



CONSTRUCTION COMMENT

The Official Publication of the Ottawa Construction Association • JUNE 2020

Cash crunch coming?

A new approach to contact tracing

League of Champions discusses safe return to work

OCS survey shows more optimism



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management@fiagroup.ca



Editor:
James Raiswell

Editorial coordinator:
Angela Tristram

Publisher:
John DeVries

Contributors:
Zey Emir
Natalie Evans
Louis-Pierre Grégoire
Karina Labelle
Lauren Lake
Patrick Lavoie

Photography:
Marilyn Mikkelsen
Ralph Plath

Design and Layout:
Raymond Leveille

On the cover:
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School addition, 49 Iona Street
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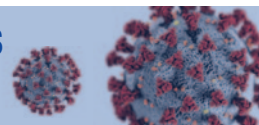
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INSIDE JUNE 2020

16 League of Champions webinar discusses
COVID safety on construction sites



18 COVID testing on construction sites
—too complicated, too risky



26 LiUNA to pilot test digital
contact-trace technology



28 Productivity, safety are contractors' main
concerns as they return to work: OCS survey

30 Cash flow crisis
could be coming



32 Three Ontario cities among least hard hit by
COVID pandemic, says Conference Board

34 Survey says 8 percent of businesses
ready to re-open their doors



36 COVID-19 – Now is the time to
turn our focus towards mitigation



38 Bonding Q&A with
Petrela, Winter & Associates



REGULAR FEATURES

- 4** Editor's Comment
- 5** Section Chairman's Comment
- 6** This Month's Numbers
- 10** Legal Comment
- 11** Financial Comment
- 12** Technology Comment
- 13** News in Brief
- 20** Around Ottawa
- 42** OCA & You
- 44** Guess the Photo



James Raiswell, Editor

As construction re-opens, our focus turns to staying safe

Ontario's construction industry returned to full capacity on May 19 after the province enacted the first phase of its staged reopening of the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The big question before the industry now is how to continue to ensure the health and safety of its massive workforce. To this point, it's a task construction has achieved with a high degree of success. Experts say that a tiny percentage of Ontario's cases of COVID-19 have been found on construction sites. That's good, but it's only a start.

The League of Champions, a province-wide organization that promotes health and safety in construction and through which members share information and resources, hosted a webinar on May 14 during which participants talked about return-to-work practices. Two key findings came out of this.

The first is the notion of the hierarchy of controls. The concept holds that there are several steps that can be taken to control the spread of the virus on sites. The hierarchy begins with pre-site access screening procedures, where workers are asked about any symptoms of, or possible exposure to the virus.

The next step is to control the hazard—in other words, to isolate people from the hazard either via quarantine at home or by cleaning the site if someone presents symptoms. After this is the need to change the way people work, such as by putting a sharper focus on hygiene at the site. Finally, in the instances where workers must be within two metres of one another, the key is to provide access to personal protective equipment such as face shields, masks and gloves.

These are processes, no doubt, that most are putting into

place already. What many may only be starting to look at is the notion of contact tracing, which is the process of recording those contacts that a worker who tests positive for COVID-19 has had with others around him or her in the near past.

Until recently, most contact tracing is being done through manual recall. When a worker tests positive, he or she is asked to track back through his or her various encounters with other site workers, who are then notified. Contacts can fall into two categories. Close contacts which are, briefly, encounters with an infected person for 15 minutes or more and within two metres, and casual contacts, which are incidents of sharing an enclosed space with a carrier for two hours or more.

The problem with manual recall as an approach to contact tracing is that it relies on a worker's memory. Can you say with certainty how many people you encountered two or three days ago and for how long?

Helping to correct that obvious flaw is a new trial project being run by the Labourers International Union of North America in conjunction with a Waterloo software developer. The TraceSCAN app works over Bluetooth technology to send encounter signals between workers on a site. It records proximity and duration of encounters. Data is stored confidentially, and system administrators can access encounter logs as and when a site worker tests positive for COVID-19.

All of which is to say there are many ways in which our industry is responding to the pandemic, and changing their practices for the better.

Keep up the great work!



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The future of mentoring



Ken Crawford,
Chair, Mechanical &
Electrical Section

I was asked this month to write an article for the OCA magazine. When I accepted the request, I pondered what to write about. Mentoring came to mind.

As an electrical contractor, we mostly subtrade to general contractors that have been awarded lump-sum projects based on the lowest bid. For our firm to be competitive in today's market, we must come up with ways to reduce our labour costs either by lowering our labour rate or reducing non-productive labour. This is compounded by ensuring that we have the proper tools with the most updated technology, adequate material on hand, and the right number of skilled workers—keeping in mind our mandated apprentice-to-journeymen labour ratio.

You might ask how mentoring impacts our industry. In turn, I ask you: how does mentoring fit within today's construction market? Thinking back to the beginning of my 36-year career, as an apprentice I was always partnered with a journeyperson/mentor to job shadow. Via mentors, I learned not only installation methods but also industry practices and workflow efficiencies. In today's competitive market, our original concept of mentoring has changed. We no longer focus on job shadowing as we simply do not have the financial leeway. The solution therefore may lie in the use of technology and communications as supportive tools.

Communications allow us to keep our employees informed about our company's current endeavours by providing technology and proper documentation such as installation drawings, cell phones and laptops. We train our employees by offering courses in first aid/CPR, attend courses at the OCA, participate with the IBEW on offered updates on training and educational courses, and host events demonstrating new tools and technologies. All this to say, that in today's society, the definition of mentoring is more ambiguous. We no longer solely depend on the instruction of an individual at one's side but rather rely more heavily on technology and communication.

This shift towards technology can be seen in all industries across the globe. As technology continues to evolve, human involvement will further diminish. Physical mentoring will continue to be replaced with technology and proper supporting documentation in order to eliminate labour costs, making firms more competitive in a low bid market. Nonetheless, our responsibility to better educate and train tomorrow's leaders still remains, therefore we should continue to keep in mind that, "the best teachers are those who show you where to look—but don't tell you what to see."



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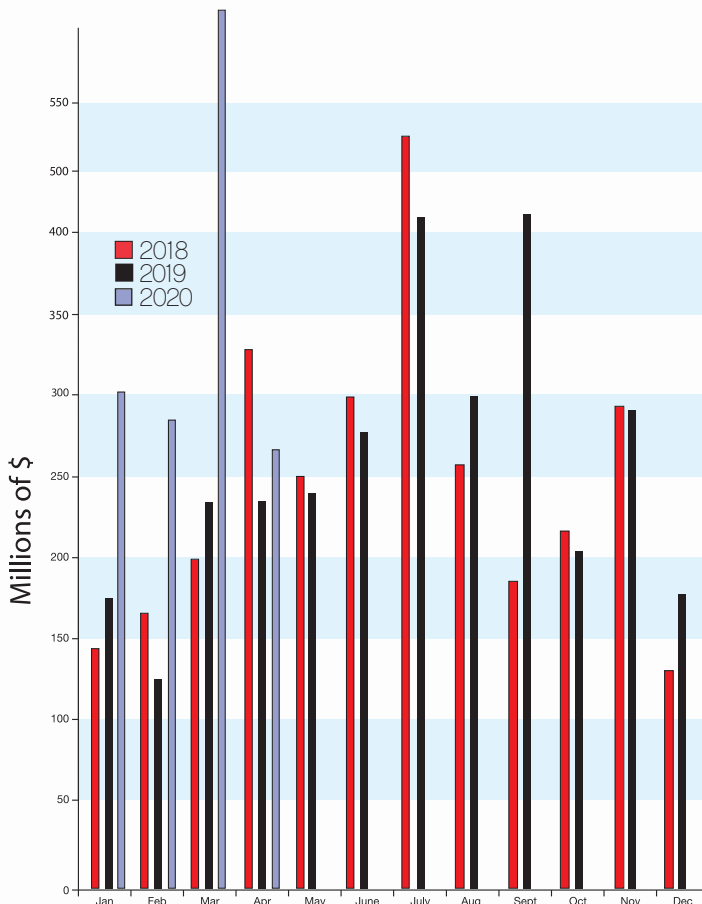


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Permits over \$500,000

issued in April 2020

\$512,204	Tenant fit-up to the 12th storey of a 17 storey office building. New partition walls, mechanical and electrical alterations. (Patented Prices Review Review Board suite expansion) 333 Laurier Ave W.
\$540,000	Exterior/Interior alterations to an existing 3 storey 18-unit Apartment building (revise all Unit floor layouts, add Units in the basement, replace interior stairs and add a rear exit stair - total of 18 Units). 46 Nelson St.
\$750,000	Interior alterations on the 1st floor of a 24 storey office building (Shopify - Back of House Area) 234 Laurier Ave W.
\$1,663,000	Interior alterations on the 6th floor of a 14 storey office building (CAS, Suite 704) 90 Sparks St.
\$3,534,399	Construct a 3 storey, 14 unit apartment building with underground parking 130 Boundstone Way
\$4,438,133	Construct a 4 storey 31 unit apartment building 443 Kent St.
\$5,136,000	Interior alterations on all floors of a 3 storey building 501 Heron Rd.
\$11,743,703	FOUNDATION ONLY - Construct a 27 storey residential apartment building 383 Albert St.
\$38,244,713	Construct a 30 storey apartment building with first and second floor commercial use (Soho Italia) 500 Preston St.
\$51,002,211	Construct a 27 storey mixed-use residential apartment building 383 Albert St.
\$54,537,019	SUPERSTRUCTURE ONLY - Construct a 9 and a 6 storey linked apartment building (Blocks A, B & E1) 770 Brookfield Rd.



April 2020 Total: \$266.6 million
April 2019 Total: \$229.5 million
 change: 16.17% increase compared to April 2019

Building permit values (\$ millions)

	2018	2019	2020
January	140.7	175.7	301.0
February	161.5	123.8	281.1
March	199.4	229.9	632.7
April	320.2	229.5	266.6
May	252.7	240.8	
June	293.7	278.6	
July	533.8	413.5	
August	253.5	295.9	
September	178.1	411.9	
October	211.2	206.7	
November	296.2	285.4	
December	128.8	175.7	

Total: **\$2,969.8** **\$3,067.4** **\$1,481.4**
 Year to date: **10.6%** **3.28%**

2020 year to date is 95.2% higher than the \$758.9 million in 2019

Housing starts: April 2020

	Single-Detached			All others			Total		
	2019	2020	%	2019	2020	%	2019	2020	%
April	227	223	-2	263	613	133	490	836	71
Year to date	514	669	30	1,122	1,846	65	1,636	2,515	54

NUMBERS

Building permit statistics: April 2020

(Please note that City of Ottawa building permit data now includes both new construction and renovation permit data.)







	Number of permits	Value of permits	Gross area of work (ft²)
Residential			
Apartment	8	164,412,576	1,193,039
Det. Garage/Shed	1	15,000	365
Rowhouse	31	34,145,669	272,522
Semi - Detached	2	60,000	810
Single	177	57,237,651	362,859
Stacked Rowhouse	1	43,113	650
Total	220	\$255,914,010	1,830,244

Year to date: Residential: \$770,791,399

	Number of permits	Value of permits	Gross area of work (ft²)
Non-residential			
Demolition	8	186,350	-9,604.00
Industrial	3	5,638,122	74,293
Institutional	3	590,000	2,472
Office	7	3,427,288	25,140
Other	18	195,000	64,176
Retail	6	723,162	6,321
Total	45	\$10,759,923	162,797.53

Year to date: Non-residential: \$444,750,555

Material prices

	Commodity	Latest value	% change (monthly)	% change (yearly)	
	Oil (WTI, \$US/barrel)	32.5	77.5	-48.5	▼
	Natural Gas (\$US/MBtu)	1.9	8.2	-31.5	▼
	Copper (\$US/mt)	5314	2.7	-11.2	▼
	Steel (\$US/mt)	250	0	-16.9	▼
	Electricity (PJMw, USD/MWH)	16	-20	-56.8	▼
	Lumber composite (USD/1k bd ft)	343	7.9	-0.6	▼

Source: data collected by and reprinted with permission from Export Development Canada's Weekly Commodity Update.
For more information, please visit www.edc.ca

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FORECASTED TENDERS

Infrastructure Services – Design and Construction Projects

July 2020 to October 2020 (Published: May 8, 2020)

Project Name	Project Type	Project Phase Status	Forecasted Date
Ottawa River Outfalls - More Complex	Municipal	Design	Jul-20
2018 Misc Drainage East and West Phase 2	Municipal	Design	Jul-20
Exp Intergrated Huron Ave	Municipal	Design	Jul-20
Queenswood Heights Replace 2 HVAC Units	Facilities	Planning	Jul-20
City Hall Level P1 Expansion Joint	Facilities	Initiation	Jul-20
Kenmore Park -Playground Replacement	Facilities	Design	Jul-20
Cobble Hill Park Re-Development	Facilities	Implementation	Jul-20
Splash Wave Pool - Entrance Remediation	Facilities	Design	Jul-20
Carp Depot - Foundation Wall Remediation	Facilities	Design	Jul-20
OC Transpo Miscellaneous Transit Work	Municipal	Planning	Jul-20
Charlie Conacher Parking Lot Resurfacing	Facilities	Design	Jul-20
OC St Laurent Stn Renovate Operator Area	Facilities	Design	Jul-20
2018 Trenchless Sewer Program	Municipal	Design	Jul-20
OC Transpo Operation - Waller St	Municipal	Design	Jul-20
Building Envelope Remediation	Facilities	Initiation	Jul-20
City Hall ActiveLiving ChangeRoom Access	Facilities	Design	Jul-20
Fred Barrett Repl Roofs 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7	Facilities	Design	Jul-20
Nepean Sportsplex Sign Replacement	Facilities	Initiation	Jul-20
Multi-Use Pathway: Woodroffe	Municipal	Design	Jul-20
ROPEC- Elevated Platforms & Guardrails	Facilities	Design	Jul-20
Sidewalks & Roundabout	Municipal	Design	Jul-20
CARDREL Sprinkler System/Heads/Trusses	Facilities	Planning	Jul-20
Ottawa South Pumping Station Upgrade	Municipal	Design	Jul-20
Exp Ped Bridge: Terry Fox Park	Municipal	Design	Jul-20
Small Culvert Replace: 21 Rural East	Municipal	Design	Aug-20
Huron Day Care -Shade Structures (3)	Facilities	Design	Aug-20
Fairmile View Park renewal	Facilities	Design	Aug-20
Dulude Repl Walkways/Retaining Walls	Facilities	Design	Aug-20
Hintonburg Ext Wall Assembly/Gym Floor	Facilities	Design	Aug-20
Transit Int Mod: Scott Street	Municipal	Design	Aug-20
Richelieu CC Elevator Modernization Ph 2	Facilities	Design	Aug-20
March Rd Wastewater PS Conversion	Municipal	Design	Aug-20
Britannia Repair Bricks&Replace Windows	Facilities	Initiation	Aug-20
City Hall - Refurbish Supply Fan #20	Facilities	Design	Aug-20
2018 Pipe Repairs: Non Critical Sites	Municipal	Design	Aug-20
Brewer Park Office Bdg Demolish Facility	Facilities	Design	Aug-20
Ray Friel Des-Customer Service Counter	Facilities	Design	Aug-20
Design-Replace Playground Equipment	Facilities	Design	Aug-20
Carling Building Envelop	Facilities	Design	Sep-20
Ruth Wildgen Comfort Stn Replace Roof	Facilities	Design	Sep-20
Osgoode CC & Stuart Holmes Arena Rink	Facilities	Design	Sep-20
Richmond PS Rehab and Capacity Upgrade	Facilities	Design	Sep-20
Carleton -Chiller Replacement	Facilities	Design	Sep-20
Kizell Pond Trail System	Facilities	Design	Sep-20
Fire Stn 56 -Slab Remediation	Facilities	Initiation	Sep-20
Maple Grove Roof and HVAC Replacement	Facilities	Design	Oct-20
Hintonburg CC - VCT Floor Replacement at Gym	Facilities	Design	Oct-20
Renewal Kanata Ped Bridge	Municipal	Initiation	Oct-20
SpringHurst-Jr Playstructure replacement	Facilities	Design	Oct-20
Charles Sim - Replace Roof Area 2,4	Facilities	Planning	Oct-20

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The mandatory mediation clause in your construction contract may give you more time to sue

Many construction contracts contain a clause that provides for a tiered dispute resolution process, which obliges the parties to engage in negotiation, followed by mediation, before being entitled to commence any legal proceedings. These clauses may have the effect of tolling (postponing) the basic two-year limitation period within which a party must commence legal proceedings after a claim is discovered.

The *Limitations Act* governs limitation periods in Ontario. The two-year limitation period begins to run on the day the claim is discovered. The determination of the starting point of a limitation period is very fact specific and turns on the particular circumstances of each case.

Paragraph 5(1)(a) of the *Limitations Act* stipulates that a claim is discovered on the day on which the person with the claim first knew: (i) that the injury, loss or damage occurred, that (ii) it was caused by an act or omission (iii) of the person against whom the claim is made, and that (iv) a proceeding would be an appropriate means to seek remedy.

As a general rule, the claim is discovered (or deemed to be discovered) on the day the act or omission on which the claim is based occurred. However, the case may be different where mediation is a contractual precondition to the parties commencing legal proceedings.

The Ontario Court of Appeal recently considered, in *PQ Licensing S.A. v. LPQ Central Canada Inc.* the application of subparagraph 5(1)(a)(iv) where mediation is a contractual precondition to commencing legal proceedings (in this case arbitration). In this case, the following facts were relevant:

- The franchisee delivered a notice to rescind the franchise agreement on August 11, 2009.
- The franchisor disputed the notice of rescission on October 8, 2009.
- Just shy of two years later (October 6, 2011), the franchisee brought an action in the Ontario Superior Court, which the franchisor opposed by raising the mandatory mediation and arbitration clause in the franchise agreement.
- Two years and three months after the notice of dispute (January 16, 2012), the franchisee refused the mediation proposed by the franchisor.
- Four years after the notice of dispute (October 7, 2013), the franchisee subsequently served a notice of arbitration.

- The arbitrator noted that the parties had agreed to a comprehensive scheme for the resolution of their disputes within the franchise agreement. His interpretation of the provision was that mediation was a precondition to arbitration, and thus, he held that the time for the limitation period began to run after the mediation, and therefore the arbitration was not time-barred.

The Court of Appeal endorsed the arbitrator's ruling that the limitation period was suspended until the parties' obligation under the contract to attempt mediation was met. While items (i) to (iii) of paragraph 5(1)(a) of the *Limitations Act* can be discovered early, the discoverability of item (iv) will be dependent on the parties completing the mandatory mediation step as a party would not have known that a "proceeding would be an appropriate means to seek remedy" until mediation was effectively attempted and failed. Thus, the Court of Appeal held that the limitation period commenced to run as of the date on which the franchisee refused mediation, and held that the franchisee's notice to arbitrate was within the two-year limitation period.

However, section 5(1)(a)(iv) has its limits. The Ontario Court of Appeal in *Davies v. Davies Smith Development Partnership* held that a party cannot simply "sit on its hands," make no effort to "discover" a potential claim, and use section 5(1)(a)(iv) to postpone the running of a limitation period when it is unreasonable to do so.

The question then becomes what is reasonable. How long can a party wait before triggering the mandatory mediation under a contract? In *PQ Licensing*, two years and three months had elapsed between the notice of dispute by the franchisor and the mediation. This uncertainty has yet to be addressed by the courts, especially in the context of construction disputes. If your contract provides for a mandatory mediation step, the cautious approach is not to delay engaging in negotiation and mediation after a loss or damage is discovered, so that the limitation period is effectively tolled until the negotiation and mediation run their course.

This article was written by Louis-Pierre Grégoire, Karina Labelle and Patrick Lavoie of Gowling WLG. They practice exclusively in the area of construction law in both official languages. They can be reached at Louis-Pierre.Gregoire@GowlingWLG.com, Karina.Labelle@GowlingWLG.com, Patrick.Lavoie@GowlingWLG.com.



Rebuilding the construction business

Few, if any, small and medium-sized businesses have escaped the negative fallout from COVID-19 but for the construction industry, these past two months have been particularly uncertain and harrowing.

Construction is a complex business at the best of times, and these are not the best of times.

Construction is a business where deadlines and deliverables are embedded in contracts. It is a business dependent on reliable supply chains. Without supplies, contractors and sub-contractors alike can't deliver to deadline.

It's also a business of stages. Electricians can't do their work until framers have finished and drywallers can't come in until electricians have finished. And on it goes.

The pandemic has amplified all of these issues, and more.

It's clear from speaking to construction industry clients during the past few weeks that forced contractual delays are especially concerning, especially if there are associated penalties. Hopefully, these situations can be resolved amicably. If not, my advice is to touch base with your lawyer who can examine and assess the contract language and advise accordingly.

The province has gradually allowed a re-opening of construction after an initial lockdown of most sites considered non-essential. Obviously, the restriction of physical distancing is still in place. For smaller projects that can often mean only one sub-contractor at a time working on site. That translates into a slower than usual work rate and likely delays in completion.

Another key issue is supply. COVID-19 caused closures and slow downs at the supply end too. This brings concern that costs will go up as demand for these now limited supplies grows. Pricing in contracts can be significantly driven by the expected cost of supply and labour to fulfill the contract. How do businesses deal with the added pressure on margins?

My advice to construction company owners is invariably centred on managing cash flow. Plan for the management of cash now, as well as, preparing projections for cash flow. Is there cash going out, but not enough coming in? Beyond government relief programs available, is borrowing an option, or even desirable? If you've received any abatements on costs, that's great news, but if you have organized payment deferrals, do not forget to factor them into your future cash-flow management decisions.

The most frequent questions I hear are about those financial resources available from the government and the application process involved.

For example, the Canada Emergency Business Account can provide a loan of up to \$40,000, interest-free, to qualify-

ing small businesses to help cover operating costs. Those who repay before December 31, 2022 will be forgiven 25 percent (up to \$10,000).

The process has been frustrating for some and they have been refused without explanation. Relationship managers at the banks aren't able to help because they don't seem to have access to the necessary information.

CRA has sometimes rejected qualified applicants because of outdated information on a company's CRA business profile. It could be something as simple as a wrong phone number and outdated address. It's critical to keep that file up to date. This information can be accessed through your CRA My Business Account.

Another federal government financial aid program is the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance. Details have been slow coming and the situation may lead to friction between tenants and landlords. It has been a source of frustration among business owners.

There is a crucial human element to all this.

Most companies have a core group of valued and loyal employees they want back when businesses are able to re-open or ramp back up. It has been painful for business owners who have had to make the decision to lay off employees.

The Canada Emergency Response Benefit has helped some of those employees while others have been sustained by EI benefits. Despite the best efforts of employers and the government, many of those employees may be permanently lost to other construction companies who are now in a position to hire.

Everyone wants to get back to a normal productive work day and are not interested sitting at home for extended periods.

Business owners are working hard to get through this. They are now turning their focus from getting through the pandemic to preparing for a comeback. Despite how trying their individual situations may seem, their entrepreneurial spirit will continue to drive them.

There has been so much for us all to learn as we continue to work through the pandemic; some things we have tried have worked and others have not. These lessons will be invaluable in the future, especially if the need should arise to react quickly in case it comes around again as predicted.

The goal is to start planning now and be better prepared for the future should we encounter this again.

Natalie Evans is a GGFL Partner and the firm's Head of Assurance.

How to run construction manpower-planning meetings effectively during COVID-19



Due to COVID-19, there's been a big shift in how construction meetings are managed and executed—in the office, on site and while remote. ForConstructionPros said it best:

“Consider using these meetings to get everyone on the same page and achieve your company goals.”

That said, you want to ensure your meetings provide value, are conducive to team collaboration, are optimized as much as possible, and provide clear next steps.

For those in-person manpower meetings, remember that physical distancing is crucial to controlling the spread of COVID-19. So if you need to be in the office or on the site, make sure you're having your manpower meetings in a large space or outside to enable physical distancing.

Here are five steps to follow when running remote construction manpower planning meetings so that they are effective and productive:

- **Assign someone to facilitate your meeting** – assigning a specific team member to facilitate the meeting will allow you to focus on the content of the meeting.
- **Choose your video conferencing tool and ensure your team feels comfortable using the technology** – some examples of video conferencing tools you may want to look into can be found below.
- **Create a single source of truth for your project and workforce data** – ensure that everyone has access to and is looking at the same information.
- **Set your meeting agenda and stick to it** – your agenda should include: team members expected to attend, key projects that will be discussed, how long you intend to discuss each project, information that attendees need to

prepare, and manpower meeting guidelines (and make sure you communicate this agenda early on).

- **Set your remote manpower meeting guidelines** – think of your guidelines as etiquette, they should include saying hello, using your mute button when you aren't speaking, giving others the chance to speak

Here are four cloud-based tools you'll want to implement in order to increase efficiencies in your construction manpower planning meetings:

- **Video conferencing tools** – some examples of conferencing tools you may want to look into include Zoom, Google Hangouts, Slack and Skype.
- **CRM** – some CRM tools your organization might want to look further into include: Salesforce, Cosential, TopBuilders, Buildertrend and JobNimbus.
- **Digital whiteboards** – some digital whiteboards your team may want to look further into include: ExplainEverything, Miro, LiveBoard and Jot.
- **Construction workforce planning tool**

Navigating a pandemic to ensure employee safety is a new experience for every industry. It's also an opportunity to re-evaluate processes and standards around team communication and meetings.

This article was written by Lauren Lake, COO and Co-Founder of Bridgit. It appears in its original format on the Bridgit website.

CPO opens the door for online JHSC certification

The Chief Prevention Office of the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development has amended two standards to allow for Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) Certification Part One training to be taken online, and to extend the time required to achieve part two certification.

Changes to the JHSC Certification Program Standard and the JHSC Provider Standard on May 1 will now allow committee members to complete their part one training online, extend the timeline to complete part two training to 12 months, and remove the need for committee members to apply for extensions or complete refresher training after part one.

As a result, the ministry has also made changes to the eLearning Instructional Design Guidelines and the provider application guidelines to allow firms to offer such training online. Providers that wish to deliver part one training online, says the ministry, must apply to do so.

Providers and programs that are already CPO-approved will remain approved and training completed before May 1, 2020 will remain valid.

StatsCan: Unemployment reaches 13 percent, construction hit hard

In the last two months, the COVID-19 pandemic has put more than three million Canadians out of work, and has brought the national unemployment level to its highest level in nearly 40 years.

The latest Labour Force Survey published by Statistics Canada on May 8 shows that two million more Canadians declared they were jobless in April. This is on top of the one million that were out of work at the end of March.

In addition, says Statistics Canada, the number of people who were employed but worked less than half of their usual hours increased by 2.5 million between February and April. This brings the cumulative effect of the COVID-19 economic shut-down to more than 5.5 million, or more than one-quarter of February's employment level.

Unsurprisingly, the pandemic has caused the country's unemployment rate to balloon. The rate rose by 5.2 percentage points in April to 13 percent. That figure is the second-highest on record since Statistics Canada began collecting such data in 1976. Only December 1982—at 13.1 percent—saw a greater proportion of jobless Canadians.

While construction-sector employment managed to escape March relatively unscathed by the pandemic, April's numbers tell a different story. The industry lost 314,000 jobs, or about 21.1 percent of its total employment for the month. Quebec's

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NEWS IN BRIEF

construction industry was hardest hit among all provinces, with employment dropping by nearly 39 percent. Ontario's construction industry lost nearly 94,000 jobs, or about 17 percent of its workforce.

Needless to say, stop-work orders on construction sites in Ontario and Quebec drove the industry to significant job losses in April. While Ontario permitted certain types of essential projects, such as transit and healthcare work, to continue through April, the provincial government kept the industry on near-total lockdown until early May.

Construction across the rest of the country has been allowed to continue during the pandemic, albeit with tight controls in place to ensure site hygiene and promote worker safety.

Building permit values drop in March

Statistics Canada's report on the total value of building permits issued across the country shows a drop of \$1.1 billion—or more than 13 percent—in March. It was officially the largest percentage drop in nearly six years.

Seven provinces reported declines in permit activity in March. Chief among those were British Columbia (-19.4 percent), Quebec (-18.1 percent) and Ontario (-12.9 percent). Those figures, said Statistics Canada, coincided with the provinces' efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Across the country, the total value of residential-sector permits dropped by 13.1 percent to \$4.6 billion. The value of permits issued for single-family dwellings fell 15.3 percent to \$2.2 billion, with the largest percentage declines recorded in Prince Edward Island (-31.8 percent) and Quebec (-27.0 percent). Meanwhile, the value of multi-family construction permits dropped 11.1 percent to \$2.5 billion. Ontario (-13.0 percent to \$1.1 billion) and British Columbia (-24.4 percent to \$389 million) reported the largest declines.

Statistics Canada also reports that the value of non-residential construction permits dropped for the third consecutive month in March. Municipalities issued \$2.8 billion worth of non-residential permits for the month—about \$400 million or 13.3 percent less than they did a month previous.

The value of commercial permits dropped by 19.7 percent to just below \$1.6 billion. Seven provinces reported drops. Quebec (-36.6 percent) was hardest hit. The value of institutional permits (-15.7 percent to \$602.2 million) was down in eight provinces. Quebec (-37.0 percent) again posted the largest decline.

Industrial permits (+14.9 percent to \$583 million) were the only component to show an increase in March. Manitoba (+185.9 percent) reported significant gains due to the construction of several large properties in and around Winnipeg.

Construction activity in Ontario dropped by about \$500 million, or 12.8 percent in March. Permit values dropped in all but the industrial sector. Residential construction permits dropped by \$370 million, or 14.8 percent, while non-residential construction activity dropped by 9.4 percent.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Elizabeth Witmer reappointed as WSIB Chair

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board announced on May 19 that it has reappointed Elizabeth Witmer as board chair for a third term. She will continue to serve in the role through December 31.

Under Witmer's tenure, the WSIB has realized a number of important accomplishments, including the elimination of its long-standing operating deficit, which peaked at \$11.4 billion in 2011. Through a series of aggressive measures, the board was able to retire its unfunded liability in September 2018—almost 10 years ahead of its legislated timeline.

Since then, the board reduced employer premiums, implemented a new rate framework scheme that considers individual performances much more equitably than the previous model, and launched its follow-up to Safety Groups: the Health and Safety Excellence Program.

"Since 2012, Mrs. Witmer's exceptional leadership has guided us to the strongest financial position we have ever been in while driving for enhanced service for people suffering a workplace injury or illness," said WSIB president and CEO Tom Teahen. "She has been a driving force for recent successes including the elimination of our unfunded liability, the introduction of our new premium rate-setting model, and the expansion of our online services."



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League of Champions webinar discusses

COVID safety on construction sites



Safety experts from around Ontario's construction industry discussed the best practices their companies have to put in place to protect site workers against the spread of COVID-19.

Now that the Government of Ontario has lifted the suspension on construction work across all sectors of the industry, what can contractors do to ensure their sites remain safe—and open—during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

That was one of the central discussion points during a webinar hosted by the League of Champions on May 14. Over the course of the session, industry leaders discussed those approaches contractors can take to keep their sites safe and instill a strong sense of confidence among workers that every necessary step is being taken to protect them from the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Among those speaking was Chief Prevention Officer Ron Kelusky. He pointed to the feedback provided to him by Premier Doug Ford about the excellent work the construction sector is doing to respond to safe-working guidelines during the pandemic.

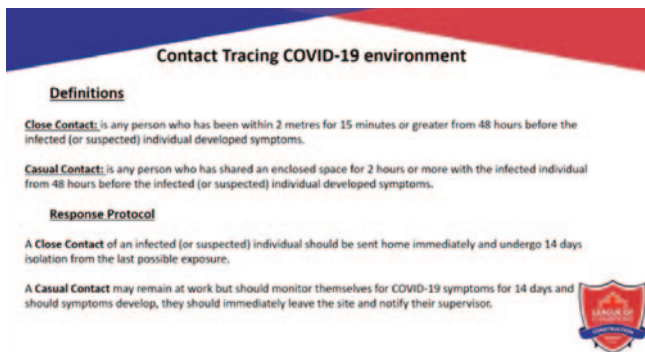
“COVID-19 has been a game-changer for construction in a positive way,” he said. “The industry can be proud of the way it has responded to the outbreak, and the fact that there are no reported COVID cases on any sites.”

Going forward, Kelusky said the key for the industry will be to reinforce the hierarchy of controls in place to prevent the spread of the virus. That begins with ensuring workers on site are properly screened for exposure to the virus, enforcing physical distancing to the fullest extent possible, and providing personal protective equipment and taking special measures to protect workers when they must be within two metres of each other.

Craig Lesurf, president of the Gillam Group, spoke about the particular safety operations his firm has put in place during the pandemic. Like Kelusky, he stressed the significance of adopting



a hierarchy of controls to stop the spread of the virus onto a construction site. For Gillam, that process begins with eliminating exposure to the virus, or screening everyone who comes on to the site for symptoms or exposure. The next step is controlling the hazard, which translates to isolating people from the hazard—either via quarantine at home or by cleaning the site if someone presents symptoms on the site. He then pointed to the need to change the way people work, such as by putting a sharper focus on hygiene at the site, and finally by giving workers access to the personal protective equipment—face shields, masks and gloves—they need to work in close proximity to one another.



He also pointed to a series of processes his company has in place to keep workers informed of the hazards of working during the pandemic. These including taking attendance so that possible exposures can be traced across the workforce, minimizing interactions among workers from different companies and with those delivering materials to the site, cleaning high-touch surfaces regularly, and creating a new signage program to remind workers of these and other COVID safety measures.

“The fact of the matter is, if we don’t follow these measures, all of our sites will be shut down,” he warned. “That applies to all of us in the industry.”

Stephen Agla, environmental health and safety director at Aecon Group Inc., then spoke about how his company manages contact tracing, or the process by which it tracks the interactions of someone who is a suspected COVID carrier with other workers on site. He indicated that the group has protocols in place to monitor what it calls “close contacts” and “casual contacts.”



Close contacts are cases where a worker has worked within two metres for 15 minutes or more with another worker within 48 hours of the second worker developing symptoms of COVID-19. Casual contacts are cases where an infected worker has shared an enclosed space with another worker for two hours or more within 48 hours of that second worker presenting symptoms.

In close contact cases, he said, the worker is sent home immediately and isolated for 14 days. In casual contact cases, the worker is allowed to remain at work, but must monitor himself or herself for symptoms for 14 days.

“Our protocols call for documenting these cases thoroughly,” he said. “Our forms ask workers to describe the instances of these contacts, the use of any personal protective equipment, and to log their history of contact with others.”

It’s intense, he admits, but it’s the best process for ensuring everyone is kept safe.

“The key to success is presenting consistent messages that are supported by trusted public-health agencies,” he said, adding that companies cannot break trust with their workers.



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COVID testing



on construction sites —too complicated, too risky

While governments and public health officials have made COVID-19 testing available across the province, the logistics of bringing these tests to construction sites are, for now, too complex to warrant consideration.

Premier Doug Ford is urging Ontarians to get tested if they are at risk of contracting COVID-19—even if they are asymptomatic. Ottawa Public Health has announced that any local resident who wants a test can get one—again, even if they show no symptoms. So could COVID testing come to construction sites?

With the industry now back at full capacity, and contractors introducing strict guidelines for keeping workers safe, OCA asked a number of its members about the logistics of providing COVID-19 testing on sites as a way of further controlling the spread of the virus.

The overwhelming sentiment was that logistically, the practice could be a nightmare. Here are some of the key reasons why.

Timing to results

Respondent's main concern was the time taken to test workers for the virus. Although current testing technology allows for results in around 30 minutes, the time taken to process a team of anything more than 10 workers would be significant. Add to that the need to bring in at least one licenced clinician to administer the test, and the possibility that samples may need to be processed one at a time, the sheer time to test even a small number of workers may be too much for any site operation to reasonably absorb at the start of any day.

"Think of a site with a hundred persons or more, even with a few analyzers it would take days."

Frequency of testing

The other big area of concern was testing frequency. Since tests account for the presence of the virus only at the time of testing, and workers will obviously go about their daily lives outside the workplace, on-site testing would have to be done daily. The problem not only becomes one of timing and lost productivity, but also the consumption of a massive number of testing kits.

"Not sure we could get these in any reasonable time for this situation based on their orders but the real issue is to truly be safe you'd need to test daily or very regularly the trades as they all leave daily and go home to risk, go to gas stations where they are at risk or grocery stores, etc."

Testing liability and logistics

Since construction workers are not licenced health practitioners, the issue of liability for on-site testing comes into the discussion. Contractors worried about potential exposures relating to a test performed incorrectly, or one that shows a false negative (i.e., the test shows a worker is negative for COVID-19, but is actually carrying the disease). Who, in this case, would carry the risk of administering the test, how would it be conducted, and how could the constructors ensure that the testing facilities itself was properly sanitized prior to each test?

"I don't see our company ever doing COVID testing unless we hire a health professional with their own liability insurance. If we do testing ourselves, we introduce too much risk to our company. If a test shows negative in error and the person is infected or gets infected, we would be in deep trouble. Testing should remain with the health officials."

Worker privacy

Finally, there is a significant question around a worker's right to privacy. Since companies are not allowed to test for, for example, drug use among workers on site, would they be legally allowed to require testing for COVID-19?

"What about privacy rights? We are not allowed to insist on drug tests on our employees, so how could we insist on using one of these?"

Just not practical

The overall sentiment among those members OCA surveyed was that while health and safety is of utmost importance for companies and their workers, there are simply too many compelling reasons—logistical and otherwise—for not bringing COVID-19 testing kits to construction sites.

"I'd pay \$100,000 or more today to make sure my staff and trades were safe, but I'm not sure there is a practical solution out there that can test often enough and fast enough to truly protect us."



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ABF Reinforcing Steel Inc.
Duron Services Ltd.
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Absolute Structural Steel Ltd./
Comtois Steel Services Inc.
Raymond & Associates Roofing Inc.
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Developer: Regional Group

Construction Manager: Ron Eastern Construction Ltd.

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Structural Consultant

Mechanical & Electrical
Consultant

Civil Consultant

Geotechnical Consultant

Civil Consultant

Geotechnical Consultant

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Designer (Landscaping)

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Engineering

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Designer

Neuf Architects*

Project Manager

Kyler Hammel

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Designer	Nick Karavidas, GSC
Project Manager	Marathon Underground Constructors Corporation
Excavation & Backfill and Site Services	Coffrages Synergy Formwork Harris Rebar (Div of Harris Steel Ltd.) Tomlinson Ready Mix M & U Masonry Co. Ltd. Duron Services Ltd. Modern Niagara Ottawa Inc. Lamarche Electric Inc. Otis Canada Inc. Demolition Plus

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AROUND OTTAWA

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PHOTOS BY EDDY LANDS CONSTRUCTION



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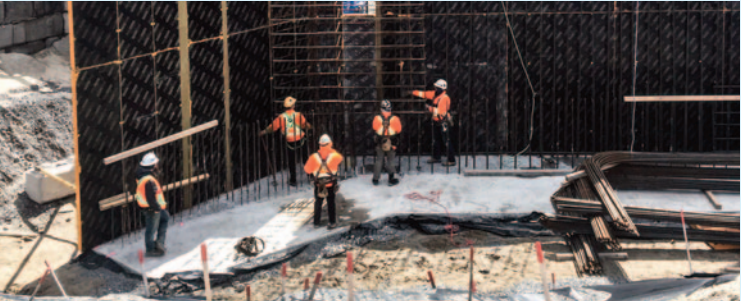
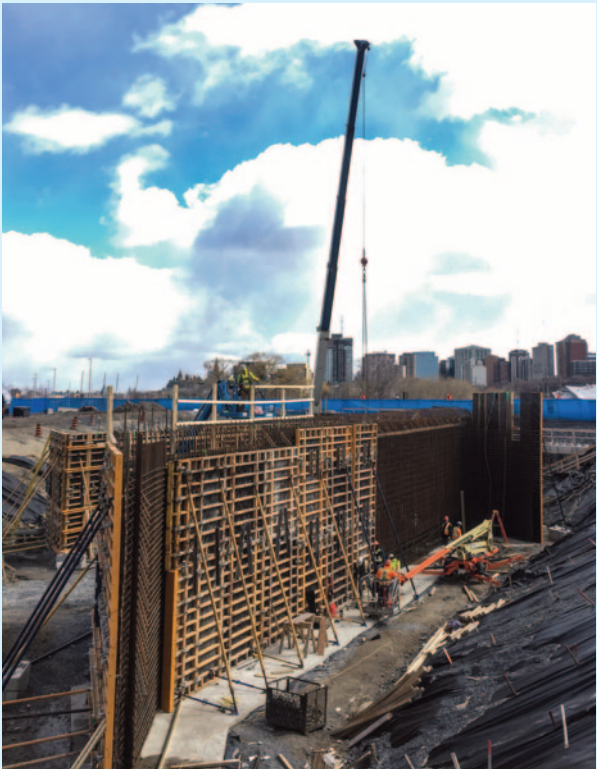
Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway - Ramp E

Construction Manager: Pomerleau

Consultants and OCA member participants

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Excavation & Backfill	Akman Construction Inc.
Paving	Aecon Construction Ontario East Limited
Formwork	UCC Group Inc.
Reinforcing Steel	AGF Steel Inc. (Ottawa Division)
Concrete	Canada Building Materials (CBM)
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LiUNA to pilot test digital contact-trace technology

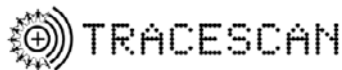


A new solution developed in Waterloo may help members of the Labourers International Union of North America track and control the spread of the novel coronavirus on an Ottawa jobsite.

The Labourers International Union of North America (LiUNA) has partnered with a developer in Waterloo to deploy technology that will help to track COVID-19 contacts among site workers.

Created by Facedrive Health and the University of Waterloo, TraceSCAN is a contact-tracing app that communicates with wearers through devices such as their phones to notify workers when they have come into proximity with someone carrying the novel coronavirus. The technology keeps a secure and encrypted record of contact frequency and duration among workers for a period of 14 days.

LiUNA



If a worker who uses the technology tests positive for, or begins showing symptoms of, COVID-19, he or she will notify a site supervisor or other authorized user who can then de-encrypt the worker's contact history data, and notify other workers with whom he or she was in contact over the past two weeks.

Because TraceSCAN operates over Bluetooth technology, devices can communicate with one another within a range of 10 metres. Based on the strength of the signal it records, the app can give a sense of the distance between a COVID-positive worker and other workers. The site supervisor or authorized TraceSCAN user can use that strength-of-signal data to send out different types of notifications to contacted workers.

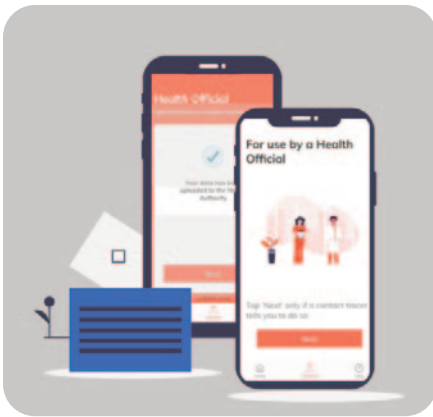
For example, a contact showing a low signal strength may only require a notice to monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and self-assess. A contact showing a high signal strength may require a notice to workers to self-quarantine and get tested by public health officials.

The result, says Joseph Mancinelli, LiUNA International vice president and regional manager of central and eastern Canada, is a solution that offers peace of mind for the union's many workers.

“The safety and well-being of LiUNA members remains our highest priority. We are pleased to have TraceSCAN available to the membership of LiUNA and their families, working together to ensure heightened protection amid the progression of COVID-19,” he said. “In partnership with TraceSCAN, we will continue to ensure that the health and safety of all members remains at the centre of all decision making, introducing this innovative safety measure as we continue building stronger communities across Canada.”

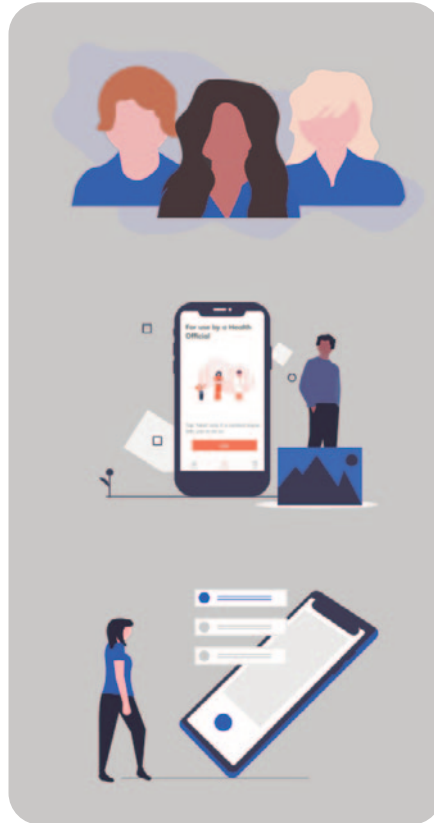
LiUNA will pilot-test the technology on a site in Ottawa, the details of which are not yet available.

Privacy, says Facedrive COO Suman Pushparajah, has been paramount in the development and testing of the app. Participation in the program is entirely voluntary, and TraceSCAN will collect minimal personal information—such as phone numbers—so participants can be notified of any potential contacts. Additionally, if a site worker tests positive for COVID-19, he or she must provide consent to access his or her encounter logs.



“Privacy concerns are critical,” he said. “The Facedrive team in partnership with researchers at the University of Waterloo have retained the legal services of McCarthy Tétrault to ensure that all data security and private information remain protected.”

With construction in Ontario now back at full capacity, contractors and workers are on high alert to control the spread of the novel coronavirus on work sites. Under guidance from public health officials, the industry has em-



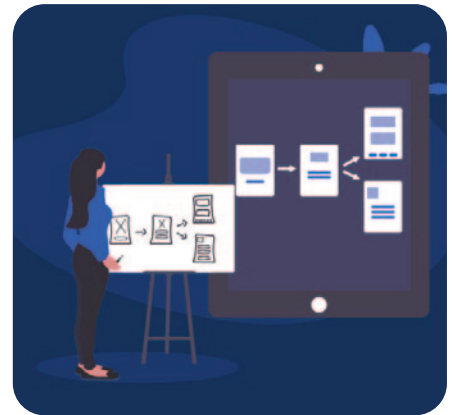
braced best practices such as pre-site access screening, physical distancing measures, increased site hygiene and personal protective equipment to not only comply with the law, but also ensure worker safety.

“Amid the rapid progression of COVID-19, we heard concerns from our members and their families about high-levels of anxiety about exposure to the virus on job sites and fear of contamination from the job-site to the home,” says Mancinelli. “Although we continue to work with industry and government to enforce the highest level of safety protocols on-site, there remains a possibility of a second surge in



infections. The TraceSCAN app is a preventative tool to mitigate this risk and assist in ensuring the safety of our members.”

Contact tracing, which is the practice of logging contacts among workers, is emerging as a new strategy to document the potential spread of the novel coronavirus on worksites. It is not without gaps, however. In most cases, it depends on a worker’s ability to recall his or her encounters and actions on jobsites in the past 14 days. That’s not ideal, says Pushparajah.



“TraceSCAN supplements manual contact tracing and current screening measures by addressing its key limitation: an infected person can only report contacts they are acquainted with and remember having met,” he says. “It can also enable more scalable and less resource-intensive contact tracing.”

LiUNA hopes the Ottawa pilot project will reveal important findings about the practical use—and further adoption—of TraceSCAN on construction sites.

“The pilot project will open up discussion on how we can approve upon as the app as it progresses,” says Mancinelli. “Additional signatory employer partners outside those participating in the pilot project have expressed an interest in adapting this technology and we will continue to work together to ensure that all safety measures remain in place to keep the men and women who build our country and their families safe.”

Productivity, safety are contractors' main concerns as they return to work: OCS survey



The second in a series of surveys conducted by the Ontario Construction Secretariat reveals contractors' concerns about returning to work during the COVID-19 pandemic, and their worries about costs, schedules and worker safety.

Productivity and the health and safety of construction workers are among the top concerns raised by contractors in the second of a series of surveys about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic prepared by the Ontario Construction Secretariat (OCS).

Released on May 25, the *Coronavirus Contractor Survey 2: Restart & Recovery* captured the opinions of more than 200 industrial, commercial and institutional contractors across Ontario during the week of May 11 to 15. It shows that, as they return to work, contractors' two principal concerns are ensuring health and safety of workers and staff, and maintaining productivity while meeting physical distancing requirements. But, they say, meeting these goals won't be easy.

More than three in ten respondents (31 percent) believe it will be highly difficult or impossible to ensure work sites are adequately sanitized, 75 percent said maintaining physical-distancing requirements would have a medium or high impact on project costs, and 73 percent worried about the impact of distancing on project schedules.

Other prominent concerns for respondents included reduced demand for, and investment in, construction projects, the government's capacity to quickly roll out infrastructure stimulus spending, and disruptions to their supply chains.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected contractors' bottom lines. More than three quarters of respondents said their firms have less revenue compared to the same period last year—although that figure is down slightly from the 83 percent in a similar OCS survey conducted in late April.



On average, firms reported revenue losses of about 33 percent, which again was improved from the 42 percent recorded in the April survey. Overall, 73 percent of respondents said they expected to earn less revenue over the course of 2020 as a whole; the average expected drop in revenue was 26 percent.

Despite this news, and the fact that four in ten respondents said they needed government support to stay in business, 82 percent of respondents said they were absolutely or moderately certain that their firms can stay in business over the long term.



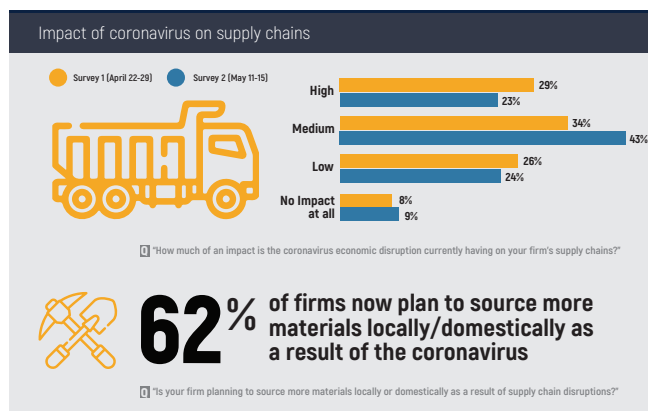
Firms are ready to work, says the OCS report. Eighty-six percent said they will have the capacity to take on extra work as and when shovel-ready projects are brought forward. This fact may be a function of reduced bidding opportunities, however. Nearly 60 percent of respondents said they have bid on fewer projects since the pandemic began; one in three said their bidding volume has not changed. Nearly 70 percent said they have seen fewer projects available to bid on.

Forty-three percent of respondents believe it will take them six months or fewer to get back to business as usual, while 9 percent don't believe they will ever get there.

Supply chain disruptions are still a concern for builders. Two-thirds say they are facing medium to high impacts to their supply lines—that total is up somewhat from the April survey when 63 percent worried about disruptions. Such shortages are causing impacts on project costs and schedules. Sixty-eight percent said supply chain shortages will have medium or high impacts on project costs, while 65 percent worried about supply impacts on project schedules.

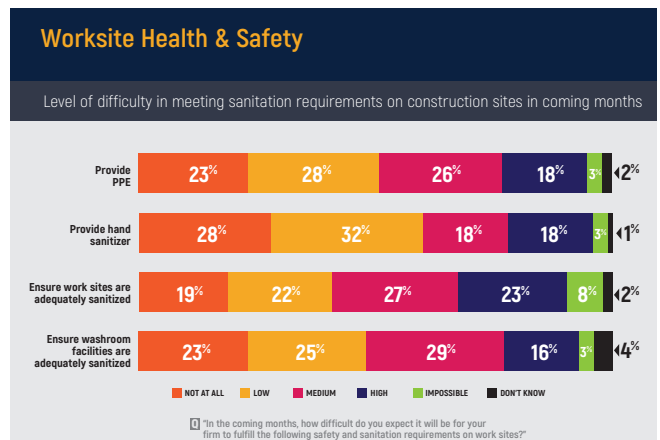
As a result of the pandemic, 62 percent of respondents said they intended to source more material locally or domestically.

What are some of the steps contractors are taking to maintain workplace health and safety? A large percentage of respondents said they will introduce, or have introduced, measures such as offering more hand-sanitizer and hand-washing stations (97 percent), creating procedures to report



unsanitary conditions (92 percent), and sanitizing washrooms more frequently (89 percent).

Other measures being put in place include establishing contact-tracing procedures (71 percent), having only one trade or subcontractor on site a given time (67 percent), using technologies to manage the number of workers on site at a given time (48 percent), and checking workers' temperatures (42 percent).



Respondents were split on who should bear the cost of the additional personal protective equipment being used on sites. One in three suggested owners should carry that cost, one in four said governments should, while 18 percent and 16 percent indicated these costs should be carried by general contractors and subcontractors. Eighty-three percent of respondents said they expect workplace sanitation practices to change permanently as a result of the pandemic.

On average, contractors said they expect PPE and physical distancing requirements to increase project costs by 28 percent; 39 percent expect physical distancing to have a high impact on project completion times.

"This second survey show us that contractors are adapting to the constantly evolving environment," said Katherine Jacobs, director of research with OCS. "As anticipated, the gradual re-start of the construction industry is seeing more contractors and workers back on jobsites across the province and therefore reporting a reduced impact on their firms' activity, financial impact and need for government assistance. Return to work, however, has created new challenges in terms of costs and productivity as contractors adapt to comply with requirements for PPE and physical distancing."



Cash flow crisis could be coming



Cash crunches and unfair contract condition —the construction industry could be in for a challenging year ahead as it manages its way through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The construction industry could be headed for a massive cash crunch if more isn't done to give builders access to cash and credit.

Sandra Skivsky, chair of the National Trade Contractors Coalition of Canada (NTCCC), spoke on a webinar on the future of construction after COVID that

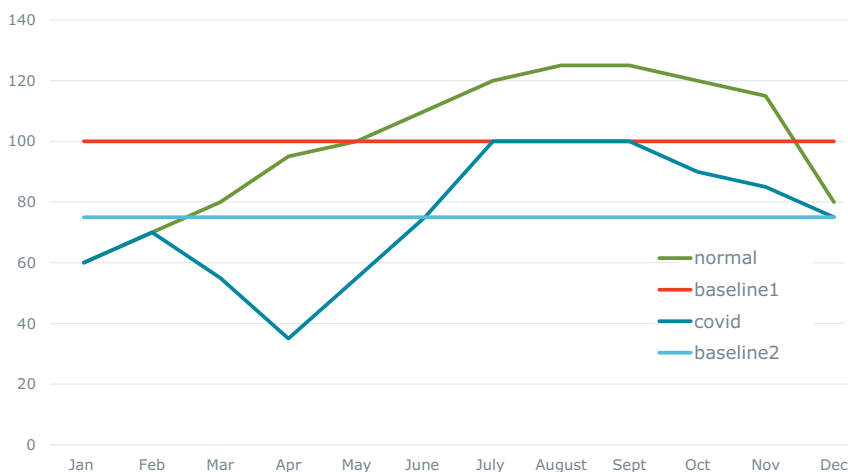
was hosted by McMillan LLP on March 14. One of the subjects she discussed in detail was the industry's absolute reliance on cash flow. She warned that site shut downs and project cancellations due to the pandemic will slow or all but stop the industry's cash flow at a time when liquidity is needed most.

In a normal year, construction ramps up in March or April and peaks in October or November before slowing as the year closes. Assuming that most contractors collect their receivables 60 days after work is completed, cash typically starts flowing through the industry in April and May for work started in January and February.

This year, however is anything but typical. While construction started the year at its usual pace in January and February, activity took a major hit in March and April because of project delays, lost productivity and government-mandated site shut downs. The decrease in activity—and its scheduled resumption in mid-May—means that cash flow in the industry won't start trending upwards much before the middle of July.

The challenge for many smaller contractors, said Skivsky, is that this will be the time at which they are expected to

Construction Activity Pre and Post COVID-19



perform their highest volumes of work, and when payments for work performed in March and April come due.

“Contractors are going to see a steep ramp-up in work at a time when their receivables are due and their cash flow is at its lowest point,” she said. “That’s bad news for subtrades that need money to take on new work, to hire people, to take on apprentices.”

This will not be a business-as-usual situation for companies, and she hopes banks and other financiers will take into account the industry’s particular challenges as companies appeal for increased credit.

“This summer and fall will be a big test for Ontario’s new prompt payment regime,” she added. “Increasing the velocity of money will help contractors come through this difficult period, but any hiccups in projects could spell disaster for some companies.”

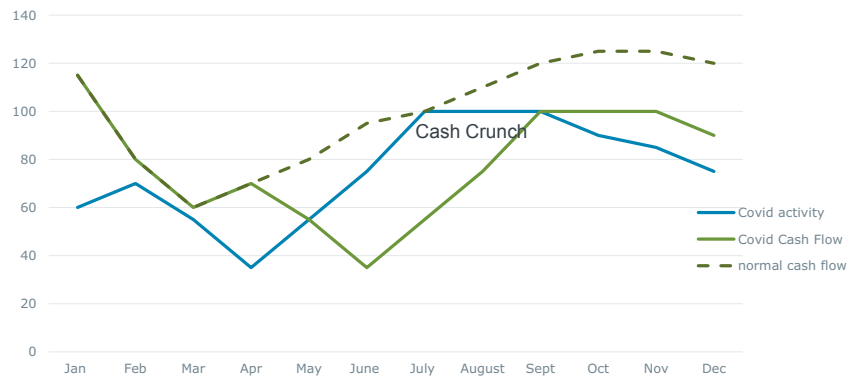
Ontario General Contractors Association present Clive Thurston, who also participated in the webinar, agreed with Skivsky. He suggested that the industry cannot be expected to resume its operations with the flip of a switch. Workforces have to be mobilized, supply chains restored, subtrades redeployed, and workers given the assurance that the sites they’re working on remain safe.

“Our industry needs support from the banks and the government to steer us through this pandemic,” he said.

Especially concerning for Thurston is the fact that while projects have been cleared to resume construction after lay-offs of as much as six weeks, some owners are refusing to give contractors any recognition for the government-mandated delays or show any willingness to compensate contractors for additional, unexpected costs.

He added that the industry is seeing more and more one-sided clauses in contracts that place the onus of dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the contractors. Some have even gone as far as to specifically exclude COVID-19 from among the pandemics that may influence contract

Cash Flow Impacts on COVID-19



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terms.

“A number of owners don’t care about the impact of the pandemic on the industry,” he said. “They want their projects completed for the prices they were quoted six or eight months ago. The government has to step in to get rid of things like reprisal clauses and clearly define force majeure clauses so people understand what they mean and how they apply.”

John Gamble, president & CEO of Association of Consulting Engineering Companies – Canada, said his concern coming out of the pandemic is how the resources of municipal governments will be stretched, and what capacity they will have remaining to tender new works.

He suggested that while larger municipalities have been largely able to weather the storm caused by the pandemic, smaller ones have all but closed their doors. If this remains the case, what capacity will these towns and cities have to apply for federal and stimulus infrastructure programs, and to tender construction projects, he asked.

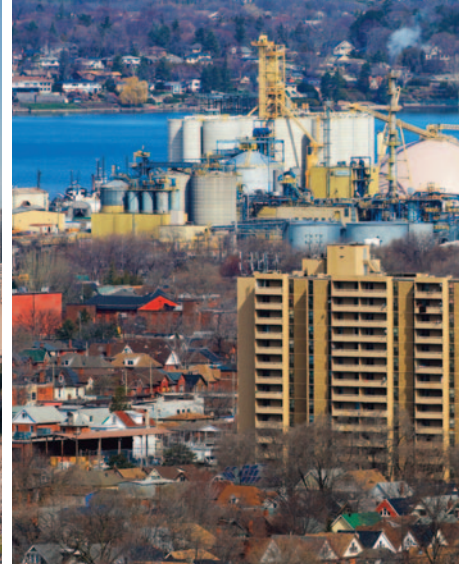
“It will be critical to maintain expertise and capacity across all municipal governments so that they can bring projects to that shovel-ready status and take advantage of the dollars that flow for stimulus projects,” he said.

The news across the webinar was not all bad. Mary Van Buren, president of the Canadian Construction Association, spoke about the extent to which the industry has come together to share ideas and strategies for managing workplaces and jobsites during the pandemic.

“To date, there has been no record of transmission of COVID-19 on any Canadian construction site,” she said. “The industry has placed an extreme focus on health and safety during the pandemic, and that has helped instill confidence in the workforce that construction sites are safe.”

Thurston agreed that going forward, construction sites will be cleaner and safer than ever before. That, he said, is down to the collective acceptance of the requirements imposed on the industry and a positive attitude of getting things done.

The webinar concluded with a look at other issues facing the industry, including the need for qualification-based procurement, the need for a stable, long-term infrastructure strategy from government, and barriers to innovation.



Three Ontario cities among least hard hit by COVID pandemic, says Conference Board

The economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic will hit Canada's cities hard in 2020, but Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton are expected to be among those least worst off by the end of the year.

Real GDP growth

(per cent)

Census metropolitan area (CMA)	2019	CMA	2020	CMA	2021–24
Montréal	3.4	Ottawa	–2.4	Calgary	4.3
Victoria	2.9	Victoria	–2.8	Edmonton	4.3
Vancouver	2.8	Vancouver	–3.0	Saskatoon	3.4
Halifax	2.6	Toronto	–3.0	Regina	3.3
Ottawa	2.6	Hamilton	–3.2	Toronto	3.2
Québec City	2.3	Québec City	–3.3	Vancouver	3.2
Hamilton	2.1	Halifax	–3.4	Halifax	3.0
Winnipeg	2.1	Winnipeg	–3.5	Winnipeg	2.8
Toronto	1.9	Montréal	–3.6	Victoria	2.8
Edmonton	0.3	Regina	–4.6	Hamilton	2.8
Calgary	0.1	Saskatoon	–4.9	Montréal	2.7
Regina	–0.1	Calgary	–5.5	Québec City	2.6
Saskatoon	–1.2	Edmonton	–5.6	Ottawa	2.6

Shaded area represents forecast data.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to wreak havoc across Canada in 2020, the economy is expected to rebound in 2021.

In the most recent edition of its *Major Cities Insights* report, the Conference Board of Canada is forecasting a drop in national GDP of as much as 25 percent in the second quarter of this year and 4.3 percent for the year as a whole. It adds that as physical distancing measures are relaxed through the spring and summer, the economy will begin to return to normal. It forecasts a growth in GDP of 6 percent in 2021.

The Conference Board calls the economic impacts of the pandemic, “a crisis unlike anything that most of us alive today have ever experienced.” It says that physical distancing requirements and the closure of non-essential businesses have brought a large portion of the economy to a virtual standstill.

As a result of such measures, nearly three million Canadians are expected to lose their jobs, and the national unemployment rate is expected to spike at around 14.4 percent. Despite this, the Conference Board projects that the job market and the economy as a whole will bounce back solidly in 2021. It calls the

response by governments to support businesses and consumers “extraordinary”, adding that the cost of such support payments will cause the federal deficit to reach as high as \$125 billion.

The Conference Board study looks at the economic impacts and likely growth prospects of 13 major Canadian cities. Three of those—Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton—are expected to perform among the top five in the country this year.

Ottawa’s economy, which grew by 2.6 percent in 2019 and averaged growth rates of 2.7 percent over the past five years, is expected to contract by 2.4 percent in 2020—the lowest contraction among all 13 surveyed cities. The Conference Board expects the city’s economy to grow by 4.9 percent in 2021.

Part of the reason for Ottawa’s performance is the influence of the federal government on the city’s economy. Output in the public sector is expected to expand by 0.4 percent in 2020, as will output in the healthcare sector (by 2.4 percent). Those growing industries will help offset output losses in the city’s other sectors, including drops of 0.5 percent in the finance, insurance and real-estate sector, 41.6 percent in the accommodation and food service sector, and 18 percent in the entertainment industry.

Toronto’s economy, which has grown at an average rate of 3.1 percent between 2014 and 2018, but which dropped to 1.9 percent in 2019, is expected to lose 3 percent in 2020 before rebounding by 6.2 percent in 2021.

The Conference Board expects Toronto’s public administration, health care and construction industries all to post positive growth rates in 2020. In addition, it says, output in the finance, insurance, and real estate sector will remain essentially flat. Other industries in the city, including its accommodations and food industry (-40.2 percent), and arts, entertainment and recreation (-17.8 percent) are expected to be hit hard.

Toronto’s residential construction sector is expected to perform well in 2020. Starts fell to just over 30,000 units in 2019—a drop of nearly 26 percent from 2018—and are expected to rise to more than 34,300 in 2020. The increase

is expected to be spurred by low interest rates and supportive federal programs. These, in turn will help to increase the number of starts to nearly 40,000 units in 2021.

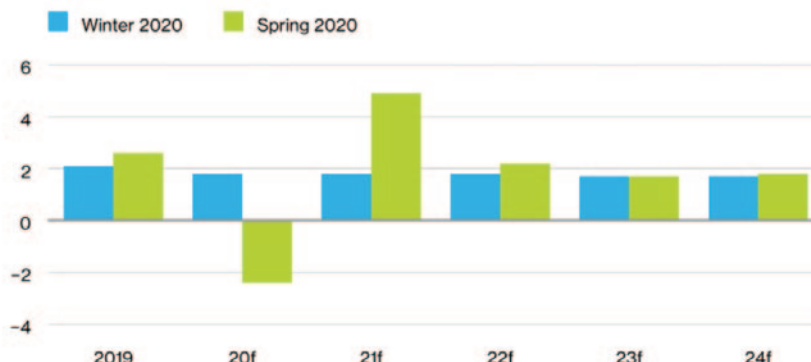
Finally, the Conference Board reports that Hamilton’s economy, which has increased at an average rate of 2.7 percent over the past five years, to contract by 3.2 percent in 2020 before

growing by 6.0 percent in 2021.

The city’s arts, entertainment and recreation (-17.6 percent), accommodation and food (-40.4 percent), and transport and warehousing (-10.4 percent) sectors are expected to feel the brunt of the economic storm, but its residential construction sector is expected to gain 3.2 percent in 2020.

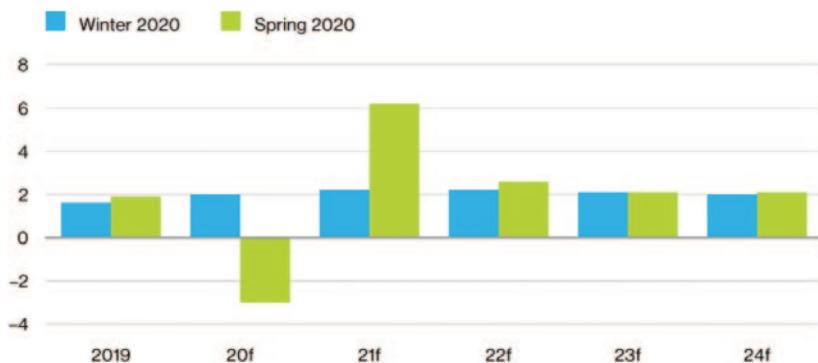
Ottawa real GDP

(real GDP, percentage change*)



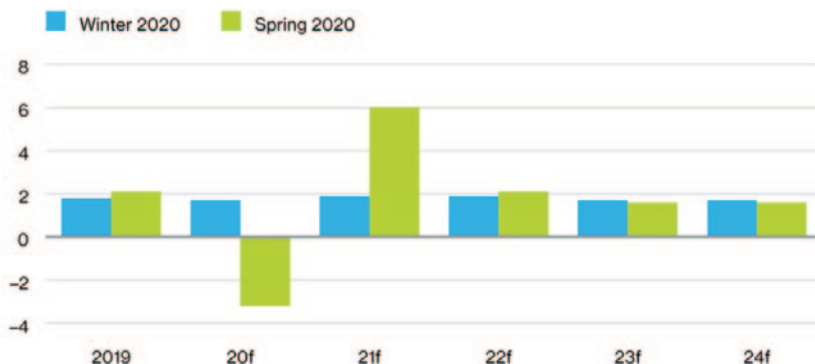
Toronto real GDP

(real GDP, percentage change*)



Hamilton real GDP

(real GDP, percentage change*)



f = forecast

*based on 2012 \$

Sources: The Conference Board of Canada; Statistics Canada.

Survey says 8 percent of businesses ready to re-open their doors



Findings from a recent survey conducted by The Conference Board of Canada show that only a small fraction of Canadian businesses are ready to resume operations during the COVID pandemic.

Ready to go back to work? Most organizations in Canada say they're not.

Results of a recent survey of nearly 300 businesses conducted by The Conference Board of Canada in May shows that only 8 percent of companies said their businesses were fully prepared to resume operations once government-imposed

shutdown orders were lifted. More than 85 percent of companies surveyed said they were either "nearly prepared" or "somewhat prepared" to re-open their doors.

The survey, which was conducted on May 11, also looked at measures companies intend to take to bring employees back into workplaces, the strategies they intend to put in place to keep employees safe while at work, and the steps they will take to accommodate employees who might be at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

"For employees returning to workplaces, safety will be paramount. The virus will likely find loopholes in safety measures we put in place," says Allison Cowan, director of human capital at The Conference Board of Canada. "Employers will need to continually adapt, and this could include bringing employees back and then having to close workplaces again."



During the pandemic, most employers have directed employees to work remotely. With governments relaxing restrictions and allowing more businesses to operate, employers face the question of how to bring workers back to the office. Forty percent of those surveyed say they will require workers to return to the workplace in at least some capacity. Four percent said they would require employees to come back to work full-time, and 30 percent said employees could continue to work remotely full time.

The challenge for many employers is that some workers are at higher risk of several health issues as a result of COVID-19 than others. People over the age of 65, those with weakened immune systems, and those with medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and hypertension are particularly at risk.

Return to work plans therefore have to take into account who can come back, when and in what capacity.

The survey found that only half of employers will allow employees who are not comfortable returning to the workplace to stay home. It also asked under which conditions employers would exempt employees from returning to work. Ninety-six percent of employers said they would allow workers with high risk of illness from COVID-19 to stay away. Eighty-six percent said they would exempt workers with caregiving responsibilities, such as looking after children and elderly family members, to stay away; 84 percent said they would exempt workers with family members at high risk of illness from COVID-19, and 60 percent said they would exempt workers with family members in high-risk jobs relating to COVID-19.

So what safety measures are companies putting place to ensure worker safety in the workplace? Chief among these is cleaning work surfaces and high-touch elements. Employers are also adding new hand-washing facilities and hand sanitizer stations. Many are limiting business travel, limiting face-to-face meetings, providing personal protective equipment, posting signage and spacing out employees.

In terms of plans for return, the most popular approaches were to bring employees back in phases, to restrict the number of people working on site, controlling on site movements, and alternating on-site schedules.

Finally, the report about companies' plans to prepare for a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts suggest that could happen as soon as September. Twenty-eight percent of employers say they have plans in place for a workplace re-exist, while 62 percent say they're working on such a plan.



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COVID-19 – Now is the time to turn our focus towards mitigation



Whether your project has been slowed down due to COVID-19, or your project site has been shut down completely, there are many ways for project teams to look for opportunities to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 as well as other risks.

In Revay's previous article, we discussed some of the impacts the construction industry has been facing due to COVID-19, along with the importance of recording and documenting issues, lost time and additional costs stemming from the situation in order to facilitate the resolution of disputes later on.

As the current COVID-19 situation continues to affect the construction industry, Revay would like to remind all our clients of another important consideration: the duty to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 related disruptions. Looking beyond the duty to mitigate, Revay also sees an opportunity for the construction industry to come back stronger after COVID-19 by taking time

to address other common construction risks.

Whether your project has been slowed down due to COVID-19, or your project site has been shut down completely, there are many ways for project teams to look for opportunities to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 as well as other risks. To the extent possible, there are opportunities for parties to use this downtime to reassess their projects, by both revisiting existing project risks and identifying new project risks. Revay offers the following considerations and opportunities, some of which relate to common issues affecting projects, even during normal times:

Reduce common design and procurement risks

- advancing project designs and collaborating with suppliers and contractors;
- engaging with contractors more regarding constructability in design;
- advancing procurement to address common supply chain issues such as late supplier engagement or late material delivery; and
- resolving design issues to reduce Requests for Information (RFI) when work resumes.

Resolve outstanding contract administration risks

- addressing and resolving outstanding change orders, RFIs and other administrative responsibilities;
- following up on outstanding submittals, including shop drawings, close out requirements, notices, etc.;
- updating current as-built schedules and site conditions to reflect project conditions before COVID-19 impacts started; and

- updating and organizing project management items such as quotations, change request submittals, change logs, drawing logs, etc.

Address new risks related to restarting work after COVID-19

- carefully training workers with respect to new and evolving COVID-19-related safety procedures and retraining workers with respect to other safety procedures;
- developing comprehensive recovery plans that consider labour, equipment, material, and subcontractors;
- reviewing and optimizing the planning and sequencing of work as a collaborative effort with owners, contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers;
- considering and identifying all possible opportunities to reduce and/or

mitigate costs, schedule delays and productivity losses, including acceleration; and

effectively rolling out new procedures, recovery plans and schedules to all project stakeholders.

Mitigate impacts of lost time or additional costs

- evaluating the costs related to new work procedures, schedule delays, productivity impacts, increased labor rates, amongst other impacts;
- preparing for or defending against possible claims by recording all events and tracking costs using separate cost codes – construction claims consultants can aid in schedule updates and claims preparation; and
- initiating discussions with respect to resolution of additional costs and schedule impacts as early as possible.

While the opportunities may differ depending on what stage your project is at, proactive behaviour will help alleviate and mitigate impacts encountered. Working together to mitigate existing or new risks while work is slowed or suspended will allow for a more seamless restart and improved collaboration moving forward.

Your projects, and the construction industry as a whole, will come back stronger if all parties work together and seize all available opportunities during this slow down or shut down time.

The article was written by Zey Emir, P.Eng., MBA, president of Revay and Associates Limited. It originally appeared on the company's website.

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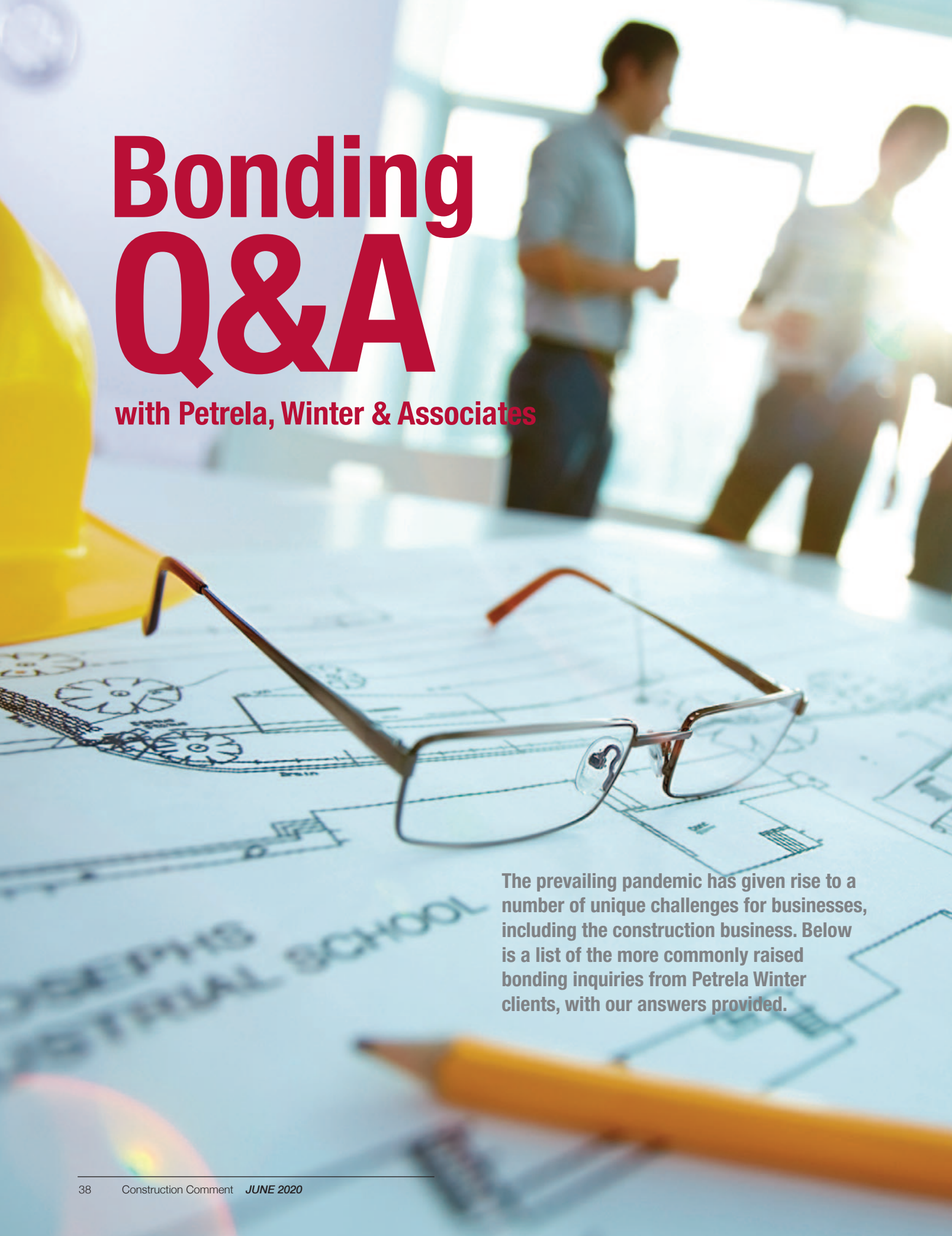
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Bonding Q&A

with Petrela, Winter & Associates

The prevailing pandemic has given rise to a number of unique challenges for businesses, including the construction business. Below is a list of the more commonly raised bonding inquiries from Petrela Winter clients, with our answers provided.

What impact is the crisis having on the bonding industry? Should I expect any changes from my surety?

After an unprofitable year for Canadian surety in 2018, the industry rebounded in 2019 with profitable results posted by most individual sureties and the industry overall. The surety industry was in a healthy state as we entered the crisis, however, the resultant economic disruption has had an immediate impact and imparted a more cautious approach from bonding companies.

Most sureties are asking more questions of existing clients and being more selective in the new clients they take on. For well performing and financially sound construction companies, things should be more or less “business as usual” with their surety, aside from perhaps a little extra scrutiny and questions around how the contractor is managing the disruption.

For contractors that have struggled to generate consistent profits, are weighed down with high debt levels, or have historically struggled to get adequate bond support, dealings with your surety are likely to become more difficult in the current environment. Some may even face restrictions in bond support.

What can we do to ensure no adverse changes to our bond program?

It’s critical to have the right broker advisor in your corner. A specialized surety broker with exposure to numerous bonding companies can provide perspective as to how the different markets are behaving and how they would act in the exact situation the contractor finds themselves. Your broker should also be in direct and consistent contact with your surety and your underwriter specifically, gauging their comfort not just on your business, but also on the surety’s overall approach and temperament in the current marketplace.

There are tried and true strategies to maximize bond support in any environment, however the current disrupted business environment presents new issues which require a different plan to

maximize your bonding. Sureties will be looking for a thoughtful strategy around how you will manage any project delays or shutdowns, supply-chain issues, reduced productivity, and payment delays and reduced cashflows.

How will my performance bond respond to claims made for COVID-related delays or interruptions in work?

It is important to remember that the performance bond will only respond if the principal (contractor) defaults in their obligations under the contract. If work is interrupted and the contractor is delayed, and the contract provides relief for the delay, then the contractor is not in default and the bond will not respond. In other words, a bond can’t be enforced to fulfill an obligation that does not contractually exist. A precise review and interpretation of the contract wording is required, with particular focus on delay and/or force majeure provisions, and the associated notice requirements.

The best way to deal with bond claims is to avoid them. During these uncertain times, we recommend contractors take a proactive approach to anticipate and manage issues and delays, and to actively engage the owner and consultant to keep them informed of any challenges and collaborate on solutions.

How can we manage and minimize COVID-related risk?

Start by confirming your safety and legal obligations are met.

- Address the health and safety of your employees and colleagues.
- Review the current legislative environment in your province or region with respect to essential services, and the status of construction projects.
- For projects that are ordered or forced to shut down, review our publication on Managing Temporary Project Shutdowns and consult with us for additional material/advice.

Next, take account of your financial and operational realities.

- Determine the financial resiliency

of your company. Revenues and productivity are going to be greatly reduced, costs are going to escalate, receivables may be harder to collect and payables are going to be called on. Manage your cash prudently.

- Talk to your bank to ensure no changes in your credit program. What assistance programs are available for your business and your employees?
- Arrange a call with your surety broker to ensure your bonding company is up to date on the actions you are taking. Do you have the surety support you need?
- You may have to look at your internal cost structures – footprint, rent deferrals, staffing and compensation levels, and “discretionary” overhead. Difficult decisions are being made across the industry

Finally, look to the horizon, and begin to think strategically. Think not only about what your company must do to emerge, but how could take advantage.

- Review your opportunity pipeline. How likely are private owners to come out of this wanting to spend money on construction? How will that impact your business?
- Where is construction money likely to be spent? Infrastructure always benefits during recessions.
- When bid opportunities do begin to return in force—and they will—remember the truism that contractors rarely starve to death; they die of gluttony. Build your backlog back up slowly and strategically, remembering that most contractor defaults occur when contractors don’t have the cash to finance heavy backlogs.

All of these questions are designed to offer advice to construction contractors on how to manage one aspect of COVID related risk. Petrela Winter & Associates have dedicated resources and detailed position papers on a vast array of COVID related topics and issues, which are constantly being updated. We are committed to helping contractors manage the disruption and position themselves for success in the new environment.

Our offices are open!

After nearly two months of shut-doors, OCA reopened its offices on May 19.

Of course, we're taking all the precautions we can to keep our building as clean as possible, to respect physical distancing requirements, and to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff and any members who come to visit.

One of the ways we're doing our part is by bringing our staff back to the office in smaller teams. Not everyone will be in the office every day, so if you have a question for any specific staff member, your best approach is to contact them by phone or email.

Members may come to the office in person to sign statutory declarations or buy products such as CCDC documents and seals, safety posters and drawing orders. We will process these requests between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., and have created a dedicated pick-up zone for these items in the foyer of our building.

While we're pleased to bring back these services, we are also encouraging members to consider taking care of any of these transactions through our website or by other contactless means. We are, for example, still offering virtual statutory declaration services. Members can contact either Stephanie Wallace stephanie@oca.ca or Kathy Morocz at kathy@oca.ca to have those documents signed.

Thanks for being patient and helping us stay safe. We're looking forward to getting back to business as usual as soon as possible!



Elaine Michels announces her retirement from OCA

OCA is saying "farewell and good luck" to a long-time friend.

Our education manager Elaine Michels announced her retirement in mid May and will continue in her role until the end of this month.

Elaine has worked in various capacities with OCA for more than 16 years: in the plan room, on events, at the front desk and most recently as the lead on our education portfolio. No matter the day, no matter the role and no matter the challenge, Elaine has been a tremendous ambassador for the association and its members. She is a true professional and a great friend.

Replacing Elaine in the role of education manager is Kathy Morocz. Elaine will provide advice and guidance to Kathy over the next month.

Please join us in wishing all the best to Elaine as she begins the next chapter of her life!

Projects listed in April 2020

Project # 0664-0838 Owner/Agency	April 2020	Year to date
City of Ottawa	18	112
PWGSC & Other Federal Depts.	30	79
NRC	0	1
DCC	4	16
NCC	1	5
Provincial & Other Municipalities	68	293
Private Owners & Developers	1	12
Ottawa Housing	2	18
Museums	1	7
Health Care Facilities	1	18
Schools	5	26
Universities & Colleges	3	20
Brookfield	6	81
Prequalifications	13	56
Notice Only	22	94
Duplicate	0	0
Total	175	838
April 2019	281	1,134
% change	-37.7	-26.1

*Prequalifications and Notice Only were previously combined in the same category.

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Special fundraising appeal for Chelsea Ogilvie

A special GoFundMe campaign for Chelsea Ogilvie is being highlighted for your consideration.

Chelsea is the 32-year-old daughter of Jack and Sharon Ogilvie of Ottawa. She fell while hiking in Turkey last September, and suffered a complete spinal cord injury at the T-12 level. She is paralyzed from the chest down.

Due to COVID-19, a number of fundraising events have been cancelled. Efforts are now turning to raising the profile of a GoFundMe page for Chelsea in order to help the family reach its financial goal.

Ed and Joanne Brennan of Donalco, who had a similar experience happen to their daughter, have generously contributed \$1,500 to Chelsea's GoFundMe. The Brennans have issued a challenge to other OCA members to add \$25,000 more to Chelsea's GoFundMe campaign.

Please read [Chelsea's story](#) and consider donating to her page.

Unofficial bid results over \$500,000: April 2020

JOB #	DESCRIPTION	BID
OCA-20-0700	Rural Road Upgrade and Pavement Preservation	Thomas Cavanagh Construction Limited \$2,676,545.50
OCA-20-0699	Rehabilitation of County Structure B202 - (Cameron Street Bridge)	R.G.T. Clouthier Construction \$951,797.50
OCA-20-0693	Rehabilitation of County Road 65 - (Centennial Lake Road) & County Road 508 - (Black Donald Road)	Miller Paving Limited \$685,527.50
OCA-20-0692	County Road 515 - (Palmer Road & Quadeville Road)	Greenwood Paving (Pembroke) Limited \$1,694,539.10
OCA-20-0689	County Road 10 Reconstruction and Slope Stability	Coco Group Inc. \$2,889,104.50
OCA-20-0651	Supply and Deliver Sand for the Trail Road Landfill	George W. Drummond \$597,500.00
OCA-20-0634	Reconstruction of Sydney Street, from Fourth Street to Fifth Street and Fifth Street from Sydney Street to Amelia Street	Maylon Excavation \$1,663,097.10
OCA-20-0623	Nepean Sportsplex - Parking Lot Rehabilitation	Aecon Construction Ontario East Limited \$2,148,000.00
OCA-20-0620	Intersection Control at Barnsdale Road and Prince of Wales Drive	Ottawa D-Squared \$2,432,150.00
OCA-20-0605	Volunteer Fire Station, Municipality of Casselman	J.C. Sulphur Construction Ltd. \$2,132,895.00
OCA-20-0596	2020 Surface Treatment Program	Thomas Cavanagh Construction Limited \$666,595.63
OCA-20-0578	Teron Road Storm Sewer Rehabilitation	In-Depth Contracting \$1,813,482.00
OCA-20-0572	Supply of Winter Salt	Blendtek Fine Ingredients \$668,692.50
OCA-20-0560	Structure Renewal - Bridges And Culvert	National Structures Inc. \$1,293,655.38
OCA-20-0527	2020 Asphalt Paving & Concrete Works on Various City Streets	Maylon Excavation \$2,978,787.86
OCA-20-0491	Bid Request for Bridge 06-077 rehabilitation	Dalco Constructors Ltd. \$917,000.00
OCA-20-0487	Reconstruction of Louisa Street and Alice Street from Montreal Road to First Street, and Baldwin Avenue from First Street to Second Street	Clarence McDonald Excavation Ltd. \$3,267,810.84
OCA-20-0468	MTO - Culvert Replacements, Culvert Repairs, Culvert Cleanouts, Drainage Improvements, Micro-Surfacing and Rock Scaling at Hwy 7 and 62	Dufferin Construction Company, a Division Of CRH Canada Group Inc. \$4,414,156.00
OCA-20-0429	Bid Request for Hot Mix Paving & Related Road Rehabilitation Work at various location	Cornwall Gravel Company Limited \$8,053,622.15
OCA-20-0399	MTO - Grading, Drainage, Granular Base, Hot Mix Paving and Structural	Aecon Construction Ontario East Limited \$5,398,000.00
OCA-20-0272	Justice Building HVAC Systems Replacement	3V Mechanical Inc. \$1,128,870.00



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OCA training schedule

SUMMER 2020

June 8	Working at Heights - Fundamentals of Fall Protection	8:30 a.m.
June 9	Working at Heights - Refresher Training	8:30 a.m.
June 19	Gold Seal Certification Information Session	9:00 a.m.
June 22	Working at Heights - Fundamentals of Fall Protection	8:30 a.m.
June 23	Working at Heights - Refresher Training	8:30 a.m.
July 9	Working at Heights - Fundamentals of Fall Protection	8:30 a.m.
July 10	Working at Heights - Refresher Training	8:30 a.m.
August 6	Working at Heights - Fundamentals of Fall Protection	8:30 a.m.
August 7	Working at Heights - Refresher Training	8:30 a.m.
August 17	Working at Heights - Fundamentals of Fall Protection	8:30 a.m.
August 18	Working at Heights - Refresher Training	8:30 a.m.



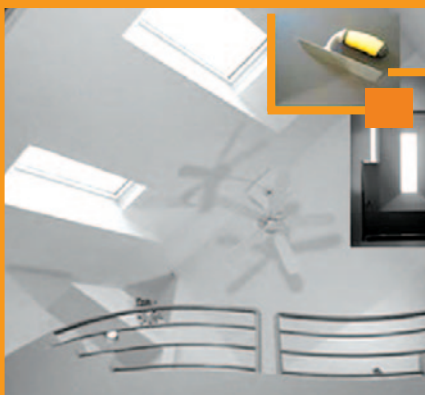
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Ferano Construction Ltd.
Groupe Piche Construction Inc.
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Guess the photo

Congratulations to Bruce Geerts from Spacebuilders Ottawa Ltd. who took all of about 10 seconds to send us a note correctly identifying this building as the Clarence-Rockland Town Hall. (Bruce confessed he drives past the building every day.)



Photo by Ron de Vries Photography



Now tell us what's pictured here. (If you've seen this building before, you'll know it right away.)

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