BRITISH COLUMBIA SMACNA CHAPTER

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British Columbia

Fall 2026

CANADIAN CONSTRUCTION A TURNING POINT IN 2027?

Also in this Issue:



Project Management



Data Collection

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

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- 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.

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Sheet Metal Journal
British Columbia

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AUTUMN UPDATE AND EVENTS



Jeremy Hallman,
Executive Director, SMACNA-BC

As I write this, summer seems to have come to an abrupt end, with rainfall warning notifications popping up in the lower-left corner of my computer screen. One thing seems fairly predictable in the Lower Mainland: it will rain for the PNE, but somehow the clouds seem to part just in time for the SMACNA-BC Golf Classic.

This year was no exception, and we were fortunate to have another great day for the tournament. It was also great to see our president, Angelo Paris, make it out in the morning to welcome everyone and spend some time with the group before they headed onto the course. Thank you again to everyone who attended, sponsored, volunteered, or otherwise helped make this year's tournament another success.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome several new members who have joined SMACNA-BC over the past year. On the contractor side, we are pleased to welcome Vancouver Stainless Steel and Hammertime Sheet Metal Ltd. We have also welcomed Airtek Canada Inc., Doane Grant Thornton LLP, Russel Metals Inc., Vancouver Mechanical Supply, and Air Chek Industries Inc. as associate members. Thank you for choosing to become part of SMACNA-BC. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming meetings and events and getting to know everyone better.

As we settle back into the fall, I would also encourage our members to take advantage of some of the online educational programs being offered by SMACNA National. In particular, there have been several recent sessions focused on artificial intelligence and practical ways that AI can be used in our businesses and day-to-day work.

Most of these programs only require about an hour of your time, and I have found that the AI sessions continue to become more refined and practical each time I attend one. The technology is changing quickly, and these programs are an easy way to learn a little more about what is available and how others in our industry are beginning to use it. Keep an eye on SMACNA National's upcoming programs and consider signing up when you see a topic that interests you.

Finally, SMACNA-BC would like to congratulate Reesha Sidhu and Nicholaas Van Nuland-McDonald, this year's recipients of the SMACNA British Columbia Endowed Scholarship through the SMACNA College of Fellows. Both recipients were selected based on their applications and the decision of the College of Fellows, which administers the scholarship program.

In recognition of their achievement, the SMACNA-BC Board of Directors was also pleased to provide each recipient with an additional $2,000 CAD matching scholarship to help support their education.

Congratulations to Reesha and Nicholaas. We wish them both continued success in their academic pursuits and look forward to seeing where their education takes them.

Recent Events

41st Annual SMACNA-BC Golf Classic

SMACNA-BC held its annual Golf Classic on September 11, 2026, at Northview Golf & Country Club. This year, we had 144 golfers on the Ridge Course, 28 overflow golfers on the Canal Course, and 202 people for the dinner following golf.

Of course, an event like this wouldn't be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. A big thank you to Aarc West HVAC Solutions for sponsoring the drink tickets, Crossroads C&I for the always-popular "Chip to the Boat," ECCO Supply for providing the bagged lunches, and EH Price Solutions for sponsoring the Oyster Station.

Throughout the course, Novagreen offered the Dart Board Challenge, Ridge Sheet Metal sponsored the Mega Putt, and Sinclair Supply gave golfers something big to aim for with the Hole-in-One contest for a brand-new truck. Sommerville Fasteners made sure everyone went home with a sleeve of golf balls, although I feel like many of these were unintentionally driven into adjoining fairways or water hazards. UBS Industries challenged golfers to Beat the Pro and Vets Sheet Metal brought some extra fun—and distance—to the day with the Air Cannon.

Thank you to Leanne for all her hard work organizing the tournament. I also need to send out a special thank you to all our volunteers who helped make the event such a success—Colleen Smith, Enza Bruno, Evan Hallman, Jessica Kirby, Joe Desantis, Lara Perraton, Mike Maloney, Linda Hiebert, and Marina Radakobic.

Through our efforts, over $7,865 was raised on the course. The SMACNA-BC Board of Directors agreed to match this amount, resulting in a donation of $15,730 for the Helping Families in Need Society. Following the tournament, Apollo Sheet Metal, Cascade Metal Design, and Summit Sheet Metal all agreed to donate another $1,000 each, resulting in a total donation of $18,730. Well done, everyone!

Thank you to all who generously supported this worthy cause.

Skill & Raffle Prize Winners:
Texas Scramble Winners

Ron DeSantis – Viaduct Sheet Metal
Kevin Taylor – EH Price Solutions
Shawn Halford – EH Price Solutions
Paul Finch – Viaduct Sheet Metal

Canal Winners

Men's Longest Drive – Jacob Mitchell
Ladies' Long Drive – Heidi Yurechko
Closest to the Pin – Quinn Mackay (hole in one)

50/50 Winner

Angela Hallahan – Vancouver Mechanical Supply

SMACNA National – Canada Mental Health Summit

SMACNA National invited contractors, workers, and industry leaders to attend the 2026 Canada Mental Health Summit—a half-day event focused on mental health awareness, reducing stigma, workplace support, and practical strategies for fostering healthier workplaces in the trades. Justin Crandol, Abbie de Pano-Sanchez, and Cody Shook all made the trip out to BC and arranged special guest speakers Geoff Moffett & Caitlin Kantor, CMHA, and Zachary Hensch, Vets Group. At the conclusion of the event, Angelo Paris of Apollo Sheet Metal presented a cheque for $5,000 to the Canadian Mental Health Association courtesy of Milwaukee Tool.

SMACNA-BC Membership Dinner Meeting – September 17, 2026, at the Civic Hotel in Surrey

Following the Canada Mental Health Summit, we hosted a dinner meeting at the Civic Hotel. Our reception was hosted on the rooftop terrace on the 22nd floor at the Civic Hotel. Once again, the weather cooperated for us. With music playing and the sun shining, the event brought out a record 82 guests.

Following the reception, SMACNA-BC was proud to present Francis Petit, P.Eng., director of engineering at VETS Sheet Metal. Francis presented his program on the important differences between industrial dust collection systems and traditional HVAC systems.

During the session, Francis discussed some of the risks associated with treating dust collection as simply "bigger HVAC," including air velocity, static pressure, duct construction, particulate transport, abrasion, and explosion risks.

The program was very well received. Thank you, Francis, for making the trip out from Toronto for us to present.

41st ANNUAL SMACNA-BC GOLF TOURNAMENT












MORE PHOTOS FROM THE TOURNAMENT

Scan the QR code to view the complete gallery.
kasselmancreative.com/SMACNA-Golf2026
Password: HVAC

ASHRAE British Columbia Chapter

SMACNA BRITISH COLUMBIA CHAPTER

Photos from the Whitecaps Game at BC Place







To see all the photos of this event please use the QR code or visit https://bit.ly/3UmZxNt

SMACNA-BC/ASHRAE BC Whitecaps Game at BC Place

We also had the pleasure of joining ASHRAE and BCICA for a Whitecaps game from the newly renovated Creekside Terrace at BC Place stadium.

Together, we had approximately 160 attendees there to enjoy a 3-0 Whitecaps win over the LA Galaxy. I would like to extend a special thank-you to Norm Grusnick of ASHRAE & PacAire for hosting this wonderful event. Special guest Carl Valentine, former Whitecap, 86er, and Canadian Soccer League legend, was on hand for a visit, photo ops, and to draw a lucky winner's name for the grand prize: a signed Thomas Mueller jersey.

Upcoming Events

Business Management – Claims & Change Orders

On November 17th, SMACNA-BC will welcome back Stephane McShane of Maxim Consulting Group to present "Change Order Management and Building the Case to Win" at the Civic Hotel in Surrey.

This program will focus on the change order process from a subcontractor's perspective, including how to recognize, scope, price, and negotiate change orders. Stephane will also discuss contract risk, documentation, claims management, and preserving your rights to improve the chances of financial recovery.

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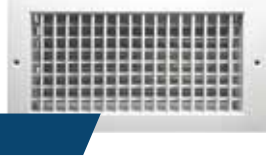
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We have heard great things about this program, which is one of the most popular courses offered by Maxim Consulting Group. The session will provide practical strategies to help contractors better manage change orders, reduce risk and protect their bottom line.

SMACNA-BC Membership Dinner Meeting

Following her daytime program, Stephane McShane will attend our dinner meeting to discuss her Change Order Management program from earlier that day and share some key takeaways.

Stephane will share practical insight into risky contract clauses, claims management, the legalities surrounding change order control, and the importance of proper documentation when disputes arise.

Stephane has been a popular speaker with SMACNA-BC members in the past, and we look forward to welcoming her back for what should be an informative and engaging evening.

SMACNA-BC Christmas Party - November 28, 2026, at the Pan Pacific Hotel, Vancouver

All year long people await the SMACNA-BC Christmas Party at the Pan Pacific Hotel, downtown Vancouver. It is the perfect chance to dress up, get together, and welcome in the holidays. This year, join SMACNA-BC contractors and their guests Saturday, November 28 at 6:30 p.m. Please remember to bring an unwrapped gift and/or donate to the Helping Families in Need Society *helpingfamiliesinneed.org* ▪

BRITISH COLUMBIA SMACNA CHAPTER

Event Calendar

2026

November 17
Business Management 2026: Claims and Change Orders

November 28
SMACNA-BC Christmas Party

2027

February 25
SMACNA-BC/ASHRAE BC Technical Standards Program 2027

March 18
Field Effectiveness: Supervisor Training

March 18 – Membership Dinner Meeting

May 26 – 58th AGM & Convention SMACNA-BC: Penticton, BC

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SMWTC APPRENTICESHIP CONTEST

Fifteen sheet metal apprentices across levels represented at the Sheet Metal Workers' Training Centre Annual Apprentice Contest, held October 24. Participants were tasked with theory, drafting, welding, and project components and brought it all together for some incredible competition among the groups.

Congrats to the contest winners:

LEVEL 1

1. Kate Wenzley Alcantara, Viaduct Sheet Metal Works Ltd.
2. Trevor Nociar, Viaduct Sheet Metal Works Ltd.
3. Cuong "Kelvin" Nguyen, Modern Niagara Building Services

LEVEL 2

1. Cameron Attwell, Ventus Sheet Metal Ltd.
2. Meagan Molloy, Viaduct Sheet Metal Works Ltd.
3. Andrea Baird, Viaduct Sheet Metal Works Ltd.

LEVEL 3

1. Alexander Prechel, Bronswerk
2. Jake Purdaby
3. Joshawa-Shawn Lucier, Ridge Sheet Metal Co.

LEVEL 4

1. Alexander Howard, Ames Metal Fabricators 82 Ltd.
2. Cindy Panduru, Modern Niagara Building Services Inc.
3. Jesus Alonso Cuadrado

The Trustees of the Sheet Metal Industry Training Board and the staff of the Sheet Metal Workers Training Centre congratulate all contestants, who represented multiple contractors, competing across four levels.

A special thank you SMWTC Head Instructor, Jake LeBlanc, for taking photos and capturing the apprentices in action.

The events drew many, many generous donations and outstanding prizes. A sincere thank you goes out to the following sponsors. This support helped make this year's Annual Apprentice Contest a memorable experience for the apprentices and added to the excitement of the day.

2026 SMWTC Apprentice Contest Sponsors:

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SMART CANADA HIGHLIGHTS CAREERS IN SHEET METAL

National Skilled Trades and Technology Week (NSTTW), November 1-7, 2026, came at an important time for Canadians considering a career in the skilled trades. Major investments in infrastructure and energy projects are driving demand for skilled trades workers across the country. As 20% of the construction workforce prepares to retire over the next decade, the skilled trades are attracting a new generation of workers eager to build rewarding careers with competitive wages, comprehensive benefits and secure pension plans.

"A lot has changed in our world over the years: technology, artificial intelligence, you name it," said SMART General President Michael Coleman. "But one thing that won't ever change is this simple fact: we need skilled trades workers to build Canada."

SMART members are doing that from coast to coast to coast, whether building new hospitals, ensuring air quality in schools, or making sure apartment and office buildings run as efficiently as possible.

"We're excited to shine a light on the many career paths available to workers in our industry during National Skilled Trades and Technology Week and beyond," Coleman added.

Construction Workforce Needs Continue to Grow

According to BuildForce Canada, the national construction unemployment rate fell to 3.8% in September 2026, the lowest level in two years, emphasizing the growing number of career pathways for Canadians interested in the skilled trades. Canada is expected to see more than 299,200 job openings in the skilled trades by 2032, driven by the need to develop critical energy and industrial infrastructure. Encouragingly, SMART Canada is already seeing strong interest from the next generation, with most new apprentices joining our trades between the ages of 20 and 24, showing growing awareness of the rewarding opportunities available.

Apprenticeships Offer a Debt-Free Path to a Rewarding Career

Apprenticeships, like those offered through SMART locals, provide the opportunity to earn while you learn, allowing apprentices to gain in-demand skills, earn a paycheque, and build a career without taking on significant student debt. This pathway is becoming increasingly attractive to young Canadians and those seeking a career change. SMART Canada also offers innovative training initiatives through its Green Future Partnership Project, allowing members to gain access to cutting-edge resources, enhanced green skills training, and a nationally recognized green certification, equipping SMART members with the knowledge to excel in an evolving construction sector.

continued on page 26

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SMACNA NATIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Field Leadership Orientation - December 7-9, 2026
Venue: Residence Inn Los Angeles Redondo Beach

Effective construction management transforms project variability into predictable success. It establishes a single, trusted source of truth where current design documentation is readily accessible. By streamlining critical workflows, it ensures submittals and RFIs are reviewed and resolved rapidly, and proactive change-order management stabilizes project scope. Ultimately, when all stakeholders collaborate in total alignment, project leaders can prevent schedule delays, cultivate safer jobsites, and maintain uncompromised build quality.

This course is specifically designed to prepare and develop the current and next-generation workforce to lead in the field with impact, protect the margin, and perform at their best every day. Participants will explore the true cost of doing business, analyzing how direct and indirect costs, as well as personnel impact the bidding process and overall competitiveness. By mastering critical operational workflows—from preconstruction and short-interval planning to production tracking and project closeout—attendees will learn how to align office and field operations to mitigate risk, build trust, and maximize organizational productivity.

Beyond project economics, this workshop delivers the practical leadership tools necessary to build and motivate high-performing teams. Leaders will learn how to establish effective communication habits and distinguish between management and true leadership. Recognizing that a team's strength relies on its well-being, the program also incorporates SMOHIT training introducing new leaders to the responsive network that supports members and their families facing mental health or chemical dependency challenges.

Webinar: Learning Journey: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures - Women in the Trades - December 10, 2026, 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Venue: Online

Join SMACNA, SMART, and ITI on December 10 at 7 p.m. EST for the next BE4ALL Learning Journey webinar: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Women in the Trades, A Joint Conversation with BE4ALL, SMART International Women's Committee, and the SMACNA Women in Leadership Committee.

For this webinar, we'll hear from a panel of women in the industry who share their unique experiences coming into—and staying in—the trades. We'll learn about obstacles faced and overcome, what has helped along the way, and hear unique stories about finding a place in the industry.

Register for these and other training and education opportunities at *smacna.org/education*

Toolbox Talk: Neurodiversity in the Workplace

BE4ALL's latest Toolbox Talk focuses on neurodiversity in the workplace and how clear communication and inclusive practices can help create safer, stronger jobsites.

The resource offers practical tips for crews, leaders and coworkers on supporting different ways of thinking, learning and communicating.

smart-union.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Toolbox-Talk-Neurodiversity.pdf ▪

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CANADIAN CONSTRUCTION A TURNING POINT IN 2027?



Economic uncertainty, major infrastructure projects, labour shortages, and emerging technolgoy will shape the year ahead.

By / Jessica Kirby

© iStock/Volodymyr Kyrylyuk

The Canadian construction industry may have arrived at a critical pivot point in 2027, were it not for the tariff situation in the United States. According to a report from Altus Group published at the end of 2025 and covering predictions for the following two years, after navigating a gruelling era defined by aggressive interest rate hikes, structural labour shortages, and unexpected geopolitical trade barriers, Canada was projected to approach 2027 as a year of stabilized recovery, strategic restructuring, and measured optimism.

The report cited macro forecasts, which said Canada's real GDP growth was expected to rebound to 1.9% in 2027. But the beginning of Q4 tells a different tale. Accounting firm Deloitte Canada has shaved 20 per cent off its growth forecast for Canada's economy in 2027, citing increasingly tough conditions for consumers and businesses, resulting from escalations in the Canada-United States trade war. The new prediction: a sharp economic slowdown in the final quarter of this year and into early 2027 and 1.6% GDP growth overall.

According to CBC news, chief economist for Deloitte, Dawn Desjardins, says the weight of billions of dollars in American tariffs and Canada's reciprocal measures will not fall evenly across the Canadian economy, hitting some sectors hard, while others prosper. At the same time, the federal government's fiscal supports, investment initiatives, and defence spending are positive signals for targeted growth.

THE NUMBERS

1.6% **Projected GDP growth for Canada in 2027** (Deloitte Canada)

1.9% **Expected real GDP growth for 2027** (Altus Group)

"For some, it's a little bit like the Earth is moving under their feet—and not in a positive way," she told CBC News in an interview. "While in other sectors, I think we can anticipate growth and job creation."

An area in which all businesses and sectors are feeling the effects of tariffs is the sluggish supply chain. Duties on Canadian lumber, steel, and industrial machinery have created nationwide material cost pressures, causing construction businesses to fundamentally shift their supply chain strategies. Gone are the days of relying on just-in-time delivery models, which are vulnerable to political crosswinds. Most sectors are learning to lengthen their lead times and embrace regionalized procurement, domestic material sourcing, and contractual clauses designed to share tariff risks between owners and contractors.

And supply chain hits will only feel magnified by megaprojects creeping into the Canadian market. While the drooping condo market and private real estate investment re-calibrate, public sector spending on large projects in civil infrastructure, utilities, and green energy will remain construction's primary anchor in 2027. BuildForce Canada says non-residential infrastructure investment is projected to rise steadily and reach its peak in 2027 before stabilizing into the next decade.

As examples, the federal government is pushing ahead with massive transit and power initiatives that will reach peak construction intensity in 2027. Key focus areas include major urban transit expansions in Ontario and British Columbia, alongside initial civil works for the planned high-frequency rail corridor connecting Quebec City and Toronto.

At the same time, Canada's clean energy transition will hit its stride with development on high-profile projects like the Ontario Power Generation (OPG) Darlington New Nuclear Project.

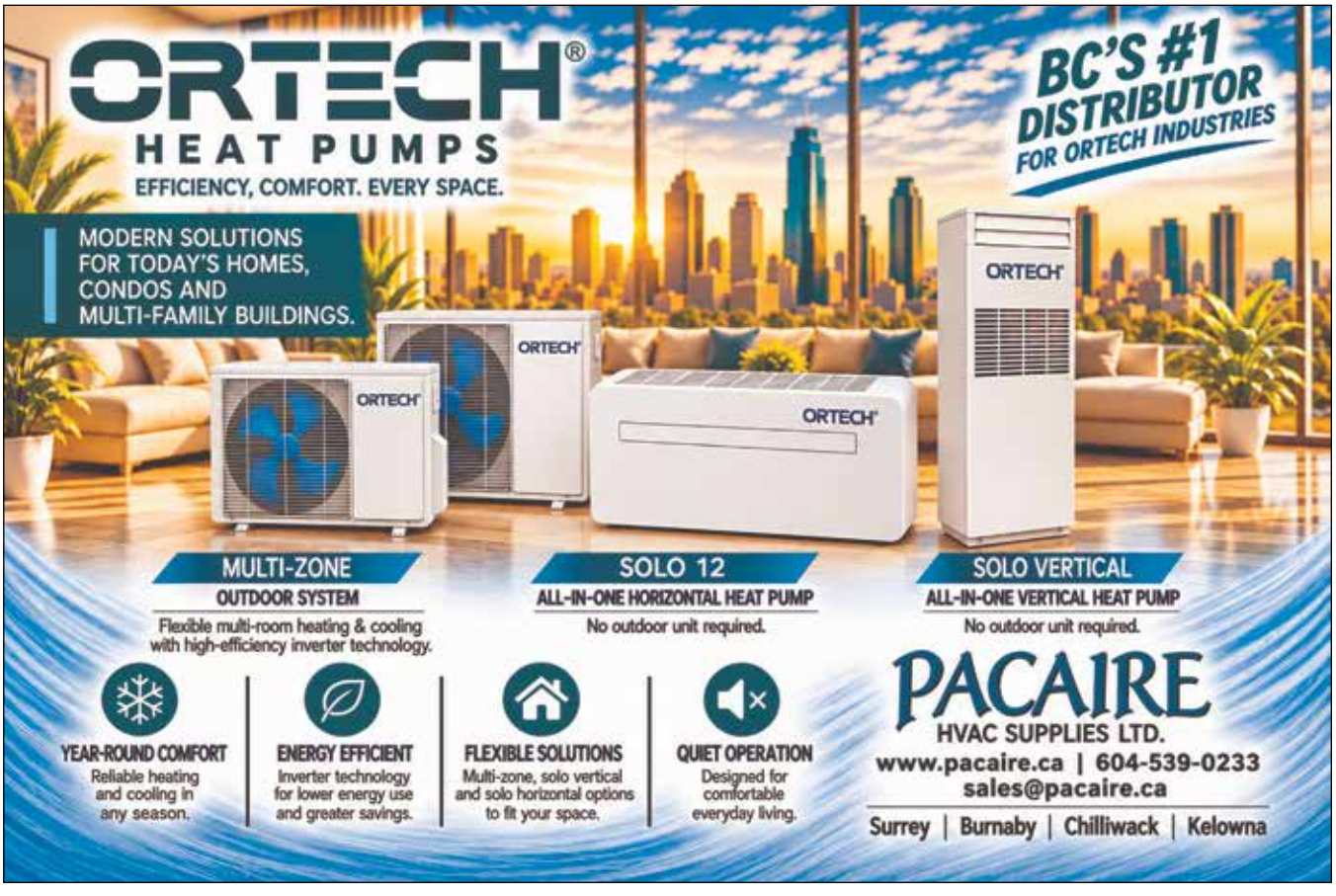
THE CHALLENGES

Tariffs
Tariffs on Canadian steel and industrial machinery

Supply Chain
Material cost pressures and a sugglish supply chain

Procurement
Need for regionalized procurement and longer lead times

Domestic Sourcing
Shift to domestic sourcing and contract clauses to share tariff risks



> ***While every province and sector of the Canadian economy is reeling from historically high job vacancy rates, the situation is even more acute for the construction sector already dealing with decades of chronic challenges in recruiting qualified workers.***

According to the Canadian Construction Association, this project is an important part of the federal government's ambitious growth plan, but it will require labour that the association isn't sure yet exists.

"While every province and sector of the Canadian economy is reeling from historically high job vacancy rates, the situation is even more acute for the construction sector already dealing with decades of chronic challenges in recruiting qualified workers," says a report on the CCA website. "The federal government is no stranger to the skilled labour shortage our industry is facing. Construction employs 1.5 million people, and our industry will need to fill hundreds of thousands of jobs by 2028 brought on by shifting demographics and a spate of retirements."

The construction industry continues to struggle to fill indispensable jobs that are essential to building crucial infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, power generation, roads, and bridges. Plans for these types of projects are at risk of delay or cancellation.

CCA points to the Talent Fits Here (*talentfitshere.com*) public awareness campaign, developed to inspire a new generation of trades workers.

"We are also actively seeking out immigrants and temporary foreign workers as a way to alleviate retirements and an ongoing skills shortage that will result in over 300,000 jobs needing to be filled by 2028," the CCA adds. "It is these individuals who will help drive diversity, inclusion, creativity, and innovation to the sector."

While Canadian construction grapples with this acute workforce deficit, technological adoption in 2027 is transforming from a luxury into an operational necessity. A CCA survey reported that 90% of Canadian construction leaders cite digital tools as vital for boosting productivity amid labour shortages. Facing the possibility that headcount alone cannot satisfy Canada's infrastructure demands, some firms are leveraging technology as a force multiplier to optimize jobsite productivity and compress timelines.

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A major component of this trend is the evolution of Building Information Modeling (BIM) into full-scale Digital Twins. That means construction teams use real-time cloud data to create living digital replicas of their projects, rather than simple 3D models.

Digital twins integrate with on-site IoT sensors to track material staging and predict logistical bottlenecks. Concurrently, AI-driven project management software has started to mature, showing promise in how machine learning algorithms reliably re-sequence tasks in real time based on supply chain disruptions, weather patterns, or other factors.

Physical automation is also reshaping the jobsite, with innovations in modular construction and advanced prefabrication. In some applications, these processes are assisted or even completed using complex mechanical and electrical assemblies, and on-site, autonomous robotic layout tools are taking over repetitive, labour-intensive tasks.

Rather than replace human workers, these systems are designed to change the training requirements for the current workforce and help attract younger, tech-savvy workers to the trades.



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Further reading:

Altus Group Canadian Cost Guide & Insights: Industry benchmark data mapping regional cost variances, material pricing stabilization, and tariff impacts across Canadian markets.

BuildForce Canada Construction & Maintenance Reports: Long-term laboru market insights highlighting the 2027 infrastructure investment peak and the compounding retirement crisis.

Canadian Construction Association Technology Report: Statistics on the acceleration of AI, BIM, and prefabricated modular construction to counter labor headwinds. ▪

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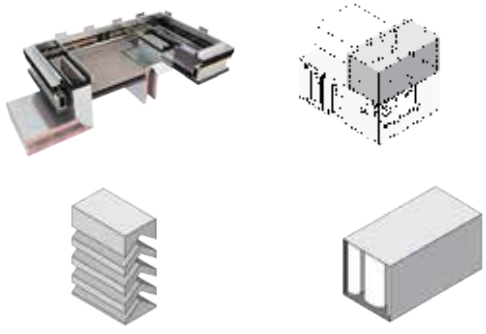
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INDUSTRIAL:
Rethinking Project Management

How to know when it's time to upgrade a from a patchwork of manual tools to a disciplined, digital backbone



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By / SMACNA National | *smacna.org*

How to know when it's time to upgrade from a patchwork of manual tracking tools to a disciplined, digital backbone.

Project management systems are becoming mission-critical infrastructure for industrial sheet metal and HVAC contractors because the complexity, risk, and speed of today's work have outgrown spreadsheets and paper.

"When does manual job tracking become a liability? When costs and quality problems escalate, meetings expose problems, and claims and change orders rise."

Unfortunately, construction has historically lagged other industries in digital adoption, with a significant share of contractors still relying on spreadsheets, whiteboards, and paper-based workflows for planning and tracking. But adoption is accelerating under pressure from tighter margins, more complex projects, and workforce shortages.

Graham Corsar, who was previously a project manager but now works with contractors as an account executive at Trimble Inc., a construction technology company, argues that the real question isn't whether you need a project management tool, but whether your existing system can survive as industrial work continues advancing.

One Mistake Could Eliminate Your Profit Margin

On a multi-million-dollar industrial job, an HVAC or sheet metal contractor is often living on a 5% to 10% margin, where $50,000 to $100,000 can vanish with one mistake: one missed change order, one shop error, a misread spec, late material, or a crew installing from the wrong drawing.

Industrial work magnifies that risk. Large air handlers, extensive duct runs, specialty metals, and complex supports mean material is a major cost driver, and much of it is ordered early, long before the last RFI is resolved. Add in aggressive schedules, tightly sequenced trades, and code inspections that can shut down a floor, and a contractor's financial outcome is inseparable from how projects are planned, tracked, and documented day to day.

For many industrial shops, the system is a patchwork: estimating software feeding into Excel, hand-marked shop tickets, email chains, and shared drives. "Your company already is the project management system," Corsar argues.

Corsar breaks that system into three elements—people, processes, and tools—and insists that software sits firmly in last place.

- **People:** project managers, coordinators, detailers, foremen, fabricators and their experience, judgment, and willingness to communicate bad news early.
- **Processes:** how change orders are captured, how RFIs are logged and answered, how drawings are issued and superseded, how labor is tracked and compared against budget.

- **Tools:** the actual platforms that hold drawings, budgets, time sheets, RFIs, submittals, and photos.

"A new platform that just recreates the same bad habits in the cloud will not save a single dollar of margin," he insists.

When Manual Tracking Becomes a Liability

The contractors who most urgently need a structured project management system often have the most reason to believe they can get by without one. The crews are seasoned, the estimator knows the market, and the shop has its own rhythm. But Corsar asks them to look for three warning signs that show they can no longer operate without a better system:

- **Too many surprises.** Costs, quality problems, schedule slips, or scope gaps keep blindsiding the project team. This equates to project managers being surprised more than once a week, executives more than once a month, and ownership more than once a quarter, Corsar says, signaling that the system isn't surfacing risk early enough.

- **Progress reports that require a meeting.** In many sheet metal shops, job status still comes together in a monthly ritual: someone gathers timecards, pulls the latest PO log, requests updated fabrication status, hunts through email for change approvals, and then walks it all into a conference room. If there are no automated reports or dashboards, you are using meetings "to find out about problems, not to solve them," Corsar says.

- **Claims and change orders that leak value.** If the value of missed or incomplete claims is more than 25% of your margin or if no one can say how much is missing, the contractor is effectively donating profit to the general contractor or owner. In industrial HVAC work, where scope creep often hides in "small" extra runs or rework tied to other trades, that leakage can define an entire year's results.

DID YOU KNOW

5-10%
typical margin on industrial projects

$50-100K
could be lost through one mistake

When all three indicators show up on the same jobs, Corsar says the problem is not "bad luck;" it is the project management system itself, and spreadsheets are part of the problem.

Who Actually Needs Project Management Software?

Corsar doesn't pretend every contractor needs a heavyweight project management platform tomorrow. Instead, he challenges



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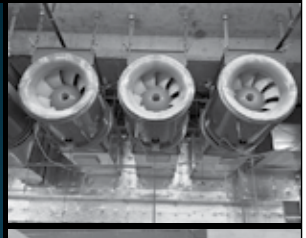
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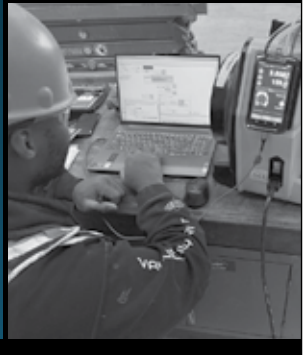
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firms to ask what they are really trying to fix and to focus first on process.

An integrated project management system can force changes through one documented path: an RFI or change request is logged, the model or drawing is updated, the shop status is changed, new assemblies are tagged, and the cost and schedule impact are attached to that specific event. That is how a contractor turns what used to be unbilled chaos into a billable, defensible change.

For very small shops—fewer than ten people—the question is stability. If jobs are small, scopes simple, and changes rare, a modest digital backbone paired with disciplined processes may be enough. But if even one or two industrial scale jobs a year can push the company to the edge with complex coordination, multiple vendors, and long lead times, that is a sign that more structured project management is no longer optional; it is insurance.

For mid-sized contractors—those with multiple foremen, a dedicated project manager or two, and a real backlog—the tipping points are usually:

- Repeated disputes over extra work, especially when documentation lives in texts and unsaved photos.
- Chronic re-entry of data from field to office—time sheets, quantities, change logs—that burns out staff and still produces inconsistent numbers.
- Difficulty answering basic questions in real time: Where is this job versus budget? Which change orders are approved? How much labour have we really spent on this level?

For larger firms, Corsar argues, the question is not, "Do we need a project management system?" but, "Is the one we have working like it should?" Overhead (office salaries, software, infrastructure, and the unplanned costs of rework and missed claims) is already functioning as project management spend; the only choice is whether that spend produces visibility and control or just more noise.

How to Decide on Project Management System Software

When a contractor decides that "something has to change," Corsar's advice is to focus on four areas to keep the project management software decision grounded.

1. **Budget.** This means understanding not just license fees, but what you already spend on people who are doing manual project management: tracking hours, copying data, chasing signatures, re-entering quantities, and fixing billing errors. That cost often dwarfs the software line item.
2. **Authority.** Who really decides what project management tool can work best for the company? For a sheet

THREE ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS

1 People
Experienced teams who communicate issues early.

2 Processes
Defined workflows for change orders, RFIs and tracking.

3 Software
The right software to bring it all together.

metal contractor, that may mean bringing in the shop superintendent and the most skeptical field foreman before any contract is signed.

3. **Need.** Are you shopping for cost control, productivity, decision speed, or risk management? If the "need cannot be explained in a single sentence that makes sense to the ultimate decision maker," he warns, "you probably aren't clear on what you're buying."

4. **Timing.** "System change takes 12 to 24 months," Corsar says, and contractors should not let anyone convince them it can be done faster. For industrial HVAC and sheet metal shops juggling live jobs, that means planning a rollout that respects bid seasons, shutdown windows, and critical project milestones.

Processes First, Tools Second

Corsar's most practical advice to industrial contractors is also the least glamorous: fix your processes before you pick your platform. He stresses that "good process can make up for shortcomings in tools and people," and warns, "if you don't have good processes, stop" before you sign any software contract.

That might mean standardizing how markups become formal change orders with a clear path from foreman sketch to priced, approved scope. It might also mean defining a single source of truth for drawings and models, so no crew is ever building off an obsolete PDF taped to a gang box. And it could even mean setting a consistent way to tie labor and material codes back to estimating templates, so job cost feedback improves future bids.

Only once those processes are clear does the choice of tool become meaningful. Industrial HVAC and sheet metal contractors do not need another project management tool so much as they need a system that lets their people see risk early, defend their work, and protect the thin slice of margin that keeps the shop lights on. As Corsar says, "The software is only the part you can install; the rest is the company you are willing to change." ▪





I've Been Collecting All This Data. Now What?

Effective data management is the foundation of any successful data-driven initiative.

By / SMACNews | *smacna.org*

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Before diving in deep to see what insightful nuggets lie in this goldmine, there are some best practices to ensure that historical data is managed efficiently and used effectively in projects

I used to be a larger proponent of the single source of truth, the centralized platform or cloud-based solution for data storage and management to ensure that all historical data is accessible from a single location, facilitating easy retrieval and analysis. While centralized platforms also provide a unified view of the project, enabling better coordination among different teams and stakeholders, they may not always be feasible, or the infrastructure may not lend itself to this structure. Another option is to leverage APIs and other communication tools to connect systems together provided there are adequate keys in the data to relate the information from one source to another. This allows the data to reside where you created it, but also makes it easily accessible

For intensive data work, there is often a need to pull the data into one pool. Standardizing data formats is crucial for ensuring compatibility and ease of analysis. Without standardization, data from different sources can be inconsistent, making it difficult to draw meaningful insights.

This leads us to quality assurance. Implementing data quality assurance measures, such as regular audits and validation checks, can help maintain data integrity.

Machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance data standardization and quality assurance by automating the processes of identifying, correcting and standardizing data discrepancies. ML algorithms can analyze vast datasets to detect patterns and inconsistencies, ensuring that data conforms to predefined standards. AI-powered tools can continuously monitor data quality, flagging anomalies and suggesting corrections in real-time. This automation reduces

the manual effort required for data cleaning and validation, enabling the maintenance of high-quality data consistently.

Once data is collected, the next step is to analyze it to extract valuable insights. This is where data analytics and Business Intelligence tools come into play.

Descriptive analytics involves analyzing historical data to understand past performance and identify trends. This can mean reviewing data on project timelines, labour hours, and material costs to determine what went well and what could be improved. Descriptive analytics provides a foundation for making informed decisions.

Predictive analytics uses historical data to forecast future outcomes. Identifying patterns and trends in past projects can help predict potential issues and opportunities in upcoming projects.

Prescriptive analytics goes a step further by not only predicting outcomes but also suggesting actions to achieve desired results. This involves using advanced algorithms and machine learning models to recommend the best courses of action. Prescriptive analytics can provide actionable insights on optimizing resource allocation, scheduling, and procurement.

Analyzing data from previous projects develops more accurate project schedules. Understanding how long specific tasks take and identifying potential bottlenecks helps create realistic timelines that minimize delays and ensure timely project completion.

Historical data can turn past projects into a roadmap for future success.

Historical data on material and labour costs can inform more accurate project cost estimates and budgets. Understanding past spending patterns can enable the development of budgets that are more realistic.

Labour productivity and material usage data can optimize resource allocation. Identifying which resources are most effective for specific tasks can ensure the right people and materials are in the right place at the right time, maximizing productivity and minimizing waste.

Historical data can also be used to enhance quality control and risk management efforts.

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Data Collection Cheat Sheet

Organize and Connect Your Data
Inventory your historial data, identify where it lives and determine how different sources can be connected reliably.

Standardize and Clean Your Data
Establish consistent data formats, naming conventions, units, and categories. Identify and address missing, duplicate, or inconsistent records.

Analyze Historical Project Performance
Use data analytics of BI tools to review product timelines, labour hours, material costs, and productivity.

Develop Predictive and Prescriptive Insights
Use clean, accurate data to forecast future outcomes and recommend the best courses of action.

Apply Insights to Project Planning and Execution
Improve schedules, reduce bottlenecks, and optimize costs, labour, and material planning.

Monitor Results and Continuously Improve
Track KPIs, compare actual results to forecasts, and refine your approach over time.

Six steps to making the most of your data collection:

1. Organize and Connect Your Data

The most important first step: Inventory the historical data you already have, identify where it lives, and determine whether the different sources can be connected reliably. This will establish what analysis is possible and where data cleanup or integration work is needed. From there, you can determine whether a centralized data platform or connected systems are the best fit. If centralizing, establish a shared location for storing and accessing data, and if keeping separate systems, identify APIs or integration tools to connect them. Don't forget to establish a teachable process for retrieving and combining data when needed.

2. Standardize and Clean Your Data

Establish consistent data formats, naming conventions, units, and categories, while identifying missing, duplicate, or inconsistent records. Check historical data for anomalies or errors and address or correct these before analysis. Moving forward, implement regular data audits and validation checks. Explore AI and machine learning tools to automate these tasks, but commit to on-going, human-powered data quality monitoring procedures.

3. Analyze Historical Project Performance

Select appropriate data analytics or Business Intelligence (BI) tools and begin the process of analyzing past project timelines, labour hours, material costs, and productivity. Be on the lookout

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for historical trends, recurring issues, and successful practices, and be mindful of planned versus actual project performance. Document and track your findings over time and watch for improvement opportunities.

4. Develop Predictive and Prescriptive Insights

Once the historical data is clean, correct, and analyzed, use it to forecast future project timelines, costs, and resource needs. But be flexible. Watch for patterns that indicate potential delays or risks and prepare to pivot as necessary. Evaluate and revise predictive analytics or machine learning models, and watch for opportunities to improve scheduling, procurement, and resource allocation.

5. Apply Insights to Project Planning and Execution

Bring this work together with a concrete plan to improve project schedules, alleviate recurring bottlenecks, and stay on top of realistic scheduling. In doing so, the company should be able to improve cost estimates and budgets, optimize labour assignments, and improve material planning and procurement while reducing waste.

6. Monitor Results and Continuously Improve

Once the plan is in place, measurable KPIs and an on-going monitoring program will help track actual project results against data-driven forecasts and recommendations. Review predicted and actual outcomes and update or revise the plan as necessary.



Over time, the analytical model and decision-making process associated with this data should improve and become more refined. ▪

This article appeared in SMACNews on September 17, 2026. Read it at smacna.org/news/smacnews/issue-archive/issue/articles/smacnews-july-aug-2026/i-ve-been-collecting-all-this-data.-now-what

The Six Steps sidebar was created by Sheet Metal Journal *staff.*



DUCTS: THE CRITICAL LINK IN ENERGY EFFICIENT HVAC SYSTEMS



By Norm Grusnick, PEng
Commercial Sales Rep, PACAIRE
HVAC Suppliers Ltd.

We live in an era where sustainability and energy efficiency are becoming increasingly important. Green building certifications are a testament to a building's environmental performance, and energy efficient HVAC duct systems significantly impact a building's energy consumption, indoor air quality, and overall environmental footprint.

The intent of the green initiatives is to encourage the use of energy efficient products and practices that also have a positive impact on the environment. This concept has expanded to include all energy used to create products and deliver them to the jobsite.

Energy efficiency has a direct link with the environment because for every kilowatt hour of electricity that buildings consume, there is a measurable amount of pollution emitted into the atmosphere.

Every aspect of a construction project is under closer scrutiny today, especially the HVAC system, which is often the single largest energy consuming component in a building. The HVAC industry, ASHRAE, and national and local codes are pushing for energy improvements – and there are real opportunities for those who endeavor to find new ways to capitalize on it.

New legislation has resulted in the development of higher-efficiency HVAC equipment and higher SEER ratings, but poor installations cause equipment to work harder and run longer—often reducing the very efficiency we are trying to attain.

Proper duct design is critical to HVAC performance, yet far too many projects do not maximize the positive effect created by good duct design practices. While a bad duct system may deliver air to the conditioned space, it increases the static pressure losses, which lowers the system efficiency and cheats the building owner out of the performance and value that they paid for.

When it comes to proper ductwork design and installations there is a wide range of factors that can impact the system. Here are four common mistakes that can affect HVAC system performance along with suggestions for good practice.

Selecting less efficient duct materials: Flexible duct is the least expensive duct material to purchase and install but is also by far the least efficient. Even when installed correctly, flexible duct has twice the static pressure loss of round metal duct. With installation of proper wye fittings and other components in accordance with SMACNA duct construction standards, the most efficient duct system can be installed.

Using load averages instead of proper load calculations: If designers use load averages such as CFM/sq. ft. instead of accurate load calculation, they may oversize or undersize the equipment and/or ductwork. In addition, load averaging does not account for various climate zones. Accurate calculations by a qualified industry professional should always be done to guarantee a properly designed HVAC system.

Inadequately sizing ducts: Ducts should be sized in accordance with ASHRAE guidelines and other recognized authorities. Airflow and pressure loss measurements should be made by the testing and balancing contractor and reviewed by the engineer to see that all the intended efficient design criteria are met. If not, have it redone properly.

Failing to design and install to maximize system performance: The most efficient ducts are straight, smooth, and short. Sections of flexible duct that are used should be stretched tight; failure to do this will compress the core and dramatically increase static pressure losses. The design focus should always be on

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SMACNA-BC / SMART Local 280 Partnership



Left: Jud Martell, Local Union No. 280 President.
Right: Angelo Paris, Apollo Sheet Metal Ltd., SMACNA-BC President.

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3 BENCHMARKING METRICS EVERY CONTRACTOR SHOULD TRACK THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

By Ronald J. Eagar, CPA, CCIFP

Sometimes, success is best measured in relative terms.

With outside forces such as material costs, inflation, and market conditions influencing results from one quarter to the next, it can be challenging for contractors to maintain a consistent view of performance.

Benchmarking provides that needed point of reference by measuring performance against industry standards and peer results. When reviewed quarterly or even monthly, the following three benchmarks can provide a clearer view of where your business stands today, whether performance trends are moving in the right direction, and potentially where you could make some operational changes to improve results.

1. Gross Profit Margin

Gross profit margin is one of the first metrics many contractors check after a job is completed, but it deserves attention throughout the year. It is calculated as (Net Revenue – Cost of Revenue) ÷ Net Revenue.

A high margin indicates that work is being delivered at or below the expected cost, reflecting strong estimating and disciplined scope management. This benchmark varies significantly by market and trade; general contractors often report margins in the mid-teens, while some specialty subcontractors perform above that range.

Tracking this metric regularly enables contractors to spot erosion early and make corrections while there is still time to course-correct on active work.

2. Current Ratio

The current ratio measures a contractor's ability to cover short-term obligations with short-term resources. It is calculated as Current Assets ÷ Current Liabilities and is a key metric for lenders and sureties evaluating credit strength and bonding capacity.

A ratio above 1.1 is generally considered a baseline for financial stability. The quick ratio, which excludes less liquid assets like underbillings, retainage, and prepaid costs, provides additional context. A widening gap between the current ratio and the quick ratio may indicate that working capital is tied up in assets that may not convert to cash quickly when needed.

Understanding how liquidity is measured and reviewed by lenders and sureties can facilitate more productive conversations about bonding capacity, especially because certain balance-sheet items may be treated differently for underwriting purposes than in internal financial reporting.

3. Backlog-To-Equity

Backlog is a positive indicator of pipeline depth, but it should never grow faster than the equity supporting it. The backlog-to-equity ratio measures the amount of contracted work a company is carrying relative to its capital base, calculated as Total Backlog ÷ Total Equity.

A commonly referenced industry guideline is 20 or below. Ratios above this level indicate that growth is outpacing capitalization, potentially putting additional pressure on the balance sheet. When reviewed alongside debt-to-equity and underbillings-to-equity, this metric helps show whether growth is being financed by equity or increased reliance on leverage.

Contractors should also consider the gross profit embedded in backlog and how many months of general and administrative expenses it covers to support upcoming work.

Why Consistent Review of Benchmarking Matters

Benchmarking is about understanding where your particular business stands. These metrics can change incrementally, making early signs of pressure easy to overlook if reviews happen only at year-end.

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INDUSTRY NEWS

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Federal Investments Supporting the Next Generation of Tradespeople

Federal investments are also helping strengthen recruitment and training opportunities. Recent initiatives include an $8 billion investment in skilled trades and workforce development, along with financial incentives for employers hiring first-year apprentices and grants of up to $400 per week for apprentices attending in-class training.

"Canada needs more skilled trades workers than ever before, and there has never been a better time to start a career in the sheet metal or roofing industries," said SMART Canada Director of Canadian Affairs Jack Wall. "We have apprentices entering our industry today who are gaining hands-on experience on major projects and advancing into leadership roles as forepersons, building long-term careers with growth opportunities every step of the way. With industry-leading training, and 21 locals across Canada, SMART is providing the next generation with the opportunity to earn while they learn, develop lifelong skills, and build a secure future."

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At SMART Canada, our 17,000 members work on everything from HVAC systems and architectural sheet metal to roofing systems, industrial construction, and major infrastructure projects. Members develop valuable skills while enjoying workplace protections and long-term career stability. For Canadians seeking a career that offers purpose, security, growth, and the opportunity to help build a more sustainable future, the skilled trades aren't an alternative, they're a first choice. ▪

ENGINEER'S DESK

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performance. Proper sizing and installation of a duct system is essential to maximize system performance. This is what the client is expecting.

Funding and programs from organizations such as NRCan and Live Smart are available to help develop and promote energy-efficient HVAC practices. HVAC designers and installers who use good practices will come up with systems that use the least amount of energy/CFM, thus enabling the greenest and most energy efficient solution for a particular HVAC system. ▪

CONTRACTORS' ADVICE

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Contractors who track these benchmarks monthly or quarterly and discuss them regularly with financial advisors are better positioned to adjust pricing, tighten billing practices, and manage capital proactively. Over time, this discipline improves financial visibility and supports stronger, more informed decision-making. ▪

For more information, please contact Ronald J. Eagar, CPA, CCIFP, Chief Operating Officer and Partner at Grassi, at reagar@grassiadvisors.com or 516-336-2460.

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