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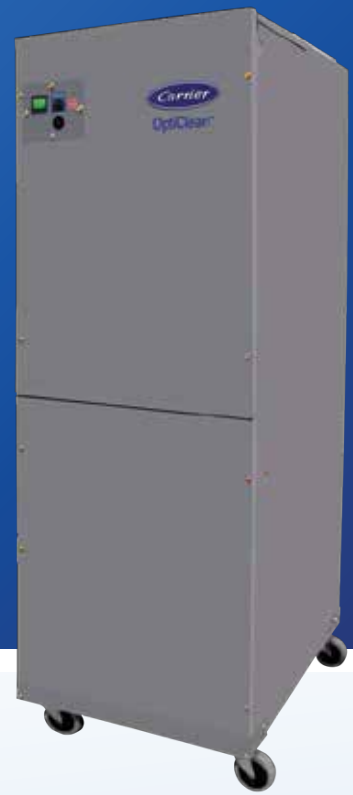


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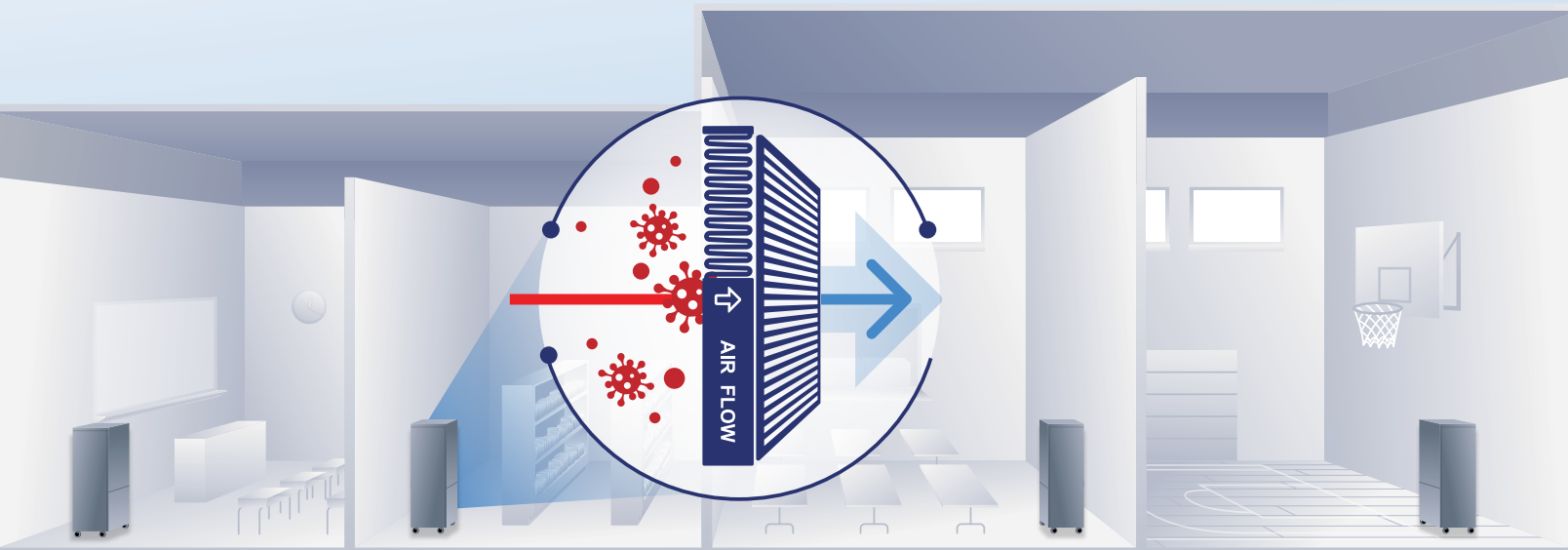
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Mark Cooper, President & CEO,
Saskatchewan Construction Association*



Welcome to the first issue of *We Build* in 2021. I am writing this message at the end of February. A year ago, COVID-19 was just coming into our everyday consciousness, and we had no idea what kind of impact it would have on our world. I am not sure how you feel, but I at once feel this year has flown by and also that it has been the longest year I can remember. A year ago, I never would have contemplated working from home or attending meetings virtually, and now we have permanently closed our physical office. A year ago, who would have thought that governments would be paying the majority of wages in our industry, or that we could possibly have invented multiple effective vaccines to a virus we barely even knew. If the last 12 months

have taught each of us anything, it should be the following: Humanity is resilient, creative, collaborative when needed, willing to serve, capable of managing massive change, and innovative.

Change and innovation is the theme of this issue of *We Build*, which makes sense given the year we have had. In this issue, you'll read some great stories about innovation in our industry. Whether reading about SCSA's new tech tools, hearing how Hillman AV seized the opportunities presented by the pandemic, learning about SATCC's new IT system, or getting details on SupplierLink, each article in this issue will highlight the role that innovation does and can play in our industry.

Most of you will know that construction has a labour productivity problem. Our industry lags behind most other industries, and the economy as a whole, in productivity growth. This is something that industry leaders must really begin to wrestle with. Solutions will require interventions at a government level, at the level of the industry as a whole, and at the individual company level. Governments play a key role both as regulators, but also as sizeable buyers of construction services. Most of the solutions must happen at the industry level.

Labour productivity in the construction industry can be improved by reducing the fragmentation of the industry through greater collaboration, more effort to collect and share best practices and lessons learned and building and sustaining work teams vertically throughout the construction supply chain. Additionally, more effort needs to be expended convincing owners of the necessity of investing properly in project design and planning, as well as building project contracts that appropriately align risks and rewards for contractors.

There is significant opportunity for collaboration between the construction industry and the design industry when it comes to moving these issues forward. This is a major reason why the Saskatchewan Construction Association (SKCA) actively engages with our partners

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Humanity is resilient, creative, collaborative when needed, willing to serve, capable of managing massive change, and innovative.

from the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies and the Saskatchewan Association of Architects. Only together can we really begin to identify ways to unlock innovation across our industries.

At the individual company level, finding ways to invest in innovation is essential if you hope to differentiate yourself from your competition and position your business to be competitive in any economy. Unfortunately, that is not easy to do. Outside of retail, construction is the industry with the lowest profit margins. Work is highly cyclical, and many of the slower times can last for prolonged periods. Consequently, construction companies with longevity have learned to manage their cash cautiously, and most avoid investing in technology or innovation unless it's well proven; even then, it's not unusual to have technology driven by client demand first.

Not only do you need to be cautious with your resources, but with such a fragmented industry, how do you even begin to know which digital platforms or tools are appropriate for your company and your current growth plans?

Over the course of the next year, the SKCA will convene a series of discussion tables to begin looking for answers to some of the challenges and questions asked above. We have had several members approach us about supporting the discussion around technology adoption. I do not know what this discussion will look like yet, or how we will use the results, so I am curious for your feedback. If you, as a

member, are interested in contributing to a discussion on technology in construction, or if you have lots of questions about this too, please let me know. Send me an email at

president@scaonline.ca and share your thoughts with me.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *We Build*. Take care, and stay safe! 🏠

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ADVOCACY UPDATE

*Mark Cooper, President & CEO,
Saskatchewan Construction Association*



The primary way that SKCA serves you, our members, is through our advocacy work. Our advocacy is mostly focused on the provincial government, but we are working to expand that reach while enhancing our effectiveness. In this article, I'd like to share some of the ways we're looking to grow our advocacy engagement, while also providing a quick update on some of the files we're working on for you.

Expanding our Reach

This year we hope to expand our advocacy reach in three key areas: more involvement with the municipal sector, engagement with private sector owners, and stronger connections with the architects and engineers. Many of the initiatives we are pursuing in 2021 help to move us in this direction. Here are a few of which I am particularly proud:

Advocacy for Saskatchewan Architects

As a regulatory body, the Saskatchewan Association of Architects is limited in its ability to advocate for the interests of its members. With no collective voice to push their agenda, some Saskatchewan architects have expressed a desire for an advocacy voice. Working together with these architects, the SKCA is setting up an advocacy committee to represent and advocate for the interests

of Saskatchewan-based architects. In addition to adding a valuable voice to all the procurement discussions going on right now, this committee will also create the perfect vehicle for better dialogue with architects. We will be able to work together to deal with issues that are concerning not only to the design community, but to contractors of all kinds too. Stay tuned for more details about this group.

Building Better Relationships

The SKCA and the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies of Saskatchewan (ACEC-SK) have worked together as partners on many fronts over the last decade. While our partnership is well established, there isn't much formality to it. In this next year, we are working to define and refine the relationship between our organizations to ensure ongoing discussion between contractors and engineers.

We've also reached out to the Saskatchewan Mining Association (SMA) to explore how we can support their advocacy priorities and build better connections between our members and theirs. We hope to be able to bring more project details to our members, early in the project cycles, and to help members build relationships with companies in the mining sector.

At the same time, we've reached out

to the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) of Saskatchewan to establish an ongoing relationship with this group, which represents many building owners across the province – in both the public and private sectors. A few weeks ago, we had a great conversation with the BOMA Executive, and I think we're all excited about the opportunities to collaborate as we move forward.

Infrastructure Owners Forum

One way that we are working with BOMA is through the creation of the Infrastructure Owners Forum (IOF). Borrowed from our sister association in Edmonton, IOF is designed as a discussion table where the owners of infrastructure assets – public or private – can come together to discuss topics of shared importance. Bringing all these owners together in one place not only provides superb intel for the SKCA, but it also gives us an opportunity help build relationships with those owners with whom we are not engaged today. The first meeting of the IOF will take place this spring.

Municipal Procurement

Municipal governments across Saskatchewan – whether cities, towns, villages, resort villages, or rural municipalities – all procure construction services of some kind at one point or another. For many of these municipalities, the investments are

Almost \$900 million in federal spending has been earmarked to be spent in Saskatchewan, and yet 64 per cent of this amount (\$568.6 million) remains unallocated. Of the 36 per cent that has been “allocated”, more than half of this is still “under review” – meaning that of the \$887.26 million in federal money targeted for Saskatchewan, only \$152.01 million has actually been invested.

infrequent but are large expenditures for their budget. Most municipal leaders want their local procurement to support local companies whenever possible, but they often feel restricted by the rules of interprovincial trade agreements.

The reality is that trade agreements only apply to competition phase of a project. Prior to issuing a competition document – an RFP or a tender – the municipality can spend lots of time engaging with local vendors, informing them of potential opportunities, discussing the best ways to structure projects, and even reviewing the timing of those projects. The effort to support early engagement with local vendors is not only good for those vendors, as it helps to prepare them for upcoming opportunities, but it's also good for the municipality themselves. They get good advice that will help them shape the competition in a way that's better suited to their needs and priorities. Additionally, they're more likely to receive stronger bids from local companies when those companies fully understand the opportunities.

Recognizing the capacity challenge for many of these municipalities, the SKCA is working with SaskBuilds and other entities to develop a procurement guide for small municipalities. This guide will focus on how these public entities can use Best Value procurement to get better results, all while supporting

their local vendor base and following trade agreements.

It's too early to tell if all these efforts to expand our reach on your behalf will pay off in 2021, but I am pleased to note that they're all moving in the right direction, that the groups we've engaged with are receptive and want to work with us, and that there seems to be consistent feedback on the importance of building better relationships between the construction industry and so many others.

Issues Updates

Before I close off this article, I want to provide quick updates on a few key files that we are actively advancing on your behalf. As always, feel free to reach out directly to me by email at president@scaonline.ca if you'd like to discuss any of these, or if there are other things you'd like to bring to my attention.

Prompt Payment

Prompt Payment was scheduled to come into force on April 1, 2021; however, that will not happen now. The Minister of Justice continues to consider the best mechanism for handling the adjudication authority. This authority is a necessary component of the legislation as it will be the organization responsible for overseeing the adjudication dispute process. As per the Minister's direction,

the SKCA submitted a proposal to create an industry-led, but arm's length, entity to serve as the authority. This entity, to be known as the Saskatchewan Construction Dispute Resolution Office (SCDRO) would be governed by a multi-party governing committee that would direct its work in accordance with the provincial regulations. Part of the proposal for the SCDRO noted that the entity was likely to lose money every year and would need some source of provincial funding to offset this loss. This idea had long been discussed with previous Ministers of Justice, but no specific dollar amount was known. Any funding proposal in front of the government right now is, understandably, getting lots of scrutiny, and so unfortunately the whole legislation is delayed while the government explores the viability of funding the SCDRO.

Federal Infrastructure Funding

Almost \$900 million in federal spending has been earmarked to be spent in Saskatchewan, and yet 64 per cent of this amount (\$568.6 million) remains unallocated. Of the 36 per cent that has been “allocated”, more than half of this is still “under review” – meaning that of the \$887.26 million in federal money targeted for Saskatchewan, only \$152.01 million has actually been invested. This is a travesty, and it is almost entirely because of federal bureaucratic inefficiencies.

If you consider that economists estimate that for every dollar spent on infrastructure, our economy sees GDP growth of anywhere between \$2.46 and \$3.83 – the economic cost of this stalled money is immense. It could mean between \$1.4 billion and \$2.2 billion in lost GDP growth for Saskatchewan. For context, that's likely more than two per cent of our total provincial economy.

There are several reasons for these delays. Lengthy and unnecessary project reviews, undefined expectations, and misalignment of funding priorities are a few. The bottom line is that this money needs to start flowing now. The failure of the federal government to get these funds in the hands of Saskatchewan's municipalities is literally holding our entire economy back.

Procurement and Supporting Local

Public sector procurement improvement continues to be the most significant file the SKCA is engaged in. The work can be divided into three types: (1) responding to member concerns or inquiries regarding procurement processes, competitions, and documents and working to address those concerns; (2) responding to requests from public agencies to support their procurement improvement efforts and engage in

consultations; and (3) leading industry's efforts to guide government's procurement improvement efforts and shape them into outcomes that are good for your business.

In addition to these three types of work, we've spent a lot of time recently talking about the importance of leveraging the economic returns that come from investing stimulus funding locally. When local companies do the work, the economic return is stronger and more prolonged. The SKCA wrote to every municipality in Saskatchewan, encouraging them to build a local vendor engagement program. The response from municipalities taking the time to engage with this idea has been promising, and the SKCA is being asked to provide tangible options for how these municipal governments can support their local vendors.

Meanwhile, the Government of Saskatchewan remains committed to supporting local contractors, despite walking back from their previous efforts to award contracts to companies pledging to use local labour. Industry leaders, including the SKCA, will keep the pressure up to ensure that local contractors get the inside track when it comes to future opportunities with the provincial government.


Along with a core group of other like-minded associations, the SKCA is part

of what I like to think of as a rapid-reaction group that provides regular and close-to-instant feedback to the Government of Saskatchewan when it comes to their approach to supporting local companies and to procuring construction services.

We're also working to set up a committee of general contractors that will provide regular advice to the Government of Saskatchewan on several topics, including the scheduling of project releases and the content of procurement documents.


Working with our four local association partners, we are encouraging the government to make better use of the Saskatchewan Bid Depository as well.

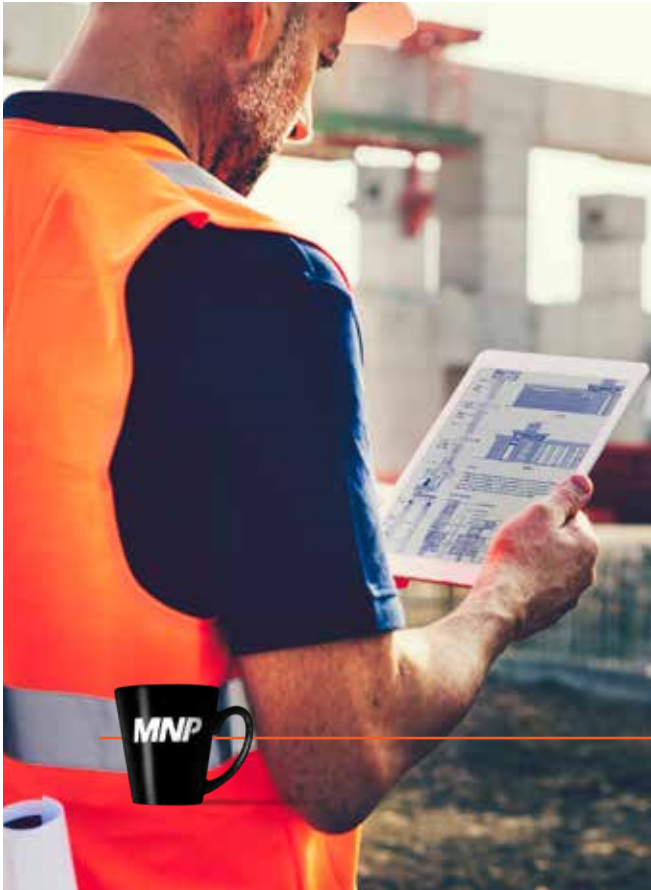
Over the next few months, in addition to the procurement priorities noted above, we'll be working to see provincial construction procurement require COR/SECOR, flow all documents and specifications through the electronic plan room as is done in Alberta, and consistently release information to industry regarding contract awards. All these changes have been pushed for by our members for years, but we are finally starting to make meaningful headway in convincing government officials of the mutual benefits that can be realized when they move in these directions. 



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MEMBER SERVICES UPDATE

Events & Engagement in 2021



Since early 2021, members have been asking us when we are bringing in-person events back. While we don't currently have plans to host any large-scale celebrations up at Elk Ridge this year, we have found ways to connect members virtually.

Virtual Procurement Sessions

A spin-off from our wildly popular Procurement Days, these sessions target an audience of general and trade contractors, as well as suppliers, for their engagement opportunities with public- and private-sector infrastructure owners.

SKCA will be hosting up to 10 procurement sessions with a different infrastructure owner for each session. We will be discussing upcoming construction activity, future plans, and open conversation about the best ways to conduct business with them.

All sessions will feature Q & A before, during, and after. We will also be offering the exclusive opportunity to book a private break-out room with the infrastructure owner for more intimate one-on-one networking.

Starting in April and ending in December (with a break during the summer), members can expect approximately one session per month:

- SaskBuilds – sponsored by KPMG



- City of Regina – sponsored by Western Surety



- City of Saskatoon
- SaskPower
- SaskEnergy
- SaskTel
- And more coming soon!

Visit www.scaonline.ca/events for details and registration once available.

Virtual Economic Update Panels

SKCA will also be hosting up to four economic sessions with commercial realtors and economic development professionals to discuss what's happening in the Saskatchewan economy as it relates to construction.

Each session will include a panel of experts, selected for their knowledge in timely and relevant topics determined by one of our brilliant moderators. All sessions will feature Q & A.

- Quarter 1, moderated by Prabha Mitchell (WESK) – sponsored by Intact Insurance
- Quarter 2, moderated by Shelley Thiel (CPASK)
- Quarter 3, moderated by Jason Aebig (GSCC)
- Quarter 4, moderated by Steve McLellan (SCC)

Visit www.scaonline.ca/events for details and registration on each of the sessions once available.

SKCA-MNP Business Advice Webinars



The SKCA has teamed up with MNP to provide members with a series of relevant and valuable webinars for members. Topics include:

- Scientific Research & Educational Development tax incentive program – did you know that your company could be eligible for a kick-back on costs you had incur to innovate your business?
- Tax Planning & Business Advice for Construction Company Owners – because we all know taxes are going to look a little different this year!
- Plus, one more session that we'll reveal a little later in the year. Watch your inboxes for details on how to register and access recordings!

Saskatchewan Construction Week

April 19 – 23, 2021 will be the fourth annual celebration of the social and economic contributions that construction has on the Saskatchewan economy and quality of life that we enjoy. This week is presented by our valued partner, Saskatchewan Polytechnic. We are so grateful for their support and couldn't do this without them!



With "support local" being the phrase on everyone's lips following our economic recovery from COVID-19, this year's theme will be #SaskBuilt.

Everything we showcase this week will focus on celebrating local talent, Saskatchewan success stories, and examples of construction excellence in our communities.

- Project Photo Contest – We will be highlighting the amazing skill sets that the construction industry possesses and showcasing the physical structures that Saskatchewan residents get to enjoy as a result.
- Official Proclamations and Flag Raising – We will instill the significant impact that local construction companies have on Saskatchewan's economy to municipal and provincial government.
- Surprising Crews – We have some surprises up our sleeve to show gratitude to construction professionals.
- SCW Participation Guide – We will support more sectors in celebrating Saskatchewan's diverse construction industry.

- Light up social media with SCW!

For more information on these initiatives and how you can be involved, visit www.constructionweek.ca.

New Marketing Opportunities for SKCA Champions and Supporters

In a year with no in-person events, we had to re-think the way we offered sponsorship opportunities. Often our sponsors want their brand or their message in front of our membership, and sometimes they simply believe in the work that our association is doing and want to support that. In either case, we felt it was important that sponsors still see tangible value for their investment, so we've found ways to strategically place sponsors in our direct lines of communication. We looked at the areas our members hear from us the most and made sure our sponsorship benefits included a piece of that.

And it has been one of our best performing years in terms of meeting our goals.

The support from sponsors this year (in a pandemic no less!) has been overwhelmingly positive, and we thank each of them for that.

As well as the traditional offerings sponsors have come to expect from us, some of the new benefits in our sponsor package this year include: visible recognition of the partnership during closing statements or breaks in SKCA's virtual events; logo / banner placement in SKCA's monthly e-newsletter; feature in a full-page sponsor ad in SKCA's Roster and Buyer's Guide, as well as complimentary advertising and unlimited trade listings; a complimentary assessment of your company's digital communications, with recommendations to improve your online presence; and full-page advertising in *We Build* magazine.

For more details on our sponsorship opportunities for 2021, visit www.scaonline.ca/news.html?id=483. 🏠

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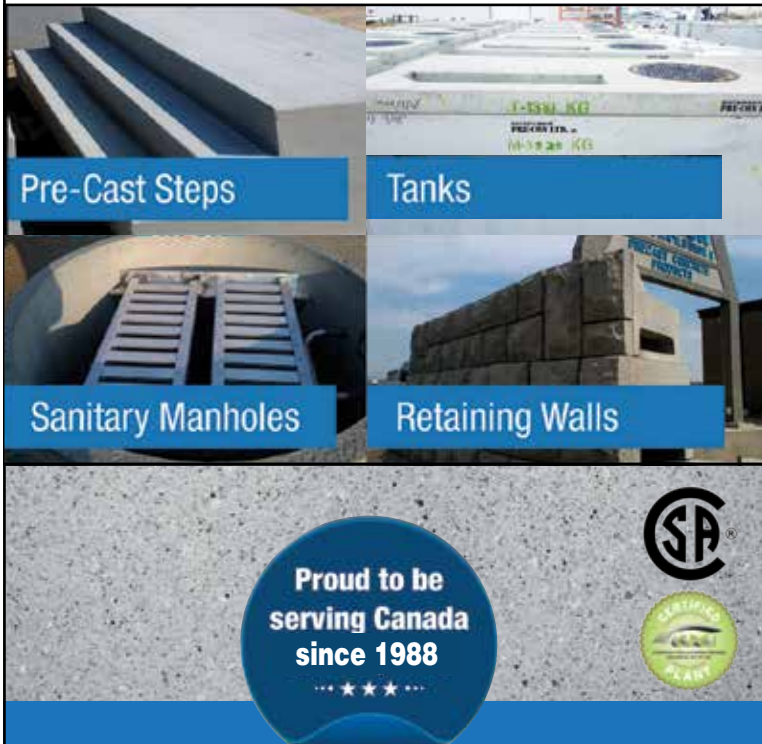


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WHEN THE TIDE GOES OUT...



Celebrating 100 Years

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by Steve McLellan, CEO, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce

Warren Buffett once said, “Only when the tide goes out do you discover who’s been swimming naked”. This vivid quote by the Oracle of Omaha was not written about the current pandemic, but it is applicable from a few perspectives. When the pandemic hit and the economy took a dive, many companies, through no fault of their own, did not have the coverage to protect their most important assets.

We saw that our healthcare system did very well overall, but our senior care, particularly in some parts of the country, was clearly unprepared. Childcare and the education system were forced to develop new strategies to enhance their function and credit is due to everyone working in those sectors. The number of Zoom calls and Wi-Fi usage clearly demonstrated that the system worked, and the technology was generally available, but there is still a need for increased affordability and wider access.

There was, and still is, major impacts on the balance sheets of most businesses. For many who had the ability to pivot or sustain operations during a sharp decline in revenue, they have done so on slower revenues and government supports. For others, particularly newer businesses or ones that had just went through an expansion, this was the worst possible situation. Even long-term, successful businesses like restaurants and anyone in the travel businesses have felt the hit and will continue to feel it.

For decades, we will look back on the COVID-19 pandemic and share the lessons, celebrate the wins, and mourn the losses of lives as well as livelihoods. As we get closer to a widespread vaccine rollout and some sense of business normalcy, it is time to stop looking at the rearview mirror and start looking forward. For the past year, businesses and individuals may have felt like they have been backing up in a vehicle, which is awkward and hard on the neck. It means you must go slow and it often means you have gone too far down one road and must reverse directions. Now it is time to turn your head, look out the windshield, and head forward.

It is with that forward-facing perspective that we have changed our focus from recovery to one of transition and resilience. We used to think about the need to recover, but that implies returning to where we once were. I would suggest business has changed in so many ways that where we once were no longer exists. Recovery, while important in some areas, should not be our destination. Instead, we must complete the transition to a more digitally engaged world, to a place where supply chains are more diversified, where workers spend more of their time working from remote locations, whether that is their home, their cabin or on their two months in Arizona. We need to transition to a place where we, as a country and certainly as a province, become more resilient in ways that we have previously neglected.

Perhaps the most important transition that businesses are going to need to complete is the transition to full digital integration. One trend that has been obvious throughout the pandemic is the advancement of the online marketplace – and I’m not just talking about Amazon. I am talking about the shopping, the product comparison, the marketing of a company and its products, the engagement with current and potential clients, and the ability to book a service or buy a product online. These are all elements that Saskatchewan businesses need to greatly enhance to increase their ability to serve their clients of tomorrow. No longer will the most important door to your business be the one that is on the front of your building. Now and for the foreseeable future, it will be the portal that you create online. RBC’s Thought Leadership has suggested that it is likely that more businesses will fail coming out of COVID-19 because they could not adopt a digital strategy than all of those we lost because of the decline in revenues. While this is a stark observation, I believe it, and it scares me.

Get ready for tomorrow, today. We will survive! We will one day soon have an economy where we can all buy and sell with only the normal risks of losing your shirt, so get ready and cover your assets. 🏠



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AT THE NEXUS OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY AND INJURY PREVENTION

By Collin Pullar, President, and Ed Pyle, Corporate Development Manager, Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association



Management decisions in construction are critical because mistakes are often irreversible, and sometimes hazardous working conditions can lead to severe injuries and fatalities. Given complicated projects, new materials, and evolving construction methods, effective management decisions in the industry can be difficult. New, innovative technological tools can make those decisions more manageable and make complicated plans, processes and training more comfortable to understand and evaluate.

Frequently it has been said that “a picture is worth a thousand words,” and modern multi-media technology can present not only pictures or charts but sometimes three-dimensional and interactive scenarios that one can move through. The ability to provide insight and experience into safety issues without risk is why the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) incorporates new technologies into its training and advisory services. Among the most immediately useful changes and innovations the SCSA is making available to Saskatchewan construction businesses are dashboard reports and virtual reality learning and training experiences. The association is also greatly encouraged by the use of online and remote meetings for communicating safety information.

Dashboard Reporting Service

The SCSA offers this service at no cost to members. It is a handy and affordable technology to support member companies' decisions by presenting data visualizations of timely information about a company. These graphs and charts are easy to read and are also automated, meaning a company is not required to spend days gathering numbers from different sources.

Dashboard reports – such as those in the newly released SCSA Analytics product – can help gain insight into a member company's past performance and sometimes use machine learning to understand patterns and future concerns; they can get a company beyond understanding the past to improve future performance.

SCSA Advisory Services uses data visualizations and dashboards to highlight potential areas of focus in a company and enable managers of member companies to make targeted improvements to a safety program. Understanding safety performance, injury costs, performance against similar companies, training history, and other essential information about a safety program by reviewing a dashboard report with an advisor, makes determining a follow-up action easier.

By providing Data Visualizations and dashboard reports to members, the SCSA expects to make management decisions about investments in safety more manageable and more effective. All of this access to better data will help ensure that these safety programs stay effective as hazards change and the construction industry evolves.

Virtual Reality Training

Virtual reality (VR) can also make management and worker decisions easier. An SCSA trainer or advisor can show a member company hazards on a realistic construction site



and propose decisions to a viewer based on thousands of interactions with members' companies. As a trainee carries out the scenario, an SCSA trainer or instructor can provide insights into how well they perform and suggest improvements.

VR can contribute information to a company on the strength of safety knowledge and help understand risk in areas ranging from regulatory concerns to small optimizations to a safety program. The SCSA believes that a trainee making safe decisions in a hazard-free, virtual reality environment will be less likely to repeat mistakes in the real world. When used as a training product, virtual reality is exceedingly beneficial. It engages multiple senses, and students will walk away with excellent retention and a greater understanding of the course material. VR is a robust technology that is only beginning to mark the safety industry from an innovation standpoint. Done correctly, VR will help develop managers and employees to work safely for years to come.

Remote Safety Meetings

Lastly, online and remote meetings are now widespread in every business, and in a province as big as Saskatchewan, their general use is a game-changer. Today an SCSA Safety

Advisor can easily do a toolbox talk on a critical safety topic at any end of the province on the same day.

As the SCSA has shifted from in-person to instructor-led online training because of COVID -19 restrictions, the association has heard from companies in centres like Birch Hills that they enjoy the convenience and the cost-benefit of not travelling to Regina or Saskatoon. Simultaneously, an instructor-led online course carries many of the benefits of an in-class experience like group classroom work, sharing stories with course participants, and asking the instructor questions. Digital transformation has been a longstanding goal of many organizations, and it has never been easier for learners and leaders to connect.

By improving access to good-quality safety information and training resources through high-tech tools, companies can easily access useful quality information and gain experience safely. This new wave of innovation will enable industry leaders' ability to make smart, well-informed decisions about safety. Ultimately by embracing innovation and change, the SCSA expects to get safety information into the right hands, with improved speed and more effectiveness than ever before. Over time, this will drive down the cost and frequency of injuries. 🏠



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COVID-19 AND THE ECONOMY: REASONS TO BE OPTIMISTIC IN 2021

By Shaadie Musleh, Strategic & Competitive Intelligence Senior Manager, Economic Development Regina



Last year will be remembered as the year COVID-19 turned the world upside down. This global pandemic has reshaped our lives, how we interact with each other, our ability to travel, see loved ones...and the list goes on and on. Moreover, the spread of COVID-19 goes beyond how it disrupts our daily lives. Governments, at all levels, continue to struggle with lock down measures as costs to the economy and businesses continue to add up. However, there are reasons to be optimistic! New vaccines have been developed, and progress is being made to vaccinate as many people as possible. Despite this, many of us are still wondering what the recovery could look like and what our "new normal" will be.

To understand how COVID-19 has affected us, it's important to note that the economic recession we are facing currently is different than previous recessions we have experienced. The 2008 economic recession started with the collapse of the financial and real estate sectors in the United States. This collapse reverberated through the entire U.S. economy, resulting in massive mortgage defaults, huge jobs losses, a retrenchment of investment and consumer spending, along with many other affects that spread into the Canadian economy. This resulted in a long economic recovery, defined by massive government bailouts.

COVID-19 is different, as the economic affects do not have the same impact as we would see in a typical recession.

Because of the targeted restrictions to limit the spread, COVID-19 has affected some industries more than others. High-contact, service-based small and medium-sized businesses have been disproportionately affected, especially if they are businesses that depend on domestic and international travel. As a result, government grants have been targeted to include small and medium-sized businesses, as well as including additional supports for people whose employment was directly affected by the restriction and forced closures. Data released by the Government of Canada show that these programs have helped lower the total number of insolvencies in the country by 27.2 per cent from 2019. Nationally, consumer insolvencies decreased by 27.9 per cent, while business insolvencies decreased by 25.9 per cent. In Saskatchewan, this trend continued, as the total number of insolvencies in December 2020 decreased by 24.4 per cent from last year. Consumer insolvencies decreased by 23.5 per cent, while business insolvencies decreased by 52.9 per cent. Businesses and people are certainly facing a struggle and available supports are largely keeping the hardships from becoming worse. The Regina Economic Recovery Grant, Strong Recovery Adaptation Rebate, Re-Open Saskatchewan Training Subsidy, Saskatchewan Small Business Emergency Payment, Western Diversification: Regional Relief and Recovery Fund, as well as many other

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federal programs, are still available and accepting applications.

COVID-19 has also brought to our attention just how critical a role Saskatchewan can play on a global scale in agriculture and value-added food production. Regardless of how the global economy is performing, people need to eat.

Preliminary trade data from Statistics Canada show that in 2020, Saskatchewan posted its second-highest exports of Goods in the last five years, reaching \$30.41 billion. This total was only surpassed by the \$30.67 posted in 2016. The growth in exported goods by Saskatchewan is also an anomaly when we compare it to the other provinces and territories, as only Nunavut and Yukon had export increase in 2020. Our agriculture commodities and goods benefited greatly from the increased global demand for high-quality food commodities, and ingredients. According to data compiled by Saskatchewan Trade and Export (STEP), Saskatchewan agri-food exports grew by 31.4 per cent over 2019, reaching \$16.97 billion in 2020. Highlighted in this growth was the 95.9 per cent increase in lentil exports. Moreover, oats, wheat, durum wheat, lentils, canola (seed and meal), peas, flax, soybeans, and barley all exceeded growth and sales expectations in 2020. Existing trends toward healthy eating and plant protein will only help increase the value of the sector. This is in stark contrast to other key export industries such as oil & gas and potash, which saw 32.3 per cent and 7.7 per cent declines, respectively. However, the spin-off effects from agriculture exports have already begun in the potash and fertilizer sector. Anticipated increase in demand in agriculture is expected to lead to higher input demands that will set up the potash

and fertilizer markets for a strong 2021.

Looking ahead, economists across the six major banks in Canada are predicting that the Saskatchewan economy will return to growth in 2021. On average, they're predicting a real gross domestic product increase of 4.4 per cent. This bounce-back in economic growth follows a forecasted decline of 5.3 per cent. This depends on the

lessening or removal of restrictions due to COVID-19 and mass vaccination. That is the good news, although it may not happen as fast as we would like it to. Until we can safely reopen the economy, government supports remain critical, and we need to capitalize on the opportunities emerging from agriculture and value-added agriculture. 🏡



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POST COVID – ENSURING CONTRACTOR'S CREDIT WORTHINESS ENTERING THE UPCOMING INFRASTRUCTURE STIMULUS PACKAGE



By Michael Sali, Senior Vice President, Aon Construction Services Group

With 2020 behind us, there is hope that by Q4 2021, day-to-day life will return to near normal. Saskatchewan has been fortunate by the provincial government's recognition of construction as an allowable service throughout the pandemic. Most importantly, we must commend the Saskatchewan construction industry for being extremely resilient through this challenging time. If we recall March 2020, in a matter of days, the construction industry quickly adapted and implemented health and safety regulations to protect their employees at the onset of the generally unknown COVID-19. Resilience is nothing new to this industry, with recent changes in Saskatchewan including:

- Introduction of PST on prime contracts (April 2017)
- Implementation of the new National Energy Code for Buildings (NECB) (January 2019); and
- Prompt Payment Legislation (introduced in 2020)

Thankfully, there is light at the end of the tunnel: significant government investment in infrastructure. Historical events are usually a proven roadmap to formulate future economic decisions on a path forward

out of the current times. At the end of the Great Recession, the economy of the 1930s was reeling (massive deflation) with unemployment at an all-time high (more than 20 per cent). In the US, President Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced his New Deal, an infrastructure stimulus bill that would revolutionize the construction industry. The theory of the New Deal was the massive creation of employment as quickly as possible – by building America. Infrastructure spend was focused on two distinct criteria: shovel-ready projects, to get workers started immediately, and large, long-term projects to ensure sustainability. This gave life to projects such as the Hoover Dam, Tennessee River Valley Authority, and I-Series Interstate highway network to name a few. Concurrently, these major works were prefaced by countless projects that were ready to start immediately.

Fast forward to today: with significant economic interruptions, governments will look at what has worked in the past. Infrastructure stimulus spending is a proven, efficient, and effective way to stimulate the economy from recession. The Government of Saskatchewan has implemented a significant stimulus budget focused on education, health, social programs,

and infrastructure. The expectation is that the federal government will follow suit shortly. Timelines for the release of tenders will start in the second half of 2021. This will be a significant change in the industry moving from a flat marketplace to an upswing in activity. Although this increase is positive, it may create growing pains for some contractors. The adage “Contractors don’t starve, they drown” should be a phrase of caution. Commodity inflation on key project inputs such as steel, copper, and lumber will be an added challenge.

The Saskatchewan construction market is beginning to improve. With the upcoming prospect of once-in-a-generation stimulus work, margins will trend upward; however, there should be a continued focus on adequately staffing existing projects at tighter margins, as those are where problems have arisen historically.

The question: How does the Saskatchewan construction industry prepare to take full advantage of this economic stimulus?

Our suggestion: if you haven't started preparing already, now is the time. Contractors have the best opportunity to drive profitable results in the initial

Historical events are usually a proven roadmap to formulate future economic decisions on a path forward out of the current times.

upswing to strong economic times. To maximize your firm's potential, we recommend you keep in mind the following items:

Surety and Credit Relationships

Ensure you are represented by professionals that know your business. Identify your goals for growth and be prepared to have discussions around your detailed goals and aspirations and look at the following:

- Understand the metrics that surety/ credit providers concentrate on to make decisions.
- Understand alternatives available to your firm outside of traditional surety and credit solutions.

Contract Review & Negotiation

The next year will be critical to protect the creditworthiness of your company and leverage that financial strength to secure as much profitable work as possible. The last thing anyone wants is to get tangled in a contractual dispute or hung receivable. Minimize the possibility of legal disputes and liens that may tie up much needed working capital to support your company's bonding facility by:

- Mitigating penalizing clauses out of contracts – warranties, liquidated damages, and comparative indemnification language.
- Ensuring relief clauses, such as force majeure, not only provide time extensions but monetary compensation for additional costs incurred to the contractor.

- Understand where and how you can negotiate for the betterment of your firm.

Explore Joint Venture Arrangements

Stimulus packages usually target two key areas: shovel-ready and larger infrastructure projects. With larger project sizes, partnering may be a beneficial approach. Provincial procurement metrics do favour Saskatchewan content. Joint Ventures are a difficult concept – partnering with your competition; however, it may provide opportunity for Saskatchewan-based companies to secure work that could transform their sophistication and capabilities for years to come.

- Joint-venture arrangements don't need to be solely between prime contractors. Some scenarios where a specific trade is a critical component of the work (mechanical, electrical, civil), it may make sense for that trade to partner with a prime in a joint venture.

The general sentiment is 2021 will be the start of our return to normal in Saskatchewan. Our hope is that this year can be the beginning of a transformative time for the construction industry that can springboard Saskatchewan contractors to a path of long-term prosperity – a “new normal.” With proper planning and communication, we are confident the ingenuity of Saskatchewan Construction Association members will capitalize on this rare opportunity. 

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DIVERSITY IN SKILLED TRADES IS KEY TO A PROSPEROUS FUTURE



By Ryan T. Osicki, Investment Advisor, RBC Dominion Securities

“Even a brick wants to be something.”

These famous words from master architect Louis Khan remind us of the potential in all of us. Saskatchewan’s construction industry can also be positioned to thrive and prosper, pursuing its own potential in a post-pandemic Canada.

For this industry to lean into the future, we must look ahead to where the world is going. While heavily disrupted by COVID-19, we are living in a decade of change defined by a greener, smarter, and more diverse Canada. How innovative we are in our response to these transformative headwinds will determine how the industry is prepared to rise and meet the moment before it.

As we continue toward economic recovery, defined by change and innovation, there are a couple of areas we can look at to reimagine how the industry can lead from the front with the right mindset, guided by the right talent and with the right supports in place.

Smart hiring and enhanced retention

Saskatchewan’s construction industry will face recruiting and talent challenges on the road to recovery. One critical challenge is a potential shortage of skilled tradespeople, driven by the demographic shifts of an aging population. According to Buildforce Canada, the outlook for Saskatchewan

anticipates that hiring needs will be driven primarily by the expected retirement of 9,100 workers over the coming decade. Several skilled trades are at risk of not keeping pace with these retirement levels, suggesting a potential undersupply of new journeypersons could exist by 2029.

This issue could be made worse by the high-volatility, short-term workforce demands in a post-COVID recovery. Staff needed on short notice to execute on a contract may be difficult to source following a period of unprecedented government support for personnel affected by the pandemic. With demand rising and retirements accelerating, companies need to approach attracting and retaining emerging talent differently.

Organizations can deepen the talent pool by implementing smart hiring practices. Establishing recruitment channels (such as social media), with an emphasis on more diverse labour markets, may provide the key. Firms looking to invest in a strong recruiting brand to attract the requisite talent may consider focusing their effort on the following markets:

- Increase efforts for gender equality by recruiting, training, and mentoring women. This isn’t an act of goodwill – it’s a necessity. In 2019, Buildforce reports showed that of the 39,800 tradespeople employed in the industry, women accounted for only

5.7 per cent of all on-site employment. Women make up about 48 per cent of the Canadian labour force yet hold less than four per cent of jobs in the skilled trades. Closing this gap requires actively engaging women in the trades, after decades of targeting men.

- Immigration will be a powerful antidote to our aging society. By welcoming well-educated newcomers to Canada, we are importing education, skills and talents that will provide the industry with a pipeline of suitable candidates.
- The same can be said for leaning into Indigenous youth. The Indigenous population has been growing at four times the rate of the non-Indigenous population, and today, more than half of First Nations people are under the age of 30. This new generation of Indigenous youth will be critical to the economic recovery. Buildforce states that approximately 12 per cent of Saskatchewan’s construction labour force is made up of Indigenous people, of which about 85 per cent work directly on construction projects, with the remaining 15 per cent working primarily in administrative and management-related occupations. As employers begin to rebuild and rehire, and governments commit billions to economic reconstruction, creating more workforce linkages for Indigenous students will be critical.

This can start with more internships, co-ops and mentorships that cultivate both workplace skills and help youth develop meaningful goals.

Ultimately, the success of any human resource strategy depends on the ability to retain talent. The construction industry, in general, records some of the highest turnover rates across all industries. To mitigate this attrition, organizations can consider transforming how they address turnover by investing in measures to improve their chances of being a preferred employer, including:

- Enhanced staff benefits, such as advice-based group retirement and financial literacy options, such as RBC's Group Advantage, health spending accounts, and enhanced training and recognition.
- Catering to the specific needs of older workers (including workers with reduced physical capacity) – for example, by pairing them with junior workers in blended crews.
- Tailoring career-development offerings to targeted groups (Indigenous youth, for instance, or millennials).
- Support systems for employees impacted by the pandemic, demonstrating corporate investment in the community and encouraging leaders in the organization to serve as role models.

Winning the war for talent is key. Exploring additional job markets will mean transformation for the industry in how it accommodates and then retains talent.

While this is a time of transformation and disruption, it's also an incredible time for self-reflection and innovation.

Born out of times of challenge is progress and our capacity for reimagining the world around us. By leaning into the future, whether by embodying sustainability, investing in new talent streams, or building the necessary support structures, we all – brick by brick – can thrive and prosper.

Ryan T. Osicki is an investment advisor at

RBC Dominion Securities Inc. (Member–Canadian Investor Protection Fund) who focuses on the construction industry. He advises on tax, retirement and estate planning issues, helping owners grow and protect their wealth to ensure a smooth transition into a well-funded retirement. To explore any of our services in greater detail, please contact us – we would be pleased to assist. 🏠



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PLAN, ASSESS, INVEST: HOW TO EXCEL YOUR BUSINESS IN 2021

By Quinn Magnuson, Senior Client Partner,
BDC Advisory Services



As the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic intensifies, Canadian entrepreneurs are gradually regaining confidence in the Canadian economy, despite additional health restrictions, according to BDC's 2021 Outlook on Canadian Entrepreneurs' Investment intentions survey. The poll, conducted in December, looks at entrepreneurs' level of confidence in the economy, business and hiring outlooks, as well as investment plans over the next 12 months. The survey also finds that a growing number of business owners plan to invest more in 2021 than last year. (BDC February 2021)

Canadian entrepreneurs' mood has improved significantly from the previous quarter, during which more

than 50 per cent thought the economy would deteriorate over the next several months. Net business confidence is up by 34 percentage points from the past quarter. The rise in investment intentions is largely due to growing business confidence and an improved sales outlook. BDC's 2021 outlook is seeing as many optimistic (35 per cent) as pessimistic (36 per cent) entrepreneurs, a marked improvement.

What does this mean for the construction sector in Canada?

The construction sector employs approximately 1.2 million men and women, or seven per cent of the Canadian workforce. That's a 50 per cent increase in jobs from the prior

decade. As Canada's economy and population continue to rise, largely due to strong immigration, the need for infrastructure and housing continues to expand as well. That's positioned the construction industry for strong growth in the coming years. The COVID-19 pandemic dealt a blow to the construction sector, like most of the economy; however, as has already shown, it's widely expected the construction sector will rebound swiftly. (Randstad December 2020)

The Canadian government has committed to building and maintaining infrastructure across the country. Under the Investing in Canada Plan, they have earmarked over \$180 billion (CAD) in key infrastructure over the next decade. The plan includes funding for long-awaited projects related to public transit, affordable housing, and developing rural communities, among others. Green energy is another core investment area, with a focus on sustainability and stimulating local economies (Spindlove: December 2020)

How does this translate to Saskatchewan and the construction industry here? Whether you are in boom or bust mode, there are three hard truths:

1. The pandemic and its restrictions won't change much in 2021. New variants and a growing fear of a third wave will keep governments constantly trying to hit a moving



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The construction sector employs approximately 1.2 million men and women, or seven per cent of the Canadian workforce.

target and that will mean more frustrations for entrepreneurs.

2. There will be constant adjustments to consumer demands and shifting trends in the industry.
3. If you aren't in a continuous improvement mindset, you will be left behind and your competitors that are shifting will thrive.

Translation: If you haven't already made some significant organizational improvements and changes, the coming years will be tougher to navigate.

How can business owners / operators plan to adapt?

STRATEGIC PLANNING

If you've never conducted formal strategic planning for your company, you're missing out on team alignment and having everyone "on board". Having your management team aligned to company goals and the strategy to achieve them and how they, individually, affect those targets is critical. This cannot be done by owners "telling" the group what needs to be done. There must be a critical SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis done, as well as environmental audits (internal and external) so the company can navigate through these waters toward the targets that were set. We recommend getting a third-party facilitator to guide your team through this process.

BUSINESS MODEL ASSESSMENT

This can be done prior to or within the strategic planning sessions but assessing your company's business model includes defining your value

proposition, infrastructure, customers, and finances. It assists you in aligning your activities by illustrating potential trade-offs and whether it fits within the demands of 2021 and COVID-19 restrictions. It asks the tough questions as well as truly brings value add to your customers/clients. The way your company does business in 2021 cannot possibly reflect the business model of 1998 or even 2018. Customer segments and relationships, supply chain management, cost structure, revenue streams, key activities/resources, and networks all change over time. Think of it as an "audit" to understand if what you are doing is productive and profitable for you and valuable to your customer base.

INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY/AUTOMATION


Canada still lags far behind other developed countries in adoption of technology. "Eighty-eight per cent of respondents believe technology will either play a key role in the future of how we work in construction, or it

THE EXPERTS

will actually form the backbone of the construction industry, something we can't do without," notes a report by Procore Canada titled How We Build Now Canada. "Technology is clearly vital to the future of building." Some of the change is being driven by necessity, and COVID-19 has forced adjustments, but much of it is coming from the next generation entering the workforce and establishing themselves in middle and upper management. Still, there's clearly more to be done. The Procore survey also found "one-third (of respondents) are still using paper files, spreadsheets, and email to manage their projects and workflows."

The bottom line is that this old dog (the construction industry) needs to start learning new tricks. Getting a tech assessment or tech audit that pertains to this industry is the first step toward becoming more agile, adaptable, and ultimately, profitable.

For more information on starting any of the above processes, feel free to reach out to Quinn Magnuson at (306) 975-4828 or quinn.magnuson@bdc.ca. 🏢



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ADVANCING THE INNOVATION AGENDA BY CAPITALIZING ON CHANGE



By Mary Van Buren, President,
Canadian Construction Association



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The world in 2021 looks very different from what many of us could have imagined just 14 months ago. The pandemic highlighted the power of technology and digitalization. Companies that had re-created themselves for a digital world were in a much better position to weather the storm of change brought on by COVID-19.

While some sectors have had to shut down or drastically alter their services at various points, the construction sector – declared an allowable service – has largely continued to operate throughout the pandemic. Companies and their employees adapted quickly to new ways of working to continue delivering the important services that Canadians rely on every day.

As businesses look to recovery, they are also considering what impacts from COVID-19 are permanent. Will people continue to work from home in record numbers? Will online shopping, home meal delivery, and DIY be as prevalent two or three years from now?

Regardless of these shifts, construction firms have a golden opportunity to accelerate their own digital transformation for many reasons in addition to COVID-19:

1. To position themselves for delivering sustainable solutions and address climate change.

The federal government has earmarked billions of dollars through the Investing in Canada Plan and other programs. The Canadian construction sector sees the urgency and is prepared to play its part, but achieving greater resiliency requires that the government provide the necessary framework and investment to augment innovation in the construction industry.

Research indicates that the benefits of investing in community adaptation and resilience outweigh the cost of such investments by a ratio of six to one. The recent announcement of Canada's first-ever national infrastructure assessment is an important first step, but governments must also be prepared to lead the way by changing attitudes regarding procurement and helping to defray resilience costs through program supports.

2. To attract a digitally savvy workforce and leverage technology to complement the shrinking labour pool.

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2028, construction must become a career of choice. A technology-forward industry, where STEM graduates can learn and grow, would be one competitive advantage for construction. The industry would also benefit from the latest knowledge. Technology-assisted devices, from drones to vehicles, can also reduce some of the dependency on workers, while also improving safety, for example.

3. To improve decision-making by using real-time data.

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4. To improve collaboration among the industry by using BIM and other software.

Multiple people can participate together virtually with the use of software that links up the ecosystem in real-time. This can result in improved productivity and less waste with teams being more agile to changes.

Lowest-bid should not be the model upon which projects are allocated. Projects that include innovative materials and concepts, despite costing more, should be given consideration. Programs are also needed to financially incentivize businesses of all sizes, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to access and embrace emerging and sustainable technologies, materials, or processes.

How CCA is working on your behalf

Advancing the innovation agenda has been a focus area for the Canadian Construction Association (CCA) for several years now, and 2020 saw a real uptick in activity and interest from our members.

- A webinar series was launched in 2020 to bring more attention to industry advances (<https://www.cca-acc.com/events/connected-webinars/>).
- CCA launched several new member services designed to accelerate the adoption of innovation within the industry.
- Launched in partnership with Cognit.ca, the Construction R&D Portal provides unprecedented visibility into world-

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CCA believes passionately in the sustainability and vitality of Canada's construction industry and the industry's pivotal role in Building a better Canada.


class expertise, research, facilities, and intellectual property that exist at post-secondary institutions across Canada. This is accompanied by the R&D Showcase which is a series of webinars that will focus on bringing the latest research from academia to the industry. Upcoming topics include digitalization for geometric control in prefabrication and construction, AI to improve safety and productivity of construction projects, robots for architectural design and construction, and long-term performance of the building envelope in the context of climate change.

- The KPMG digital maturity assessment tool is a new initiative to assist Canadian construction companies measure where they stand against other firms and help them make informed strategic and operating decisions. Preliminary results from this tool will be shared at CCA's virtual annual conference in March.
- Our CONtact innovator mentorship program also

continues to match aspiring entrepreneurs creating new solutions for the construction industry with experienced industry leaders to help refine their products and services.

CCA believes passionately in the sustainability and vitality of Canada's construction industry and the industry's pivotal role in Building a better Canada. The industry provides jobs, injects socioeconomic opportunities and life into a community, and creates infrastructure critical to keeping the country moving forward. The world is changing, and the industry is changing with it.

Let's stay in contact

Please email me at mvanburen@cca-acc.com if you have any feedback or comments on how the CCA can serve you better. Stay in the loop by subscribing to CCA's newsletter at bit.ly/ccasubscribe, by following @ConstructionCAN on Twitter, or by looking up Canadian Construction Association on LinkedIn. 

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THREE WAYS TO HELP YOUR REMOTE TEAM STAY CONNECTED, PRODUCTIVE, AND COMFORTABLE



By Jarrod Hillman, President, Hillman Audio Video Inc.



Most people didn't have a dedicated home office before COVID-19 swept through the world, creating a complicated – and sometimes uncomfortable – situation for many in their homes. A report by YouGov, LinkedIn and USA TODAY shows only 46 per cent of people reserved space at home for an office. With as many as 74 per cent of people ages 18 to 74 working remotely, that left a large portion without an at-home setup. So where did the rest work? For the past year, people worked from their kitchen tables, sofas, or bedrooms with little or no ergonomic support to help curb the aches and pains of computer work.

This created an opportunity for employers to help their workforce adapt and thrive in this next phase of COVID-era work. When employees are comfortable and have the tools they need, productivity will remain high.

At Hillman AV we specialize in commercial audio and video solutions, we're fortunate to always have had the technology and infrastructure in place to "go remote". However, for most, the pandemic highlighted a large gap in technology to support a remote workforce.

For our team, digital collaboration has skyrocketed – sharing documents and files while being able to work on them together in real time is now a larger

part of our daily operations. Leveraging platforms like Microsoft Office 365, Teams and Zoom has had an incredible impact. We've taken full advantage of business supports to invest in quality headsets, video cameras, and additional equipment as needed for staff to make the "new normal" the new natural.

Hillman AV recently became the preferred video conference supplier for one of Saskatchewan's largest owners, and we are excited to announce our expansion to Winnipeg this spring. We're ready to hit the ground running, with a reputation of quality services and products.

Here are our top three ways to help your workforce stay connected, productive, and comfortable while they continue working from home.

1. Employees must stay connected – near or far

The dramatic increase in Zoom and Teams calls left some home-internet solutions strained, resulting in a large portion of the workforce experiencing disruptions. The lack of reliable Wi-Fi inhibits remote workers' ability to stay productive, which adds stress and frustration to an already chaotic time.

Stable internet lays the foundation for a well-functioning home office, but staying connected takes many forms, including:

- Docking stations to organize laptops, external monitors, keyboards and more.
- The appropriate cables, adapters, and chargers to keep the engine (laptop) running.
- IT-sanctioned software that enables remote access.

For IT professionals helping to outfit their organizations with work-from-home kits, start by surveying the workforce about their most common needs. Once those questions are answered, it becomes clearer how to determine the best way to support remote employees long term.

2. Help workers combat fatigue and strain with office furniture

Although sitting on the couch all day for work might sound like a good idea, it's likely to end with a negative impact on posture. After months, the strain to one's neck, back, wrists and more will compound and make for an ironically uncomfortable experience.

Here's what full-time remote workers need to stay comfortable while at home:

A sturdy desk – A desk will improve comfort by providing a dedicated space to mount monitors and use other devices like a mouse or keyboard without strain. A height-adjustable desk would provide the most value to



remote workers by allowing them to shift positions and stretch their legs throughout the day.

A comfortable chair – Arguably even more important than the desk is the chair. A comfortable office chair that supports remote workers' back and height will go a long way to keep people focused on the tasks at hand.

A bright lamp – For those in an apartment or place with minimal natural light, a desk lamp will help reduce eye strain brought on by looking at a screen for long hours. It'll also provide a better image for video calls.

3. The new normal is hybrid collaboration

To support a hybrid workforce effectively, consider these measures for remote and in-office workers:

Video conferencing-equipped meeting rooms – Remote workers spend most of their days balancing their actual work with a series of Zoom or Teams calls. It's likely the whole workforce won't return all at once – and some will stay home permanently – so it's important to make sure meeting rooms allow hybrid workers to collaborate just as easily as they would from their laptops or mobile devices.

Software for collaboration and security – IT departments went into overdrive at the beginning of the pandemic if they weren't prepared to transition their workforces to remote work. Where are the gaps in software today? Video solutions have been in play, but what challenges are remote workers experiencing that software could fix? Survey user groups to find out.

Webcams, headsets, and additional components – Audio issues are a common disruption at work – and it's probably the same way at home. An upgrade from standard ear buds would go a long way to improve audio for those working remotely, as would a sharp webcam or set of desk speakers.

Among these challenges of managing and engaging with a remote workforce, companies are faced with floating project timelines. The current COVID-19 restrictions have made it impossible to predict when we'll need the technology to facilitate virtual meetings and collaboration from the office space. If you need help planning how your organization will support its remote workforce and hybrid team members, please contact us. We would love to help during this strange yet exciting transition. 📶



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MINISTRY OF SASKBUILDS AND PROCUREMENT: INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS ON THE HORIZON

By Michael Harrison, Government of Saskatchewan



While COVID-19 has changed so many facets of how we do business and how we live, the Government of Saskatchewan has remained unchanged in its focus on job creation and economic growth. These underlying principles of Saskatchewan's Growth Plan have never been more important than now.

Ensuring Saskatchewan's economy emerges from the pandemic in a strong

position is priority one. That's why the Government of Saskatchewan announced a stimulus package last year with record infrastructure spending. This large investment is driving economic activity, helping to create jobs and laying a strong foundation for more growth in the years ahead.

This stimulus funding was announced in May 2020, as part of a \$7.5 billion

two-year capital plan to build a strong Saskatchewan and stimulate the province's economic recovery. Since then, the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement has been working with partners across Government to coordinate the roll-out of this funding, which includes funding for several major projects.

Some recent highlights of the investment work underway include our announcement of Regina-based firm Clifton Associates, the winning engineering team for the preliminary engineering design for the Westside Irrigation Project. The Westside Irrigation Project (Phase 1 and 2) and the Qu'Appelle South Water Conveyance Project (Phase 3) are part of the \$4 billion Lake Diefenbaker irrigation expansion projects announced in July 2020.

This will be the largest infrastructure project in the province's history. Once complete, the project will double the size of irrigable land in Saskatchewan, which is a significant step in completing the goals of the 2030 plan for growth.

We also recently announced the winning design team, Strategic Prairie Region Alliance, for the \$120 million Saskatoon Remand Centre. This will expand and modernize the Saskatoon Correctional Centre and ensure a



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This stimulus funding was announced in May 2020, as part of a \$7.5 billion two-year capital plan to build a strong Saskatchewan.

safe environment for staff, offenders and the public. The investment will also create more space in the provincial correctional system to provide rehabilitative programming to offenders.

Ensuring we have modern transportation corridors is key to our province's success. Sixteen highway construction projects worth more than \$130 million have recently been awarded and should be completed this fall. This is part of a record Ministry of Highways tender of \$437 million last year – the largest in Saskatchewan's history.

Municipalities have also seen significant infrastructure spending. As of January 2021, approximately \$149.8 million of the \$150 million Municipal Economic Enhancement Program has been advanced to participating regional municipalities, towns, and villages.

With this unprecedented level of stimulus spending and concurrent projects, the Government of Saskatchewan decided to consolidate procurement under one ministry. The Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement was created to drive greater procurement efficiency and effectiveness.

Part of the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement's mandate is to take a new approach to the management of all infrastructure projects and assets, standardized government procurement, and IT infrastructure. The Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement supports several key Saskatchewan Growth Plan commitments to:

- Deliver a modern approach to IT service delivery and procurement;

- Leverage government procurement and government supply chains to support the development and growth of Saskatchewan businesses; and
- Invest more than \$30 billion over a 10-year period to build the infrastructure to support a growing province, a strong economy, and a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people.

At the same time, the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement is continuing to deliver and supply critical operating services to government, working with client ministries to find the best solutions for their business.

Currently, the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement is forging ahead with several other projects. Under the large infrastructure stream of the stimulus package, the government has approved 15 projects. Those dollars are building new schools, hospitals, and long-term care facilities in every corner of the province. Significant projects include:

- \$30 million for two Urgent Care Centres in Regina and Saskatoon;
- The \$4 billion Lake Diefenbaker expansion project as noted above;
- New long-term care centres in La Ronge and Grenfell; and
- Four new schools and major renovations to two other schools for approximately \$110.5 million.

Other notable major projects announced prior to stimulus package include:

- A \$326 million Prince Albert Victoria Hospital expansion; and
- A \$74.4 million Weyburn General Hospital replacement.

COVID-19 has posed many challenges, but the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to seizing the opportunity to invest in infrastructure that will create thousands of jobs for Saskatchewan workers, strengthen our communities, and ensure a prosperous future for our province. 🏗️



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COVID-19: THE NUMBERS, VACCINE UPDATE, AND WHAT'S NEXT



By Megan Jane, Manager of Marketing and Communications,
Saskatchewan Construction Association



The light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel that we have all been living in is growing brighter each day as we get closer to coming out the other side. At the time of writing, according to the Government of Saskatchewan, over 62,300 COVID-19 vaccines have been delivered in the province. While the total number of cases in Saskatchewan is sitting at almost 28,000, only 1,530

cases are considered active, with over 26,000 recoveries. Over 563,000 COVID-19 tests have been processed in Saskatchewan.

Updated case numbers for Saskatchewan can be found on the Government of Saskatchewan's website.

Vaccines will be available to everyone who lives in Canada, free of charge, using a priority-based system.

First priority will be given to groups most vulnerable for the severe outcomes of COVID-19, and those most likely to transmit the virus to this group: people aged 70-plus, frontline health care workers, and adults in Indigenous communities. Here in Saskatchewan, we are currently in Phase 1 (December 2020 – March

2021) and anticipate more than 202,000 doses from both vaccines in the first quarter of 2021.

COVID-19 Vaccine Questions and Answers for Saskatchewan can be found on the Government of Saskatchewan's website.

The second stage includes adults from Indigenous communities who live in urban settings, residents in shared living communities, adults 60 and over, marginalized adults, first responders, frontline essential workers, and essential primary caregivers. Depending on the availability and distribution of vaccines, Saskatchewan is anticipated to move into Phase 2 in April – June 2021.

The final stage moves onto to people

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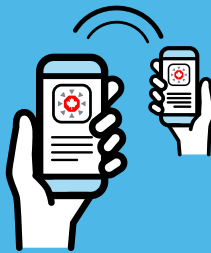
COVID Alert: Canada's COVID-19 exposure notification app

Let's protect each other

The new COVID Alert app is designed to let Canadians know whether they may have been exposed to COVID-19. Download it today to protect yourself and others.

How the app works

1. The app uses Bluetooth signals to exchange random codes with nearby phones with the app installed.
2. If someone you've come in close contact with later tests positive for COVID-19, they will receive a one-time key from their local health authority that they can enter into the app.
3. You and others who have spent time (more than 15 minutes, less than 2 metres apart, over the past 14 days) near this person will then be notified through the app that you may have been exposed.



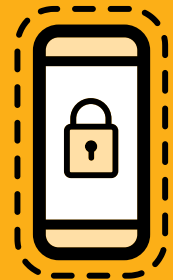
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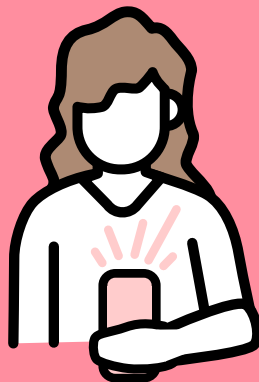
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What to do if you test positive

You will get a one-time key to enter into the app.

The app then notifies other app users that they may have been exposed. Notifications are based on having spent more than 15 minutes less than 2 metres from another user in the past 14 days. **Your identity is not revealed.**



What to do if you may have been exposed

If the app notifies you about potential exposure, you should follow the guidance from your local public health authority.



Why you should download the app

The app is another tool Canadians can use to help limit the spread of infection and prevent future outbreaks as we ease restrictions and restart the economy. The more Canadians who install the COVID Alert app on their phones, the better we can limit the spread of COVID-19.

Download the app and help others use it too. Find out more at canada.ca/coronavirus.

aged 16 to 59 with underlying medical conditions, adults 50 to 59 without underlying medical conditions, non-frontline health care workers and non-frontline essential workers. Only after these groups have sufficient access will those who are younger, healthier, or non-essential workers be given access to the vaccine – consider holding off on booking any hot holidays six months from now!

Here in Canada, there have been zero cases of unexpected vaccine safety issues to date.

There has been lots of talk of the variant strains of the virus making its way around the world. In a statement issued from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, “Although it is normal for variants to emerge as viruses continuously evolve, some

variants are considered ‘variants of concern’ because they spread more easily, some may cause more severe illness, or current vaccines may be less effective against them. This is why we need to maintain the strictest vigilance in our public health measures and individual practices. This will help to prevent these variants from reaccelerating the epidemic and making it much more difficult to control.” It’s for these reasons and more that Saskatchewan opted to extend its restrictions into March, in the hopes that communities don’t become too relaxed too quickly.

In an increasingly digital world where organizations are being forced to innovate, one useful piece of technology is the COVID Alert app. Canada’s free COVID-19 exposure notification app alerts users to possible

exposure before any symptoms appear. The app uses Bluetooth to exchange random codes between users’ phones. If a user informed the app that they have tested positive for the virus, then the app notifies all other app-users that were nearby within 14 days of the positive test.

In a statement released by the Government of Canada, Public Health acknowledges that they continue to monitor where the disease is most active, where it is spreading, and how it is impacting the health of Canadians and public health, laboratory, and healthcare capacity. Capacity seems to have been the consistent concern throughout this pandemic. One wonders what changes will be made to our healthcare system to better handle any similar outbreaks in the future. 🏠

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By Ryan Frederickson, Project Research & Development,
Saskatoon Construction Association



What is BuildWorks?

The construction industry relies on BuildWorks services as a central hub for access to construction opportunities in Saskatchewan. Often referred to as “the plan room” as a nod to the days we used to house physical copies of drawings at the construction associations, BuildWorks is vital to any construction firm’s business practice by contributing to the efficiency of the tendering process and serving as a central hub for infrastructure opportunities for companies of any

size. The BuildWorks website is developed and maintained by your local construction association.

How does it work?

Construction association staff work diligently to collect all active construction related tenders across Saskatchewan, making tendering information easily accessible for general contractors, trades, suppliers, architects, and engineers. The platform offers customizable settings to make sure you are notified of any opportunity that matches your company’s

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Construction association staff work diligently to collect all active construction related tenders across Saskatchewan, making tendering information easily accessible for general contractors, trades, suppliers, architects, and engineers.

capabilities. BuildWorks saves construction and consultant companies valuable resources by providing tender information in one place, rather than scouring various procurement websites and unrelated tender opportunities.

BuildWorks Pre-Bid Services

In addition to active tendering services, BuildWorks offers pre-tender information on projects through the "PreBid" service. The PreBid service provides the construction industry with the latest information on upcoming construction opportunities in Saskatchewan. Construction association staff also administer the PreBid service on BuildWorks. Project research is conducted continuously to find new opportunities that have not yet come to market. PreBid research continues to collect information on projects that are already being tracked to keep you up to date on all pre-tender activities. The priority information that is communicated to the construction industry focuses on

project details, scope, value, and timelines. This allows companies to actively plan for upcoming tendering activities and opportunities. The PreBid service also offers an avenue for owners, engineers, and architects to directly update the industry on upcoming tendering activities.

As a project progresses through preliminary stages, information is gathered by association staff liaising with project owners, contacts, and consultants. The construction association has regular meetings with architecture firms to discuss upcoming projects and tendering schedules.

Tangible Benefits of BuildWorks

The construction associations in Saskatchewan have collaborated with owners and consultants to provide this information knowing that it creates an effective tender process with value-add to construction projects. The mutual benefit for owners and industry has made this a common practice over the past several years and continues to



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strengthen more collaborations.

Owners and consultants benefit from this communication with the construction association through the promotion of their projects and the ability to position the project to obtain the best value through the tendering process. The goal is to inform the industry and allow companies to prepare resources for both the tendering and construction phase of these projects.

Projects Entering BuildWorks

There have been an additional 150+ projects tracked through PreBid as a result of the Government of Saskatchewan's economic stimulus plan, and PreBid is actively monitoring an additional 200+ upcoming public and private construction opportunities in Saskatchewan. The services offered by BuildWorks are your company's resource for accessing exclusive pre-construction project information, as well as public and private construction specific tenders in Saskatchewan. Below is just one example of many projects.

Active Project: Saskatoon Correction Centre – Urban Camp Facility

In May 2020, the Government of Saskatchewan announced \$4.6M in funding for replacement of the Urban Camp and related facilities at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre. The funding is part of the two-year stimulus funding program that has been developed to assist the Saskatchewan economy after impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

PreBid has been tracking the pre-construction activities of the Saskatoon Correctional Centre Urban Camp since its

announcement in May 2020. This project was announced by the Government of Saskatchewan as a component of the two-year capital plan to build a strong Saskatchewan and stimulate Saskatchewan's economic recovery.

Project: Saskatoon Correctional Centre – Urban Camp Facility

Owner: Government of Saskatchewan; Ministry of Corrections, Policing & Public Safety

Issuing Authority: Ministry of SaskBuilds & Procurement

Funding: Public; Economic Recovery Stimulus Funding

Tender: Q1 2021

Construction Period: April 2021 – March 2022

Construction Value: \$3.4M

Architect: Strategic Prairie Region Alliance (a Joint Venture of aodbt architecture + interior design, P3 Architecture and START Architecture.)

Project Delivery method: Construction Management

Construction Details: The new Urban Camp Facility located at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre will provide functional housing and programming needs for 50 inmates plus expansion ability for 25 additional inmates, 14 staff, and visitors.

Scope: The project will attain a minimum LEED Silver status and is expected to include:

- 50 Individual bedrooms
- Kitchen/dining area

The advertisement for PM SIGNS is divided into two main sections. The top section features a large, illuminated neon sign for 'GOLD HORSE CASINO' with a horse head logo in the center. Below this is a billboard for 'HORSEPOWER! WIN A DODGE RAM' with a picture of a truck and a 'Draw February 20 - 10am' notice. The bottom section of the ad has a yellow background with the 'PM SIGNS' logo (a stylized diamond shape) and the text 'Leader in Sign Solutions Since 1966'. Below this, there are two smaller images: one of a Pizza Hut sign on a building and another of a digital sign displaying a pizza.

- Toilets/showers
- Laundry area
- Storage areas
- Offices
- Mechanical areas/electrical room
- Control room/reception
- Meeting rooms
- Cultural program/classroom space

As the project progresses through the preliminary stages of pre-construction, more information is gathered.

In addition to the Urban Camp project, PreBid is actively tracking the pre-tender activities of the Saskatoon Correctional Centre Remand Expansion that will be completing a number of procurement activities in the near future. The \$120M project is expected to move into the construction phase in summer 2021.

Although the Urban Camp was previously planned as a design-bid-build project that would utilize the Saskatchewan Bid Depository, after industry consultation the Government of Saskatchewan has determined that the construction of the Urban Camp will be included in the Construction

Management contract that is being procured for the Remand Facility at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre. Due to the close proximity of the Urban Camp to the site of the Remand Centre, this approach will help ensure optimum co-ordination of the construction on these two facilities,

Prequalification for Construction Managers is currently underway, with a Request for Supplier Qualifications posted on SaskTenders.ca.

Make the most of BuildWorks today!

With the Government of Saskatchewan committing to an abundance of economic stimulus and the reality of the construction industry operating in an uncertain environment, BuildWorks offers the ability to continue exceptional business practices for any construction firm involved in the project process.

Questions?

Reach out to Ryan at ryan@saskatoonconstruction.ca or call (306) 653-1771. 📞



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SUPPLIERLINK SASKATCHEWAN: INDUSTRY COLLABORATION TO LEAD TO SASKATCHEWAN'S FIRST-EVER AUTOMATED VENDOR ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM



SupplierLink Saskatchewan will be industry's first automated vendor engagement tool to showcase vendor experience, capabilities, and qualifications, while connecting them to those who hire across industry by adding them to their bid lists. Developed by industry, for industry, with a focus on the Saskatchewan supplier base, SupplierLink Saskatchewan will broaden engagement with government and contractors of all sizes.

Background: The Problem

Increasing demand for contractor qualification documentation has presented a significant burden for

industry for a long time. Third party so-called "safety verifiers" (TPSVs) that exist today are simply consulting firms that target hiring companies with the promise of standardizing contractor management, with the intent of decreasing incidents and increasing compliance. However, these TPSVs are a significant burden for contractors due to their onerous processes, time consumption to maintain, and high costs both in terms of fees and administrative resources. In short, TPSVs are at best a hurdle for larger contractors and at worst a barrier to entry for smaller contractors who do not have the time or resources to dedicate to these

systems. The process of winning work risks becoming a confusing and expensive mess – one that the oil & gas industry now finds themselves in.

The Solution

The Saskatchewan Construction Association (SKCA) board of directors decided that the time had come for the SKCA to facilitate a simpler way of assisting general contractors and infrastructure owners discovering and pre-qualifying excellent suppliers, subtrades, and contractors. President Mark Cooper held consultations across industry, as well as with government agencies including SaskBuilds, SaskTel, SaskPower, and SaskEnergy, and gained meaningful direction: if one system could be created, it would eliminate duplication of paperwork and provide greater dependability of the information provided.

Cooper's next challenge was to make the system a reality. "The system we had conceptualized just didn't exist, so we needed to seek out a partner," he says.

EHS Analytics, a technology company working closely with developing a new platform for SKCA's sister organization, already had the infrastructure in place to custom design such a system in the amount of time needed.



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The Product

From the beginning of the development process, EHS and SKCA engaged with a range of stakeholders to ensure the system was useful, met important criteria for qualifying companies, and made it easier for companies to find work – something no existing process or system can do – and SupplierLink Saskatchewan was born.

Through the development process, it was determined that, where possible, SupplierLink needed to have direct-from-source data. As an example, one of the important evaluation components for a company is safety, and within safety it's clear that a Certificate of Recognition (COR) is a strong indicator of a safe company. The team worked with the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) and the Heavy Construction Safety Association of Saskatchewan (HCSAS) to bring COR certification data directly into SupplierLink.

Having COR certification data in SupplierLink means contractors don't need to update their COR certification status and buyers don't need to verify the certification status as accurate. As well, other attributes like WCB clearance status are brought in automatically, making independent verification of data unnecessary. Enter it once, and the system auto-renews everything by itself. No more administrative hours spent entering in information repeatedly.

When asked about featuring COR certification status in SupplierLink, SCSA President Collin Pullar said, "We know that attaining COR makes workplaces safer. Featuring COR in SupplierLink will drive more

firms to attain the certification which will, in-turn, improve safety in Saskatchewan." Al Goldstone, Executive Director of the HCSAS agreed, stating that "any tools that the associations can use like SupplierLink to improve the overall safety in our industries or make the required processes in place more efficient, we are all for it."

Beyond gathering qualifications and safety records, the most important element stakeholders told us was needed was the ability to find and connect qualified contractors and trades to general contractors, buyers, and agencies such as SaskBuilds and SaskEnergy.

SupplierLink will provide an opportunity for construction service providers to gain exposure to a large array of hiring firms and infrastructure owners and be marked as "favorites" to end up on future bidding lists.

Once connected, buyers will be permitted to see detailed information

about a company's qualifications. They will be able to find contractors by searching for things such as Saskatchewan presence, work scopes, skill sets, geographical areas of operation, and many other attributes. The system will even provide workforce demographics, safety certification, proof of insurance, bonding, and a way to demonstrate/catalogue project experience.

It has been exciting to see the results of industry collaboration become a reality. All stakeholders have done an excellent job coming together and solving a problem in a way that satisfies everyone's needs. The system is easy to navigate and will help owners find qualified contractors and make managing documentation simple, while fulfilling mandates of developing the Saskatchewan contractor base.

Stay tuned for more news on the launch of SupplierLink Saskatchewan in the coming months! 📺

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It's March, the sun is out longer, and the air is feeling a bit softer. We're about to enter Saskatchewan's other season: construction.

With the federal and provincial governments' increased investment in infrastructure projects, there's lots of new opportunities for the construction trades in Saskatchewan.

If you're keen on bidding on one of the upcoming public tenders – or any large project – you'll likely need a bonding partner. Now's the time to get your bonding facility in place, and we're happy to help! SGI CANADA has been writing surety bonds for 70+ years, and Saskatchewan is the place we know best.

If you're new to surety bonds, here's a quick rundown.

What is surety bonding?

A surety bond is like an extension of credit to a contractor. It involves three parties:

1. The principal (you) – the one who does the work.
2. The surety (us) – the one who guarantees the principal will do what is promised.
3. The obligee – the one who gets that guarantee.

Surety bonds show you're both technically and financially capable of completing your contracts. They can pre-qualify you for tenders.

How do I qualify?

We need to know you have:

1. The knowledge and experience to do the job.
2. The financial capacity to complete both your current work and the project you're applying for.
3. A proven track record of managing and completing similar projects, on time and on budget.

And we need to know the contract conditions:

1. What type of work it is.
2. Where the project is being built.
3. What coverage you require.
4. When the project will be completed.

SGI CANADA is committed to supporting the Saskatchewan construction industry, not only through bonding but with products such as Builders Risk and Trades Pak for contractors.

Contact your SGI CANADA broker to find out more – with us, you're on solid ground. 



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Whether you're just starting out, expanding your business, or preparing to bid on a big project, we've got a bonding option for you. SGI CANADA has been writing surety bonds for over 70 years. Let us help you achieve even greater success.

Ask your SGI CANADA insurance broker if bonds are right for you.

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SASKATCHEWAN APPRENTICESHIP DEVELOPING NEW IT SYSTEM

By Jeff Ritter, CEO, Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission



The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC) is getting ready to launch MyATC, a new, client-facing IT system that will provide Saskatchewan apprentices and employers with faster, more efficient service. Tentatively set for summer 2021, it will transform the way we serve our clients and we're excited to launch it.

Apprentices will be able to self-register for training and employers will be able to monitor and track their apprentices' training status. Rather than requesting information from SATCC staff members, clients will be able to access their information online when it's convenient for them.

According to the SATCC's 2019 Employer and Apprentice Satisfaction Survey data, the majority of employer respondents would like to complete all services with the SATCC online and at least half of apprentice respondents would like to complete all services online.

Right now, the apprenticeship system in Saskatchewan is primarily a paper-based system. MyATC will modernize

the SATCC's processes, allowing customers to register apprenticeship contracts, pay fees and tuition for technical training, update personal or business information, and submit trade time hours online.

With the introduction of this new system, the SATCC will strive to maintain the highest levels of service.

The new IT system will provide faster, on-demand service, but the warm, personalized service that our staff members provide won't go away once the system is introduced. Our clients will still be able to call us, or walk into one of our offices, and we are still going to have staff members visiting employers.

Closer to launch, the SATCC will share more details with apprentices and employers regarding how to get set up in the new system.

If you have questions about MyATC, please contact Project Director Curtis Leung at 306-531-4903 or curtis.leung@gov.sk.ca.

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