

WINTER 2024

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LET THE FORCE INSPIRE

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Official Journal of
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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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ELUSIVE WINTER

Is it just me or does it feel like this winter never truly materialized until January? Despite the bustling malls and crowded parking lots in November and December, the warm temperatures and lack of precipitation (until now) had me wondering what the New Year was holding in store.

As the calendar turned, the importance of planning ahead for SMACNA-BC to secure top presenters became apparent. I'm thrilled to announce that we're finalizing details to bring back Andy Patron and Stephane McShane to the Civic Hotel in both the Spring and Fall (watch our events calendar for details). This year, we will have Stephane teaching the supervisor training program, and Andy and I are working on a business program geared towards project managers and estimators. I'm hoping that changing presenters for each program allows for the targeted audience to see someone new and fresh to avoid the perception that it's not worth attending if it's the same person who presented last year.

We've also initiated contact with potential speakers for dinner meetings. Discussed topics include an NFPA-96 presentation, insights from a business accountant on tax benefits for 2024 equipment purchases, engagements with software vendors, and a joint program on flue venting and HVAC equipment installation. This collaborative effort aims to highlight common mistakes and pitfalls faced by suppliers dealing with these issues.

Planning is in progress for the SMACNA-BC 55th annual AGM and convention on May 9 to 11 at the Penticton Lakeside Resort and Conference Centre, Penticton, BC. We assure you that this year, we'll have the capacity to accommodate all interested attendees. (Contracts for our 2025 AGM and convention in Whistler, BC, are also in the final stages.)

We held our SMACNA-BC annual Christmas party at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Vancouver on December 1. We changed things up a little this year with a live performance by Patrick Gavigan whose one-man show sparked an impromptu dance floor. Despite the hotel patio undergoing renovations and obstructing some views, our guests partied into the early hours. A big thank you to our generous sponsors, including Crossroads C&I, Progressive Air Products, Ridge Sheet Metal, Samson Metals, SMART Local No.280, Smith Sheet Metal Works, and Summit Sheet Metal. See page 7 for a selection of photos.



Jeremy Hallman,
Executive Director, SMACNA-BC

I want to extend my gratitude for everyone's generous gifts and cash donations to the Helping Families in Need Society. Alongside two large totes of toys, Apollo Sheet Metal Ltd. matched all donations, enabling SMACNA-BC to present a \$14,840 cheque to the charity on behalf of our membership. Personally handing the cheque to Ray Abernethy at his warehouse assured me that the donations will make a meaningful impact.

I may be a bit late to the party, but if you haven't explored AI options like ChatGPT or Microsoft CoPilot yet, you should. SMACNA Inc. hosted a recent webinar on this topic, and I've personally found them incredibly useful. I believe this technology will mark one of the next significant advancements for our industry, and we're right on the brink of its widespread use. If you have the option to sign up for one of the online offerings, I would highly recommend it.

Final reminder for the College of Fellows Scholarship opportunity

The SMACNA College of Fellows is now accepting applications for the 2024 scholarship program. Applications will be for the 2024-2025 academic year.

The SMACNA College of Fellows Scholarship Program is open to eligible students from the SMACNA extended family seeking to further their undergraduate education by attending an accredited four-year college or university. Eligibility extends to SMACNA's extended family, which includes SMACNA contractors, employees of SMACNA contractors, SMACNA Fellows, employees of local SMACNA chapters, employees of National SMACNA, SMACNA National Associate Members, and family members of any of these groups. The applicant may pursue any course of study; however, it is hoped that a career in a field related to the sheet metal industry will be considered.

Applicants may find the application and eligibility requirements on the SMACNA website. The current application to be used is FORM: COF23.

Applications for scholarships must be postmarked or emailed by February 28, 2024.

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Learning Opportunities



February 27-29 | Partners in Progress Conference

Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Hotel, Orlando Florida

The 2024 Partners in Progress Conference is an exceptional opportunity for all SMACNA member contractors and chapter executives, SMART local unions and regional councils, and future leaders to come together. It provides a collaborative environment where labour and management can strengthen existing relationships and discover innovative strategies to shape a more prosperous future.

March 21 | Membership Meeting with Amy Duncan, DMCL CPA

Civic Hotel, Surrey, BC

At this membership dinner meeting, special guest speaker Amy Duncan from DMCL Chartered Professional Accountants will be discussing tax changes and incentives available for 2024. (Please refer to our website for more details and her bio to follow).

Calendar of Events

February 15: Board of Directors Meeting

SMACNA-BC Boardroom

February 19: Family Day

February 20: Joint Conference Board Meeting

SMACNA-BC Boardroom

March 12: Board of Directors Meeting

SMACNA-BC Boardroom

March 21: Membership Meeting

Civic Hotel Ballroom, Surrey

March 26: Joint Conference Board Meeting

SMACNA-BC Boardroom

March 29: Good Friday

April 1: Easter Monday

May 9-11: 55th Annual Convention

Penticton Lakeside Resort & Convention Centre, Penticton

September 13: SMACNA-BC 39th Golf Classic

Northview Golf & Country Club, Surrey

October 27-30: SMACNA National Conference

Palm Desert, California

November 29: SMACNA-BC Christmas Party

Pan Pacific Hotel, Vancouver ■

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SMACNA-BC contractors demonstrate unmatched technical and managerial expertise enhanced by an exceptionally skilled and professional workforce. In fact, SMACNA-BC contractors employ only Red Seal certified sheet metal journeypersons and registered apprentices, and they work exclusively with reputable suppliers to secure the highest quality materials and services. SMACNA-BC is also the ultimate source for standards-based products and services, including technical manuals, guidelines, and consultancy. That means when you hire a SMACNA-BC contractor or buy from an affiliated supplier, you are building your project's sheet metal scope to North America's highest professional standards.

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(SMACNA-BC)**

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WELCOME ASSOCIATE MEMBER: RIADA SALES, INC.

SMACNA-BC's newest associate member is Riada Sales Inc., a manufacturer's representative in Western Canada specializing in providing high-quality HVAC equipment, instrumentation, and plumbing products. The company was founded in 1995 by Geoff Adair, who began his career working for Dillingham Construction managing projects in BC, Iran, and Norway. Geoff entered the HVAC industry when he started manufacturing Adair Industries radiant ceiling panels with his father, Joe Adair. Starting out with just drainage products and electric ceiling panels, Geoff's emphasis on honesty, service, and support helped to grow the business to where it is today.

The Riada Sales team assists clients in selecting, specifying, and engineering the right products for the job, specializing in commercial, institutional, and multi-family residential projects. They stand behind the products they supply and are proud of the relationships they've built with manufacturers, while providing the best service possible to engineers, contractors, architects, and owners.

Since it opened its doors nearly 30 years ago, Riada Sales has grown significantly, particularly over the past few years, expanding into Alberta. It currently has a team of 12 dedicated sales professionals.



Adam English, senior project manager, and Scott Adair, owner, Riada Sales Inc.

In 2018, Scott Adair purchased Riada Sales from Geoff. Scott started with Riada in 2008 after graduating from BCIT School of Business. He has spent his career with the company, learning the HVAC industry, building long-term relationships, and furthering technical education.

Scott has helped grow the company via new product lines and continued support of Riada's core product offering. Based upon Geoff's founding principles of top-notch service and long-term support, Scott has begun to assemble a team to accelerate the firm's growth through sustainable solutions and cutting-edge technology. On its way to that goal, Riada Sales supplied the first DWH CO₂ heat pump in North America to Kitsilano Pool in Vancouver.

Riada Sales' long-term goal is to continue to expand its catalogue of innovative solutions and provide the best possible support to end users. As Riada has grown, the team has recognized that the industry is built on long-lasting, meaningful relationships. By joining SMACNA, the goal is to keep building great relationships.

Learn more | riada.ca ■

To visit Riada's website:

1. Open your camera
2. Scan the QR code shown left



SMART Local 280 / SMACNA-BC Partnership



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



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- B. Flaherty, Cornell University, Syracuse, N.Y.

TRADESWOMEN BUILD NATIONS 2023: LOCAL 280 TRADESWOMEN IN ATTENDANCE



The Tradeswomen Build Nations conference on December 2, 2023, saw record attendance with nearly 4,000 tradeswomen and union representatives—including a team from Local 280—gathering for three days of education and networking in Washington, DC.

Highlights of the event included plenary sessions, an all-Canadian panel and networking event, and the much-anticipated and very powerful banner parade.

As a bonus, Local 280 members Nicole Pasqualini, Tara McDonald, Ashley Barron, Sindii Panduru, Sheila Sadler, and Kimberlie Caunce, had an incredible opportunity to tour the SMART Headquarters, guided by the SMART international representative, Steve Dodd.

Save the date for the 2024 Tradeswomen Build Nations Conference in New Orleans September 27-29, 2024. ■

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The Build Your Skills Learning Hub has thousands of learning tools to help apprentices and pre-apprentices brush up on their foundational skills like math and science and build trade-specific expertise. This makes learning easier and faster!

SkillPlan has helped over 50,000 apprentices in the construction trades across Canada. It offers tutoring services, including online tutorial videos so apprentices can learn on their own, and one-on-one live tutoring to help learners better understand those tougher topics in technical training.

Learn more at skillplan.ca/learn/tutoring

CONSTRUCTION LABOUR PRESSURES EASE IN NOVEMBER, NOTABLE GROWTH AMONG WOMEN

Data from Statistics Canada's November Labour Force Survey (LFS) shows employment pressures gradually easing across the country as the year draws to a close.

National, all-industry employment grew by 0.1% for the month, adding 25,000 workers. November marked the second consecutive month in which employment gains have been muted. Meanwhile, the national employment rate, which is the proportion of the working-age population that is employed, fell by 0.1 percentage points for the month. Both occurred as the labour force grew by 0.2%, or 78,000 people.

As a function of these trends, the national, all-industry unemployment rate rose 0.1 percentage points to 5.8% in November. Since April, it has risen by a total of 0.8 percentage points, with increases most pronounced among youth.

Construction labour pressures may be easing as the sector adds more women

The industry's unadjusted unemployment rate rose by 0.9 percentage points in November, compared with a year ago. The rate also rose by 0.8 percentage points compared with October 2023, although this figure is likely due to the nature of seasonal employment.

Employment levels rose between November 2022 and 2023, adding 26,500 workers over the year, or 1.7%. November's total of 1.61 million workers was down slightly (-6,500; -0.4%) from October, again likely due to seasonality.

Meanwhile, the industry's total labour force stood at 1.68 million people in November. That figure was up by 43,000 workers, or 2.6%, from November 2022, and up slightly (0.4%) from October.

Driving these changes, in part, has been a significant increase in the number of women working in the construction sector.

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LET THE FORCE INSPIRE



Five Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre apprentices have brought *Star Wars* mojo to the training centre, completing a life-sized, working model of the movie series' beloved droid, R2D2.

By Jessica Kirby • Photos by Colin Nam

Five apprentices at the Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre (SMWTC) have mastered the Forces of creativity, problem-solving, and hard work by creating a life-size, working R2D2 model—complete with a sound board and spinning head—for their fourth-year project.

“We encourage creativity at the training centre, and in fourth year, apprentices traditionally build a generic tin man as a group project,” says Jake Leblanc, head instructor at SMWTC. “Most groups customize their tin man and pick a theme—we have had Batman, a golfer, a German guy with lederhosen, Bender the Robot, a devil Bender the Robot, Santa Claus, and many more.”

In his third year, Colin Nam made the character Bender from *Futurama*, so in fourth year, instructor Matt Brown approached him with a challenge: one-up the Bender project. After brainstorming a few ideas, the two decided an R2D2 replica model would be very challenging but possible. Nam assembled a crew.

He called on classmates Troy Martins, Ethan Picanca-Nyberg, Mitch Guillermo, and Aaron Arnal to help fabricate and assemble the pieces of this complex puzzle.

But first, there was research to be done. Nam joined a forum dedicated to building replica R2D2 models, where he found the correct sizes and proportions. He used these to make AutoCAD drawings of R2D2 and started to dissect how to fabricate and assemble each piece.

“Next, I created detailed layout drawings of the pieces required for each part,” he says. “I gave these drawings to the rest of the crew to start shearing, braking, and forming.”

Ethan and Mitch—chosen for their high attention to detail and fast hand layout skills—sheared and formed most of the pieces.

“They came out extremely well, which made it easy for Aaron to weld them together,” Nam says. “Aaron was fast and efficient, and I felt like our team was able to co-operate well together

with this assembly line. We all spent extra time after class and some time during our lunch breaks to complete this project.”

While most of the pieces are similar to HVAC fittings, thus fairly simple to make, the head was an entirely different matter. It took a few hours in AutoCAD to figure out how the team was going to make the shallow dome.

“I decided on 12 tapered pie pieces that we would roll up to make them meet in the middle,” Nam says. “I’ll be honest—I had no idea if it was going to work.”

He sent the DXF file from AutoCAD to Mitch who, luckily, was able to cut the pieces on a laser table at his shop. “I don’t think we would have been able to do it as accurately if we had to cut these by hand,” Nam says. “And it saved us a whole day’s work.”

Troy, the most experienced with rolling pipe and pieces to match precise measurements and diameters, had the daunting task of rolling up the pie pieces for the head. Each piece had to be rolled perfectly, the same way, to the right diameter. “Because they taper, we had to reduce the tension of the rolls near the tip of each piece,” Nam says. “This means changing the rolls for each piece and replicating the process precisely. Troy did an excellent job with it.”

Originally intended for static display, R2D2 soon became much more. Nam wanted to try adding lights, sounds, and moving parts, so he added three extra components that would later lead to a bigger challenge than expected.

In the quest to make R2D2’s head spin, Nam discovered that a “Lazy Susan” bearing would be the perfect size to fit the body’s diameter. In AutoCAD, he designed an 18” diameter ring that had a smaller gear on the inside with matching teeth. “This was intended for a small motor to be mounted to the inside of the body,” Nam says. “The small gear would be attached to the motor and the ring would sit on the Lazy Susan and spin the head as the gear turns.”



Nam started to model parts after school on his home 3D printer. While most of R2D2 is made from aluminum, these parts added some intricate details that would otherwise be impossible to make within the given timeframe. On the forum, he found soundboard ideas, basic wiring diagrams, and a lighting kit, which he ordered.



These were the most challenging part of the build, since the team had no experience with wiring motors, motor controllers, or sound boards. R2D2 is powered by a 12V drill battery connected to an Arduino, which is the mother board and “brains” that transmit data from a button input to a soundboard, motor, and speaker.

“I have never coded before, but I had to learn how in order to connect all these devices together,” Nam says. “By the time we got to this stage, I had four days to learn how to code and get all the motors and sounds synced up.”

After spending 8-12 hours over three days after school, Nam managed to bring R2D2 to life. “Press a button and the signal tells the motor to spin a certain direction for a specific amount of time while playing a sound,” Nam says. “There are six available sounds and each one does something a little bit different.”

R2D2 is basically split up into four main sections: head, body, and two legs. After each section was welded and the 3D printed parts were attached, the team managed to finally put it all together on the last available day they had in the shop, which was on the weekend outside of regular school hours.

“While I was working on the design and moving parts, I fully trusted in the guys to get all the pieces fabricated properly,” Nam says. “Everyone I chose to help with this project had a specific role, which helped us work together efficiently.”

Currently, R2D2 is at the training centre on display. Nam plans to take R2D2 home for an upgrade that will include motors and wheels in the feet and remote operation capabilities.

“I will eventually bring it back to the school so people can play around with it,” Nam says. “The long-term future for R2D2 is unknown but for now our team has decided that the intention is to inspire other students to make cool projects.” ■



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Canada Set to Recover from 2023's Struggles

By Robin Brunet

Purely in terms of data, Canada's construction industry encountered its fair share of headwinds in 2023, as a Research and Markets report released in August illustrates.

According to the report, the industry overall will post a 2023 contraction of 5.2 percent, with the decline "primarily driven by reduced residential construction activity due to tightening monetary policies and a weaker economic outlook."

And yet, the disappointing numbers don't correlate with reports from contracting and trades communities who say they are busier than ever. "Our industry employs some 1.6 million people from coast to coast, and in 2023 they were kept busy in both the public and private sectors," says Mary Van Buren, president of the Canadian Construction Association. "In fact, the amount of work required is such that we have an estimated shortfall of 59,000 people."

Sean Strickland, executive director of Canada's Building Trades Union, agrees. "Business is brisk no matter where you look, from electric vehicle plants in Quebec and hydrogen projects in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland to carbon sequestering projects in Alberta and new nuclear plants in Ontario.

"Plus, it's important to note how massive many of these projects are, with Alberta being a good case in point. Next year in

Edmonton, Dow Chemical will begin an \$11.5 billion facelift and expansion of its chemical plant to make it the world's first ethylene cracker that produces net-zero greenhouse emissions.”

Strickland adds, “Despite the residential market being down, the demand for new housing is through the roof, driven by 500,000 new Canadians coming to our country yearly.”

A lot of optimism comes from the changing face of Canada's industrial portfolio. One example is the country's data centre growth, driven by increasing demand for cloud computing and IoT favourable climatic conditions. The consultancy Linesight notes that over US\$7.4 billion-worth of data center projects are in the pipeline, with a significant concentration in Ontario and Quebec.

According to Linesight, the federal government's ambition to establish Canada as a clean industrial hub—hence the investments in electric vehicle battery manufacturing and carbon sequestering, as well as gigafactories in Southern Ontario—contributed to 2023's one bright spot: an estimated growth rate of 15.5 percent for the industrial sector overall.

Of course, traditional projects are key to the industrial sector's success. “Just to cite a few examples, we've got refits of nuclear plants in Darlington and Pickering, as well as big hospital



The federal government's ambition to establish Canada as a clean industrial hub contributed to 2023's one bright spot: an estimated growth rate of 15.5 percent for the industrial sector overall.

projects,” says Ian Cunningham, president of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations (COCA).

The multi-year aspect of these projects explains why, despite reports of contractions, those employed in the construction sector are busier than ever, and the new South Niagara Hospital in Niagara Falls is just one case in point—after ten years of planning, construction of the \$3.6 billion facility got underway in July and won't be completed until 2028.

But a booming industrial sector with promises of more to come exacerbates the persistent problem of labour shortages. “Plus, even if the people with decades of experience who are now retiring are replaced, it'll take a long time for the new journeymen to acquire the same level of efficiency and problem-solving capabilities that are so essential to our industry's success,” Cunningham says.



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However, strictly in terms of recruiting newcomers, Strickland is optimistic. “It’s in our DNA to attract them, and we continue to endorse initiatives aimed at women and First Nations,” he says. In fact, recent data from Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey suggests that, thanks to a combination of industry and government programs, the number of women in construction has increased significantly, outpacing the growth in the male workforce in 2023.

“I think also what’s increasingly being constructed—facilities and infrastructure contributing to decarbonisation and other green objectives—could be a strong lure for young people,” Strickland adds.

Van Buren points out that with approximately 13 percent of the construction workforce expected to retire between 2022 and 2027, her association is advocating for changes to the Canadian immigration system, in order to facilitate the entry of skilled immigrants and temporary foreign workers interested in working in construction.

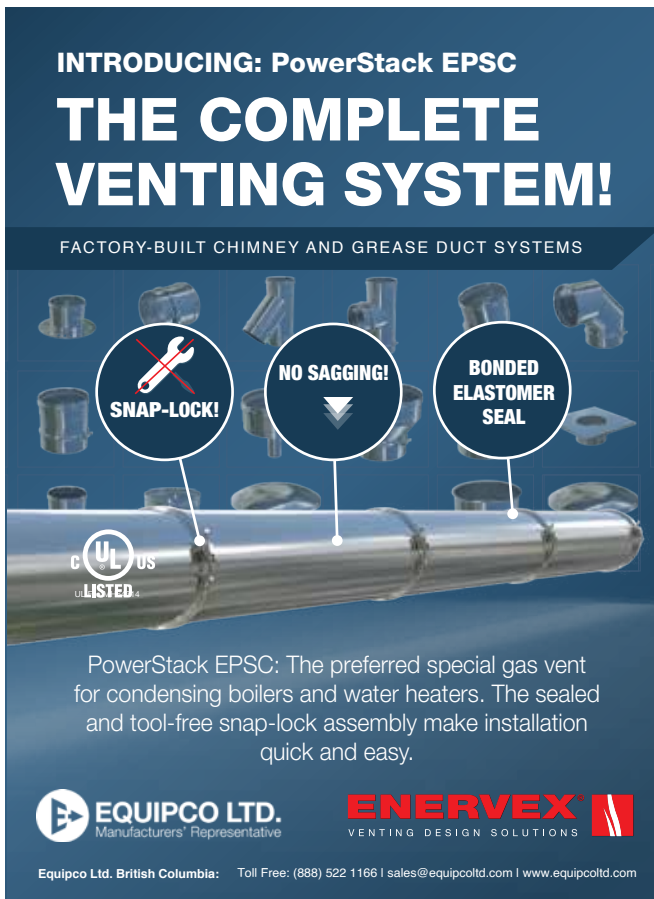
Also, the CCA has partnered with the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board, BuildForce Canada, and other organizations to advance Ottawa’s Canadian Apprenticeship Service, which provides up to \$20,000 per fiscal year in financial incentives to small and medium-sized employers for the hiring and training of first-year apprentices in 39 Red Seal trades.

“We also want to see a federal long-term infrastructure plan developed, led by an assessment mechanism to determine what projects Canada really needs,” Van Buren adds. “This would enable us to avoid the boom-and-bust cycles of changing governments and line up the type of talent we need.”

Strickland is especially gung-ho for one labour-related initiative—Ottawa’s Investment Tax Credits, which will take effect in January. “These are fantastic for our union contractors and will compel non-union businesses to pay their workers union wages and retain apprentices,” he says.

Despite headwinds now, the Research and Markets report notes that the construction industry “is expected to see growth between 2025 and 2027, with an annual average rate of 2.7 percent, supported by advancements in the industrial, energy, and transportation sectors.”

Finally, one factor that will support growth is worth noting: material prices in 2023 retreated from the highs of the pandemic years, with lumber prices stable and copper, steel rebar, and other material prices dropping, too. Even the price of cement, which escalated due to stricter environmental regulations, is rising at a slower pace. ■



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BC Facing Headwinds but Still a Powerhouse

By Robin Brunet

BC's construction industry is undeniably a powerhouse: it's the province's number one employer (over 218,000 people), and it accounts for 10.3 percent or \$27 billion of the GDP.

Better still, intense demand has resulted in major projects currently underway at an estimated value of \$157 billion—an increase of 16 percent over 2022 and 109 percent over the past five years.

But the very same organization that crunched these numbers—the BC Construction Association (BCCA)—is also concerned about the pressures to meet this demand, such as interest rates, rising wages, and high material costs.

With these headwinds in mind, BCCA president Chris Atchison says, “We can’t afford to lose tradespeople or journeypersons.” Nonetheless, from Q1 2023 to the second quarter, BC’s construction employment base diminished by 14,500 workers, the worst performance of any Canadian province.

Jeannine Martin, president of the Vancouver Construction Association, echoes Atchison’s sentiments. “Adding to the labour shortage and critical need for affordable housing in our jurisdiction are permitting delays,” she says. “Plus, every municipality has its own rules, so there’s no consistency.”

That’s the bad news. The good news moving into 2024 is that bureaucrats and other parties seems to have woken up to the need for systematic change. “In the Township of Langley, for example, the mayor speaks highly of the city’s ability to cut red tape and approve single-family developments in the space of a week,” Martin says. “Maybe this fast tracking will spread to multi-family residential. Also, pilots for the digitization of

approvals are underway in several municipalities, with the goal of bringing consistency to the process. The benefits of such initiatives could be substantial.”

Atchison cites other elements crucial to the industry’s success moving forward. These include the need for the provincial government to mirror other provinces and the federal government in enacting prompt payment legislation, the lack of which is causing an estimated \$4 billion due to risk premiums, interest charges, and legal fees, as well as the continuation of programs such as the BCCA Apprenticeship Services project.

More good news: BC is awash with a huge variety of work, including the \$16 billion Site C hydroelectric dam (which employed 4,856 people in 2023, according to BC Hydro) and the early stages of the \$6.8 billion Woodfibre LNG project near Squamish. “There’s also a record number of hospitals and schools,” Atchison says. “The Okanagan is experiencing substantial multi-unit residential construction, and Vancouver Island is buzzing with projects.”

“Our member firms are doing very well thanks to \$61 billion in proposed work upcoming,” Martin adds. “With projects such as the \$3.5 billion terminal expansion for the Port of Vancouver and, recently completed, The Stack—which is Canada’s first zero carbon commercial high rise tower—we’ve been super-busy.”

Different project delivery approaches increasingly being considered means that contractors in the future may not need to have to lose in order for owners to win.

“So yes, we’re experiencing headwinds, but there’s also lots of cause to be optimistic,” Martin says. ■

Sheet Metal Industry Outlook Survey 2024



© iStock / metamorworks

The results are in—sheet metal contractors, manufacturers, and sheet metal workers are focused on recruitment and looking to broaden their professional development to include management skills and strategies.

Year after year, similar concerns arise among respondents to this survey—recruitment, workload, and pricing. This year was no different in these areas; however, the results yielded a few new concerns, mainly to do with outside parties, such as other subtrades, engineers, and general contractors.

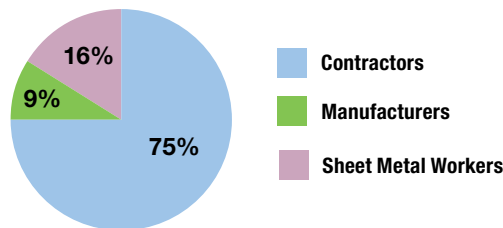
Most reported similar or higher activity in 2023 than in 2022, and the majority expected even higher growth for the coming year. As companies respond to fluctuating labour and recruitment trends, they are looking for training and professional development in a number of areas that can help, including recruitment support, management skills, productivity, and administrative practices.

When asked how they will manage the challenges of 2024, the replies were overwhelmingly supportive of teamwork, strategic planning, and promoting a positive culture from within. Contractors will look to professional development opportunities, productivity-enhancing software, and strategic bidding to keep their business moving in the right direction.

Unsurprisingly, nearly every comment about moving forward referenced leveraging teamwork: “We will face challenges as a unified team,” said one respondent. “We have been anticipating growth and have embraced it.” When we asked contractors how they would handle challenges, a few answers included: “One challenge at a time,” “By working with my team to find solutions and put them into action,” “Continue to promote a positive work environment,” “By relying on and listening to my excellent team,” and “The same way our team does everything: together.” Labour 46%

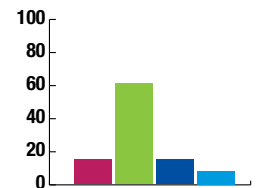
SURVEY SAYS...

1 Role in the sheet metal industry:

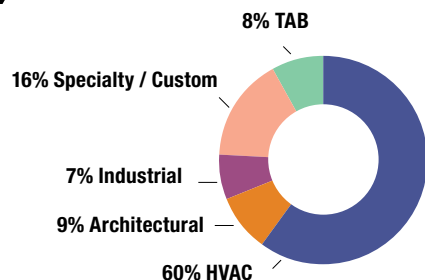


3 Business performance in 2023:

Much better than expected 15%
 Above average 61%
 Same as 2022 15%
 A little down 8%



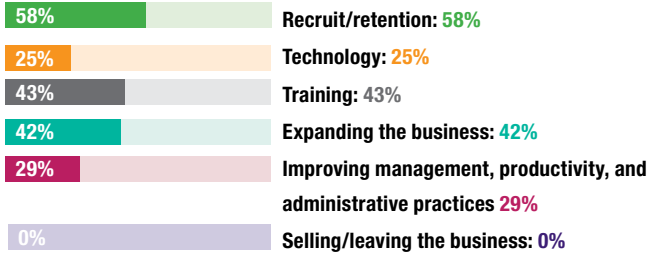
2 Area of specialty:



4 Performance expectations for 2024:

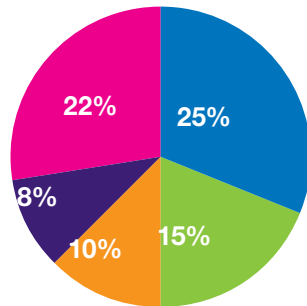
Same as last year: 23%
 A little better than 2023: 54%
 Best year ever: 8%
 A little down from 2023: 15%

5 Main area(s) of investment for 2024:



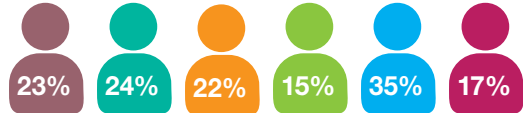
6 Biggest anticipated challenge for 2024:

- Economic decline 25%
- Too much work 15%
- Capital investment 10%
- Pricing 8%
- Other: Disorganized/unprepared contractors, faulty subtrades, poor communication from other parties on the jobsite 22%



7 Support required for your business in 2024 and beyond:

- Help with recruitment 23%
- Education and training for management 24%
- Grants and incentives 22%
- Productivity-enhancing technology 15%
- Other: Enforcement of standards and specifications; trades, engineers, designers, and manufactures being held accountable for their work; planning advice for the construction industry; education for other trades, mechanicals, specifiers 35%
- Pre-project planning for other trades and parties: 17%



8 Topics to cover with industry events or training:

- Business strategy: 37%
- Education about best practices; managing unskilled labour: 36%
- Recruitment strategy: 28%
- Foreperson and management skills training: 24%
- TAB: 23%
- Communication, conflict resolution: 18%

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- Trace over top of the plans the BCX 3D modelling tool
- Change views and orientation to see the 3D model over top of the plans

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14 COMPETE AT 2023 SMWTC ANNUAL APPRENTICE CONTEST

The Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre held its annual apprentice competition November 25 at the Surrey training centre. The return of this contest was fantastic, with 14 apprentices competing across four levels representing multiple contractors, and many sponsors, accounting for over \$5,000 worth of prizes.

“Our annual apprenticeship contest is not only a showcase of the skills and abilities of our apprentice members, but a celebration of our union family and the values that we hold,” says SMWTC head instructor, Jake LeBlanc. “It’s also a chance to bond and network with others in our community.”

The contest is open to any member apprentice in any year, and they compete in their respective years. Apprentices competed for seven hours, testing their knowledge in theory, drawing, welding, and building a shop project.

“In my many years of hosting this event, I have watched people grow both academically and interpersonally,” LeBlanc says. “The contest builds confidence, solidifies the values we hold of support and encouragement in our community, and strengthens our belief in one another. Every year, I am not only impressed but humbled by the team spirit our apprentices bring.”

The day officially launched amid a buzz of anticipation and enthusiasm as participants dove into the competition, ready to showcase their talents and skills. Contractors, union workers, and parents were on hand to observe and cheer the participants on while they showcased their skills. Spectators typically show particular interest in the project portion.

The projects are always based on curriculum from each level. This year, first year apprentices completed a riveted aluminum storage box with a hinged, latching lid; second year, an eccentric square to round, duct and spin in connection; third year, mitered duct, mitered square to round and spin in connection; and fourth year a soldered copper bucket.



“Even though it is a contest, most help each other out to complete their projects,” LeBlanc says. “I have even seen a potential winner put aside their own project to help another individual who is struggling to get their work done, perhaps at the cost of a place on the podium for themselves. We should all take a page from that book. A common slogan in our union is ‘Together we can!’ and that is exactly what we do.”





Contest judges included part-time instructors at SMWTCS Sheila Sadler, Local 280 executive board member; Connor Sove, Boston Sheet Metal; and Jake Watters, Ames Metal Fabricators.

Manning the BBQ so everyone stayed fed and energized were Troy Clutchey, acting Local 280 business manager; Dave Sove, Boston Sheet Metal; and Mike Evans, Local 280 executive member.

Congrats to the contest winners:

Level 1 Winner

Antonio Cerna Rivas
Ames Metal Fabricators 82 Ltd.

Level 2 Winner

Blair Bertrand
Austin Metal Fabricators LP

Level 3 Winner

Natasha Hua
Ames Metal Fabricators 82 Ltd.

Level 4 Winner

Colin Nam
Apollo Sheet Metal Ltd.

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SILENCE AND SUICIDE ON THE JOB SITE

The construction industry is a vital sector that requires hard work and dedication. However, behind the hustle and bustle of construction lies a hidden struggle that often goes unnoticed—the mental health of workers. Unfortunately, the construction industry has the second highest suicide rate next to mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction. The reasons for this alarming trend are many—long and gruelling work hours and the daily risk of serious injury contribute to increased stress and the job's strenuous demands that can potentially cause untreated anxiety, depression, and substance abuse. Such factors can ultimately contribute to suicide, particularly for males, as highlighted by the staggering suicide rate of 45.3 suicides per 100,000 workers. It is crucial to take proactive measures to foster a culture of support and well-being in the construction industry. We must work together to address the prevalent mental health challenges in our industry. Companies can take some key actions to address this issue effectively.

Preventing Suicide in Construction: Key Company Actions

Building Support Systems: Just as sturdy scaffolding supports a construction structure, training programs must establish robust support systems. Creating a safe, nurturing environment where employees feel comfortable discussing challenges and seeking help is essential. Mentorship programs, counseling services, and peer support groups can serve as pillars of support. These systems provide employees with a foundation to address their mental health concerns effectively, enabling them to manage stress, anxiety, and other issues, leading to improved well-being and productivity.

Caught you looking!

Got news or a great idea for a column?
Email your ideas to jessica.kirby@pointonemedia.com and share your wow with your industry peers today.



By Mark Breslin
Apprentice Performance Solutions

Raising Awareness: Construction projects often involve high-pressure deadlines, long hours, physically strenuous tasks, and a demanding work environment, contributing to stress and anxiety. Organizing awareness programs shines a spotlight on mental health, reducing stigma and encouraging employees to seek help when needed. Workshops, guest speakers, and informative resources empower employees with knowledge and open doors to meaningful conversations. Fostering a culture of understanding and support creates an environment where employees feel safe discussing their mental health.

Providing Access to Resources: Just as a well-equipped toolbox helps tackle construction tasks, companies should ensure access to mental health resources. This includes counselling services, online platforms with mental health resources, and information about local support networks. These resources equip employees to manage their mental health proactively, allowing them to perform at their best and contribute to a positive work environment. Prioritizing mental health in training programs is a necessity.

As leaders in the construction industry, our commitment to mental health not only safeguards our workforce but also strengthens the very foundation on which we build. By fostering open communication, prioritizing mental well-being, and providing accessible resources, we shape an industry that not only constructs impressive structures but also nurtures the holistic well-being of every worker.

Resources:

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

- Call or text: 988
- Chat at suicideprevention.ca/resources
- Find resources at suicideprevention.ca/resources and preventconstructionsuicide.com

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For more information on leadership training and performance or to find Mark's best-selling books, *Five Minute Foreman* and *Alpha Dog*, visit breslin.biz.

BENEFITS AND APPLICATION OF FABRIC DUCTS

Architects and engineers are constantly seeking innovative and efficient solutions for their projects. In the world of HVAC systems, there's an alternative solution you might not have considered: fabric air dispersion systems. These systems offer a host of benefits from enhanced air distribution to ease of installation, making them a compelling choice over traditional ductwork.

Before we dive into the design process, let's take a moment to understand why fabric ducts are gaining popularity in industrial architecture. Fabric ducts excel at delivering consistent and draft free airflow. They distribute air evenly throughout the occupied space, eliminating hot and cold spots, which can be a challenge.

Fabric ducting offers a sleek and unobtrusive aesthetic, blending seamlessly with modern designs. The trend toward open architectural ceiling design versus T-bar-style ceilings is boosting fabric duct as a ventilation choice. Open ceilings are a perfect application for fabric duct, whereas recessed ventilation duct must be metal, according to most codes.



Fabric duct at Langford Aquatic Centre in Langford, BC.



By Norm Grusnick, PEng
ECCO Supply

Fabric duct is remarkably easy to install, resulting in reduced labour costs and project timelines. The system typically arrives on the jobsite in two to three weeks and can be installed four times faster than conventional ductwork. Fabric ducting's lighter weight reduces lift equipment rental costs. Lighter ductwork also reduces the number of workers required to install it, which is an advantage considering today's lower staffing levels.

For example, a 48-inch metal spiral duct hung from a 25-foot-high ceiling may need several heavy-duty lifts and three or four workers to rig it into position. However, the same sized fabric duct might require a lighter duty, less expensive lift rental and only two installers to hang it. Using fabric ducts can

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INDUSTRY NEWS

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The number of women in the labour force reached 212,500 in November 2023. That was an increase of 20,700 (10.8%) over November 2022 levels. That increase outpaced the overall year-over-year labour force increase for the sector of 2.6%.

Labour force growth was particularly strong among women under 24 years of age. The number of people in that cohort rose by 79% – from 10,500 in November 2022 to 18,800 in November 2023. Women in the core working age group of 25 to 54 years of age also increased, but by a more muted 13.4%.

Overall, the construction labour force increased by 2.5% in the core working age group of 25- to 54-year-olds, and by 2.1% in the youth cohort. The number of workers 55 years of age and older declined by 0.1%.

CANADA’S BUILDING TRADES UNIONS 2024 CONFERENCE OPEN FOR REGISTRATION

Registration is now open for Canada’s Building Trades Unions 2024 conference, ‘Training a Safe, Skilled Workforce’. Don’t miss out on an exciting program line-up, including workshops, a Parliamentary Reception, inspiring speakers, and more.

April 28-April 30 at the Hilton Lac-Leamy in Gateneau, Quebec. Register today | tinyurl.com/bdfe2brp.

BUILDFORCE CANADA SHARES ITS BLOG ON INCLUSIVITY

“Inclusivity in the workplace isn’t just the responsibility of the leadership; it’s a collective effort. Understanding what exclusion looks like is the first step towards creating a supportive environment.”

Learn more about this and other topics | buildforce.ca/en/blog

ENGINEER’S DESK

continued from page 21

also save up to 40% on the cost to run a ventilation system as they are designed to provide uniform air dispersion through a combination of air-porous fabrics, linear vents, nozzles, and orifices. This method has a positive impact on energy costs as these systems heat and cool spaces faster and more uniformly to satisfy temperature set points. The result is reduced mechanical equipment run time.

There are a few things you’ll need to collect before incorporating fabric ducts into your project to meet its unique requirements. Here are key points for your design:

- Determine the CFM required for your space to meet your needs and select the right air handling unit.
- Formulate the duct layout for an efficient and cost-effective solution.
- Consider the layout of the space, including occupancy pattern and obstacles. This will help you identify optimal air dispersion locations, the type of hardware required, and other critical design elements.
- The mounting height of the ducts influences the type of airflow model needed for the space. Different mounting options, such as overhead or perimeter, cater to your system needs.
- The purpose of the space plays a significant role in fabric and dispersion type selections. The fabric ducts should align with the specific indoor air quality requirements.

Both metal and fabric duct have a place in the construction industry. Architects, specifiers, and design/build contractors should examine every project scope for the best choice. ■

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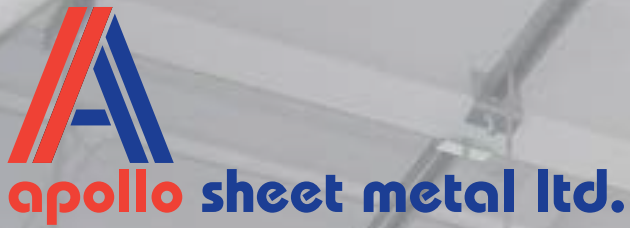
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