suspended or discharged for sending offensive emails from company accounts. In upholding the suspensions of a group of employees, one arbitrator held that the “offensive emails distributed under email addresses bearing the employer’s name can reflect poorly on the employer…[and] result in harm to the employer’s reputation and embarrassment for the employer.” The emails were described as racist, misogynist, sexist, homophobic, containing sexual content, degrading to women and vulgar. The arbitrator also commented that sexually degrading material communicated over Bruce Power’s email network could create a poisoned work environment and expose the organization to liability under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Employee (mis)use of internet and social media in the workplace

The internet and social media have changed our world. Communications that 20 years ago took days if not weeks to make their way through a workplace, now take mere seconds to reach tens, hundreds and even millions of people around the world. Theoretically, this unprecedented access to information should mean we are better informed and more productive than we were in any previous generation. But are we?
Fortunately, there are several steps an organization can take to reduce the potential for internet misuse, and address infractions before they cause serious reputational injury. At the very least, we recommend organizations consider the following:

**Develop an internet use policy:** An effective policy clearly and directly outlines permitted and prohibited uses of workplace technology and, at a minimum, communicates the following:

- There should be no expectation of privacy as it relates to the use of company technology; the employer has a right to and will monitor how workplace technology is used.
- Publishing negative comments or images is strictly prohibited. This prohibition should not be limited to postings about the employer or other employees, but include anything that may negatively impact the employer’s reputation (e.g. defamatory, offensive, threatening, harassing etc.).
- Publishing confidential information about the company, its employees or customers is strictly prohibited.
- A process for making and investigating complaints.
- A warning that any violation of the policy may result in discipline, up to and including termination for cause.

**Monitor usage:** An internet use policy will have value only if it is capable of being enforced. Inexpensive devices and services exist that allow an organization to monitor employee technology use including time spent online, sites accessed and content downloaded and uploaded. Services may also alert an organization every time its name is mentioned in a public blog or social media platform, even if the communication does not originate at the workplace. That said, an organization should be aware of how internet monitoring may negatively affect employee morale, and not impose a system that is more intrusive than necessary to achieve reasonable business goals.

**Enforce the policy consistently:** Even the most comprehensive policy will not protect an organization from internet misuse unless the policy is implemented and enforced fairly and consistently. A policy should also be revisited from time-to-time to ensure it remains responsive to the employer’s goals and relevant as new technologies emerge.

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The good news is that you can gain some control over your psychological responses—unlike the financial markets. Here are seven psychological pitfalls of investing, and some tips to avoid them.

1. Optimism
People have a natural tendency to overestimate the likelihood of positive results on everything from the weather to investing. This largely explains why people are so often disappointed by their investment performance – they simply felt they would do better based on this psychological bias.

Avoiding the feeling of disappointment is one good reason why you should consciously compensate for this natural optimism. If you base your financial goals on unrealistically positive expectations, you will almost certainly fall short of these goals. This can affect your anticipated retirement date, amount of retirement income, or the value of your estate.

How much should you compensate for this bias? Some people are better calibrated than others, but studies indicate that in general if you feel there is a 99 percent chance of something happening, the actual odds are closer to 85 percent.

2. Overconfidence
Another powerful psychological bias is overconfidence. Just as people tend to be overly optimistic about the probability of positive results, they also tend to be overconfident about their own talents. Some investors think that they can control largely unpredictable events such as stock market volatility.

This leads to one of the most common pitfalls of investing: market timing. Confident in their own abilities, many investors try to time the market so that they always buy low and sell high – despite the fact that not even the most accomplished professional investors can do this consistently.

Recognizing this tendency towards overconfidence is the first step towards dealing with it. Try to be honest about your abilities, and if you find yourself falling into traps such as market timing, take a step back and rethink your approach.

3. Hindsight
Hindsight is the tendency to believe that after something has happened, you knew all along that it would – even though you didn’t. This tendency can lead you to believe that events are far more predictable than they really are, raising unrealistic expectations about how well your investments will perform and your advisor’s ability to foretell the future, among other things. If you find yourself confidently declaring that you “knew it all along”, ask yourself whether you really did. As with optimism and overconfidence, you may have to consciously compensate for hindsight.

4. Obsession
Do you get anxious when the stock markets are volatile? Or do you feel optimistic that everything will turn out fine? Both reactions – natural parts of your psychological makeup – can actually impede your progress towards your investment goals.

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Take a step back and look at the big picture. Are you on track to achieving your longer-term goals? Are you comfortable with the level of investment risk in your portfolio? If not, you may have to make adjustments to stop obsessing about short-term events.

5. Denial
When stock markets go down, investors can sometimes panic and sell what is still fundamentally a good investment. The flipside of this is denial – when investors continue to hold an investment that has gone bad, thinking it will eventually come back. It can be hard, but when an investment has fundamentally deteriorated, it may be time to sell. Having an investment discipline in place with specific, rational criteria for buying and selling can help you overcome this tendency.

6. Greed
The desire to “get rich quick” compels many investors to take bigger risks than they should. When the risk doesn’t pay off, it can jeopardize their financial security. That doesn’t mean you should never take a risk – it’s a normal part of investing. The key is to take well calculated risks within a properly diversified investment portfolio, which is designed with your personal risk tolerance in mind. That way, when the occasional risk doesn’t pay off, the impact is mitigated by the other investments in your portfolio.

7. Herd instinct
When we see other people doing something, we have a natural tendency to think that it must be a good thing and we should do it too. This “herd instinct” is often behind sharp ups and downs in the financial markets. When other people are buying, propelling the market upwards, we buy too, sending the market even higher. Similarly, when other people sell in a panic, sending the market downwards, we sell too, fueling the decline. Unfortunately, this often results in buying at the height of the market euphoria, or selling close to the depths of the panic. Instead of following the herd, follow a disciplined investment strategy based on logic and reason.

Successful investing over the long term is less about how the markets are doing than how we react to what the markets are doing. Unfortunately, many of our natural psychological reactions – like denial, panic or greed – can impede our long-term success.

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Recent changes to Canada Labour Code

Significant amendments to Part III of the Canada Labour Code came into force April 1. Essentially, the changes involve implementing a statutory complaints framework for unpaid wages and other violations of the code (with new time limits), creating an internal administrative review process for payment orders and notice of unfounded complaint and imposing a new 30-day time limit for payment of vacation owing in the case of termination.

More specifically, the major changes involve:

Establishment of a time limit to pay vacation pay on termination of employment

This change eliminates confusion by aligning requirements set out in the code. Now, amendments will ensure that employers pay employees any vacation pay owed within 30 days (instead of “forthwith”) after the day on which employment ends.

Establishment of statutory complaint mechanism

The amendments will allow employees to file complaints in writing to Employment and Social
HR IN CONSTRUCTION

Development Canada - Labour Program inspectors if they believe their employer has contravened any provision of Part III of the Code.

It is important to note that employees will have to file a complaint within six months from the last date on which an employer was required to pay wages or for non-wage complaints, from the day on which the subject of the complaint arose.

Inspectors will now have the power to: suspend a complaint if they believe an employee must take certain measures before the complaint is considered reject a complaint under certain circumstances (e.g. if it is frivolous, has been settled or should be dealt with under a collective agreement's grievance procedure)

Employees will be able to request a review within 15 days of being notified of a decision to reject a complaint. These additional provisions will also authorize inspectors to assist parties in settling complaints, where possible.

Limits on the period that may be covered by a payment order

The current wage recovery system is an administrative tool for the collection of an employee’s unpaid wages or other amounts owing, and provides a route of appeal to parties who disagree with an inspector’s determination. The amendments will set limits on the period that

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may be covered by a payment order, since currently there is no such established time limit.

A payment order will cover wages and other amounts owing for a period starting 12 months (or 24 months for vacation pay) before the date on which the complaint is made, the date on which employment was terminated or the date on which inspection started (if a payment order results from proactive inspection).

An inspector can issue a notice of unfounded complaint if the inspector concludes that an employer has paid to an employee all wages and other amounts under Part III for the six-month period preceding the complaint.

Administrative review mechanism for payment orders and notices of unfounded complaint

The amendments will provide for an administrative review mechanism aimed at allowing the Minister to internally review the inspector’s decision. A person affected by an inspector’s payment order or notice of unfounded complaint could request a review of the decision with written reasons and within 15 days of service of the payment order or notice of unfounded complaint. Alternatively, the Minister could also refer a complex case directly to a referee, rather than through the new review mechanism.

It is important to note that an employer or corporate director requesting a review would have to pay the Minister the amount indicated in the payment order. A payment order or a notice of unfounded complaint could be confirmed, amended or rescinded on review.

Also, the decision on review could be further appealed to a referee, but only on a question of law or jurisdiction.

What does this mean for employers?

Practically speaking, the changes are administrative in nature and aim to improve compliance, expedite processes, reduce costs and facilitate resolution of complaints by inspectors. But employers should be aware of some significant changes.
Most significantly, the new complaint mechanism is anticipated to become more efficient and effective in dealing with complaints by setting reasonable time limits for filing complaints and encouraging parties to work together to resolve their differences. To that end, the changes add clarity and create significant cost savings.

Moreover, the new internal review process aims to reduce the costs associated with appointing referees for the Labour Program. The goal is to improve efficiency and flexibility by creating a quicker resolution of complaints. Essentially, employers should remember the following time limits regarding the making of complaints and the recovery of unpaid wages through payment orders:

- A six-month time limit on complaints of non-payment of wages or other amounts to which an employee is entitled under Part III (i.e. from the last day on which the employer was required to pay those wages or other amounts under this Part)
- A six-month time limit on any other complaint (i.e. six months from the day on which the subject-matter of the complaint arose)
- A 12-month time limit on the recovery of unpaid wages through payment orders and a 24-month time limit in respect of unpaid vacation
- A 30-day time limit for payment of vacation owing under section 188 of the Code concerning termination of employment during year

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New self-aware construction technology

New technology known as the Internet of Things makes equipment more self-aware. High-tech experts say it could help construction companies reduce costs and save lives.
Imagine a job site where wireless sensors detect that the rebar stock is depleted—and software attached to those sensors automatically emails a rebar supplier to place an order. That's an example of the Internet of Things in action. Tech market watchers say it could help construction companies save money, operate more efficiently and improve safety.

The Internet of Things is a network of objects with sensors that can communicate online. With sensor technology like RFID and appropriate software, any item can be linked to the Internet of Things: a heart-monitor implant, a biochip transponder on a farm animal, a GPS module in a front-end loader.

The technology can connect to other software and trigger actions. In the construction industry, those actions could include texting a supervisor about equipment theft, or scheduling an appointment for vehicle maintenance.

Robert Lutz, product management director at communications-technology company Systech Corp., suggests that construction firms will benefit from the Internet of Things. “With advanced tagging and tracking of materials, technology can vastly reduce the cost incurred by businesses for lost or misrouted items,” he says in a recent blog post.

Michael Battista is an analyst at Info-Tech Research Group, a technology consultancy. He says the Internet of Things enables construction companies to make equipment somewhat self-aware and able to reach out for maintenance. “In the short term, that can be as simple as a bulldozer texting a repairman when it is about to break down. In the long term, maybe it can order replacement parts for itself and communicate with another machine that can do basic repairs.”

Nigel Wallis, analyst at tech research firm IDC Canada, says the Internet of Things will benefit large projects first, such as mines in Alberta’s oil patch. Companies working there use giant dump trucks that have to be in peak operating condition at all times. In time, however, Internet of Things technology will come down in price so companies working on smaller projects can also benefit, he says.

Although the construction industry isn’t always the first to embrace new high-tech gadgets and software, technology analysts say the Internet of Things will spread quickly in this sector. As Battista put it, “managing supplies, parts, and personnel is a typical killer app for the Internet of Things, and construction relies on these functions more than most industries.” He describes construction as “a sweet spot” for Internet of Things applications.

“In the short term, that can be as simple as a bulldozer texting a repairman when it is about to break down. In the long term, maybe it can order replacement parts for itself and communicate with another machine that can do basic repairs.”
Manufacture parts on site, on demand

Technology companies are devising a number of potential Internet of Things applications for the construction sector. Construction-software provider FieldLens describes in an article on its website a scenario involving sensors and a 3D printer: a construction company could connect the printer to supply-monitoring sensors. If those sensors detect that a part is required, they can fire up the printer to make the piece that’s needed.

Recover stolen equipment, save lives

Nigel Wallis, an analyst at high-tech research firm IDC Canada, suggests companies could use the Internet of Things to deal with stolen equipment. If someone were to steal a truck, sensors attached to the vehicle and specialized software would work together to send the site supervisor a text message to say the machine has been taken off the job site. The software would also automatically call up the insurance documents associated with that device, so the supervisor has that information at hand immediately when talking to police and the company’s insurance provider about the theft.

Wallis says certain companies use the Internet of Things as a worker-safety system. In the oil patch, employees of some businesses carry RFID tags. Sensors around the job sites use the tags to track where people are. If something happens and the company has to clear an area, managers know which employees they need to warn.

“I can see that happening for high-rise construction,” Wallis says. “The sites are so packed and people are on multiple levels. If there’s a problem, you know where people are and you can respond accordingly.”
Fleet management on steroids

Some construction companies already benefit from the Internet of Things. Firms that use Trimble Navigation Ltd.'s TrimFleet TrimView AGG software can identify the nearest vehicle available for a job. John Deere’s JD Link Machine Monitoring system catalogues machine and operator productivity. And Caterpillar Inc.’s Cat Product Link application has a geo-fencing function that sends an alert to a manager’s mobile phone when a vehicle moves outside of a specific area.
A message from Ontario’s Chief Prevention Officer

Falls from heights are major hazards for workers in all workplaces, but particularly in the construction sector where they are the number one cause of critical injuries and fatalities.

In the construction sector alone, nine workers died and 71 received critical injuries last year because of falls at work. These tragedies are unacceptable and preventable. That is why the government has developed training standards to support quality and consistent training for workers who work at heights. We all need to get the message out to employers and workers in the construction sector to avoid hazards and be careful when working at heights.

By law, employers must ensure all workers are protected when working at heights. Every employer in Ontario should:

- identify falls from heights dangers in the workplace,
- ensure controls are in place to protect workers,
- train workers on how to work safely at heights, and
- ensure workers are provided with appropriate personal protective equipment and gear.

Workers also have a responsibility to take steps to ensure their own safety. Every worker who works at heights should:

- be aware of workplace fall dangers and hazards,
- be protected by guardrails, covers or a fall-protection system,
- be supported through safety training in the workplace, and
- always refuse to do unsafe work.

Information to help protect you is available at the Ministry of Labour and its workplace partners.

Work safe to prevent injuries and illness.

Coca continue to monitor WSIB reform

In its mid-year report to members, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations (COCA) offered an update on various current files. Among them was the council’s ongoing work on reform at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

COCA continues to monitor events at the WSIB carefully and continues to meet with senior officials at the provincial compensation agency to provide the views of our membership. COCA serves on two of the WSIB Chair’s advisory committees and works with our members and senior WSIB managers to ensure the provincial compensation agency continues to serve the needs of construction employers.

Consultations regarding the implementation of the recommendations made by Doug Stanley in his report Pricing Fairness have been delayed until later in 2014, as the WSIB has turned its attention to the implementation of new IT systems. The implementation of the Stanley Report, to whatever extent undertaken by the WSIB, is designed to inject a sense of fairness into the system so that individual employers understand and believe the premiums they are paying are fair and appropriate for their individual businesses. Because of the inconsistent way the WSIB has calculated premiums rates in the past, today’s premium rates are significantly out of alignment. The implementation of the Stanley recommendations will likely see the phase-in of various employer rate increases and decreases. We are anticipating no increase in rates for 2015.

In a pre-election announcement, Premier Wynne committed to extending presumptive WSIB coverage to six more cancers for firefighters. This move will place a significant new financial burden on municipalities and their ratepayers.

Also of interest during the period under review was Bill 146, a government bill which, if passed, would amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act in a way that would transfer the premium and accident costs of injuries to temporary workers to the employer that retained the workers from the temporary help agency that supplied the workers. This change would dramatically alter the legal landscape with respect to the obligations of construction employers who use temporary agencies to supply workers.

The overall performance of the WSIB continues to improve. Injured workers are returning to work sooner, the result of better access to medical care, investment returns have been strong, the number of claims continues to trend downward and the unfunded liability, now in the $11-billion range, continues to decline. However, mandatory registrations by independent operators for WSIB coverage still have not met expectations.

CCA speaks against government’s mandates apprentice procurement initiative

The federal government’s new apprentice procurement initiative, which came into effect on June 30, mandates companies bidding on jobs issued by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) and Defence Construction Canada (DCC) to use as many apprentices as possible on these projects. Some in the industry, including the Canadian Construction Association (CCA), say this approach is flawed.

CCA president Michael Atkinson recently met with the director of policy for the federal Ministry of Finance and outlined the following concerns.

We feel very strongly that introducing contract quotas or other mandatory practices concerning the hiring of apprentices on federal construction projects will not be effective. The policy is flawed because:

- It has been our experience that mandated, contract quotas do not lead to the desired change in practice in the long run.
- The vast majority of construction contracts let by federal contracting authorities, (i.e. PWGSC, DCC, etc.), are low-valued contracts on which smaller firms would be bidding. Over 60 percent of the employers in the construction industry employ less than five people and 99 percent are considered by Statistics Canada to be small businesses.
- There are fewer apprenticeable trades on infrastructure/civil construction projects than building construction projects and yet the former are for the most part the projects contracted by or funded by the federal government.

On building construction projects, the prime or general contractor which contracts with the federal contracting authority is not the entity that typically brings labour to the work site. Those employers are the trade contractors normally engaged by the prime or general contractor as subcontractors. As a result there is no privity of contract between the Crown and the targeted employers and enforceability then becomes the unwelcome purview of the prime contractor.

A number of provincial governments have introduced different measures for provincial and provincially funded projects in their respective provinces. Most do not include quotas or mandatory hires.

Quotas would introduce a further “red tape” burden to federal construction contracting that could deter contractors from bidding federal construction work.
What can the construction industry do to get more women into leadership roles? That's the central question behind a three-year study being conducted by the Canadian Association of Women in Construction (CAWIC).

Beginning in September, the association wants to talk to at least 60 female volunteers from across Ontario, Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador. It wants women who work in all non-management jobs—tradesworkers, apprentices, even students—to share their experiences, success stories and challenges. The aim of this initial phase of research, says CAWIC director Tammy Evans, is to discover the barriers to bringing women into construction and those that prevent them from rising through the industry's ranks.

“Women still represent about four percent of the construction industry workforce, yet the comprise 54 percent of the total population,” she says. “In the past two to three decades, female representation in the construction industry hasn’t changed. Yet there is a natural fit for women wanting to enter the construction workforce, given that the industry is about to be faced with a real shortage of skilled workers.”

CAWIC will aggregate the data it discovers during this consultative phase and then feed it back to a group of participating employers. The employers will then be asked to develop strategies to resolve such issues. The end goal of the study is to present a report on the barriers women face and the proposed solutions to each to industry and government.

“This is the first time this type of research has been conducted and implemented with the participation of industry,” says Evans. “Our goal is to create an action plan for construction that employers will take ownership over and use to bring more women into the construction workforce and into leadership roles in the industry.”
It used to be that one of the major barriers to the entry of women into the skilled trades was strength. Women were seen to not be as strong as men, and construction was seen to be a rough and tumble job that at times demanded brute force. And while it’s still undoubtedly a physically difficult job, machines now do most of the heavy work that our bodies used to.

According to Evans, the greatest barrier women face when working in construction is attitudinal. Women have traditionally held administrative roles in the industry rather than trades roles. There’s no reason that attitude cannot change, she says, but society has to make a conscious effort to encourage women to enter the trades workforce. That effort starts in the school system and must permeate through to the small and large construction companies that have always relied on men to perform leadership roles.

“Government and industry both have roles to play to bring more women into construction,” says Evans. “Government needs to open more trades training courses that are suited to the needs of women; industry needs to make changes to accommodate women, such as separate change areas, separate toilet facilities, even teaching construction safety in a way that meets the precise needs of pregnant workers.”

These small changes can help change the mindset of construction being a man’s industry.

It’s no secret that women were indispensable during the First and Second World Wars. While the men fought abroad, women mobilized themselves to perform essential roles in industry, nursing and other aspects of civil life.

Canada might not be involved in a war at present, but the critical—and growing—need for workers in the skilled trades could be a similarly powerful catalyst to mobilize women into joining the skilled trades.

“Construction has not adequately addressed its succession needs,” says CAWIC director Tammy Evans. “And yet women are still underrepresented and underpaid in the trades. There is a natural fit here between labour demand and supply.”
Don’t treat her like a girl.

Treat her like an Ironworker

Jamie McMillan is the founder of Journeyman, a national program that promotes, supports and mentors women in the skilled construction trades. She’s also a certified ironworker with the Hamilton local of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers. Jamie wasn’t always interested in a job in the skilled trades, yet she found herself applying for one in 2002 when she came to a crossroads in her life.
“After moving to Hamilton, I was unsatisfied with my means of income. I worked part time at a nursing home as a personal support worker and waitressed on the side. I knew I needed a change, but I was in my late 20s with bills to pay, so schooling did not seem like a viable option. I happened to catch up with an old high-school acquaintance one day who told me about a career in the ironworker trade. A few weeks later, knowing very little about the trade, I looked up the union hall address and walked there to apply. The rest is history.”

We spoke to Jamie about her experiences in the trades, what led her to create the Journeyman program (the term is a badge of status, not one of gender, she explains), and what she wants to accomplish next.

GVCA: Knowing that you would be one of only a handful of women (if any) on a job site, was it difficult for you to build up the confidence to work on those first few projects?

Jamie: I was very intimidated the first time I had to go to a job on my own. I still get nervous at times. It’s a lot different when you don’t know anyone. But I love being one of the boys, love to work hard, and I’m confident with the work I perform. The first thing I always tell people when I’m on a new job is, “Don’t treat me like a girl, treat me like an Ironworker.”

GVCA: Some women feel as though they have to work twice as hard to gain acceptance in male-dominated roles. Was that the case for you?

Jamie: In some cases, women have to work with opinionated men who take pride in the idea that the trades are for men. These are the men I most enjoy working with because they are the ones I get the most satisfaction impressing. I drive myself to work twice as hard as anyone else because it’s my personal belief that I’ll be taken more seriously if I do. And it’s not only women that have to work twice as hard to prove themselves, some men do too, especially apprentices and new hires.

GVCA: Before Journeyman, you made a point of networking with other women who were interested in the skilled trades. What were some of the concerns you heard from them?

Jamie: The most common concern I heard from young women is whether or not they have the physical strength to work in trades. Trades are not for everyone and physical strength is an asset. But with modern technology, mechanical advantages, and ergonomically friendly equipment, the trades have become easier on everyone. We are using our brains, not our backs by working smarter not harder.

GVCA: How did Journeyman come about?

Jamie: My love for my job made me extremely passionate about making others aware of the opportunities in the trades. I began brainstorming ideas to reach out and educate others. In 2011, I became the founder of the Journeyman initiative to promote, mentor, support and retain women in trades.

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Soon after, I wrote a letter to the Canadian Building Trades Unions (CBTU) after the president of my Ironworkers International got me in touch with [CBTU COO] Bob Blakely. Bob turned out to be a great support and fan of the initiative. He connected me with Lindsay Amundsen (the CBTU workforce coordinator and now Journeyman director). Together, Lindsay and I put together a proposal to make Journeyman a national CBTU program. The CBTU board accepted that proposal unanimously in 2013.

GVCA: It is helping to get the message out?

Jamie: Absolutely. With the CBTU’s funding and resources we were able to market, advertise and hire representatives. Journeyman has become a successful program with professional teams of women from coast to coast. We have been gaining momentum in both print and social media and bringing positive attention to the building trades unions.

GVCA: What’s next?

Jamie: We want to create a successful mentorship program of supportive men and women. We want to make a difference and educate the next generation about the amazing opportunities that exist in the skilled trades.

Personally, I’d like to see the percentage of women in trades grow from the current four percent to 25 percent. That’s a big goal, but we are passionate, drive women who are creating change one step at a time. Although our journey has just begun, we all know the sky is the limit.
CONESTOGA ROOFING

New owner brings new methods of success innovation and triples growth
n many respects, roofing hasn’t changed much in 100 years, but we certainly have changed how to do business in the roofing business,” says Mark Mollison, president of Conestoga Roofing. These changes have led to tripling growth since 2010, the year Mollison bought the well-established roofing company from retiring founder Dave Walden.

With a solid reputation and a well-stocked fleet, Mollison, an engineer, brought his knowledge and previous experience from Toyota Manufacturing Canada Inc. to his new role as company leader. While he readily admits some of his experiments have failed, he adheres to Toyota’s mantra, “safety, quality, productivity and cost”. Following this means costs are naturally reduced because when quality and productivity are high, there are fewer roof leaks that require a crew to return to the jobsite, and with workers highly trained in safety there are far fewer lost-time injuries.

As Mollison continues to reinvent Conestoga Roofing, he has taken on different challenges including new roof installation. Prior to Mollison’s assuming ownership, the company focused on re-roofing, maintenance and repairs, but with his engineering background, Mollison has taken the venerable firm into the design-install roofing business. Now Conestoga Roofing offers customers a full suite of roofing consultants, engineers, project management, estimators, Red-Seal certified roofers, and administrators.

In 2013, Conestoga Roofing tackled an immense project: installing a new 450,000-square foot roof for the Toronto Premium Outlets mall on Trafalgar Road in Halton. Working with PCL on this successful project proved that Conestoga Roofing had the chops—and the manpower—to take on projects of up to a million square feet.

Labour shortage? Use training

With a chronic shortage of people willing to work as roofers, Mollison has implemented an intensive training program that requires all roofers to obtain Red Seal Certification through the Conestoga/OIRGA Roofing Skills Training Centre, in Waterloo. This has two positive outcomes: current employees are continually exposed to training and potential employees can see a respectable career path that is not just about a decent wage, but also about gaining a valuable education in a growing trade.

This continual education extends to the administrative team as well. All staff members have undertaken a weeklong roofing course where they get practical experience on most ICI roofing practices. This hands-on knowledge allows them to better understand the challenges that roofers face and make smart purchasing decisions overall.

Through continual training in-class, on the job and by suppliers, Mollison says he is achieving cost savings through superior quality work. “When the guys don’t have to go back to the jobsite to fix a leak or know how to solve something before it becomes a problem, the company is immediately reducing costs,” he acknowledges.

Quality, to Mollison, is the ideal way to save on costs even in the most competitive bidding market.
Stop the leaks in overhead costs

Using readily available technology, Mollison tracks all overhead expenses in great detail, year-by-year, month-by-month looking for trends that indicate where improvements can be made. This detailed graphing of expenses recently revealed rising water costs that were due to an underground waterline leaking. Once fixed, water costs returned to normal. He also introduced the Japanese kanban system of cards that is used to control the logistical chain and implemented just in time practices to further streamline costs. Mollison simply re-invests his cost savings back into the company, which has allowed him to triple growth.

Don’t be afraid to innovate in unlikely places

Readily available and quality personal protective equipment and often-used tools are essential in the roofing trade, but Mollison realized that accountability for these items was not as diligent as

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it could be. Working with Fastenal, Mollison installed several industrial vending machines that dispense everything from safety goggles to cutters and ropes. As a consignment system, Mollison doesn’t have to invest in inventory until it is actually required. The workers have a personal code they input into the vending machine to dispense the required item. Knowing that they are tracked on usage, employees are more accountable for their gear, which results in lower equipment costs. Plus, they always have access to top-quality safety gear.

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‘I dream of buildings’

Rick Haldenby, an associate professor at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, is the lead behind a 10-week festival that celebrates the best in local architecture.
Several years ago, architecture professor Rick Haldenby hosted an exhibit called *Images of Progress* that looked at modern architecture in the Waterloo region. He says he learned a thing or two.

“The first was that this region had come to collect a surprising number of architectural awards, be they Governor General’s Awards, awards from the Ontario Association of Architects or National Urban Design Awards,” he says. “The second was that the tradition of post-war modern architecture that had been very strong locally between 1946 and 1972 had been largely forgotten, but was nonetheless important to the climate of local architecture.”

Haldenby filed those findings away until very recently when he was delivering a talk at the Waterloo Art Gallery on modern buildings. The gallery curator approached Haldenby, asking him to explore the question of modern architecture in Waterloo in a more ambitious and public way. Coincidentally, the community outreach group associated with the light rail transit project also expressed their support for such a program.

Thus, Building Waterloo Region (BWR), a 10-week celebration of design and architectural excellence in Waterloo Region, was born.

In form, BWR is a program of exhibitions at sites across the region. It is supplemented by walking tours, public forums and lectures to provide further opportunities for reflection and discussion on the future of the built environment in Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo.

Together, eight exhibitions trace the sources, phases of development and achievements of the region’s buildings. Each has its own thematic focus that contributes to the overall chronology of the program and shows the evolution of innovation and industry.

**Evolving Urban Landscapes** is a display of streetscapes from the past 40 years that have contributed to Waterloo Region’s sense of place.

**EX INDUSTRIA** charts the origins and development of the industrial landscapes in the region and explores the widespread repurposing of these buildings.

The aim of **Finding Ways** is to explore the issues of accessibility, navigation and public space on the main campus of the University of Waterloo.

**First Builders** is an outdoor walking exhibit that looks at the history of settlement in the Grand River valley over the past 10,000 years.

**No Small Plans** is a celebration of the region’s eight national and international award-winning buildings.

**ReMade: Post-War Cities** connects 200 Xpress transit riders with the local arts, culture, heritage, commerce and recreational activities that are on offer along the line’s various stops.

**ReMade: Post-War Cities** explores some of the iconic post-war buildings developed in the region, and those in particular that were imagined by the firm of Barnett and Rieder.

Finally, in **Street Style**, presenters connect the design of women’s fashion with architecture over the past 200 years.

"We need a conversation about what Canadian cities will look like fifty years from now," said Haldenby. "It’s not enough to just wait for it to happen. Building Waterloo Region explores some extraordinary urban design decisions and celebrates the past to help people engage with the future."

For more information, visit www.buildingwaterlooregion.ca
No small plans

“Our region has won more Governor General’s Medals and Awards—the highest honours available to architecture projects in this country—that any municipality outside Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal,” says Haldenby. “People in this region are proud to see that level of excellence on display.”

Projects in Waterloo Region have won:
seven Governor General’s Awards:
• 14 Ontario Association of Architects Awards (only Toronto has more)
• 2 National Urban Design Awards

In addition:
• The Centre for International Governance Innovation Campus (Balsillie School of International Affairs) is the first building in Canada to win: the Royal Institute of British Architects International Award, the American Institute of Architects Award of Excellence, and the Governor General’s Medal
• the Grand River Aquatic Centre: Lyle S. Hallman Pool was selected best building in 25 years in Canada by Canadian Architect magazine
• the Seagram Museum was the first deliberate repurposing of an industrial building in Waterloo Region and won the First Governor General’s Medal in Waterloo Region
• the Grand Valley Institute for Women is the only prison to win a Governor General’s Medal
Old is new again

EX INDUSTRIA and ReMade both explore the history of post-war architecture in the region. The former considers the role of the five major mills in the region (in Galt, Preston, Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo) and their connection with transit and architecture.

ReMade takes things a step further by considering the significance of these (and other) buildings in the region. Few are considered to have heritage value in the sense that they are not particularly old, but their influence on the community is every bit as profound as buildings that are 100 years older. The exhibition also asks the question about how the region will be transformed by light rail, in much the same way as it was by the introduction of Highway 401.

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In OnTheLine, Haldenby wants you to explore the future of design in the region as it is connected to the development of light rail. Along every stop of the 200 iXpress transit route (which closely mirrors the planned light rail route) exhibitors have created 800-metre walking tours that are filled with cultural information and opportunities for public interaction.

The idea of the exhibit is currently to showcase what exists at each stop. Grander plans may allow the speculation about the future of development as it is affected by light rail.

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The value of this positive publicity is worth $5,000+ Now that’s a WIN!

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Lottery tickets available by contacting editor@gvca.org

Unless you have been living under a rock, you have by now heard the results of the June 12 Ontario general election. Premier Kathleen Wynne’s Liberal government strolled to a comfortable majority win, capturing 58 of the legislature’s 107 seats. The Progressive Conservatives (28 seats) and New Democrats (21 seats) were relegated to the roles of virtual observers.

What happens next in Queen’s Park is anyone’s guess. Certainly, it’s a fair bet to assume that Private Members Bills—documents that brought us the Prompt Payment Act and the Ontario One-Call Legislation during the last session—will be of little or no importance. Yet on the other hand, a majority government does give the Liberals the assurance they need to implement their own agenda without compromise. Certainty of action and purpose may combine to produce good results for Ontario.

And what of the issues relating directly to construction? At the time of the election, at least three big items were in various states of implementation: the Ontario College of Trades, the proposed infrastructure spending package in the Ontario budget, and a promised review of the Construction Lien Act (CLA) that was intended to include a discussion of prompt payment.

Looking at the results of the June election and what those might mean for construction in the years ahead.

“Of course the planned spending is good news, but the spending is discretionary.”
Ian Cunningham, president of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations (COCA), offered his opinions on each of these issues when we spoke to him in July.

**CLA review/prompt payment**
Bill 69, the *Prompt Payment Act* looked to have a bright future in the legislature. In May 2013, it was fast-tracked through second reading and looked all but a certainty to be passed into law. Yet a planned committee review was a long time coming. By last fall, the industry no longer appeared to be one hundred percent behind the proposed legislation. And when the committee review did finally happen, the industry showed itself anything but united.

Just this part spring, the Ministry of the Attorney General announced that in the wake of the failed prompt payment bill, the government would proceed with a review of the CLA that would “find ways to ensure companies pay for services and supplies on time.” The review was promised to start pre-election.

“We hope the review will begin as quickly as possible this year,” says Cunningham. “Prompt payment is a big issue for Ontario’s construction industry and it should be resolved to everyone’s satisfaction.”

**Infrastructure spending**
No matter how you slice it, $130 billion in new infrastructure spending over 10 years is good news for the construction industry. Unless the spending doesn’t happen, that is. “Of course the planned spending is good news,” says Cunningham, “but the spending is discretionary. And at a time when the government is embroiled in fiscal challenges, it might be tempting for them to sacrifice some of the spending plans in favour of balancing the books.”

Among the spending commitments:
- $29 billion for new highways, roads, bridges and public-transit facilities
- $11 billion for hospital expansion and redevelopment
- 1 billion for strategic infrastructure in the Ring of Fire
- $111 billion to modernize elementary and secondary schools

**The College of Trades**
The creation and subsequent implementation of the Ontario College of Trades has been one of the most divisive issues to hit the construction industry in some time. Its abolition became the focus of a number of employer and owner groups in the lead-up to the election, and PC Leader Tim Hudak promised to abolish the college if his party won the election.

A Liberal win suggests the college is here to stay, although Premier Wynne did promise that the government would appoint a special advisor to review some of the issues relating to the college.

Cunningham says that the industry eagerly awaits the appointment of the review officer.

“I think the key here is to ensure the review is thorough, of a significant duration and is conducted by someone who is independent minded, whether he or she comes from the rank and file of government or is internal to the college.”

It is not yet known when the scope of the review will be announced.
Kitchener – Conestoga MPP Michael Harris made headlines last year when he introduced Bill 73, the *Fair and Open Tendering Act* which would have clarified that municipalities and school boards could not be considered construction employers. Harris’ bill was defeated at second reading in September, but the MPP vows to fight on.

“I committed to the voters of this riding that this issue would be the first I would address if I was returned to Queen’s Park,” he said. “A ruling by the Ontario Labour Relations Board has locked the Region of Waterloo into a labour monopoly that will shut out thousands of tradespeople and local contractors and force the price of construction higher. I am going to consult with contractors and tradespeople ahead of drafting a new fair and open tendering bill and I will introduce the legislation at the first possible opportunity.

“At the end of the day, this issue is about taxpayers getting good quality infrastructure at the best possible price, and no contractor being denied the opportunity to bid on work that they pay for with their tax dollars.”
Local MPPs speak

We spoke to local MPPs about their plans for the next legislative session and to get their thoughts on some of the key issues affecting the local construction industry.

Kathryn McGarry (LIB) Cambridge

On infrastructure
Although the government has yet to identify projects under the infrastructure package, there are a few that would be important to the people of Cambridge and North Dumfries. The first is the expansion of Highway 401 between highways 8 and 24. Another is the reconfiguration of the Franklin Boulevard Bridge over Highway 401 to include pedestrian access. And of course the expansion of Highway 7 has been committed to.

On the College of Trades
In order to support the success of the college in its second year and going forward, the government has committed to appointing a special advisor who will review the applications process as well as the scope of practice and enforcement. I think it’s important to support the college and ensure the college is listening to the feedback of the trades to ensure it works on their behalf as effectively as possible.

On prompt payment
It’s clear that we need to close the gaps that currently exist in construction laws to protect large and small members of the industry and ensure that companies pay for services and supplies on time. I’m satisfied that now is the right time to review the Construction Lien Act and close its loopholes.

Michael Harris (PC) Kitchener – Conestoga

On infrastructure
We have heard time and again promises from the government to begin the expansion of Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph. Their promised start time is now the fall of 2015. If I have to, I will stand on the highway itself and in the legislature to ensure the government meets this obligation. It’s long overdue.

On the College of Trades
At a time when Ontario faces shortages in skilled trades workers, we need to open job opportunities for young people. The College of Trades is a bureaucracy of needless red tape and taxation. It’s a barrier to employment, especially if it leads us down the road of making more trades compulsory. I hope the government’s review will shed light on the extent of our skilled trades problem and offer real solutions for change.

On prompt payment
There is no doubt in my mind that contractors need to be paid on time, and clearly the industry needs a better solution to make that happen. Bill 69 wasn’t the right fix for the industry and I look forward to working with the government and industry to get this initiative moving forward.

Hon. Liz Sandals (LIB) Guelph (Minister of Education)

On infrastructure
Two projects [from the $29 billion to be spent on transit infrastructure] are going to have a big impact on Guelph. This first is expanding Highway 7, which has been promised for 25 years. Preliminary work on the highway is schedule to being in the fall of 2015 and right now the government is pushing to acquire all the land needed to build the corridor. The other big transit news is two-way all day express GO Train service along the Kitchener-Guelph-Pearson corridor. That 10-year project is in the planning stage.

On the College of Trades
The college’s mandate is clear: to protect the public. One hiccup that we’re looking at right now is the role of the college with regard to certification, enforcement and discipline. But the real benefit of the college is to enable members of the public to find out who is licenced to do construction work, and that will really people in the home construction and renovation markets. As to the review of the college, our government committed to appoint a special advisor to review applications to the college, as well as its scope of practice and scope of enforcement. During the review, there will be a moratorium on certification of compulsory trades. We don’t know when the review will begin.
What is your brand? You have a logo. You might have a colour palate. If you’re really advanced you might even have a brand book. You know when your logo looks good on the side of a truck or how commanding it feels on a sign in front of a new build. Some people call that a corporate image. But it’s not your brand.

You have core values: pride, passion, relationships, entrepreneurial spirit, integrity. Sound familiar? You put them on your website and your stationery. They are projected at meetings and worked into your proposals. But they’re not your brand either.

A logo on its own does nothing. Values are meaningless unless you show people exactly how these values change the way they work. A few brushes of colour or a couple industry-neutral terms hold little meaning for people working at every level of an organization. They speak little to people looking to contract your services. And they wouldn’t stand on their own without the great work you do day in, day out.

Your brand isn’t judged on your messages, advertising or local presence. It’s judged on the experiences people have with it. If they connect with the crew, had a pleasant experience with your front office and feel like their project is comfortably in hand, they’ll be well on their way to having a good
experience with your company. To control every interaction people have with your company, first understand how people perceive your brand.

**Storytelling**

Brand storytelling is one of those catchy industry terms that everyone is using these days—but few can reliably tell you what it means, much less how to do it.

Storytelling is not telling your story. It’s getting other people to tell your story. It’s setting up experiences that are memorable and easily repeatable. How do you get people to repeat their experiences? By leading them to emotional reactions from what they witness and take part in. By including them in your brand so that right away they feel as though they are part of an exciting and exclusive community they are proud of.

Ask anyone, a client, an office worker, your aunt, what they think of your brand. Not many of them will be able to explain your mandate. Nobody will quote verbatim the mission, vision and value statements from your website. And I bet that none truly understands the depth of what you do or the impact it may have on their day-to-day lives.

People have short memories. They can have an excellent experience working with you, but will it motivate them to stay loyal to your brand a couple years down the line? Maybe. Does your marketing collateral work on these people to keep them in touch and inspired by your vision and what you do a decade from now? Sometimes. But not likely.

To get people hooked on your brand, they have to be the ones advocating for it. They should take every opportunity to tell stories of the experiences they’ve had with your company, every possible moment they can. If a key audience is business leaders, then you’d better knock their socks off when they call you for the first time. If it’s an R&D organization, you need to make a real difference every time they come for help. You have to do everything in your power to make an impact on them, so they can make an impact for you in the future.

Brand storytelling is a world without spin. You can’t tell people their memories are wrong. Can’t presume they had one experience over another. The only way to make sure they are telling the story you want them to is by controlling their experience every time they interact with you.

**How you tell stories**

The way to get people to tell stories about your brand is to create a physical, spiritual and intellectual environment where they can thrive. You set people’s expectations and deliver. You make promises that you keep. You give them an enormous sense of pride. You include them in key decisions so they feel a sense of power, loyalty and responsibility when it comes to the brand.

So what is a brand? Thousands of little stories. Tiny memories, each evoking a strong emotional recollection. These all come together to make an indelible, repeatable impression. Specifics make a brand: They built the home I’m proud to live in. They showed me how to save money while building something truly remarkable. I learned a particular skill. I set a goal; they helped me reach it. My business grew. Now I compete internationally.

These are the stories you’ll help your audience tell every day of their lives. These people are your storytellers. These people are your brand.

**Stories across different platforms and cultures**

We believe that brands exist in the overlap between technology, commerce and culture. Technology itself changes with the appetite for a different type of conversation. Social media reigns these days because we as a planet are more social. We want to connect with each other and share information on an instant and personal level. When you create a brand, imagine all the different ways your brand elements could be delivered. Exciting builds get updated through Facebook. Publications get tweeted. More than attempting to just seem current, tell your brand story across the media people are actually receiving.

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GVCA HELPS members

GVCA members have access to all kinds of programs and services. Most, however, use only one or two. We’re here to tell you about all the exceptional services the association offers and how each can help you win in business.

Plansroom: the association lifeblood
The GVCA service that attracts (and keeps) most members is the plansroom. In any given year, owners and buyers of construction services as well as designers and general contractors post hundreds of projects to the GVCA plansroom. These are jobs of all shapes and sizes located across southwestern Ontario and even across the province. Members are free to come to the physical plansroom at the GVCA offices to sign out documents, do take-offs and even make copies to take back to the office. They may also use the electronic plansroom to view documents any time of the day or night.

Thanks to an arrangement with BestBidz, the GVCA plansroom is better than before. The BestBidz portal offers a better user interface, new functions and the same level of convenience when compared to the old plansroom software. Through BestBidz, members also have access to plans lists, bidders lists, addenda, low bids and awards throughout Ontario.

Crystal Ball pre-bid report
Wouldn’t it be useful if someone had their finger on the pulse of the industry and knew what projects were going to be issued for tender ahead of time? The GVCA is that someone. GVCA staff are constantly talking to sources across the industry to discover what projects are in the planning stages and when they might be tendered. And they give that information away to members for free! The GVCA’s Crystal Ball pre-bid report is an insightful look into what projects are coming down the pipe and when. Check it out!
Education and training
Construction is an ever-evolving industry. To stay at the top of your game, you have to be constantly on the cutting edge. That’s why GVCA offers a series of training programs and seminars on the trends that affect your business most. Whether it’s a refresher on construction financial information, training on Microsoft Excel or information sessions on Gold Seal or BIM, it’s all here at GVCA.

Safety training
Working safer is everyone’s goal. To help you meet that goal, GVCA offers online and in-person safety training courses from the basics (fall protection and WHMIS training) to the more specific (lockout/tagout and transportation of dangerous goods).

Safety Groups
GVCA also runs its own Safety Group. Created by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the Safety Groups program brings association members together to share ideas about safety best practices and create newer, more refined safety programs. Members benefit from the year-long program in two ways: by fostering better on-site and in-office safety cultures, and from receiving (if all goes well) rebates against their CAD-7 premiums.

Gold Seal
Gold Seal Certification is the construction industry’s standard of excellence. It demonstrates a worker’s experience and commitment to professionalism in his or her chosen discipline. GVCA is an avid supporter of the Gold Seal program and offers the tools and resources to help members achieve and maintain this important designation.

Standard documents
GVCA is a strong supporter of the need for contractors, designers and owners to use standard documents when drafting contracts with one another. GVCA offers for sale documents created by the Canadian Construction Association and the Canadian Construction Documents Committee that are approved by industry stakeholders as the industry standard guides and contracts.

Social events
Being a GVCA member isn’t always about the work you do on site. Sometimes, it’s also about having a bit of fun. GVCA maintains an active calendar of social events, from golf tournaments to trips abroad as well as networking events for particular interest groups such as Women in Construction and Leaders in Construction.

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We asked: what GVCA services do you use?

Max Fratarcangeli, the Guarantee Company of North America

We use the GVCA to stay connected with our clientele. Being a member helps us to get a good sense of the issues and the environment that affects their businesses—and ours. We also learn a lot from the GVCA’s education sessions. Topics like fraud in construction and accounting interest us. We attend these events—and the GVCA’s social events—not just for the valuable education but also for the opportunity to re-connect with our clients.

Mitch Overholt, Canaan Construction

It’s really useful to us as a subtrade to collect the bid results issued by the GVCA. That document tells us which general contractors we should reach out to for future work. The plansroom is also very important to us and we like the new software, which is completely customizable.

Brian Rempel, 5 Star Paving

Construction is a very fast past environment. There are always new projects being tendered, and last minute-addendums being issued. GVCA’s plansroom is a very efficient delivery information system that speeds up the process of finding answers. It is always up to date and organized to help the user.

For me, the most important reason to be a member is to share experience with other members as well as the GVCA staff. I have participated in the continuing education classes and safety groups at the GVCA. Each member, regardless of their trade, benefits from this shared experience.

Michael Hobson GSC, Nelco Mechanical

The GVCA was very helping in supporting me and my staff navigate the Gold Seal certification process—the application, attending the courses and preparing for, and writing, the final exam.
GVCA HELPS owners

Although the GVCA’s chief mandate is to help members do business better, the association also helps owners navigate the tendering and construction process. Why? Because when owners know more about how to buy construction services the right way, everyone wins.

How does the GVCA help owners?

**By posting plans and specifications in the plansroom**
Owners know that the more companies that bid on their projects, the better the prices they will receive for their projects. That’s why GVCA makes it free and easy for owners to post projects to the plansroom. Staff will even help with scanning and posting documents, compiling bidders lists, notifying prospective bidders of addenda, and publishing bid results.

**By offering networking opportunities**
You can’t deny the importance of putting a face to a name or rubbing shoulders with a contractor you haven’t seen in a long time. That’s why GVCA regularly invites owners and buyers of construction services to its social events. It’s an opportunity to connect with previous contractors and to meet new ones in relaxed surroundings.

**By being available**
Sometimes, owners don’t know where to turn for advice about tendering a project or resolving a dispute. In such cases, GVCA staff is always available to help. Combined, they boast years of experience and they can help buyers solve difficult problems with ease.

**We asked:**
**why do you turn to GVCA?**

*John Vanos, manager, project management portfolio, University of Guelph*
We post our projects to the GVCA plansroom to make the documents available to as many people as possible. In turn, we hope to get the best price possible from the industry. We also purchase CCDC documents through the association and attend the occasional training session.

*Perian Tebbutt, manager, purchasing services, Conestoga College*
We really appreciate the fact that GVCA is a connection to the entire construction industry. It’s a one-stop shop for us to reach out to contractors of all shapes and sizes across Ontario to help us get the best possible prices for our projects. I personally also participate in the Women in Construction group to network with other professionals in the industry and I have taken the GVCA’s Construction 101 course to learn more about the industry, which has been very helpful in my work.

We have a great relationship with the GVCA and I look forward to continuing it in the years ahead.
Finally: a region-wide approach to development

The Region of Waterloo is one of the most prosperous in the country, yet those who manage its constituent municipalities know that more can be done to foster economic development and deliver programs and services better than they currently do. That’s why municipal and business leaders are developing a strategy that aims to harmonize development and make this part of the world a better place to live and do business.

Living and doing business under a two-tier municipal government is not always easy. As an individual, it’s sometimes hard to know which level of government to turn to for services. As a business that operates across all regions, it’s not always obvious which bylaws are consistent and which vary. And for a business looking to expand into the region, it can sometimes be hard to know which door to start knocking on.

That’s one of the reasons why staff at the Region of Waterloo got together with officials from the seven area municipalities and members of the business community in 2013 to formulate a region-wide strategy for economic development. To be sure, the region does well to attract businesses and facilitate growth among its existing industries. Yet more can be done to foster development and deliver programs and services better.

The Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy (WREDS) aims to define a regional approach to economic development—one that sees the big-picture advantages to encouraging business to come to the Waterloo Region and to expand here, one that addresses short- and long-term priorities for making the region a world-class location in which to live and do business, and one that demonstrates that the region is greater than the sum of its parts.

“We have to get past the narrowness of the current two-tier system that suggests that Waterloo and Cambridge should compete against one another for business expansion, for example,” says Ian McLean, president and CEO of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the WREDS Advisory Committee. “One job that comes to our region benefits everyone. And in the end, it’s better that a new company chooses Waterloo Region over Toronto or any other part of the world.”

Recent examples of businesses restructuring or relocating helped confirm the need for a new region-wide approach to development. The recession of 2008 caused turmoil in the local manufacturing industry. BlackBerry’s restructuring, Schneider’s closing its Kitchener plant and Dr. Oetker’s decision to build its frozen-pizza plant in London were other catalysts that caused the regional governments to consider whether they were going about delivering services and encouraging growth the right way.

One of the most visible elements coming out of the strategy will be the Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation. Such an entity will be responsible for implementing the strategy, marketing the region and identifying and filling gaps in approaches to development. It may yet be some time before that organization is up and running (January 2016 is the forecast date) and fully encompassing of the role played by Canada’s Technology Triangle, but all concerned agree the body is essential.

“The corporation will undoubtedly help us amend the problems that exist under the two-tier municipal structure,” says Mike Murray, CAO of the Region of Waterloo and a member of the WREDS Steering Committee. “If we’re really going to be successful as a community, we have to work together. None of us has done this on our own before.”

What’s encouraging about all of this is that the members of the steering and advisory committees all say the political and private-sector will to make this strategy happen is strong. Most also agree it’s long overdue.
"The corporation will undoubtedly help us amend the problems that exist under the two-tier municipal structure. If we’re really going to be successful as a community, we have to work together. None of us has done this on our own before."
What other regions does Waterloo compete against?

Ian McLean, President and CEO, Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

In a global environment, this region competes for foreign direct investment against Europe, the United States, Asia and all around the world. We also compete right across Ontario and across the country. As a region, we know we already punch above our weight, but we also understand that we need to raise our game to the next level if we are to continue to succeed in an increasingly global marketplace.

Tim Anderson, CAO, City of Waterloo

When it comes to attracting new businesses, we compete against regions across the province, across Canada and around the world. We’ve been successful to date, but we can’t rest on our laurels. We have to position ourselves for future success and really tell our great story to the world.

Mike Murray, CAO, Region of Waterloo

Who we’re competing with varies according to the type of business. In advanced manufacturing, I think companies look across southwestern Ontario. In other areas, we’re head to head against the GTA. In the technology sector, we’re put up against the best in Europe and in Silicon Valley.

Why are opportunities for growth being missed?

Malcolm Matheson, President, Steed and Evans Limited

The fact that our municipal system is not aligned creates confusion. There is no single window a business can turn to for information about expanding or relocating here. Moreover, all the municipalities are competing for the same business. We have to get aligned, get on the same page and realize that any business that comes here or expands here is good for everyone.

Mike Murray, CAO, Region of Waterloo

We have a fragmented approach to economic development opportunities. People who want to invest here have to go through a lot of doors to navigate the system. That’s why the role of the economic development corporation will be so important. It will provide region-wide services, support the growth of new businesses and make our region a more attractive place to live and work.

How can we measure the success of this strategy in 10 years’ time?

Mike Murray, CAO, Region of Waterloo

You’ll see the continued attracting of new investment, whether you want to measure that in terms of jobs created or square feet built, and you’ll see the continued retention, growth and expansion of existing businesses. Of course, businesses will come and go, but on balance you’ll see growth in whatever metric you choose. Another key will be diversity of the businesses in this region. Right now, we are blessed to have a few strong pillars: technology, manufacturing, financial services. Ten years from now, that base should be even broader.

Malcolm Matheson, President, Steed and Evans Limited

Success will be measured in terms of the net gain in the number of business we attract, the number of jobs we create, the number of businesses that grow organically in our region. Businesses come and go, of course and there will always be hurdles to overcome, but if we can keep our diverse business mix while maintaining a significantly improved process to allow growth to happen, we can consider the strategy a success.

Ian McLean, President and CEO, Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce

Change will be part of the success we achieve. Turning around a supertanker takes a long distance. Yet if we can create an arm’s length, business-driven, independent organization that is accountable for the public dollars that flow through its hands, that integrates our regional strengths and that communicates on a business-to-business level, we will have created some initial success. After that, we need to continue to dream big. Anything’s possible here in the Region of Waterloo.
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