

SPRING 2023

Sheet Metal Journal

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British Columbia



VETS Group:

100 years of risk-takers, go-getters, and honour

In this Issue:

Addiction Stigma

Valley Training Centre Open

Fostering Potential



Official Journal of
Record for SMACNA-BC



PROMOTING GROWTH AND STABILITY IN OUR INDUSTRY

Formed in 1969, the British Columbia Sheet Metal Association (SMACNA-BC) was the first international chapter of the Sheet Metal & Air-conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA). Founded in 1934, SMACNA traces its history to the National Association of Sheet Metal Contractors established in 1910, and has 2,300 members worldwide.

SMACNA-BC is a member-driven association representing unionized sheet metal contractors in the Mainland of BC, and suppliers to our industry. It promotes the growth and stability of the members and industry.

OUR MANDATE

- To improve the financial stability and business conditions of the sheet metal industry, and to develop and promote methods to improve managerial proficiency
- To improve quality, efficiency and productivity of this industry, and to implement high standards of work
- To establish and maintain high ethical standards of conduct between members of the Association, and between members and owners, architects, engineers, other contractors, and the public
- To promote harmony in labour relations
- To study and help in the development and enforcement of governmental codes and regulations, and such legislation as may be necessary for the best interest of the public and the sheet metal industry
- To exchange technical, professional, and educational information with other contractor associations in the sheet metal industry and its allied trades in Canada and other countries
- To affiliate as a Chapter with the Sheet Metal & Air-conditioning Contractors National Association, Inc.

BC Sheet Metal Association (SMACNA-BC) • Executive Director: Jeremy Hallman

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CHANGE IS POSITIVE... DIFFICULT, BUT POSITIVE

There's nothing like adaptation to call up your courage reserves. Whether you're an outspoken, edge-living extrovert; a quiet, self-keeping introvert; or somewhere in between, two things are clear and absolute: 1. change is unavoidable 2. change requires great courage. We may have different levels of comfort with change, but it is a challenge nonetheless because in order to change, we must learn something new, and to learn something new we have to admit we don't already know that thing. Vulnerability is hard.

This issue looks at change and how your fellow SMACNA members have mastered it. In his SMACNA-BC Update on page 5, Jeremy Hallman demonstrates just how well he pivoted with more responsibility over the day-to-day in the office.

For 102 years, VETS Group, previously Vets Sheet Metal, has persevered, changing its focus, approach, and company culture as required over ten decades. From a WWI veteran's dream to get out of a going nowhere job to today's thriving family legacy, the company has made bold decisions and kept an eye on their core values. Learn more on page 10.

Anyone who has struggled with or been affected by addiction will tell you that overcoming the stigma around what it means to be substance dependent is the hardest part of seeking and completing recovery. Physical addiction is one matter, but facing the shame and judgement that comes with it can make reaching out and sticking with it an arduous task. Many fail.

But SMACNA-BC and Local 280 are hell-bent on helping members tackle their demons through a partnership with Construction Industry Rehabilitation Program (CIRP), which provides safe, effective, confidential help to construction industry members struggling with addiction. While CIRP delivers the help, SMACNA-BC and Local 280 are doing all they can to break down the stigma and support one another through one of the most difficult types of change there is. Find out how on page 15.

After three years, a pandemic, relentless permitting delays, and a whole bunch of ambitious work, the Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre has opened "Valley", its second training centre location. This means over 300 intakes per year, no more afternoon classes at Main (the existing facility), and the return of specialty training. On the scene to make it all come together are new staff members and new classes that started in April and May. But there is still work to be done. Find out how you can support this industry endeavour on page 17.

In our Contractors' Advice column, executive coach Joel Garfinkle talks about potential—how to identify it, what it means to make the most of it, the difference between "potential" and "proven success" (spoiler alert=there isn't one), and how to develop it in your workforce. He gives five



By / Jessica Kirby, Editor, *Sheet Metal Journal*

expert tips on getting the most out of people and helping them change their habits to live their best lives. See more on page 20.

Change might be difficult, and it may require admitting we don't know everything, but it is almost always for the better. We can't help but grow, evolve, and change as human beings, so it only makes sense that our world and circumstances must also change. The question is, how do we react?

Fighting change is like struggling against the undertow in a deep body of water—certain death or at least some very unnecessary and unpleasant aftermath awaits. We don't want to be inactive and let change wash over us, either. Here are some tips for managing change:

1. Listen, reflect, and communicate: Get all the facts, examine them objectively, and share them with your team. Seek to understand rather than to decide too quickly.
2. Notice and acknowledge your feelings: Does the change excite you? Make you angry or sad? Are you pushing back or jumping too quickly on the actual change or is it just change in general that triggers you? Sit with those feelings and explore what they are teaching you about yourself.
3. Invite feedback: If your change affects others, bring them all together and tackle the change as a unit. If the change is yours alone, share ideas with someone you trust. Diverse perspectives are the antidote for indecision.
4. Make a plan and stay the course: Once you have a plan, set it in motion and commit to progress. Of course, be flexible in execution where necessary, but don't waiver from the end goal.
5. Celebrate the change: Even if it wasn't expected or it takes time to settle into the new way of doing things, celebrate your tenacity and growth for seeing it through. This is the stuff strength and resilience are made of.

As always, please reach out if you have any questions, comments, ideas, or feedback about the issue or anything in it. It's always a pleasure to hear from you.

jessica.kirby@pointonemedia.com. ■

MOVING INTO SUMMER AT SMACNA-BC

Spring has been a very busy around the SMACNA-BC office. As many of you probably know, our Executive Assistant, Michelle Rodford, decided to move on from SMACNA-BC. She obviously played a key role in the office day-to-day and planning of social events. We appreciate your patience during this transition and will do our best to serve the members.

On March 9 we hosted a business management program with special guest speaker Stephane McShane, titled “Driving predictable cost projections”. Turnout for the program at the Surrey Civic Hotel was great with a total of 48 guests attending. Overall feedback after the program was positive and requests have been received for some of the other course options from Maxim Consulting.



Our next dinner meeting on April 20 featured contract lawyer Nick Paczkowski from the Construction Law Group. Nick discussed contract pitfalls and described some of the horror stories from his extensive time in the business.

If you have any ideas for future dinner meetings, please contact me at the SMACNA-BC office.

SMACNA-BC Convention in Victoria

The 54th annual SMACNA-BC AGM and convention on May 4 to 7 in Victoria was a great success. We would like to apologize in advance to anyone who tried to sign up and was unable to attend. The hotel was booked in 2019 for May 2020 but was cancelled due to the pandemic. As we grow, we are starting to exceed the capacities of some of the previous locations. Our goal is to make all events available to all who want to attend.

SMACNA INC Annual Convention

Mark your calendars to join us at the JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge Resort & Spa in Phoenix, Arizona, for the 2023 SMACNA Annual Convention. Registration for the October 15–18 event opened April 20 at noon (Eastern).



Jeremy Hallman,
Executive Director, SMACNA-BC

By attending this one-of-a-kind event, you will have access to several unique opportunities to engage with fellow SMACNA members and be educated on emerging trends. Some of the programming options include:

- Dozens of professional and industry-specific educational sessions
- The SMACNA Product Show and Breakfast, which features new products and innovations from several of SMACNA’s industry partners
- Unique opportunities to engage with members and other SMACNA stakeholders

Incredible receptions, dining, entertainment, and fun highlights include the College of Fellows Golf Tournament and the NEW SMACNA Clay Shooting Event.



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Visit smacna.org for more details and information. We encourage members to take advantage of the early registration discount.

Welcome New SMACNA-BC Member – Armacell

As the inventors of flexible foam for equipment insulation and a leading provider of engineered foams, Armacell develops innovative and safe thermal, acoustic, and mechanical solutions that create sustainable value for customers. Armacell's products significantly contribute to global energy efficiency making a difference around the world every day. With more than 3,200 employees and 25 production plants in 17 countries, the company operates two main businesses, Advanced Insulation and Engineered Foams. Armacell focuses on insulation materials for technical equipment, high-performance foams for high-tech and lightweight applications, and next generation aerogel blanket technology. For more information, please visit armacell.com. Armacell in North America has five plants in the United States and one in Canada, with its regional headquarters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Apprentice Grants

Canada's Building Trades Union has announced that the next round of apprentice grants is available to Contractors as of April 1, 2023.

Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU) created the In the Trades apprenticeship program to support unionized contractors

in Canada by providing financial incentives to hire and effectively onboard and retain first-year apprentices.

Contractors can receive \$5,000 for new first-year apprentices and \$10,000 for onboarding equity deserving apprentices. If you have any questions regarding the program, please reach out to CBTU using the contact info below.

Joe Bagri
Project Manager – Western Region, In the Trades
613-889-0047
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Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU)
In The Trades • Canada's Building Trades Unions

Upcoming Events

NOTE – June SMACNA-BC Dinner meeting cancelled due to scheduling conflict

Wednesday, June 14 through Friday June 16, 2023

MCABC Business Conference
Four Seasons Resort, Whistler, BC
mcabc.org/events/mcabcb-business-conference-2023

Friday, September 15, 2023

SMACNA-BC 38th Annual Golf Classic
Northview Golf Course, Surrey BC

2023-24 SMACNA-BC Elections

President: Mark Kuelle

President Elect: Mark McLaren

Past-president/Secretary-Treasurer: Phil McDonald

Director SMACNA-BC & SMACNA Inc.: Bernie Antchak

Incumbent Directors:

Al Benning

Aaron Smith

Angelo Paris *re-elected

Dan Tallifer *re-elected

New Director: Paul Charbenneau

Executive Director: Jeremy Hallman

New Sheet Metal Industry Training Board Member:

Paul Charbenneau

Honorary Life Member: Bruce Sychuk

2024 Nomination Committee:

Mark McLaren

Mark Kuelle

Phil McDonald

Our new Training Facility is now open for business.

THE FIRST PHASE OF CONSTRUCTION HAS BEEN COMPLETED

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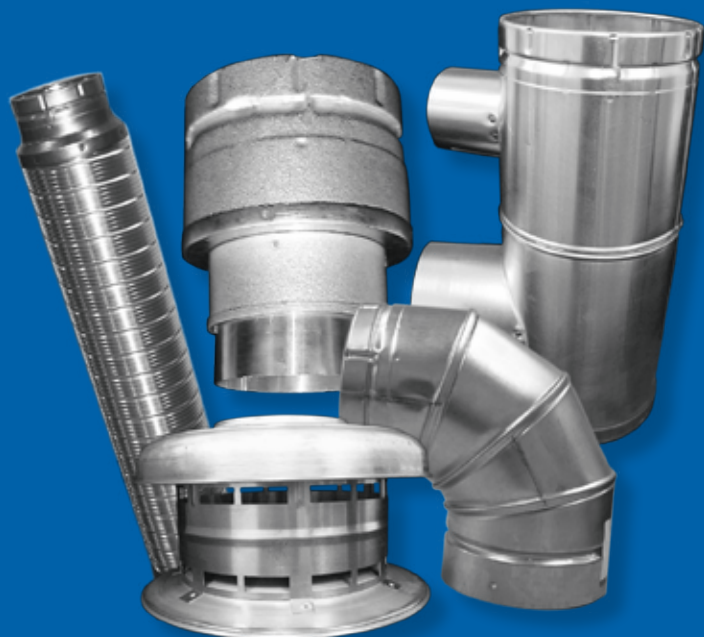


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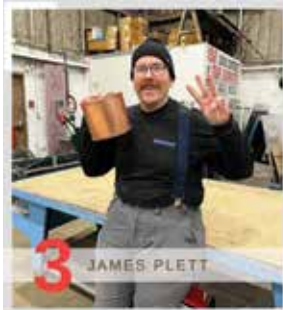
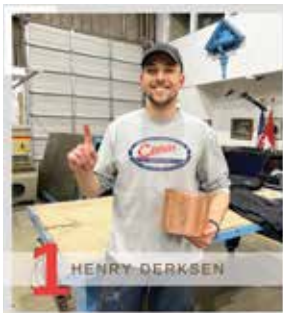


SMWTC LEVEL FOUR CONTEST – 2023

Congratulations to all contestants in the 2023 Annual Apprentice Contest for fourth year SMWTC apprentices.



- 1st place - Henry Derksen (Century Plbg. and Htg. Ltd.)
- 2nd place - Troy Martell (Termel Industries)
- 3rd place - James Plett (City Sheet Metal)
- 4th place - Alexander Flaman (Piedmont Sheet Metal)



Photos courtesy of Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre

We would like to express our gratitude to the sponsors who have generously provided these fantastic prizes for our participants:

- SMART Local Union 280
- Western Gasco
- Miller Welding
- Lincoln Electric
- Sheet Metal Industry Training Board

Thank you to the instructors who guided and judged the day's proceedings. ■

CONGRATULATIONS TO NICOLE HOUR

Sending our congratulations to Nicole Hour (Boston Sheet Metal Ltd.) for winning the silver medal at the Skills Canada BC Provincial competition held at TradeX on April 19. ■



Photo courtesy of Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre

BC BREAKS RECORDS WITH FOREIGN WORKER HIRES

By Zak Vescera

BC businesses are hiring a record number of temporary foreign workers as they struggle to fill jobs.

The latest federal data show there were more than 32,200 people in BC under the federal government's Temporary Foreign Worker Program at the end of 2022, more than Ontario, which has more than twice BC's population.

It's a sign that companies—especially restaurants, farms, construction firms, and retailers—are increasingly reliant on importing workers. They point to a tight labour market, with BC's unemployment rate at 4.2 percent in December.

"It worries us, but in a good way," Labour Minister Harry Bains told *The Tyee*. "It means our economy is booming. It's running on all cylinders, and we have more jobs than people available."

The federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program allows Canadian businesses to hire foreigners for up to two years if they can demonstrate they were unable to hire a Canadian resident for the position.

Those employers are also required to register with the provincial Employment Standards Branch. In 2021, the branch received 2,955 applications from employers. In 2022, it received more than 12,300, over 10,000 of them in the last four months of the year.

The surge is partially attributable to new federal regulations in September that urged businesses to register with provincial labour departments and follow their rules.

But industry representatives say there is growing demand for foreign labour, particularly in sectors like hospitality, construction, and agriculture where companies are struggling to hire and retain staff.

Some industry associations say foreign workers have become vital to their businesses as they compete for employees in a tight labour market. Others, though, say they would much rather hire workers with a clear path to residency, unlike temporary workers who generally only stay in the country for one or two years. Critics of the program say workers are poorly paid and vulnerable to exploitation.

“The Temporary Foreign Worker Program often places workers in vulnerable positions, at the mercy of their employer,” BC Federation of Labour president Sussanne Skidmore said. “And the same is true of migrant and undocumented workers of all kinds, who play a critical role in key areas of our economy.”

Employment and Social Development Canada says there is growing demand for those workers because of the nation’s low unemployment rate. The program received more than 5,000 applications per month in October 2021, the department said. By November 2022, that was up to more than 8,000 applications a month.

Read more at grandforksgazette.ca/news/temporary-foreign-workers-hit-record-levels-in-b-c

ONE WORKPLACE INJURY OR DEATH IS ONE TOO MANY

Executive Director of Canada’s Building Trades Unions, Sean Strickland, released the following statement on the 2023 Day of Mourning:

“Canada’s Building Trades Unions stand in solidarity with workers across the country to recognize the National Day of Mourning—a day to remember workers who have died or been injured in workplace accidents or due to occupational disease. Advocating for higher health and safety standards for our members and for all construction workers has always and will always be a priority for the Building Trades including focusing on prevention so that every worker goes home to their family at the end of the day.

According to the latest available statistics, 1,081 workers were killed in workplace accidents in 2021. This represents a 16 per cent increase from the 2020 total of 924 deaths. It was also well over the yearly average of 945 since 2009 and represents almost five workplace deaths every working day. Also up were workplace injuries at 277,225 in 2021 from 253,397 the previous year, representing a nine per cent increase. The situation gets more disturbing when one considers that these numbers are probably understated.

CBTU is proud of the joint efforts between health and safety committees that contribute to findings like a 2021 study by the Institute for Work and Health found that lost-time injury claims to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) are 31 per cent lower on unionized building trade construction jobs than they are in a non-union environment.

Unfortunately, the entire industry despite our advances and use of best practices, when taken as a whole, union and non-union construction is the fourth highest occupation group for workplace fatalities at 20.2 deaths per 100,000 workers. Falls are the common cause of death. Other risks include falling objects, electrocution, and spills.

One injured worker is one too many.

continued on page 23

SMART Local 280 / SMACNA-BC Partnership



Left: Jud Martell, Local Union No. 280 President.
Right: Mark Kuelle, Austin Metal Fabricators LP, SMACNA-BC President.



Labour & Management
“Embracing the Challenge”
 - B. Flaherty, Cornell University, Syracuse, N.Y.

Out of the DUST



VETS Group leverages more than 100 years of proactive, opportunity-seeking expertise to tackle a niche market and foster a family of excellence.

By / Jessica Kirby | Photos / VETS Group

In 1921, Fanny Rayner was eavesdropping on a party line. She overheard her husband Fred’s employers talking about laying him off, and she jumped right in. “Don’t worry about it,” she interrupted. “Send him home and tell him he quits!”

This was the beginning of VETS Sheet Metal, a 102-year-old, family-run company of risk-takers, go-getters, and challenge-seekers that has evolved with every decade and continues to break new ground with each generation.

Fred and Fanny met during WWI. Fred was injured while serving and Fanny was his nurse. They returned to Edmonton



VETS Sheet Metal founder Fred Rayner is first on the left, Alan Rayner (second generation) second from the right



VETS Sheet Metal was founded by World War I veteran Fred Rayner. At the time, many businesses had ‘Vets’ in their name.



VETS core values spell HONOUR and are more than a sign on the wall. HONOUR Awards are peer-nominated and handed out at semi-annual all-staff townhall meetings to acknowledge those who work and live the core values.



VETS Sheet Metal's 3rd shop location in 1962 just off popular Whyte Avenue in Edmonton, AB.

after The War, and after Fanny relieved Fred from his going-nowhere job, he founded VETS Sheet Metal, named to honour the war veterans he fought with and later employed.

Fred made his way to work by bike or streetcar each morning with a roll of galvanized sheet metal tucked under his arm. He eventually invented the VETS Sheet Metal Supreme gas furnace, a twist on a simple gravity furnace that achieved better efficiency. It became a common fixture in post-War Edmonton homes and partially defined Fred's mark on the company's history.

In 1944, Fred's son Al took over the company and forged new paths into the city's commercial and institutional construction markets. He grew the company to employ more than 100 people, and it became the first Lennox dealer in Alberta. He employed his son David, who eventually took the reins in 1974 and spent three decades improving efficiency and productivity with technology upgrades, a strong safety culture, and a family of long-term employees.

Today, Sean Rayner leads the innovative, energetic company that stays connected to its roots but keeps a brave eye on the future. The company was rebranded VETS Group under Sean's tenure and is nimble and responsive, fuelled by a dedicated team and zero desire to sit around waiting for the future to happen.

"Every one of the generations had its own mark and stamp on the business that shaped how it has evolved," Rayner says. "When I took over in 2005, we were a small job shop fabrication company also doing small industrial HVAC projects. We refocused on construction and industrial construction needs, particularly in the then-growing oil and gas industry."

Business grew rapidly through the boom, and so did VETS Group. "Knowing there is a cycle in the oil and gas business, we knew it wouldn't last forever," Rayner says. "Before we had to, we started specifically working on our building expertise and developed contacts in the wood business, focusing on dust collection, which is a specialized niche in the sheet metal business."

In 2016, the VETS Group acquired AirTek Pneumatics with locations in Kelowna and Surrey, British Columbia. Through that acquisition and building its expertise in that market, VETS Group managed to shift the business from 85% industrial oil and gas and 10-15% other work to the opposite when oil and gas declined in 2016. "We shifted to 85-90% dust collection and 10-15% other things," Rayner says. "So, the intentional pivot paid off."

Delving into the niche market introduced some challenging but deeply rewarding projects. A specialized press exhaust system for an OSB plant, for example, hit a roadblock when the price and availability of materials changed abruptly from the year in which the project budget was created.

The plans originally called for a free-standing stack in $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch stainless fed by stainless piping. But when Russia invaded Ukraine, the price of stainless spiked from \$2/pound to \$11/pound.



Originally designed as a stand alone stainless steel stack, this project required innovative thinking to keep it on budget in a volatile steel pricing market.



Sean Rayner, VETS Group President and CEO, 4th generation successor.

“We couldn’t deliver on our price guarantee, so we reengineered the stack,” Rayner says. “From the original self-supporting stainless stack concept, we built a structural steel supported stack using lighter steel, which we could still get. With creativity and engineering, we were able to save the customer time and fit the project into the original budget.”

In Terrace, BC, VETS Group completed a dust collection system for Skeena Bioenergy, a pellet plant. VETS worked with the plant and equipment manufacturer and supplied a cyclofilter—a unique combination of a cyclone and baghouse. “It was a show piece because the pellet mill is right downtown and emissions control is critical to keeping the neighbours happy,” Rayner says. “We were able to do that.”

“People shy away from baghouses because of the maintenance required, but this mill hasn’t changed the bags in over three years. The efficiency of our design was off the charts.”

Today, VETS Group designs, engineers, manufactures, and installs complete dust collection systems.

“I think what we are doing to create our success going forward is owning the expertise and the design of the specialization that made us successful,” Rayner says. “We are not waiting for someone else to design the project. We are the direct link to the customer. That is what sets us apart in our market.”

Of course, labour shortages, delayed materials, and inflationary cost increases are as haunting in BC and Alberta as anywhere else.

The BC labour market is challenging enough—finding people with an extremely narrow field of experience is an added conundrum. “We take pride in low labour turnover, so when we get people, they are the right people,” says David Brown, Branch Operations Manager at the VETS Group location in BC.

“I would prefer to work short staffed with the right group than be top heavy with people who don’t quite have the skill set or team buy-in.”

For that level of experience and mentality, the workforce earns premium wages and the challenge of interesting work that is never the same two days in a row.

“That is what excites the people working in the shop,” Brown says. “It is always something they have never built before.”

But that’s not even the best part. Brown says one of the company’s most important accomplishments has been discovering its core values.

“Core values are discovered, not created,” he says. “We’ve had the good fortune of finding ours with people who have been working with us for decades.”



Dave Brown, Branch Manager for VETS’ British Columbia operation, in the shop yard in Burnaby, BC.



A VETS Sheet Metal team member is dwarfed by the size of this super efficient multi-cone cyclone.

VETS Group core values are a throwback to their military history. They spell the word honour:

- Human leadership
- Ownership mentality
- Nurturing environment
- Open communication
- United team
- Renowned craftsmanship

“I can tell you, it’s what attracted me to the company,” Brown says. “I’ve been in the industry 30 plus years, and one thing missing from my previous work was passion in the trade and feeling like you are part of something. When I was recruited by VETS and sat down with Sean, Leo, and Bill, it was an instant connection, and I had immediate buy-in. We were speaking the same language.”

If only it were that simple every time. For employees who didn’t necessarily share the mindset, getting buy-in to the company values was a little bit more challenging. Brown came on during the integration of the acquisition in 2016, so he had the benefit of a clean slate and gave the crew the same opportunity to buy in and see what advantages that might bring to their daily work lives.



A cyclo-filter installation for an OSB application.



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“We knew once we got the ball rolling, it wouldn’t be as challenging,” he says. “That really solidified when we switched locations from Surrey to our new office in Burnaby.”

When the opportunity arose to move the BC location, it also brought the chance to start fresh. The management team worked hard to shed the previous vibe and brought the workforce around to the new space, so they felt included in the process.

“The whole team really got involved with the move and making it a new home,” Brown says. “The buy-in was incredible. They wanted to be part of the demo work and of the whole process. It was huge.”

The future manifested from there. In the new building, everyone from first-year apprentices to long-time members of the team felt at home. One said he wished he could have been in the building 20 years ago.

“The values show in how the team presents themselves,” Brown says. “If you want to be a pro, you must act like a pro.”

Rayner says the ownership mentality is crucial to the company’s success. In fact, he leveraged the employees’ passion and launched an employee shareholder structure in celebration of the company’s 100th year in business. At the time of writing, VETS Group had 27 employee shareholders.

“There were a lot of people working in the business who treated it like it was their own,” he says. “We have been an organization of four generations of family ownership with a single successor and shareholder per generation. But the core values and the company’s success are not only the Rayners’ legacy.”

Moving forward, VETS Group will capitalize on renewed activity in the mining industry and new or renewed service and optimization across sectors.

The niche work also spreads across other industries, including agriculture, biomass, forestry, mining, food manufacturing, and import/export terminals.

“We are continuing to develop the market in the dust industry, including meeting demand for assessment and consulting work in various industries,” Rayner says. “We are working on addressing those needs across the country, and we have customers who want to know if we can meet their needs in the United States and other Canadian locations.”

“Our focus also continues to be workforce training and development to meet expectations for growth,” Brown adds.

“We are hearing about fears of slow down and recession, but we are so specific in specialization that we are hoping to see one of our best years ever,” Rayner says.

Learn more at vetsgroup.com ■

Ending Addiction Stigma

Industry leaders commit to ending substance use stigma and providing support for those in need.

By Natalie Bruckner



On April 14, 2016, British Columbia’s provincial health officer declared a public health emergency in response to a sharp rise in overdose deaths. In the years since, the number of suspected illicit drug toxicity deaths has continued to climb from 994 to 2,272 in 2022, according to the BC Coroners Service—more than half of those who died were employed in the trades and transport industry.

The reason why trades, including sheet metal workers, are more susceptible to substance use challenges hasn’t been widely studied, but Vicky Waldron, executive director at the Construction Industry Rehabilitation Plan (CIRP), believes it is due to the nature of the work. “I think it’s a perfect storm,” she says. “The sheet metal industry is predominantly male, and men don’t like to talk about their emotions. It’s also a very high-pressure industry and physically demanding, working in tight margins with a shortage of workers. Add to that the fact that following an injury the pressure to return to work is significant. You can imagine the drive to say, ‘Well, if I take an opioid or if I take a painkiller, I can mask that pain and get back to work quickly.’ There’s a whole bunch of things that collectively add pressure in this industry.”

Steps Toward Help

The sheet metal industry is well aware of the issue of substance use, but instead of sweeping it under the rug, SMACNA-BC and Local 280, with CIRP’s help, are taking action to tackle the issue at its source to try and prevent those numbers from climbing.

“Many years ago, the building trades in the province got together to create CIRP,” says Richard Mangelsdorf, business manager at Local 280. “Originally, it was a 12-step program with beds for members with addiction challenges. Now, the building is gone, and CIRP has expanded its coverage to include mental health, addictions, and wellness. Over the past few years, Locals

started heavily promoting CIRP in an attempt to save lives. Now, more than ever, the drug supply is extremely toxic, and all it takes is one bad batch of drugs and a life or lives can be lost.”

The signatory sheet metal industry has been one of the early adopters of stigma reduction campaigns and efforts to promote mental health awareness. “Because of the work that Jud Martell, training coordinator at the Sheet Metal Industry Training Board, does, some of the highest engagement we see is from the Sheet Metal Workers Training Centre,” Waldron says.

She cautions that higher engagement numbers do not necessarily indicate higher levels of substance use in the sheet metal industry compared to other trades. Rather, they reflect the positive impact of stigma reduction campaigns and support services. “The sheet metal workers have changed the conversation around mental health and substance use,” Waldron says. “Because of that, people feel more confident and safer to actually come forward and ask for help.”

Ending The Stigma

Having made great strides in creating a safe space for workers struggling with substance use and mental health challenges, the industry’s net step—reducing the stigma surrounding these issues—is an ongoing, larger battle that leaders are committed to addressing.

Waldron cites a CIRP and WorkSafe BC study that found while 88 percent of participants were very supportive of someone who may have a mental health and substance use issue, the voice of the remaining 12 percent who are stigmatizing “is far louder.”

“I would hope that some of the stigma has changed around addiction, although I feel that it still has a long way to go,” says Jeremy Hallman, executive director, SMACNA-BC. “Hopefully contractor education programs, like the one we recently offered



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BC Sheet Metal Association (SMACNA-BC)

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with CIRP, help drive that message through education and word of mouth.”

Martell explains that the industry takes a multi-faceted approach to open up conversations around substance use and mental health. On day one of technical training, students are reminded of the strict policy against drug and alcohol use and sign an ‘Ability to work’ document. “If a student cannot sign the document, an individual intervention is provided, with the option of directing them to the CIRP, a local union health benefits plan, or union representatives,” he says.

Mangelsdorf adds that substance use and mental health are discussed at every union meeting and apprentice class. The CIRP website is also prominently featured on the footer of every Local 280 website page, and members are referred to the program when they open up about their challenges. “We also discuss it regularly with owners and managers of companies, so they are aware that the programs are available,” says Mangelsdorf.

Strengthening The Approach

When it comes to addressing concerns about a colleague or employee, many people feel unsure of what to do. Waldron’s advice is to approach the conversation with empathy and offer help instead of pointing out behaviours. “Say, ‘Hey, I’ve noticed you’re not yourself recently. What can I do? How can I help you?’”

Hallman says SMACNA-BC’s contractor education session with had one of the highest attendance rates, but there is always more work to be done. Martell and his team have dedicated themselves to education. The Training Centre introduced the new Build Strong app and have made all students aware of its functionality. In addition, the Centre is participating in the A Kit in Every Hand initiative—a pilot program with CIRP that trains workers on harm reduction, overdose prevention, and Naloxone use. “My hopes would be that society at large get to a safe drug supply,” Martell says.

Waldron says continued progress means normalizing conversations around mental health and addictions. “Put up lots of posters around mental health and substance use awareness and set up a mental health committee to talk about it,” she says. “Let people know you understand this is an industry issue and we are all here to support you.”

She emphasises CIRP’s strict confidentiality mandate and the program’s focus on the individuals who come forward for help. “We have a hard wall of silence between us and the employers and the unions,” Waldron says. “The unions are not our clients. The employers are not our clients. Our clients are our clients. We are there for them no matter where they are in their journey.”

Visit CIRP online at constructionrehabplan.com ■

OPEN FOR CLASSES

Sheet metal apprentices have a new training centre to call home and can say goodbye to the afternoon shift at the Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre.

Valley Training Centre OPEN FOR CLASSES

By / Jessica Kirby • Photos / Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre

The Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre (SMWTC) opened its new training centre in January 2023, and is off to a great start with classes running and new staffing. The "Valley" location, located at 5514 275 Street in Langley, is approximately 12,000 square feet and will accommodate 12 classes each year.

The building, purchased back in 2021 and derailed by various covid-19 and permit related challenges, is a standard industrial tilt concrete building with a flat EPDM roof. Its footprint sits on a half-acre lot, occupying approximately 40 percent of the land space. The front of the building features truck bays and office space.

"We converted the building's front end into two classrooms and an instructor's office, a student kitchen and lounge, and washrooms," says SMWTC Training Co-ordinator, Jud Martell.

"Our industry has come together to help make this project a reality and help us prepare for the issues the skilled trades face moving forward."

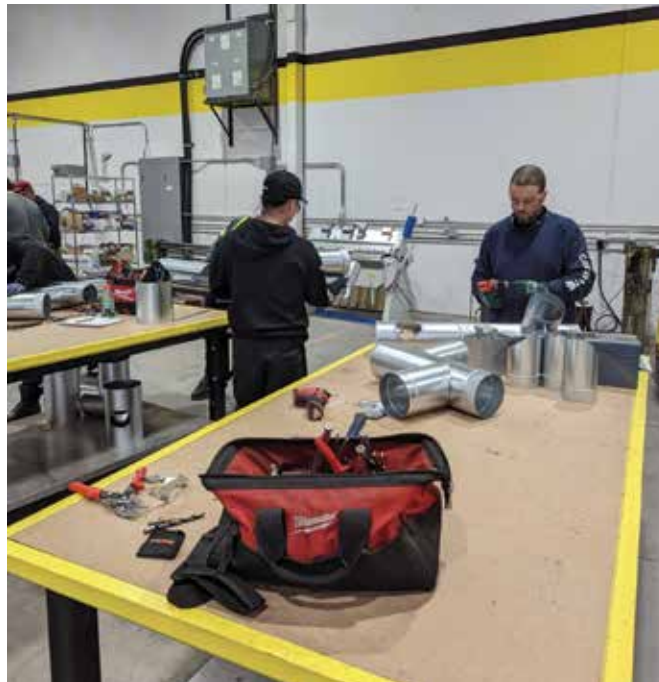
A general contractor oversaw the project with SMACNA-BC members Austin Sheet Metal, Modern Niagara, Cascade Sheet Metal, Smith Sheet Metal, Boston Sheet Metal, Apollo Sheet Metal, and Crosstown Metal Industries contracted in on various scopes.

When the Valley facility opened, two classes began, along with another two at the existing facility—called "Main"—allowing for four classes running simultaneously.

"Both facilities will continue to operate simultaneously, effectively doubling the training program's capacity," Martell says. "Combined, the two facilities will see 380 students per year."

“We are already out and ahead, delivering the highest standard of training in North America and doing more with less than most sheet metal training programs.”

—Jud Martell, training co-ordinator, SMWTC



January’s classes included levels 1, 2, and 3 in the sheet metal stream and one architectural sheet metal class. In March, three more started, including levels 1, 2, and 4 in the sheet metal stream, with the first architectural sheet metal class graduating at the Valley. Four more sheet metal classes started in April and May.

“This is important for us because there are 64 seats to fill each intake,” Martell says. “We anticipated the demand and labour shortage, and the increased capacity and extra seats were necessary for several factors.”

First of all, covid-19 created a backlog of student applicants. There is also increased demand for technical training as the industry seeks to grow in response to labour shortages and a retiring workforce.

“SkilledTradesBC has introduced skilled trades certification and sheet metal worker is one of the first ten compulsory trade,” Martell says. “This will drive interest in technical training.”

Besides expanding capacity, the new facility also removes the afternoon shift, which refers to an afternoon/evening class that has run at Main for the past three years. It was implemented because the building’s capacity was two simultaneous classes, but demand called for three.

“In the absence of the afternoon shift we have been able to bring specialty classes back to Main starting in May,” Martell says.

With the new building came the requirement for new equipment and staff. The Union Training and Innovation Program (UTIP) grant with which SMWTC was able to outfit the Main campus with state-of-the-art augmented reality welders and other training technology is not available to the Valley facility.

“UTIP aims to close important gaps for businesses or training facilities just getting started or looking to upgrade their technology to contemporary practices,” Martell says. “We are already out and ahead, delivering the highest standard of training in North America and doing more with less than most sheet metal training programs.”



Nearing the end of phase 1, Valley is open as a shell facility but still needs important equipment before it can run 100% independently from Main. In the meantime, students will move between the facilities depending on the module of training.

“Valley still needs a half to a quarter million in work,” Martell says. “It needs these important finishing components before it will be ready to handle full sheet metal classes at all levels. Right now, it is kitted for sheet metal level 1 and 2 and all levels of architectural.”

Needless to say, the training centre is still seeking funding. Once the dust settles on the facility’s inaugural classes, the team will work on requirements for phases 2 and 3.

In phase 2, the plan will be to get the shop side up and running to level 3 and 4 capacities. That will require more industrial equipment and some stainless steel work. Phase 3 involves a fully operational welding area.

“We are waiting to see how it all falls into place,” Martell says, estimating 6 to 18 months before the building is complete. “Like the building’s timeline, the timeline for the next phases is flexible.”

The training centre hired additional instructors and now has five full-time instructors and three part-timers to handle running four simultaneous classes.

“What has become apparent is that everyone here as a team is really stepping up and really taking on those individual leadership roles in their departments,” Martell says. “The board and the new instructional team have met the project’s challenges with incredible grace. We now have \$10 million in assets with no support from anyone but the organized industry.”

The team at the Sheet Metal Industry Training Board is working diligently on class assignments for upcoming classes and intakes beyond May.

“Our goal is to finalize class assignments in a timely manner so as not to delay apprenticeship progression, while trying to accommodate apprentice and contractor requests,” Martell says. “We appreciate our contractors’ efforts to ensure apprentices are released to attend technical training.”

Learn more at smwtcs.ca

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THE MYTH OF POTENTIAL: 5 WAYS TO DEVELOP TALENT

In high school, I wasn't an amazing athlete, but one of my closest friends sure was. Most people didn't know it, though. He was quiet, even shy, and spent most of his time either practising or studying. Nothing he did off the court—not the way he acted, how he dressed, or who he talked to—shouted “jock!” But he handled a basketball as if he'd been born with one in each hand. According to our school's coach, one of the best in the region, my friend had “real potential.” He even talked about him going pro.

But what is potential? When most people say “potential,” what they really mean is “proven success.” After all, no one mentioned my friend's potential when he was an awkward third grader learning how to dribble. It wasn't until he already established himself as a local superstar that people started talking about his potential.

The truth is everyone has potential, and nearly every employee has some talent of great potential value. But developing that talent takes serious work, both from employees and their managers—just like the thousands of hours my friend put in every day after school, along with the encouragement and instruction from his dad and his coach.

Developing talent—that is, helping every employee reach their potential—should be a goal of every leader. In fact, at GE top



By Joel Garfinkle, Executive Coach

executives spend as much as 40 percent of their time identifying and mentoring their replacements. Leaders at other companies would be wise to follow suit. Here's how to start:

1. Give employees time to focus. With the frenetic pace of business, it's easy to get lost in a sea of deadlines and shifting priorities. The best leaders encourage employees to spend time absorbed in a single project or area of focus—especially when it's a stretch assignment that will challenge their abilities. Some of the most innovative companies in the country put a priority on free or flexible time. For example, Google developers and engineers receive “20 percent time”—eight hours a week they can devote solely to projects of their choice. Likewise, Bell Labs—one of the biggest American innovators of all time—gave scientists and engineers the opportunity to spend years researching a single product.
2. Promote the value of learning. Leaders should be on a constant lookout for professional development opportunities. Taking time to focus on learning helps employees crystallize their goals and determine what skills and areas of growth are most important to them. As I mentioned, General Electric is one example of a company that places a premium on promoting the value of professional development and learning. The company has a Chief Learning Officer and spends \$1 billion a year in training its employees through the GE Global Learning initiative. That's about \$3,500 per year for each of their 290,000 employees.
3. Ask lots of questions. It's no secret that leadership requires clear and effective communication. When it comes to developing talent, leaders should focus on the listening side of the communication equation. Find out what's important to employees, what experience they have, where they see themselves in the future, and what excites them about the company. Colin Powell nicely sums up the importance of listening and effective communication: “The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them.” His words are just as true in the corporate world as they are in the military one.
4. Give frequent, specific feedback. It's far too easy for managers to only give feedback during performance reviews or to offer vague platitudes. The best mentors provide quality



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HVAC VENTING: THE RIGHT CHOICES

Gas-fired equipment is changing, and so are the related codes. As efficiencies and energy factors creep up, the installation processes and venting technologies evolve. New materials have recently presented the installers with a learning curve. As a gas appliance is only as good as the venting system, poor venting can cause improper combustion and possible gas spillage into the occupied space. As efficiencies are changing so are the various types of venting materials available, each for a specific application. There is polyvinyl chloride (PVC), chlorinated polyvinyl chloride (CPVC), and polypropylene venting, as well as a more traditional metal venting systems.

Unit heaters

Unit heaters are most often found in warehouses and semi-finished areas. Relatively recent code changes and energy efficiency concerns have seen some of the most significant shifts in venting for unit heaters.

Recently, Canadian Standards Association (CSA) requirements 10.96 and CR96-005 were combined with American Standards Institute (ANSI) Z83.8 CSA2.6 to create one overreaching standard for all unit heaters installed in North America. Going forward, all new horizontally vented unit heaters will require a minimum Category III venting.

This means that all power-vented unit heaters installed in commercial applications that require horizontal venting must now be gas-tight and meet criteria defined in UL1738, Venting Systems for Gas Burning Appliances, Categories II, III, IV. Venting systems approved to meet UL1738 will be clearly identified on each piece with ULC approval.

Power-vented units installed in commercial applications must use a listed vent system. This applies to separated combustion units, as well. High-efficiency, separated combustion units are condensing appliances, meaning the vents must be gas and water tight and must include a means to drain condensate from the vent system.

Venting

There are a variety of simple rules to follow to ensure proper venting. Perhaps the most important is the need to keep vent runs as straight as possible, limiting the number of turns or elbows. And never use a vent size smaller than the size recommended by the equipment manufacturer.

Vertical vent systems must terminate vertically, must not have a horizontal run that is more than 75 percent of the vertical rise in Category I installations, and it must terminate a reasonable distance above the roof line to prevent snow buildup. Vertical venting systems are preferred as they interfere less with adjacent building occupants.



By Norm Grusnick, PEng
Sales Manager, ECCO Supply

Horizontal vent systems, if needed, must terminate horizontally, must be pitched no less than a ¼ inch per foot, and must not terminate near inlet openings. They must also terminate at a height sufficient to prevent accidental contact by neighbours.

A drip leg is recommended with the cleanout cover located appropriately based on the installation to prevent condensate in the vent pipe from entering the heating equipment. Special attention must be paid to the maximum length of the vent system from the manufacturer's installation instructions.

Boilers

Most gas-fired boilers are now Category IV and require positive pressure venting systems.

Category I appliances feature less than 84 percent efficiency and operate with a neutral or negative pressure. The higher stack temperature—though less than 550 degrees F—means flue gas condensate is not an issue.

Category II appliances often use a small fan to move gases through a secondary heat exchanger, and the force is not enough to pressurize the flue, thus operating at neutral or negative vent static pressure. With vent gas temperatures below 140 degrees F, over dew point Category II appliances can cause excessive condensation in the vent.

Category III appliances operate with a positive pressure but are noncondensing as vent gases are above 140 degrees F.

Category IV applies to high efficiency condensing appliances producing condensate that must be removed.

Polypropylene venting

Recently, there has been a big move toward polypropylene vent systems instead of PVC and CPVC. Component availability for polypropylene venting systems has greatly improved in the last few years and costs have come down. Polypropylene may be a better option for condensing boilers where flue temperatures tend to fluctuate. Polypropylene can operate up to 230 degrees F.

As efficiency standards increase the industry is providing more installer training to ensure appliances are vented correctly. ■

PAYING THE PIPER: THE COST OF A BAD FIGHT

In the recent case of *Shen v West Continent Development Inc. (BC0844848)*, 2022 BCSC 462, a dispute arose between homeowners and their contractor in relation to the construction of a new home. In this case, “uplifted” costs were awarded against the contractor as a result of improper conduct during the litigation process.

The Facts

In 2010, the homeowners and contractor entered into an agreement whereby the contractor would construct a new home on the homeowners’ property in exchange for payment.

In addition, the homeowners provided the contractor with a Power of Attorney, which allowed the contractor to remove funds from the homeowners’ chequing account to pay subcontractors.

In 2011, the relationship soured over disagreements about the price and design of the home. The homeowners subsequently barred the contractor from attending their property and retained the services of another contractor to complete the project.

The homeowners commenced an action against the contractor on March 7, 2012, for breach of contract, fraud, breach of fiduciary duties, and negligence. The contractor denied these claims and commenced a counterclaim alleging that the homeowners owed money under the construction agreement.

In 2020, after conclusion of a 41-day trial, the Court found the homeowners largely successful.

Part of the homeowners’ success resulted from the contractor’s improper use of the Power of Attorney, which had been used to remove funds from the homeowners’ bank account. In this regard the Court noted as follows:

[the contractor] was largely unable to produce any kind of record of the uses to which the [homeowners’] money was being put. On numerous occasions, [the contractor] was given time during breaks in the trial of this matter to go home to look for the documentation he claimed he had. I do not find [the contractor’s] explanation for failure to produce invoices—that he had them and would produce them but could not find them—to be believable, and draw an adverse inference from his failure to produce them. I found [the contractors] handwritten summaries of payments made to be self-serving.

The Court also noted that the contractor’s use of the Power of Attorney required the contractor to act in the homeowners’ best interests and render accounts. The Court found that the contractor had breached his fiduciary obligations to the homeowners by being unable to account for and explain why the funds had been removed.



By / Matthew T Potomak and
Liam M Robertson, Kuhn LLP

The homeowners subsequently brought an application seeking an uplifted cost award against the contractor.

The Issue

In order for a Court to award uplifted costs, the award of “regular” costs must be grossly inadequate or unjust as a result of unusual circumstances. An uplifted cost award is meant to indemnify the successful party where there are unusual circumstances (i.e., misconduct, incivility, actions commenced in bad faith, rudeness, or misbehaviour).

The Decision

The Court found that the contractor had made the litigation process far more complicated and prolonged than it needed to be. This included the contractor engaging in the following:

- a. giving self-serving and unreliable evidence in relation to construction expenditures;
- b. calling numerous witnesses whose evidence was not useful for the purpose of resolving the issues;
- c. engaging in prolonged cross-examination of the parties and their witnesses;
- d. pursuing a frivolous counterclaim forcing the homeowners to incur further legal costs; and
- e. presenting evidence that was unnecessarily lengthy, uninformative, and irrelevant.

The Court awarded the homeowners uplifted costs after determining that the contractor had made the litigation process far more complex and prolonged than it otherwise should have been.

Lessons Learned

A couple lessons learned are as follows:

1. Conduct both prior to and during the litigation process are factors that the court may consider in determining how costs will be awarded. Involving a Lawyer early to provide advice with respect to a contractor’s course of action could prevent against an adverse cost award; and
2. Commencing claims or counterclaims that are not properly founded could backfire in the form of an adverse cost award. ■

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INDUSTRY NEWS

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“Let’s reflect upon our collective purpose, let’s remember, acknowledge, and offer our deepest gratitude to those who have been injured, fallen ill, or lost their life while at work,” Strickland says. “Their suffering and loss have led to much needed reforms that serve to prevent injuries, illnesses, and deaths.

“But we also owe it to them and others in the future to commit to doing all that we can to make sure every worker goes home safe. Prevention, including creating an environment where workers can refuse unsafe work, is part of the solution.

“Mourn for the dead. Fight for the living.” ■

CONTRACTOR ADVICE

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feedback that’s timely, genuine, and focused on desired behaviors. It’s also important to be positive and forgo any personal judgments. To reinforce how critical providing quality feedback is, try Googling “leaders and the importance of feedback.” The search yields over 18 million results (and lots of good advice).

5. Treat failure as an opportunity for improvement. Nobody likes failure, but everybody enjoys saving face. When employees fail, they’re often at their most vulnerable. And that’s a good thing. It means they’re open to receiving feedback, trying new approaches, and improving areas of weakness. Stay positive as you help your team members take advantage of these opportunities.

Some of the most meaningful learning in my life has been in response to failure. A beloved high school teacher of mine often used the mantras, “Failure is a better teacher than success,” and, “The bigger the failure, the bigger the lesson.” Obviously, no one wants to encourage failure, but it’s important to realize that it will happen—and embrace it for what it is: a learning opportunity.

Remember: Everyone has potential, but that potential may remain hidden without skilled mentoring and effective leadership. Take time to help employees discover their talents, learn from failures, and build on their successes. It may just save your company some major recruitment dollars. ■

Joel Garfinkle is recognized as one of the top 50 leadership coaches in the United States. As an executive coach he has worked with many of the world’s leading companies, including Google, Amazon, Deloitte, Oracle, and Ritz-Carlton. He is the author of seven books, including Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level. Learn more about his books and executive coaching services at garfinkleexecutivecoaching.com. You can also subscribe to his Fulfillment@Work receive the free e-book, 41 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now!

IT’S THE LAW

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This article was written by Liam M. Robertson and Matthew T. Potomak, who are lawyers that practise in construction law with the law firm of Kuhn LLP. This article is only intended as a guide and cannot cover every situation. It is important to get legal advice for specific situations. If you have any questions or comments about this case or other construction law matters, please contact us at 604.864.8877 (Abbotsford) or 604.684.8668 (Vancouver).

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