



YARDSTICK

Fall 2021

ECO-FRIENDLY FUTURE

RETROFITTING TIPS FROM PASSIVE HOUSE CANADA

BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY

LESSONS LEARNED REFLECTING ON PANDEMIC

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MASTHEAD

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Published September 2021

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Cover and below left: This Passive House Canada certified build was completed in 2020 in Vancouver.

Below right: Prairie Pride firework boxes are being sold for a local fundraiser.

COVER PHOTO AND BELOW LEFT: NICK BRAY ARCHITECTURE LTD. BELOW RIGHT: SUPPLIED



INNOVATING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

If we expect to see different results, we need to ask what changes need to be made to get there.

“The greatest gift parents can give to their children is a good work ethic,” is a common theme of conversations as of late. After experiencing the workforce-related issues in this past year, a lot of businesses had eye-opening moments and truly experienced the value of a hard work ethic and staff who had this inherent ability to figure things out, which meant they can think critically, roll with the punches, focus on the job at hand and get things done. Having staff like this truly can make life easier and take the pressure off business leaders as they are not dealing with unnecessary distractions and issues.

While it is up to parents to instill a work ethic (among other things such as integrity, morals and ethics to name a few) in their children, it's up to industry and educational institutions to equip the future workforce with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful. Whether it is part-time jobs to keep the money flowing to pay for further education, or full-time jobs for self-exploration, there is always an opportunity to minimize the skills gap and maximize opportunities.

Most of you know, there is a lot of opportunity in the LBM industry and most of us landed here without actually planning to be here. But imagine how much further ahead we could be if we had better training programs to target youth and channel generations of the workforce to the LBM?

To help channel students and place this industry on their radars, the WRLA, with feedback from members, has started to work on opportunities to include vocational training in curriculum and factor in programs that will help provide training and help make it easier for members to recruit qualified staff. COVID interrupted our progress, as the institutions we are working with were forced to put a hold on new initiatives and focus their attention on delivering existing programs effectively. As we emerge from this pandemic, the ability to harness new opportunities lie ahead of us and are among our priorities.



How does this apply to innovation? If we expect to see different results, we need to ask what changes need to be made to get there. We commonly hear members speak of the difficulties they are having finding qualified staff (not unique to the LBM) but if as an industry we want knowledgeable and skilled employees, then we need to develop consistent programming that will help develop the talent pool.

The other piece of the puzzle is a shift in mindset, which Joel Seibert will focus on in his article, as we have an opportunity to create change that will help members be more successful on the staffing side in the long run.

This is an area we are committed to focus on and will continue to do so. Please stay tuned for more information, and if you or some of your staff are interested to work on this initiative, then please do reach out. Member engagement is critical to our success. Without your feedback, knowledge and experience we can only go so far.

Liz Kovach
PRESIDENT, WRLA

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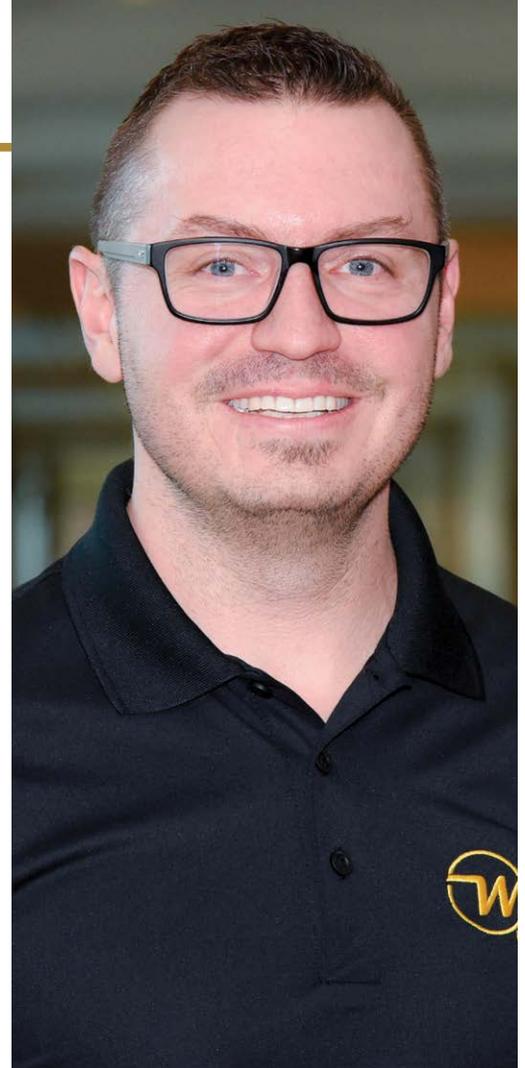


SUPPORTING OUR INDUSTRY'S SUCCESS

Historically high lumber prices, combined with record volumes of lumber sales, means the market is able and willing to pay more for our product than we had initially thought.

As Winston Churchill famously said, “never let a good crisis go to waste.” With provinces lifting restrictions and lumber and building material prices dropping, it’s important to look back at these past 18 months and critically evaluate the trajectory and successes of one’s business and our industry. Within the past year, historically high lumber prices have thrust the LBM industry into the national spotlight. Nightly news reports on the consistently climbing lumber prices contributed to feverish buying by DIYers and homeowners who, while working from home and unable to travel, now had the time and disposable income to tackle the projects that had been deep on their to-do lists.

Historically high lumber prices, combined with record volumes of lumber sales, means the market is able and willing to pay more for our product than we had initially thought. This is something as retailers we need to understand and hang on to. Having a higher cost of goods is a GOOD thing. Higher priced goods, sold at the same margin points, means more money flowing through our businesses and industry. More money allows us to attract new technology and people with better education, skills and training. New technology, combined with employees with better education, skills and training grow and better our businesses and industry. It is difficult to develop, attract, retain and most importantly pay employees what they are worth when the goods we are selling are grossly under-priced and companies are racing to sell product at the bottom dollar just to get a sale.



We know the historically high prices of lumber are not sustainable, just like we knew that prior to this spike lumber prices were way too cheap. However, it is up to us at the retail and vendor level to establish the new acceptable level of pricing. We have the connections and relationships with the retail, builder and contractor markets, and have the responsibility to find the new “sweet spot” where everyone is profitable and able to grow!

Our industry faced a lumber pricing and supply crisis. It’s up to us to learn from it, and now that we are on the back side of it, use it to our advantage. I encourage you to meet with your peers and competitors and have open, meaningful discussions about your markets and work together to create sustainable pricing for everyone involved in the construction industry, and work towards bettering our industry and more importantly our people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Seibert'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Joel Seibert
CHAIR, WRLA



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NEW WRLA TEAM MEMBERS

Please join us in giving a warm WRLA welcome to our two new team members!

CAROLYNNE JANSEN, DIRECTOR, MEMBERSHIP AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Carolynne is thrilled to be added to the team to help the WRLA deliver membership value, leading policy, advocacy and educational opportunities for members and stakeholders and foster strong relationships and partnership opportunities in support of our organization's mission, vision and values.

For the last seven years as the Director of Business Development and Part-

nerships with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, Carolynne played a very similar role and has an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of member-based organizations and the importance of solid, mutually beneficial partnerships with members and key industry stakeholders.

In addition, the trajectory of her career also brings an in-depth understanding of the global retail marketplace, supply chain management systems, transportation and logistics as well as inventory management and trade and tariff issues.

Raised in Manitoba, Carolynne is dedicated to her son, daughter and granddaughter, loves animals and has deep agricultural roots.

ALISA LUO, GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Alisa Luo joined the Western Retail Lumber Association in June to take our marketing and communications materials to new heights. She is in charge of the design of the *Yardstick* magazine, the directory, in addition to social media posts and more.



She is a graduate of the Graphic Design program at Red River College in Winnipeg and comes with a Bachelor's Degree in landscaping from the Beijing University of Agriculture.

PHOTOS: MARY-MARGARET MAGYAR

WRLA NEWS



GETTING OUT ON THE GREENS

The WRLA annual golf tournaments have been a huge success! We were so excited to see old friends and connect on the course. Last year's tournaments allowed us to offer 14 education grants valued at \$1,300 each.

Top: Joel Seibert from Mountain View Building Materials, Wendell Gillert from Allied Lumberland Home Hardware, Mark Kuzma from Taiga Building Products, Liz Kovach, WRLA President and Ron Cuff from Taiga Building Products.

Centre Left: The Cervus Equipment team from left to right: Rory Quinn, Brent Goodwin, Greg Britton and Rhiannon Millard.

Centre Right: Jil Reid from the All-Fab Group and Tim Pillipow from American Express.

INDUSTRY AWARD NOMINATIONS

We love to celebrate the best and brightest in the lumber and building supply industry. We have two prestigious awards to hand out.

SALES REPRESENTATIVE OF THE YEAR (ONE PER PROVINCE)

As a WRLA retail member, you can nominate the sales representative who always goes the extra mile, a team player, a person who represents you and your brand with professionalism, and does exceptional work, day in and day out.

INDUSTRY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The lumber and building materials industry is full of strong leaders, and we want to celebrate them!

The WRLA Industry Achievement Award recognizes a member (past or present) who has contributed to their business, the building supply industry, the WRLA and their community.

The nomination deadline is **October 29, 2021**. You can nominate someone on our website wrla.org.



IN MEMORY

Window and Door pioneer **Harry Buhler**
remembered by family, employees, and industry



Harry Buhler founded All Weather Windows on June 5, 1978 in a small 10,000 square foot facility in Edmonton, Alberta with 9 employees. By 1988, the new business had grown 10 fold with locations across western Canada.

Harry was a pioneer, a visionary leader, and a true entrepreneur. The customer was at the heart of every decision Harry made and his customer focused legacy lives on today at All Weather Windows.



ONLINE TRAINING COURSES AVAILABLE

The WRLA is excited to be able to offer virtual courses. The flexible online delivery allows you to build knowledge and skills on your own schedule.

1 BUILDING SCIENCE AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY AWARENESS

This course is designed for anyone in building design, construction and management who wants a better understanding of how buildings work. The training will provide you with a solid grounding in the fundamentals of building science, from air movement and moisture management to energy-efficient windows and doors. It will also get you up-to-speed on National Building Code requirements for new buildings, additions and major alterations.

2 ONLINE ESTIMATING LEVEL 1: ESTIMATING FUNDAMENTALS – DECKS & GARAGES

Become an expert estimator in the lumber and building supply industry. This online course teaches you the basic knowledge of estimating for a variety of projects including decks, garages and roofs. You will gain the knowledge base of the projects and be able to understand the steps used in these projects from estimation to completion.

LUMBER PRICES AND FOREST FIRES

Significant supply chain challenges and transportation backlogs are being created as a result of the wildfires out west. Producers are facing a variety of challenges and are trying to manage the situation as best as they can. Some of the current issues include:

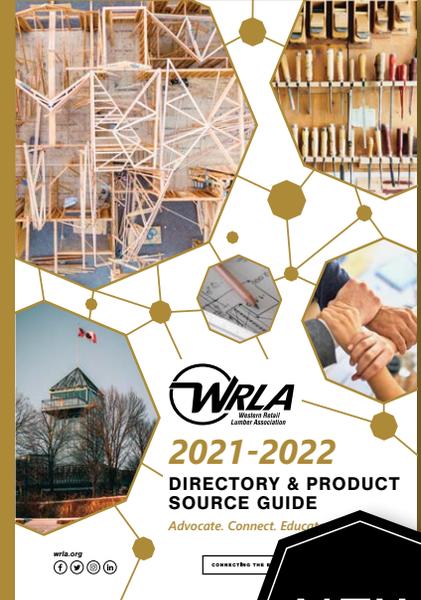
- An inability to harvest logs due to dangerous conditions. Logging will continue to become more difficult if the current conditions continue.
- Crippling of the transportation network in some cases as rail is not able to operate, creating backups at the Port of Vancouver.

Producers are managing the situation as best as they can, however a change in weather, wind, etc. can have impacts.

Other issues that continue to impact pricing and supply are container costs and availability. Costs continue to rise and have increased by more than 400 per cent. Regular container pricing has jumped from \$2,500 to \$10,000 and with the demand for product, premium service is basically the only option and is \$18,000 to \$31,000 USD per container, depending on the container and region the shipment is coming from.

Labour shortages continue to be experienced, which create delays and strain on an already stressed supply chain.

WRLA DIRECTORY DELIVERED



The WRLA 2021-22 Directory & Product Source Guide is now available. Additional copies are available for purchase by contacting the WRLA office. You can also view our free version on the member portal of our website: membersarea.wrla.org (email wrla@wrla.org for the password).



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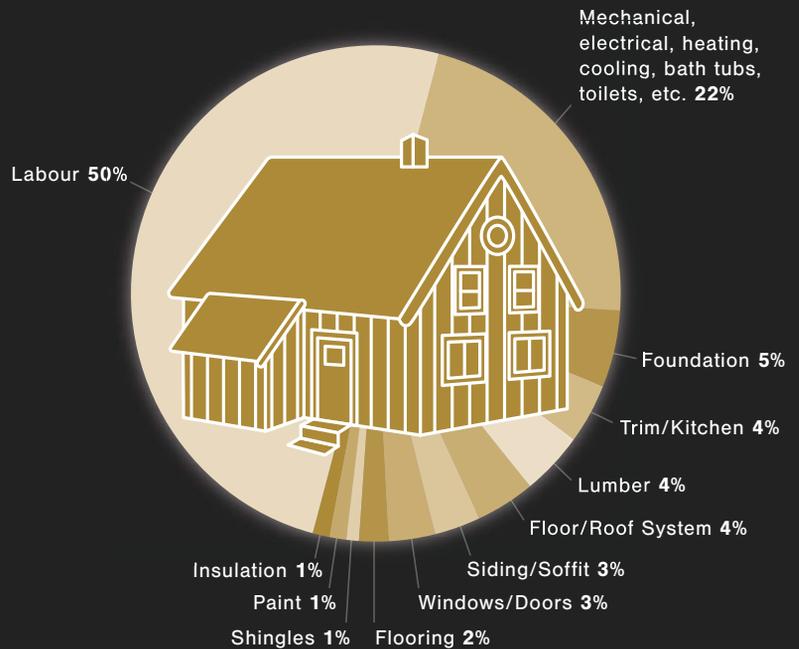
Bigfoot Systems® is distributed by Con-Cell Industries Inc. in Western Canada and is available at your local building supply store.

LUMBER FACTORS IN NEW HOME BUILD

The cost of building a new home in Canada has more to do with labour prices than any material used in the home.

Members of the WRLA broke down the average bill of a brand-new build in Canada and found that direct lumber material costs make up only about 4 per cent of a new home's price. Meanwhile, the largest line item is labour, at about half of the home's cost. It's important to keep things in perspective. Many new homes that are being built are large houses, but the proportion of the bill that's lumber is relative.

NEW HOME COSTS



NEW RETROFIT GRANT FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The WRLA is pleased to see the federal government make significant investments in the future of energy-efficient homes in Canada. This year, the federal government announced the new Canada Greener Homes Grant, which will help up to 700,000 Canadian homeowners across the country improve the energy efficiency of their homes and reduce their energy bills through an investment of \$2.6 billion over seven years.

Homeowners will be able to receive grants of up to \$5,000 to make energy-efficient retrofits to their primary residences, and up to \$600 to help with the cost of home energy evaluations. Eligible home improvements and upgrades include replacing windows and doors, adding insulation, sealing air leaks, improving heating and cooling systems – such as with heat pumps – and purchasing renewable energy systems like solar panels.



2022 SHOWCASE NEWS

We are thrilled to be hosting an in-person WRLA Building & Hardware Showcase this January!

Our member portal has been updated, registration is open and booths are now on sale. The showcase is scheduled for January 19 – 21, 2022 at the RBC Convention Centre in Winnipeg and our partner hotels are taking bookings.

If you would like more details about booking a booth, please visit our show portal.

Email wrla@wrla.org for the password.



UPCOMING WEBINARS

Our WRLA webinars have become very popular amongst members as an opportunity to learn and expand their knowledge base and to strengthen and enhance their businesses. The webinars cover a wide range of business topics including marketing, leadership, data security, HR and industry trends. Here are some of our FREE upcoming webinars on the fall schedule.

INTRO TO PASSIVE HOUSE STANDARD FOR RETROFITS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

September 14, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. CST

Presenters: Chris Ballard, CEO, Passive House Canada and Ed May, Partner, BuildingType LLC

Buildings shape the lives, health and well-being of individuals and communities. Unfortunately, many of the buildings across Western Canada often have a multitude of problems: from drafty building envelopes to mold and moisture problems and inefficient HVAC systems. While the Passive House standard was first adopted as a tool to improve the quality of new construction, in the decades since its inception, the standard has grown to include some powerful new tools, guidelines and certifications, which can help professionals in the construction sector retrofit buildings to be more comfortable, healthier and use less energy. This one-hour session will introduce the Passive House Retrofit Standard (EnerPHit) and highlight some examples of successful Passive House retrofits from around the world. Do not miss this opportunity to learn more about how you can sustainably retrofit.

This webinar is sponsored by:



BUILDING WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

September 28, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. CST

Presenter: Melenie Olfert, Instructor of Cultural Studies and Business Communication at the University of Winnipeg

How is productivity and inclusive leadership connected? Diverse and inclusive teams start with a 17 per cent higher productivity rate. They are 29 per cent more collaborative and are reported to make high-quality decisions. Why is this? Join us for a presentation on diversity and inclusion at work and in the industry as a whole.

In this webinar you will:

- Have a better understanding of what is meant by diversity and inclusion in the workplace
- Articulate the business case and benefits of diversity and inclusion
- Know the elements of workplace diversity with a focus on gender and cultural diversity
- Take away some tips to continue building diversity and inclusion within your business

This webinar is sponsored by:



To sign up for any free WRLA webinars, visit our website to register:

wrla.org/events/webinars

SOCIAL MEDIA PLANNING FOR TRADE SHOWS

November 16, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. CST

Presenter: Charmaine Jennings, Strategic Charm Boutique

It's no secret successful trade shows can drive a lot of traffic to your business. But did you forget about your online traffic? While it's great to make in-person connections and pass out business cards, in the age of social media, potential customers and retailers often go to Facebook or Instagram to learn more about you – sometimes before going to your website. If your social media channels are stale and don't have fresh or engaging content, your trade show connection may lose interest.

During this webinar, Charmaine Jennings of Strategic Charm Boutique will walk you through how to prepare your social media channels prior to your trade show, how to utilize features like lives and Instagram stories during the trade show and how to keep engagement going after the trade show has ended.

.....
Webinar sponsorship available!
Contact Carolynne Jansen at cjansen@wrla.org for more information.
.....

Above: WRLA Trade Show & Events Manager Jessica Cranmer hosting a webinar for members.

WRLA NETWORKING & AWARDS NIGHT



JANUARY 20, 2022

6:30-11:00 p.m.

7:30 p.m. Industry & sales
award presentations

Delta Marriott Hotel Winnipeg

Nominate a member today for
Industry Achievement or Sales
Representative of the Year.

DEADLINE: OCTOBER 29, 2021



DETAILS AND NOMINATION FORMS:
wrla.org/events/industry-awards



MEMBER CORNER

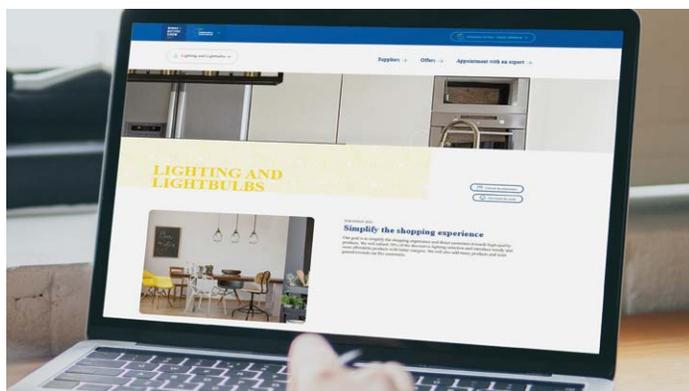
 WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Email us at marketing@wrla.org or reach out via social media.



THE RONA BUYING SHOW IS BACK IN VIRTUAL MODE THIS YEAR

Lowe's Canada, one of Canada's leading home improvement retailers operating or servicing some 470 corporate and affiliated stores under different banners, announced its RONA Buying Show will return exclusively online from October 18 to December 3, 2021.



40-YEAR MILESTONE

We are happy to celebrate Gary Fletcher for his 40 years at the Trail Group of Companies.

Gary, who is now the General Manager, started with the team in June 1981. Congratulations Gary!



HOME HARDWARE ANNOUNCES 2021 VIRTUAL FALL MARKET

Home Hardware is pleased to announce its 2021 Virtual Fall Market will be held September 27 to October 4. This eight-day event will provide the entire Home community with an opportunity to connect and for dealers and store staff to engage with suppliers over an interactive platform.



HOME HARDWARE ANNOUNCES NEW VP, STORE OPERATIONS & ECOMMERCE

Home Hardware Stores Limited is pleased to announce the appointment of Rob Wallace as Vice-President, Store Operations and eCommerce. Wallace brings 30 years of home improvement experience to the position, including roles in Retail Applications, Merchandise Services, Public Relations and most recently, Vice-President, Marketing.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

GYPSY MOTHS TAKING A BITE OUT OF CANADIAN TREES

EXPERTS SAY NO NEED TO PANIC YET

Amber Gomez, WRLA

Canada is no stranger to insects damaging and sometimes killing our trees and one in particular that's causing leafless trees is no immediate cause for concern, according to experts. This year, gypsy moths have been devouring the leaves and needles of trees in Ontario. According to Natural Resources Canada, gypsy moth damage is caused exclusively by the caterpillars, which feed on developing leaves in May. During severe outbreaks, trees and shrubs are completely defoliated over large areas. Despite the trees' ability to produce a new crop of leaves over the summer, the damage causes significant growth loss.

Chris MacQuarrie, research scientist with Natural Resources Canada, specializes in invasive species. He said the problem with gypsy moths is mostly in Ontario, Quebec and parts of the Maritimes. "It's occasionally found in BC, but will be eradicated," he said. "The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is very active in surveying for it and they have programs to survey ships that are arriving in ports in areas that are experiencing outbreaks of that pest. They will inspect ships as they come into ports in Vancouver and if the ship has been contaminated, they will send it to be cleaned. When a moth is found, they will be quite aggressive with eradicating it."

The gypsy moth was introduced to the United States in 1869 and has become one of the most serious defoliators of hardwoods in North America, according to Natural Resources Canada. "Most of the damage they cause is feeding on the needles and leaves of



According to Natural Resources Canada, the gypsy moth was first detected in Canada in 1912 in BC, where egg masses had been accidentally introduced on young cedars from Japan.

- The first infestation in Canada happened in 1924 in southwestern Quebec, near the U.S. border.
- The second infestation happened in 1936 in New Brunswick.
- The insect was again reported in Quebec in 1955 and since then, has become established in southern Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and British Columbia. Populations vary annually, depending on the region.

trees," said MacQuarrie. "When they feed on the trees, they can quickly defoliate a tree. One caterpillar can eat about a square metre of foliage. If you multiply that by the millions of caterpillars, that's a lot of foliage. Trees can sustain that for a couple of years and be able to survive."

BC's Provincial Forest Entomologist, Babita Bains, says the gypsy moth is not established in the west and the province uses aerial and ground sprays with a biological insecticide. "Over the past several years we have seen an increase in the number of introductions detected annually and we are somewhat concerned that this is going to lead to regular eradication efforts," Bains said. "As long as we continue to successfully eradicate establishing populations/stay gypsy moth free in the west/BC, there will be no impacts on the lumber, agriculture and nursery industries; however, if gypsy moth does become established, quarantines could be imposed on BC's forest, nursery and/or agriculture industries." Bains added for a short period, the U.S. did impose a quarantine on BC's nursery products.

MacQuarrie explains climate change is going to be another factor to watch. "The mountain pine beetle is a good example; climate plays a big role in where it can develop and spread and how bad it is on the landscape, that's one of the contributing factors for it jumping to Alberta and travelling."

For now, experts are monitoring gypsy moths and other invasive species to protect Canadian trees.

Left: Some of the damage by gypsy moth caterpillars at the Thornton Bales Conservation Area in Ontario.

SHOWCASE INDUSTRY TO ATTRACT TALENT

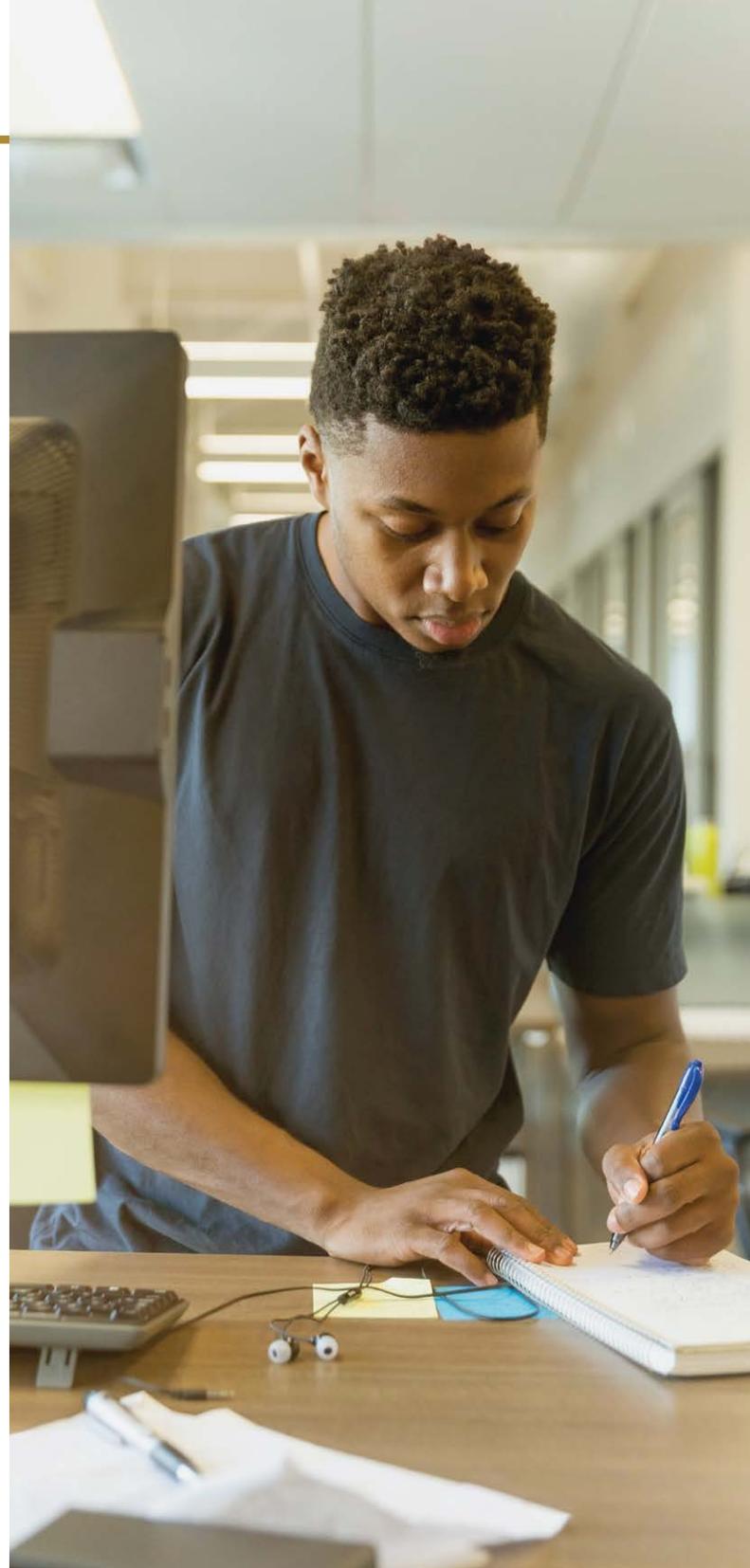
Liz Kovach, WRLA President

There is no question labour force and shortages have been top of mind for many industries as a result of last year and the issues so many businesses faced. The more people I speak with on both sides of the border, the more consistent the message is that there is growing concern for the workforce over the course of the next five to 10 years, and we need to get ahead of it.

We all know the industry provides a variety of opportunities, however the outside world doesn't seem to know about them. We need to change this, and we must do so together. Having attended several career fairs and engaged in conversations with many members, it has become obvious that we need to take a different approach to give this industry a face and that we also need to start channeling the future labour force at younger ages. Prior to COVID-19, the WRLA, with engagement from members of its education committee, had started to make progress in working with educators and work towards including industry education into the curriculum. When educational institutions had to modify their way of teaching during the pandemic, we were advised new curriculum discussions understandably would need to be postponed.

We need to position the industry to attract talent and innovation will play a role in that. Adopting technology, better business practices as well as training and education opportunities will be key. How can you help? Industry data is always important when it comes to catalyzing change with government. If we can back up our claims and our needs with credible data, we can move the thermometer – we saw this with our tax credit advocacy work. We need to invest in some research to help create some baselines to work from.

We need to better understand the skills and knowledge gaps our members are facing. This will help to provide a focused starting point that we can build from. Our membership is diverse and every segment is going to experience some different issues and the more information that you can provide, the better equipped we will be to act. As we continue to evolve industry training and education, it is vital to have the industry validate the training. If we want to



professionalize the industry and make it more attractive, then we need industry to validate the training by supporting it through the development phases and implementation phases.

The more that we can show educational opportunities will turn into relevant and rewarding employment, the more successful we will be in recruiting talent to the industry. To get involved and support this area of focus, please reach out to discuss. We will be planning next steps shortly.



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SIDELINE WORK STRESS

Homewood Health

One in three Americans say work stress is getting them down. Can you relate? If so, there are ways to deal with the causes of stress and develop proactive strategies to help you reduce your stress and anxiety levels. Of course, not all stress is bad stress. In fact, some people find stress in their lives helps them to perform at their best. The key is to determine the right amount, so you will have energy, enthusiasm and drive while not taxing your physical and mental well-being.

Why is reducing stress important to your overall health?

Stress can have negative effects on your overall health. When stress becomes unmanageable, it can cause physical, behavioural and psychological challenges, which inevitably impact your ability to perform organizational duties. These stresses have a variety of symptoms that can lead to more severe problems, if left unchecked.

PHYSICAL. When you are stressed, it can impact your physical well-being. Stress reactions can range in symptoms such as loss of sleep, upper respiratory or digestive problems, to more life-threatening conditions such as elevated blood pressure, hypertension or coronary heart disease.

BEHAVIOURAL. Stress reactions can take a variety of forms, including nervous habits and tics, increased smoking or alcohol consumption and negative health-related behaviours.

PSYCHOLOGICAL. Reactions to stress may have negative effects on your mood, lower your tolerance and patience levels as well as disrupt your cognition.

ORGANIZATIONAL. Some of the most common individual outcomes of stress include increased absenteeism, decreased performance and reduced employee engagement, which may lead to increased accident rates, increased interpersonal conflict, impaired communication and flawed decision-making within the organization.

Ultimately, any of these reactions can be devastating to both employee and employer. Remember, if you are beginning to feel symptoms of stress, use the following strategies to help alleviate your stress at work.

SIX STEPS TO REDUCING WORK STRESS

Step 1: Change your thinking

How you think has a profound effect on your emotional and physical well-being. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation.

Step 2: Manage your feelings

It is important to realize that managing your feelings not only impacts your stress level, but also those around you. Stepping back from stressful situations and thinking about the solution can help you move away from the emotional reaction, and allow you to deal with the task at hand.

Step 3: Learning to relax

Relaxing during challenging or uncomfortable moments can be difficult, but it is possible by taking small steps to keep you grounded during your work day. From the moment you wake up, to commuting to work, to managing your work day, there are little things you can be doing to help your body relax and focus.

Step 4: Staying connected to purpose and meaning in life

When stress begins to take over your life, it becomes difficult to see the bigger picture. It often feels like everything around you is going wrong and there is no end in sight. Although this is often not true, the feeling of being stuck in your predicament can be overwhelming.

Step 5: Time management

Everyone has moments when they feel like there just isn't enough time in the day. Using time management skills and tactics can greatly reduce stress at work.

Step 6: Getting active

Being active is important to reducing stress and living a healthy life. When participating in physical activity, your body creates endorphins, chemicals in the brain that act as natural stress reducers.



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THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD OF WORK FOR WOMEN: UPSTANDING FOR INCLUSIVE TEAMS

Tanya Wick, Associate Vice-President, Human Resources,
Health, Safety and Environment, University of Alberta

COVID-19 has touched the lives of virtually everyone in one form or another, but a mountain of recent analysis shows the many ways that women have been disproportionately impacted by the crisis. As of the beginning of this year, nearly 100,000 Canadian women have left the workforce as a result of COVID-associated economic disruption – 10 times more than the number of men according to Statistics Canada with an analysis by RBC Economics.

- Consider the public health front-line workers, who continued to head to work each day to combat the virus even as many of us were fortunate enough to be safely working from home. About 90 per cent of nurses in Canada happen to be women.
- Meanwhile, the economic fall-out of the crisis has battered industries that are heavily comprised of women – think of flight attendants, cooks, retail workers and others.
- In a culture that still often looks to women to be primary caregivers, the closures of schools and daycares have dealt a double whammy to women holding down careers while also keeping the household running smoothly.

Fortunately, the lumber industry has been relatively spared by the worst of the crisis. The crisis has nonetheless laid bare many of our society’s inequities, particularly in relation to the status of women in the modern workplace. As the world continues to build back from the peak of the pandemic, it’s critical that we not miss this opportunity to re-imagine a future other than a reversion to the status quo.

We have seen great progress in recent years in terms of growing awareness on the importance of diversity in the lumber industry; not simply as the right thing to do, but as the smart thing to do from a business perspective. Simply put, more diverse teams generate better ideas. That’s why every member of our teams must feel respected, valued and included. But there’s a great deal of work ahead in continuing to grow a diverse and engaged workforce in order to ensure the rewards of greater profits and innovation.

I have been fortunate enough to work with a wide range of organizations across the industry on steps they can take to ensure greater diversity, equity and inclusion. It’s been stunning to me how despite the diversity of our workplaces and cultures, we often struggle with similar challenges. Consider some of these actionable steps you can take today to ensure that members of your team, women included, feel fully engaged and welcome at your workplace.

- **Consider the potential for bias.** Nobody fancies themselves sexist or a bigot. The far more insidious challenge is unconscious bias that we aren’t even aware of; an especially big concern in the age of Artificial Intelligence automating more traditional parts of HR, including recruiting. To reduce the chance of bias, ask trusted colleagues for candid feedback on your behaviour with a 360-degree approach to seeking input. Their perspective can help you to be more conscious of your interactions with others.
- **Pay it forward by mentoring.** Moving more women into decision-making and leadership positions requires that we diversify the pipeline of opportunities that move talent into the upper echelons of our organizations. Consider acting as a mentor and sponsor to talent who otherwise may not receive consideration for high-profile and special projects.
- **Decide to be an upstander.** This one is especially for my male colleagues; don’t view an initiative or project simply through the prism of how it affects you. Strive to adopt an expansive view of how building more diverse teams ultimately serves everyone. This is the first step in becoming what I call an upstander – someone who speaks up or acts in support of others – even when it’s uncomfortable. It may be the easiest path of least resistance to not speak up when a sexist joke is uttered on the golf course or in the board room, but calling out bad behaviour is the first step toward building equitable and inclusive teams.

What steps do you take at your organization to ensure respect and dignity for everyone? What steps can you begin adopting today in your personal behaviour to be the change you want to see?

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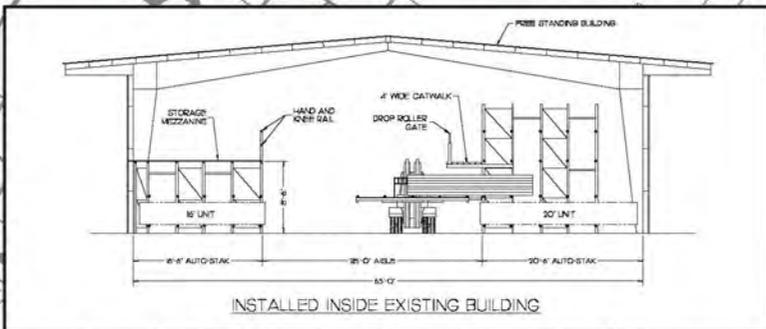
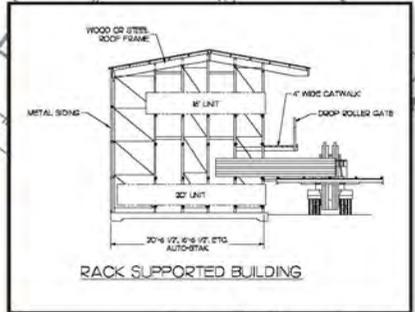


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Rack-supported Double Sided System

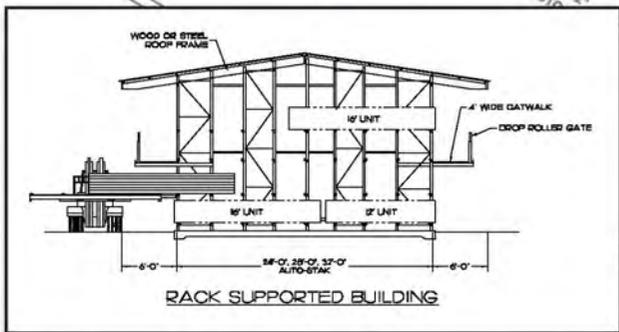
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Loads in less than one minute

Auto-Stak Drive Thru System



Center Lane Drive-Thru Auto-stak System

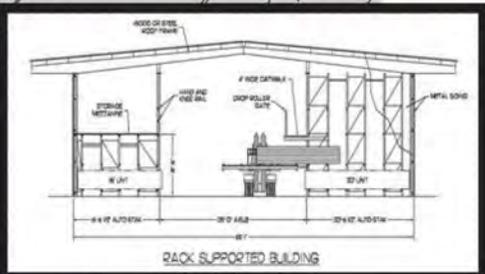
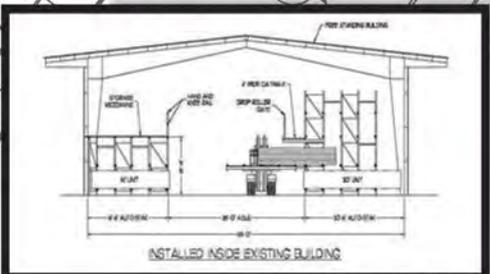
- Can be designed as a totally enclosed rack-supported building or into existing building
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- System layout is based on products and site
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Floor-to-Ceiling High Density Storage



Interior Drive-Thru Auto-Stak Racking with Mezzanine above



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Pallet Rack



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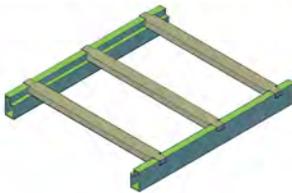
- Store pallets of roofing & shingles, bagged goods, pailed goods, 4'x8', 10' and 12' sheet goods, vinyl siding, etc.
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- Beam Levels have vertical adjustment in 2" and 3" increments
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Shingle Storage

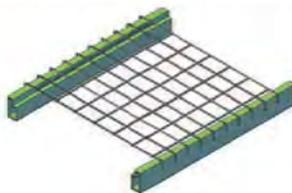


Roofing, Bagged, and Pailed Goods



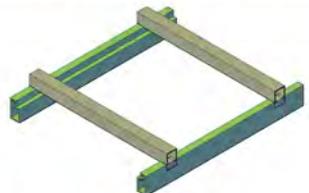
Pallet Support Bar

Supports Pallet
Prevents Offset Pallets from falling between beams



Wire Deck

Supports Pallet
Creates Shelf Deck
Allows Sprinkler and Light Passage



Fork Spacer / Product Support Bar

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- Designed to store doors and windows vertically
- **Auto-Stak's** door and window rack provides an efficient method for storing and picking orders
- The rack is equipped with adjustable M-Dividers, C-Dividers, or Tube Dividers to separate items being stored



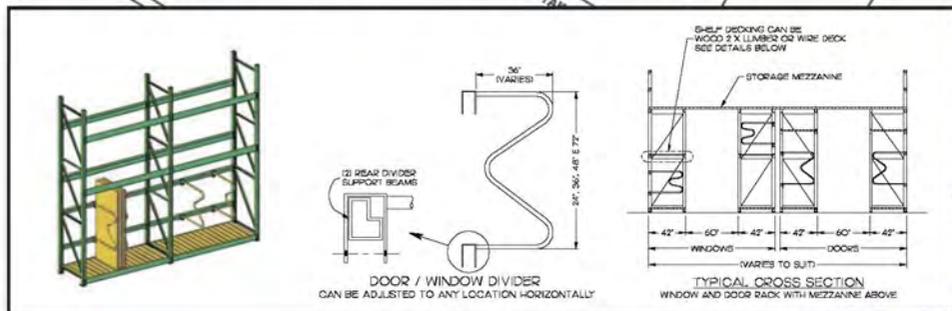
Door and Window Rack



Door and Window Rack with Tube Dividers



Door and Window Rack with Mezzanine above

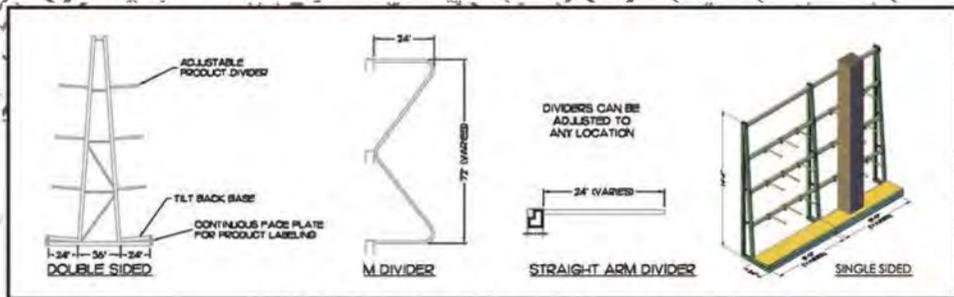


A-Frame Vertical Storage Racks



A-Frame Systems for Trim and Moulding

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Stacking Racks

- Stacking Racks store a wide variety of products: moulding, bagged goods, doors and windows, engineered lumber products, pallet goods and more
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- Upper level can be configured for additional storage systems



Auto-Stak with Mezzanine for additional storage



Lay-down Board Rack Mezzanine



Structural Mezzanine

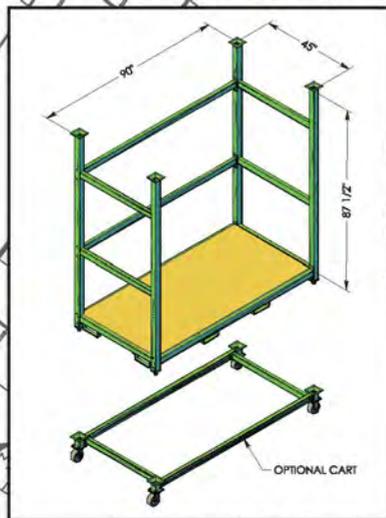


Shed with Board Rack Mezzanine

Portable Stacking Racks



Stack two and three levels high



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Staged Orders

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FIVE WARNING SIGNS THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE TOO MUCH DEBT

Kevin Sun, Credit Counselling Society

Not sure how much debt is too much and worried you might be in trouble? Many Canadians have the same concern. After all, unlike your vehicle's fuel gauge or home smoke detector, there's no convenient device that will tell you when you need debt relief. While banks have a debt load formula based on your debt to income ratio, it's very possible for them to approve you for more credit than you might actually be able to afford. Here are five warning signs that you might have a debt problem and what you can do instead.

1 RELYING TOO MUCH ON CREDIT:

Imagine tomorrow you can no longer buy anything on credit. If you're already making payments on a house, student loan or car, then those are fine, but you can't use any credit cards or lines of credit at all. What amount of time could you last doing this? A week? A month?

Whenever there's a payment you just have to make with a credit card, repay it on the same day through online banking. If that's not practical, put the payment amount into an envelope or savings account and don't touch it until the 30 days are up. If you find yourself struggling to buy things you usually get without a second thought, then you might be relying too much on credit in your daily life.

2 ONLY MAKING MINIMUM CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS:

Making only minimum payments means you're just keeping up but not getting ahead or paying the debt down in any significant way. The interest you pay eats into the money you have to spend, which might then cause you to use more credit to make up for it. This new credit will have its own interest, continuing the cycle. Before you know it, your balance might become so high that you can no longer afford even the minimum payments, and those are just the tip of the debt iceberg. This is a red flag showing you need help as soon as possible, especially if you're using other forms of credit – like a high-interest payday loan or cash advance – to pay off debt you already have.

3 NOT USING A BUDGET:

Those who don't plan what to do with their pay cheques often simply aren't sure how to budget money. Does this sound like you too? It's true that some people do just fine without ever thinking about budgeting. Others manage with an alternative way of budgeting where they just keep a list of what they're spending versus keeping track of their bank account by memory. However, most people who have debt problems can see a real and immediate improvement to their financial situation as soon as they make and follow a budget.

4 NO SAVINGS FOR A FINANCIAL EMERGENCY:

If there's one thing that the last few years have shown us, it's that anything can happen at any time and that having savings for a financial emergency is crucial. Being prepared for unexpected expenses is one of the world's best debt solutions because when an emergency does happen, you won't need to get into debt for it at all.

5 BEING WORRIED ABOUT HOW MUCH DEBT YOU HAVE:

If you're thinking about how much debt you have, and wondering if it's too much, you likely have a problem. When it comes to your financial health, there's no such thing as being too careful. The fact that you're worrying about debt means it's worth taking the time and effort to figure out how to pay down your debts and get back on track.

Debt is a symptom, so it's important to go deeper and identify the reasons why you're in debt. Until you know what's causing your debt problem, you won't be able to explore possible solutions.

The Credit Counselling Society is an accredited non-profit charity that helps Canadians solve their money problems. They do this by providing free credit counselling, low-cost debt solutions and education to help you manage your money better. Learn more at nomoredebts.org.





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As more businesses begin to harness data to make better, smarter and faster decisions, that time-honored tradition of guesswork needs to be put on the shelf with the rotary phone, fax machine and cassette tapes.

The ability to move at the speed of your customers is critical today as the balance of power in the buyer-seller equation has shifted permanently to buyers. They have more information, more choices and less brand-loyalty than ever before.

Businesses must have insights into the shifting demands of their customers, and real-time data has become the currency of the digital economy.

A change to cloud-based, integrated busi-

ness management solutions promise data insight instead of looking back in hindsight.

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- Instead of having to review dozens of time-consuming spreadsheets to evaluate some "what if" scenarios, modern ERP allows you to create, evaluate and select from a wide range of alternative plans.
- Instead of making phone calls and plowing through mountains of paper to get a snapshot of your inventory, modern ERPs capture and update that information in real-time.

- Instead of relying on gut instinct to determine how much seasonal material to purchase, cloud-based ERPs allow you to monitor and optimize your replenishment requirements in real time throughout the year.
- Instead of constantly telling customers and promising prospects "I'll get back to you with details," modern cloud-based ERPs allow you to immediately answer their questions from anywhere.

While good old-fashioned guesswork helped your company get to where it is today, it can't handle the demands of the high-paced and fast-changing digital economy. It's time to meet the challenge of today's digital marketplace with robust ERP solutions that can help you survive and thrive.



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SAVED BY THE SKY

Amber Gomez, WRLA

When WRLA member Jack Maendel, CEO of EcoPoxy, heard that two seniors had gone missing after a countryside drive, he knew he needed to help. On June 25, Manitoba RCMP sent out a news release that an elderly couple, Brian, 88, and Evelyn Watt, 83, were reported missing from Morris after they didn't return home from their drive the previous afternoon. Their family was scrambling for clues and desperate to find them. The clock was ticking, and the pair rely on medications they didn't have with them. "They could be anywhere, but I thought they can't be that far away. Having access to an aircraft, I'm one of the few people in the area who has access to an aircraft, and I knew a lot of people were looking from the ground and I just felt the need to help and assist and see if there was anything we could see from the air. Sure enough, it's a completely different perspective up there. You see things you don't see from the ground. We decided to give it a try," Maendel said.

Maendel is part of the Hutterian Emergency Aquatic Response Team (HEART) started by his brothers in 2012. While people searched from the ground and near rivers, Maendel and two of his brothers and sister-in-law, who is a doctor, took to the sky to cover more ground, flying in grid patterns. After an hour and a half of flying, Maendel felt a prompt he credits to his faith in God to check St. Mary's Road. "From a gravel road it becomes a dirt road that goes through the fields all the way down and basically it stops being a dirt road and then a tall grass path ending up in dense woods and a dead end," Maendel said. From the air, Maendel's sister-in-law spotted a spec of white between the trees and they circled down lower for a better look. "You can see how little we could see. It was in the woods, and there's no way you could see it from the ground. The grass is three feet tall. Basically, we just for a few seconds saw a tiny, little thing. We thought that shouldn't be there." The crew circled around the site and landed so their team could investigate further by driving there. "We landed and they took off with the HEART van, which they had ready at the



airport. They drove down there. We had a doctor in the vehicle ready to go. From when we found them until they drove up to the vehicle it was 30 minutes. It was very, very fast."

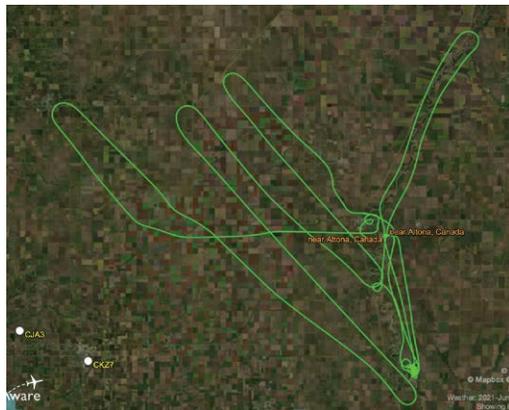
The couple had been hidden deep in a wooded area surrounded by rivers. Maendel said he doubts the couple realized how desperate their situation had become. "We have little doubt that if we didn't find them that evening, the grandpa especially wouldn't have survived the night. That we are pretty sure of. When we found the grandpa, he was a quarter of a mile further into the woods. He had crawled there." His wife was waiting in the car, thinking her husband would be back soon with help. Eventually that did come for them. "When we found him, he didn't know where he was, or who he was, or who we were or what

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



we were doing there. He had spent the night out there already. The next night, he wouldn't have made the night. In her mind, he had gone for help and would be back any minute. They never really realized the danger they were in."

Maendel was relieved to know the couple was safely rescued, turning a scary situation into a celebration. "Someone asked me the other day 'what's it like being a hero?' Well, if I'd known it was that easy and little work to become a hero, I would have done it a long time ago. I just went and did what I love doing, which is flying. I take off with an airplane and look for somebody and don't know if I'm going to find them or not. Somehow God let us find these people. The next day everyone calls you a hero. I didn't do anything, I just went flying. At the end of the day, it's using tools available to us to help search. Maybe next time it'll be you who finds them," he said. "These are not victims, they're people who got recovered and we were able to talk to them. You usually can't talk to the people you find. This was a very, very good story and a real morale booster for us that we needed and it came just at the right time."



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Left Page Bottom Left: Brian and Evelyn Watt after being rescued.
Left Page Top Right: Jack Maendel, CEO of EcoPoxy, flying his personal plane.
Bottom Centre: The white car is the vehicle that had gone missing and the red vehicle is the team on the ground who rescued the missing couple.
Right Page Middle Left: The flight path Jack Maendel took with his crew to find the missing couple.





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Amber Gomez, WRLA

Building green doesn't mean plain vanilla design, or sacrificing on style for a new home or construction project. Passive House Canada is innovating the industry with their standards in eco-friendly construction projects that architecturally marvel. High-performance design is the heart and soul of the organization – with a goal of building for comfort, affordability and energy efficiency.

Chris Petit, manager of technical services with Passive House Canada, explains how there's a number of factors that go into making a house comply with their standards. "If you have a building that has a lot of different complexities in the shape, it can lose a lot of heat, so we try and simplify the shape for the structure and for the thermal envelope. There's still decoration and other elements that add to the aesthetic, but we try not to penetrate that thermal envelope, so we don't lose heat. We also look at high-performance windows, air tightness and heat recovery ventilation. We want to make sure there's good, fresh air always supplied in the building and with the heat recovery ventilator, we capture that energy in the outgoing stale air before it's exhausted outdoors. Generally, we have 80 to 90 per cent efficiencies for heat recovery ventilators and then finally we make sure to have efficient heating and cooling. A lot of people use heat pumps but there are other heating options such as electric resistant heating. The idea is to have a super insulated and airtight envelope and from there we have to supply very little heat to the building to help it operate. That sustains the temperature level, so there are not huge swings in the temperature. It's a lot more comfortable and just a pleasant environment to live in."

Petit explains that people new to the concept have to combat construction misconceptions. "When people first come to this idea of Passive House, they think it is just going to be this simple box and that's all it's going to be," he said. "There's a lot of options for building design and creativity. Instead of balconies cut through the wall of the building, the idea is to isolate that in some way, shape or form. There's the use of more freestanding elements where the balcony is built next to the building but not actually cutting through the envelope, disrupting the insulation layer and creating that thermal bridge. There's a lot that can be done once the designer realizes you can keep that envelope intact and then you can do built-in type elements in the inside of the building and you can build exterior elements with point attachments. There are different strategies to reduce the possible thermal bridge. The sky's the limit for design."



To learn more about Passive House Canada, join other WRLA members in a webinar on September 14 at 12:30 CST. Register on our website: wrla.org/events/webinars

Left: The Passive Narrow in Vancouver, BC was built in 2020 as a single-family residential home built to last at least 100 years.

PHOTO: NICK BRAY ARCHITECTURE LTD.



Above: The Fort St. John 50-unit Passive House in Fort St. John, BC.

The federal government is pushing for innovation in the building industry with their goal of moving to net-zero emissions by 2050. Part of the push is to help retrofit existing homes in the country. This May, the federal government announced the new Canada Greener Homes Grant, which will help up to 700,000 Canadian homeowners across the country improve the energy efficiency of their homes and reduce their energy bills through an investment of \$2.6 billion over seven years. Homeowners will be able to receive grants of up to \$5,000 to make energy-efficient retrofits to their primary residences, and up to \$600 to help with the cost of home energy evaluations. Eligible home improvements and upgrades include replacing windows and doors, adding insulation, sealing air leaks, improving heating and cooling systems – such as with heat pumps – and purchasing renewable energy systems like solar panels.

Petit believes this is a step in the right direction. “Any funding helps. Incentives are good to help create that demand for this kind of change. We have very lofty targets for 2050 for buildings to be net-zero energy, and in 2030 we are looking at a 45 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. To hit those targets, we really need to look beyond new construction and plan to retrofit our existing buildings because 75 per cent of the buildings standing today are still going to be standing by 2050. To hit our targets, we need to retrofit our existing buildings as well as construct new high-performance buildings. More funding and other innovative financing mechanisms will be needed to incentivize these deep energy retrofits. As we create the demand for deep energy retrofits and ramp up the industry, we will also need to focus on training and coordinating. To not just do one-off projects, I would like to see more renovations happen on the neighbourhood scale. Whole communities could be benefitting from bulk purchasing and procurements. Usually, neighbourhoods have certain typologies of buildings so those solutions can carry over from building to building instead of just doing one building at a time.”



Natural Resources Canada lists 260 available energy efficiency and alternative energy programs available across the country online. Depending on where your project is, each province and municipality can offer extra incentives. Some of those include:

- The Canada Greener Homes Grant where homeowners are able to tap into an interest-free \$40,000 loan.
- BC Hydro Distribution Project Incentives where you can get funding for energy efficiency upgrades, up to 75 per cent (to a max of \$500,000) for your energy efficiency upgrade projects and improve the payback on your investment to as little as one year.



Reward your Business with Retrofits

Promoting the federal government’s Canada Greener Homes Grant may help you sell more products. Consider in-store, online and digital promotions to highlight relevant products or services your business provides.



Taking an existing home and making it meet tougher energy-efficient standards through retrofitting is not an easy feat. “Retrofits can be more challenging than new construction because when you’re starting from scratch you can really think about the design and mitigate thermal bridges, places where energy is going to be leaking out because of junctions in the building. You can’t always correct details after they’re constructed, you just do the best you can,” Petit said. “With the step-by-step retrofit process, you can plan out the whole retrofit process from beginning to end but then take it in stages and make sure nothing in between is going to cause unintended consequences in that retrofit. For example, we take into account comfort, health and safety, such as mold and moisture risk, and combustion safety regarding carbon monoxide. It’s important to have these things in mind when you’re doing a retrofit. When you’re doing a step-by-step retrofit you can also really plan out your financing if you don’t have the money to do a full-scale retrofit all at once. You can phase improving your insulation in your walls, roof and adding mechanical ventilation, tightening up the building for air tightness and replacing the windows and the like.”

The cost to retrofit a home can vary. “Generally, insulation is relatively cheap so that’s not the hard part – it’s making sure, depending on how far you want to go with the retrofit, you may have to do modifications to the actual structure of the building. Some people may remove roof overhangs and then extend them out and ensure they can get insulation around joists. It depends if you’re going that far or just removing the façade and adding insulation or just adding insulation to the interior of the building. It varies but it can be anywhere from \$50 to \$100 a square foot but it can be more depending on the building type and the options chosen.”

When building a house with the Passive House standard, Petit says you can enhance the sustainability of your home as well by adding renewable energy down the road. “The idea is to simplify mechanical systems and put your investment into the envelope – your wall system, roof and your floor. They’re going to last 50 to 100 years, where your mechanical systems are lasting generally 10 to 20 years, so you want to invest that money into the parts of the building that are going to last a long time. With doing that, you can simplify the mechanical systems and reduce the size you need and the costs helping to offset the envelope improvements. When you’re swapping out the mechanical system in the future, you can add on your renewable energy system. You can go from a really low energy building to a net-zero building by adding on renewable energy production.”



Level up your Knowledge with the Building Science and Energy Efficiency Awareness Course

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PROJECT: BLUE WATER CONCEPTS LTD. PHOTO: KRISTEN MCGAUGHEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Above: Construction of the Clark Road Passive House in Squamish, BC.





This North Vancouver, BC home underwent extensive renovations as part of a major retrofit process in 2017. The original building design was complicated with three different roof lines, a turret sticking out from the centre of the main living area, two slopes (butterfly wings) on either side and a flat (skirt) roof around the perimeter and over the garage. These features required some back and forth with the architect to address thermal bridges between the many junctions. The project was completed by Done Right Renos to become the first certified EnerPhit building in Canada.



The future of building is already here and Petit and the team at Passive House Canada say the country is eager to build high-performing, high-efficiency homes and buildings. "It's not just about energy but we are really looking at comfort, health and wellness. With a Passive House building, it's airtight so there's very little noise you'll hear from outside. You won't hear construction or traffic noise. For health and wellness, we're really looking at reducing mold and condensation risk and attending to combustion safety so that you don't have any problems with carbon monoxide. With COVID-19 being predominant in the environment now, people are thinking about healthy ventilation and thinking about not using recirculation of air for ventilation within buildings and using more fresh outdoor air. That's part of the Passive House principles. Finally, saving energy is the icing on the cake and brings everything together and is an added benefit. What really draws people to Passive House is that comfort, health and wellness." With the federal government's targets for net-zero emissions, the construction and building materials industry is poised to innovate and meet the demands of Canadians.

Left page and top left: The Passive Narrow in BC built in 2020.

Top right and middle right: This single-family residential house was built in 2020 on the shores of the Squamish River in BC.



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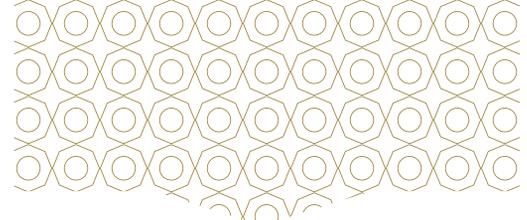
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FROM IMPACT TO INNOVATION

WRLA MEMBERS REFLECT ON PANDEMIC'S EFFECTS

Amber Gomez, WRLA



Masks and half-used hand sanitizer bottles now litter our desks, bags and cars but before the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us would have thought our reality for the past year and a half or so sounds more like a movie. When news started spreading about a virus infecting people around the globe, Rick Kurzac, president and owner of Kamloops Home Hardware Building Centre and Prince Rupert Home Hardware Building Centre, didn't know what was next. "We were looking at COVID and I remember sitting down with some of our associates in the store and wondering what is COVID going to be like, what's it all going to entail?" he asked. "No one really knew what the pandemic was going to do to our industry, we didn't know if this was going to be good, bad or indifferent for us. I remember sitting in the office thinking this is going to be awful and shut down the country and we're going to have to sit down and manage through this."

Kurzac didn't know what to expect but he and his team got to work, trying their best to protect their customers and staff. They started offering curbside pickup and phone-in orders in addition

Above: Staff at the Kamloops Home Hardware helping customers during the pandemic.

Below: Rick Kurzac, president and owner of Kamloops Home Hardware Building Centre and Prince Rupert Home Hardware Building Centre, helping a customer.

PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



Above: The team at the Kamloops Home Hardware.

to escorting customers through the store to help them get in and out more efficiently. These efforts led to an estimated 30 to 40 per cent increase in customer counts. “As a company and as a leader in the community, we were really conscious of what was going on and we started to implement plans in April when we went into a semi sort of lockdown for our customers. COVID was accelerating and we were one of the first in our community to limit the amount of customers in the store. I remember at the end of April we had staff meetings and we decided we were going to escort every single one of our customers through the store and have a concierge personal

shopping experience for them and it was hugely successful. Our team hit it out of the ballpark.”

With thousands of Canadians working remotely and cooped up with nowhere to travel or spend their entertainment budgets, they turned to upgrading their homes and living spaces. “It was like a rocket took off and we never stopped,” Kurzac said. “No one really understood what nesting meant to the building supply industry and we watched it just explode. We were having record customer counts, record sales and prior to that all of our decisions were about downsizing so this hit us by surprise. We were talking about laying people off, what a devastating effect this is going to have on our sales and are we going to survive six months?” Kurzac’s stores are having record-high sales this year, something many others in the industry have been experiencing as well. “We are probably going to see some pretty dramatic shifts in sales percentages. We are going to see some decreases and we have to be careful we don’t beat ourselves up. To sit here it’s hard to believe we are getting \$75 a sheet for OSB, it is just mind blowing. A year and a half ago we were selling that same sheet for \$12.99, how is that not going to affect our sales?”

Building on the success seen in the pandemic, Kurzac and his team plan to keep some of the innovations dreamed up during this time. “We are definitely going to be keeping and trying to build on the curbside pickup, we see that as an opportunity,” he said. “What we really learned was when your back’s up against the wall and you’re trying to do business, most of us in this industry figured out ways we never even could have dreamed of to do business. And we were able to successfully keep our businesses going during challenging times.”

PHOTO: SUPPLIED



TIMELINE

COVID-19 Pandemic in Canada

January 2020: The first confirmed COVID-19 case in Canada.

March 2020: The first death from COVID-19 in Canada.

December 2020: First COVID-19 vaccine administered in Canada.

February 2021: 1,000,000 COVID-19 vaccines were administered in Canada.

August 2021: Altogether 51,192,292 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in Canada as of August 13, 2021.



Above: The Cedar Shop in Calgary.

Right: Mitch Wile (left) and Matt Bouma of Bramari Design Build.

Mitch Wile, president of The Cedar Shop in Calgary, didn't know he was strapped in for such a roller coaster ride when COVID-19 first came to Canada. "Having just moved into a new facility, we were getting up and running and basically that's when COVID hit; the financials and the industry came to a grinding halt. We had to make some really drastic choices. We laid off employees for the first time in the 43-year history of the company. These layoffs ended up being for a few weeks, but at that point we had no idea how long they would be. The ownership and senior management stopped taking a wage for a two-month period and other full-time employees took reduced hours to get us through," he said adding they managed to bring everyone back within a month and even had to hire additional staff to keep up with the surge in customers. "Business was coming from everywhere. Contractors, do-it-yourself people, other businesses and retail boomed. We sold out of many products by the end of May and were constantly searching for product to fill demand."

In The Cedar Shop, Wile wanted to make sure customers and staff were protected from COVID-19 as best as possible. They added a



hand washing station and gave out free masks to customers while assigned employees took turns wiping down doors and counters and anything that the virus may sit on. Wile and his team brainstormed about what they could do to attract customers who weren't wanting to shop in person. Randy Lazzarotto, sales executive at The Cedar Shop, came up with the idea to offer free delivery for a couple of months in the city. "Well that just went crazy and we do free delivery in the city all the time. So many people call up and we will be talking to them and they will ask what's your delivery charge and we will say in the city over \$500 it's free. They will say 'oh my goodness, it's free, thank you. I don't have to get a truck; I don't have to handle it.' We tend to be competitive and our stock is the best quality. We want the best stock and buy from quality mills and we don't carry sub-standard product and to get it delivered free was our biggest innovation that still drives sales today," Wile said. "We have a mill here, we manufacture and sell our own planter boxes, specialty products and lattices that go along with people you know who are looking at their backyards now since they can't spend money on vacations and they're looking at accessories. We now supply distributors with our lattice because of the superior quality. There is nothing like it on the market. We want to be recognized as an outdoor experience location, that's another innovation we started a few years ago but when COVID hit, it took off in a massive way."

Reflecting on The Cedar Shop's success, Wile credits his team and support network. "If I look at what's the biggest achievement, it's the whole development of our team – much closer, much better, morale is high and we took care of our own. Out of the tragic situation of COVID, as far as our business goes, we came together and came out a stronger business," he said. "The support of our suppliers, which are all WRLA members – McLean Lumber, AFA, Taiga, Goodfellow, PPG and Sansin, they're our strength here. They came to the table. We struggled to get product and they really helped us keep the flow of business. We have an incredibly strong business relationship with these companies. They support us and we support them. It became evident how some of these companies really gave a damn about you and vice versa. That support from our major suppliers was immense in getting through this. Without them, we would have seriously struggled. Finally, the way customers adjusted to the new way business was to be done, we were able to service them quickly and efficiently so that their time here was minimal and they could get back to their jobsites. Without them and their patience, none of this would have happened."



Above: Taiga Building Products Ltd.

As retail stores were scrambling to meet customer demands, supply issues became a challenge. That's something Russ Permann, Co-CEO, Taiga Building Products Ltd., faced head-on during the pandemic. "We do a lot of importation both offshore and in the U.S. The offshore business is still really challenged because as part of the pandemic, when they called that giant stop around the world, shipping containers ended up very displaced. They ended up in strange places all over the globe and the patterns really haven't recovered. The containers aren't where they're supposed to be. So, bringing in things like mouldings from South America or flooring from China and Europe is very difficult right now because the container flow isn't there," he said. "In an entirely separate business, our preserved wood category, the demand was through the roof and supply of our raw wood was very hard to come by. And it challenged the whole industry. We had to sit down and think about how are we going to manage this part of the business and we came up with a really innovative program around matching our customers with our ability to go out and procure that wood and find a way to get it into the channel. Our team came up with what we think is a well thought out program that took us a few months to

build. I think this will have a long life after COVID. I think it will work for all parties."

Permann and the Taiga team focused on using technology to create efficiencies. "We had started pre-pandemic an e-commerce initiative, TaigaNow, and we intended to launch some time mid-2020 and it dragged a little further to later 2020 when we started rolling it out. This was always in the works but again this is one of those things that it was an extra shove for us. In that B2B world, e-commerce is a little slower than the B2C world. Now we are going to drive that initiative harder. I think technology integrations between us and our suppliers and our customers is forefront in our minds to take some of that daily transactional stuff and move it into this space," he said. "Aside from that, we had a lot of innovation initiatives underway prior to COVID. We had installed an automated warehouse management system across our entire business, we finished all our go lives by the end of 2018 and we were in the process of really starting to optimize the use of that system. With COVID, it was shoving us over the edge in the last few facilities. We wanted to create a paperless environment where we didn't have interaction between the front office and the back office in our business or between our back office staff and outside parties, you know COVID just absolutely forced that issue so we became very good at running our WMS system and it became a necessity."

Permann and some of his team members also transitioned to working remotely during the pandemic to limit the spread of COVID-19, something that worked well for their forward-thinking company. "What we have done is prove to ourselves that not everything has to be done in person and we can accomplish a lot without being in the same room. We've definitely done that," he said. "The concept of leveraging technology to run our own business, we will keep doubling down on that in terms of automating parts of the business to improve accuracies and improve on-time performance. And then also to improve our communication. We spend a lot of money every year meeting with ourselves. I think there's still a huge component that we should still all physically be in the same space with each other from time to time, but maybe not as much as we did before; we will use technology more often. I think we will get back to being in person with customers and amongst ourselves, but I think we will all be a little more measured in our use of the airline points and try and use this technology a little more. We have become a lot more efficient with our own time without sitting on a plane for several hours. I think travel will return in the business world, don't get me wrong, but I think it will come back in a different way. And I think those interactions will be very meaningful when they happen and important, but I think we will use technology to facilitate a lot of that and I think that won't go away." As the country and the world move past the pandemic, many business leaders will be using this experience to hone their business practices and innovate for the future.

BLAST FROM THE PAST: PRAIRIE FIREWORK FUNDRAISER PRESERVING HISTORY

Amber Gomez, WRLA

Fireworks are used to celebrate many important milestones and achievements, and one WRLA member is using them to preserve the past. Matt Bialek, president and owner of BLAST-OFF Fireworks, has been working on a fundraiser to move and restore a flat grain warehouse and display it at the Manitoba Agricultural Museum. “This is the last known flat warehouse in Western Canada. Flat warehouses were once used to store grain. They were the precursor of the elevator system you see donning the Prairie landscape and this is the last one,” he said. “We were pretty excited to be part of this and move this last one to the museum for total refurbishment and preservation.”

Bialek and his family run business put together the Prairie Pride firework box to raise money for the cause in the fall of 2020. “This kit is

distributed amongst all our retailers across the country. We have about 4,200 retail locations we partner with and anyone who purchases a Prairie Pride is actually helping the flat warehouse restoration project. A portion of every sale goes to that endeavor,” he said. The warehouse was built in 1902 and is currently located near Austin, Manitoba – a community about an hour and a half west of Winnipeg. So far, Bialek and his family have already donated just over \$5,000 from the anticipated sale of the fireworks to cover off the moving costs from the transportation of the building taking place this fall.

The warehouse’s ultimate home will be the Manitoba Agricultural Museum, where it will neighbour 26 other buildings dating back to 1879. “This warehouse, when it is on site it will be another piece of the puzzle and will show that progression of agriculture from early days to the early 1900s to more modern times in the 40s, 50s and 60s. My hope is it does well in the grand plan of the Manitoba Agricultural Museum to provide that missing heritage that is missing from the museum at this point,” Bialek said, adding this design of grain handling facilities quickly became obsolete. According to the museum, in 1901 Manitoba had 76 licensed flat warehouses and by 1917 it had none. “I firmly believe that history is unbelievably important to a society and a culture. If we don’t have the history, the knowledge of where we came from, we lose out on all that experience and intelligence that we had accumulated in our society.”

Bialek hopes he can get more support from other WRLA members for the initiative. “What we are finding with stores like those operated by WRLA members, there’s a real community push. People see the package and they’re impressed that there is a preservation effort, and that a portion of the proceeds is going to something tangible within an industry that’s very important to their community.”

FUNDRAISING GOAL: \$100K

CURRENTLY RAISED: \$30K



PHOTOS: SUPPLIED



Above: Prairie Pride firework boxes are raising money for a historical cause.

MEMBERS IN THE COMMUNITY



PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF THE COMMUNITY

Builders Choice, which is one of the Sexton Group of Companies, knew something had to be done to support the suffering around them in Saskatchewan this past spring. The province, and specifically its capital city Regina, was fighting a significant spike in COVID-19 cases due to variants. Builders Choice decided to step up and help some of the most vulnerable people through Souls Harbour Mission, a charity providing meals, safe housing, programming, counselling and a one-year recovery program for those with addiction issues.

Builders Choice General Manager Ron Yeomans got in touch with the charity and asked if safety products such as masks, sanitizing wipes and gloves would be of use to them and donated about \$1,200 worth of products. Souls Harbour Mission was overjoyed by the generosity.



BOOSTING BIKE SAFETY

Penetang Home Hardware is doing its part to keep kids safe this summer. For the fourth year in a row, Dealer-Owner, Rob Staffen and Co-Owner, Kate Smith donated dozens of bike helmets to Cerebral Palsy Kids and Families, a Calgary-based charity dedicated to providing opportunities to children with physical disabilities.

The program offers helmets and modified bikes to children with neuromotor disabilities, giving them the chance to experience the simple joy of riding a bike. After suffering a traumatic brain injury due to a cycling accident in 2012, Staffen knows how important a helmet can be. That's why he's spent the better part of a decade promoting bike safety and giving back to the community. Penetang Home Hardware and Home Hardware Stores Limited have teamed up to split the cost of the close to 400 helmets.



SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE

Lowe's Canada made a significant donation in health care and presented more than \$1.2 million to Children's Miracle Network and Opération Enfant Soleil to support the work of 14 children's hospitals across the country for the fourth consecutive year.

To raise this record amount, teams from Lowe's, RONA and Reno-Depot corporate, as well as participating affiliated stores, collected donations at checkout or sold tickets during the spring. Customers also had the possibility to contribute to the campaign on the banners' websites, and Lowe's Canada added to the amount raised with a corporate donation.

Since 2018, Lowe's Canada has presented more than \$3.3 million to the two organizations through its annual fundraising campaigns and corporate donations. All funds raised are given directly to children's hospitals in the province they were collected.



Tell us about what you're doing in the community! Email Marketing and Communications Manager Amber Gomez at agomez@wrla.org.

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