

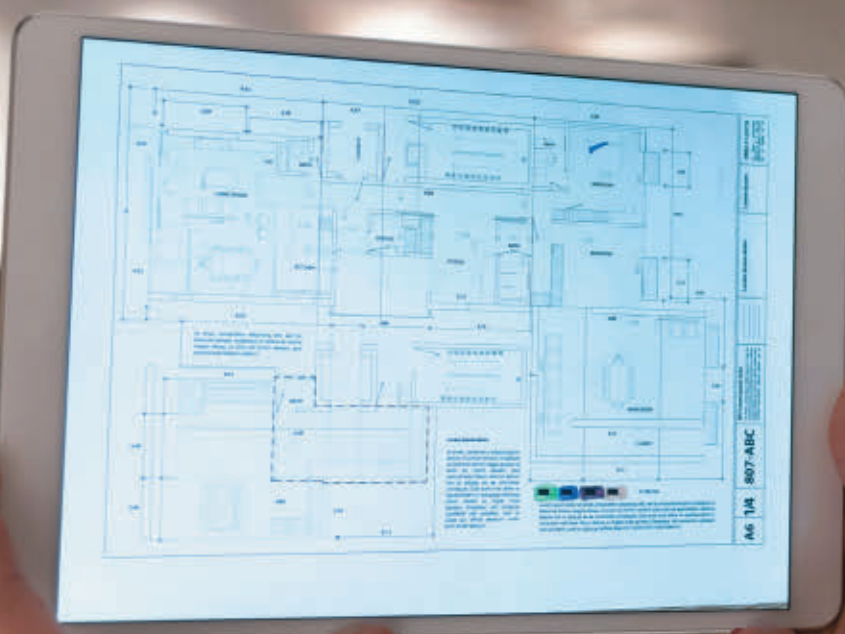
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# YARDSTICK

ISSUE 4 | AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2019



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# YARDSTICK



## [contents]

### WRLA ADVOCATES

- 7 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- 9 UPDATE FROM THE MEMBER SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS DEPARTMENT
- 11 WRLA ADVOCACY BULLETIN 3
- 12 WRLA MEETS WITH CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER ANDREW SCHEER
- 37 CHAIR'S MESSAGE

### WRLA CONNECTS

- 13 CALENDAR OF EVENTS
- 15 FIFTH ANNUAL RIDE THROUGH THE ROCKIES
- 17 BUYING GROUP PROFILE: Sexton Group
- 19 MEMBER PROFILE: Seljax
- 22 WELCOME TO WINNIPEG: Manitoba's Capital Will Host the 2021 to 2023 WRLA Buying Show

### WRLA EDUCATES

- 24 FEATURE: Effective Merchandising and Store Design for the LBM Industry
- 28 STORE PROFILE: Olympic Building Centre
- 30 FEATURE: 3 Simple Ways to Generate More Impulse Sales from Your Retail Space
- 32 SAFETY: All Hands In: Hand Health and Safety Awareness
- 33 SAFETY: SCSA Fall Protection Tour Demonstrates Safety



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# Engage with Team WRLA

*By Liz Kovach, President, WRLA*

**IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE** that summer is almost over, which means that the Manitoba provincial election will soon be upon us and the federal election will be just around the corner.

We've been working hard to get in front of electoral candidates provincially and federally to ensure that our industry is on the radar of each of the political parties. Increasing industry awareness is important when decisions are being made on tariffs, trade agreements, and government policies that will impact members in our industry and their ability to run their businesses successfully.

In this edition of the magazine, you will have the opportunity to read updates on our government relations activities, including a brief recap of our meeting with the Hon. Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. We will continue to send out our monthly Advocacy Bulletins to keep you up to date on our activities and progress. If you are not currently a recipient of these Bulletins, please drop me a line so that I can add you to our distribution list and make past issues accessible to you.

The WRLA has a large membership base that we want to continue to grow and leverage so that we can continue to **ADVOCATE, CONNECT, EDUCATE**. We will continue to support and protect the interests of our members and the industry to government, agencies, and the general public.

To ensure that we can continue to expand upon our work we also need to make sure we are attracting members. Along that line, we will be conducting a membership drive and offering a referral incentive. More information can be found on page 9.

A couple of important deadlines to keep in mind:

- Booth registration closes in less than 60 days so if you haven't booked your booth contact Jess prior to October 31, 2019 at [buyingshow@wrla.org](mailto:buyingshow@wrla.org) to register.
- Dealer registration opens in September; take advantage of our early bird pricing for badges, which ends on November 15, 2019.



Finally, special thank you to all those members that support our volunteer committees, initiatives, and golf tournaments. Member engagement is critical to advance progress and I look forward to our new and continued partnerships in the coming months.

Stay tuned for more opportunities to engage with the WRLA! **»**



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# Update from the Member Services and Solutions Department

*By Erin Lubinski, Member Services and Solutions Manager, WRLA*

**AS THE NEWEST ADDITION** to the WRLA team, I am taking this moment to introduce myself and review some of the key priorities that I will be focusing on over the course of the next year. For those of you that have already met me, you will know that I have a lot of energy that comes from my passion for the industry.

Having spent the past nine years working in the industry, I have had the opportunity to connect with many WRLA members and I look forward to fostering our relationship and working toward the betterment of the industry.

If we haven't met yet, I am excited to work with you and will be reaching out to set up visits as I start planning my road trips for the fall.

On a personal level, I love to keep active with workouts, jogging with my dogs, playing various sports, and being the number one fan in all of my kids' sports activities. My husband and I also keep busy maintaining our two acres south of Winnipeg.

## UPCOMING PRIORITIES

After reviewing member feedback and strategic plans, the following key areas will be a part of my focus:

- Member visits and recruitment.
- Education course development and delivery.
- Increasing industry profile through the rebrand and refocus of NexGEN.



## MEMBER VISITS AND RECRUITMENT

One of the best ways to understand your business needs is through conversation and to gain a better understanding I will be hitting the road and scheduling member visits in the fall. Each of you have your own stories to tell and I want to hear those stories.

The WRLA is here to serve the needs and promote the common interests of the LBM industry. By gaining a better understanding of your accomplishments and barriers, we can do just that.

The WRLA as a not-for-profit member-based association gains its strength from its membership. There are many benefits to being a WRLA member, one of which is being represented at the provincial and federal government levels. As we continue to grow our advocacy efforts, we need to continue expanding our member community and reach.

To ensure that we can continue to expand our programming and impact, we also need to ensure we are attracting members. We will be conducting a membership drive and offering a referral incentive.

For every successful referral, the WRLA will provide you with a Visa gift card to spend as you wish.

This referral promotion started in July and will run through to the end of the year. There is power in numbers and I thank you in advance for helping to keep our membership diverse and extensive.

## EDUCATION COURSES AND DELIVERY

As we work toward enhancing our educational offerings, we are excited to expand our education to distance learning through webinars starting in the fall. We understand that travel for courses can sometimes be difficult and offering professional development in



**WRLA Webinar  
Series for Members**

bite-sized installments through webinars will be a new approach.

Some of the topic areas include marketing your business through social media, human resources, business succession, etc. If there are specific topics or issues that you would like to see added to our webinar series, please let me know.

The WRLA Fundamentals of the Building Supply Industry is entering its second season starting in October. Thank you to members that have signed up their new hires for the course. We do hope this course will become the standard for new hires and will continue to promote the course publicly to attract talent into the industry.

We are also expanding our Education Committee so if you'd like to make impact in this area, we would be happy to have you join our committee.

## INCREASING INDUSTRY PROFILE THROUGH THE REBRAND AND REFOCUS OF NEXGEN

As you may have read in a previous issue, members of the WRLA came



together to develop a strategy for the NexGEN program.

With the aging work force, attracting new talent into the industry is a priority and in the coming months we will be working toward implementation so stay tuned!

I look forward to meeting each one of you in the upcoming months. We have some exciting events and golf tournaments organized in Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. I hope to see you there. »



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# WRLA Advocacy Bulletin 3

## DEAR WRLA MEMBERS,

My apologies for this Bulletin being a little delayed, however I wanted to update you on a few things:

1. Our Advocacy and Government Relations Action Plan leading up to the federal election.
2. The key messages we will be delivering to federal politicians over the coming months.
3. Details of my recent trip to Ottawa to meet with like-minded organizations that have many of the same objectives as we have, and to share ideas on plans leading up to the election and explore ways in which we can collaborate with these organizations in order to fully maximize our effectiveness on your behalf.

## OUR ADVOCACY AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ACTION PLAN

- We will communicate directly with those preparing major party platforms in order to highlight those issues which are most important to our sector and to you, our members.
- We will facilitate our members communicating directly with major party candidates in their ridings prior to the federal election.
- We will encourage some of our members to meet with and present our priorities directly to some of the key candidates in the coming election.
- We will prepare all materials necessary to make these tasks as simple and effective as possible. (e.g. letters, PowerPoint presentations, etc.).
- We will produce opinion pieces that can be submitted by our members for insertion in their local daily and weekly newspapers across our regions, again highlighting those issues which are most important to you our members.
- And, we will keep you apprised of our progress by producing monthly Advocacy Bulletins, such as this one, in the lead up the October federal election.

## KEY MESSAGES WE WILL BE DELIVERING TO FEDERAL POLITICIANS

1. **Eco-housing Tax Credit:** Few deny that climate change is real and having an increasingly negative impact on our quality of life. The WRLA's view is that to help deal with climate change; to tackle the underground economy head on (and create some additional tax revenue); to provide a much needed boost to the construction sector; and, to assist Canadians in upgrading Canada's existing housing stock, **an Eco-housing tax credit should be implemented** using the EnerGuide Rating System.
2. **Modified Stress Test:** The Stress Test needn't be scrapped but should be updated for non-insured mortgages. The update would apply a higher stress rate to open and short duration mortgages and a lower one for those of longer duration with locked in rates.
3. **Mortgage Rules:** It's estimated that the June 2012 reduction of maximum amortization for insured mortgages from 30 to 25 years has annually eliminated an estimated 20,000 potential first-time home buyers from the market. The WRLA's view is that for qualified first-time home buyers, the federal government should reinstate amortization periods of up to 30 years for insured mortgages.

## OTTAWA MEETINGS JUNE 25 AND 26

During a recent trip to Ottawa at the end of June, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of three national organizations whose members share many of the

*Continued on page 12*



Liz Kovach and Rodrigue Gilbert, VP of Public Affairs with the Canadian Construction Association.



Liz Kovach and Kevin Lee, CEO of the Canadian Home Builders' Association.



Liz Kovach and Linda Kristal, VP Advocacy, and Dina McNeil, Director Government Relations, with the Canadian Real Estate Association.

# WRLA Meets with Conservative Party Leader Andrew Scheer

By Liz Kovach, President, WRLA, and Director Prairie Provinces, Building Material Council Canada

**ON TUESDAY, JULY 9,** Andy Boha of Fries Tallman Lumber, Past WRLA Board Chair Mark Westrum, current WRLA Chair Tom Bell, and I had a positive meeting with Conservative Party of Canada leader, Andrew Scheer (MP for Regina-Qu'Appelle).



He is aware of the many challenges faced by our industry in Western Canada, and appeared to be in agreement with many of the policy changes we propose to deal with these challenges.

We discussed the need to make adjustments to the stress test. Mr. Scheer says that while the stress test may have helped deal with unique challenges in larger cities such as Vancouver and Toronto, it's had a negative impact elsewhere. He feels this is another case where we can't have a one-size-fits-all approach to a particular challenge.

Mr. Scheer was also receptive to the idea of an eco tax credit and while he couldn't commit to anything prematurely, he encouraged us to look for specifics on this in the Conservative Party election platform once released. As for the details on such a program, Mr. Scheer made it clear his party would consult with industry on the final parameters of the program and collected our contact information for future consultation.

In closing, we were appreciative of the meeting we had with Mr. Scheer in addition and the constructive discussion was mutually beneficial on these important public policy issues.

We assured Mr. Scheer that we would be following up with key Conservative Party staff on the party platform and with numerous conservative MPs and party candidates across our region.

This meeting was the first we had among the federal parties and we will continue to keep you updated on the outcomes of those meetings as well.

If you or members of your staff team are interested in supporting our government relations initiatives, please contact me so that we can discuss next steps at [lkovach@wrla.org](mailto:lkovach@wrla.org) or 204-770-2416. »

*Continued from page 11*

same challenges and objectives of our WRLA members.

I met with Kevin Lee, CEO of the Canadian Homebuilders' Association; Rodrigue Gilbert, VP of Public Affairs with the Canadian Construction Association; and Linda Kristal, VP Advocacy, and Dina McNeil, Director Government Relations, both with the Canadian Real Estate Association. In each of these meetings, it was made very clear that, among other issues, they intend to be very active in pushing for changes, such as changes to the stress test, a return to 30-year mortgages, and some type of housing tax

credit, all intended to stimulate increased activity in the housing market across Canada.

In all meetings, we agreed to continue talking and working closely with these organizations (and others) to enhance our chances of success in convincing federal politicians of the urgent need to address these important issues, immediately after the next federal election.

I trust you're finding this information useful. Should you have any questions, comments or suggestions, please feel free to pass them along to me at 204-770-2416 or [lkovach@wrla.org](mailto:lkovach@wrla.org).

P.S.: The WRLA is also very mindful of the importance of regional and provincial issues that affect you, our members. We will shortly be assembling a focus group of some of our Manitoba members to identify issues they want us to advocate on in the run up to the Sept. 10 Manitoba election. If you would like to participate in this focus group or would like to advise us of issues you think we should be promoting to Manitoba politicians, please don't hesitate to let us know.

Liz Kovach, President, WRLA  
Director Prairie Provinces,  
Building Materials Council of Canada »



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### GOLF

Saskatoon, SK – Aug. 8  
Winnipeg, MB – Aug. 21  
Sundre, AB – Sept. 5  
Kenossee, SK – Sept. 11

### BOOTH SALES

Now open – Oct. 31

### RETAIL REGISTRATION

Open Sept. 3

### 2020 AWARD NOMINATIONS

Open now until Oct. 31

### MEMBER NETWORKING EVENTS

Saskatoon – Aug. 7  
Winnipeg – Dec. 5

### EDUCATION – MRU:

#### Industry Literacy Skills:

#### The Role of the WRLA in Today's Lumber Building Materials Industry

Session 1: Oct. 7 – Oct. 11  
Session 2: Nov. 18 – Nov. 22

### Industry Negotiation Skills

Session 1: Oct. 15 – Oct. 18  
Session 2: Nov. 25 – Nov. 29

### Industry Critical Thinking Skills

Session 1: Oct. 21 – Oct. 25  
Session 2: Dec. 2 – Dec. 6

### Industry Relationship Management: Communication, Active Listening & Customer Service

Session 1: Oct. 28 – Nov. 1  
Session 2: Dec. 9 – Dec. 13

### EDUCATION – Principles of Yard & Warehouse Operations:

Leduc, AB – Oct. 25  
Winnipeg, MB – Nov. 4  
WRLA Buying Show,  
Calgary, AB – Jan. 21, 2020

### EDUCATION – Manual Estimating Levels 1, 2, and 3:

#### Manual Estimating Level 1 – Decks and Garages

Leduc, AB – Oct. 21 & 22  
Winnipeg, MB – Oct. 28 & 29

#### Manual Estimating Level 2 – Residential Construction

Leduc, AB – Oct. 23 & 24  
Winnipeg, MB – Oct. 30 & 31

### Level 3: Advanced Estimating

Winnipeg, MB – Nov. 1  
WRLA Buying Show,  
Calgary, AB – Jan. 21, 2020

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AW 3466 PVA Type 2 glue	AF 0031 Vinyl tiles and planks adhesive	AC 0055 Construction and panel adhesive (latex)
AW 2992 Craft glue (white)	AF 0036 Soft floor covering adhesive	AC 0054 Foamboard adhesive
AW 2461 White glue	AF 0044 Ceramic tile adhesive	AC 0616 Concrete weld
AW 2094 Carpenter's glue (yellow)	AF 0038 Outdoor carpet adhesive	AF 3452 Waterproofing membrane



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# Fifth Annual Ride Through the Rockies

By Liz Kovach, President, WRLA

## RIDE THROUGH THE ROCKIES

(RTTR) taking place August 23, 24, and 25 is an annual fundraiser, sponsored by Star Building Materials, that challenges cyclists to complete a three-day 345-km journey through the Rocky Mountains. Each cyclist has pledged to raise at least \$2,500 for Habitat for Humanity to help local families build stability and independence through affordable home ownership.



WRLA member Geoff Keats of AFA.



ALL IMAGES SUPPLIED BY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY SOUTHERN ALBERTA

"Since 2014, this event has raised an incredible \$640,000 to help working families benefit from the gift of affordable homeownership. Moreover, hundreds of donors have contributed to individual riders' campaigns, helping to raise awareness of the affordable housing crisis in our community. We are extremely grateful to Ken Crockett, of Star Building Materials and all of the riders who commit to riding and fundraising in support of Habitat for Humanity, Southern AB," said Gerrad Oishi, President and CEO of Habitat for Humanity Southern Alberta.

Affordable home ownership builds long-term stability and self-reliance, empowering families to invest in their futures and creating lasting benefits for their children.

In the Habitat model, families work to build their homes alongside Habitat, and then purchase these homes with an affordable mortgage through Habitat, so that they have the stability and financial flexibility to make forward-looking choices.

"This is one of the best things that has ever happened to me. I wish I could convey to a donor the profound impact this has had on my life. This one thing has changed everything. I don't have to prove myself anymore," said Nichole, mother to three children, about the benefits of Habitat homeownership.

Industry members make a profound impact annually to the community and it is about time that we not only track the impact the LBM industry has on the local communities, but to also recognize industry members for their contributions to the community. I had the opportunity to catch up with Ken Crockett, Vice President of Star Building Materials and race organizer for the fifth year in a row, to learn more about the ride and provide other industry members the opportunity to support the team as well.

## WRLA: Who initiated this event and what was the catalyst behind doing so?

Ken: I initiated the Ride Through the Rockies event through my first ride with our Qualico Winnipeg sponsored event named Ride Around the Lake back in 2013. I came back from that event and was so inspired by the comradery, the challenge, and of course the volunteers and staff from Habitat for Humanity that I felt compelled to begin Ride Through the Rockies in 2014.

Building a home through Habitat for Humanity truly is the roots of a community. Family stability is one of the factors that has lifelong effects for generations.

## WRLA: Why was Habitat for Humanity chosen as the charitable beneficiary?

Ken: The passion that Habitat has in creating strength, stability, and independence along with the close tie that both Qualico and Star Building Materials has within our industry made Habitat for Humanity an easy choice to support.

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### WRLA: Star Building Materials has supported the event. How have you encouraged others to participate?

Ken: Our industry is filled with so many passionate people who are highly engaged within their organizations and who all share a desire to help others. I'm inspired to work for and with so many of these people who exemplify what it takes to succeed on so many levels and who contribute to helping others through charitable organizations such as Habitat for Humanity.

### WRLA: How can other industry members support the team if they're not cycling?

Ken: The team's fundraising goal is \$100,000. As such, we would be grateful for the support. Donations can be made to Ride Through the Rockies by visiting our web page at [www.habitatsouthernab.ca/ridethroughtherockies](http://www.habitatsouthernab.ca/ridethroughtherockies).

Thank you in advance for supporting the cyclists and if you are interested in participating in the ride next year, please reach out to Ken at [KCrockett@starbuilding.ca](mailto:KCrockett@starbuilding.ca).

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# Sexton Group Ltd.: Putting Members' Needs First

By Bailey Hildebrand-Russell, Naylor Association Solutions

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**THE KEY TO SEXTON** Group Ltd.'s success since its founding in 1985 is a team that cultivates relationships with members and actively responds to their needs.



Gary Fletcher of Trail Building Supplies.

There's a reason more than 300 members, including rural lumber yards and specialty distributors in urban areas, in over 400 locations across Canada have chosen to do business under the Sexton Group banner.

"Sexton Group has determined that our members need three things; competitive pricing, quick resolution of vendor issues, and accurate, timely payment of all rebates backed up by clear reporting," said President Steve Buckle, who has been with Sexton Group since 2006. "These things appeal to our current members and therefore should be of interest to prospective ones as well."

For Sexton Group's 22 employees, this means providing exceptional service to members, which includes strong advocacy with vendor partners, transactional excellence and ensuring members remain competitive in local markets, Steve said.

"When vendor issues crop up, our members know they can call us with an issue, and we will get right to work to solve it," he said. "We work out problems for our members quickly so they can focus on their business and stay competitive in their market."

The buying group's team also works hard to keep overhead costs down. For example, no distribution centre investment means no capital is tied up in inventory, according to Steve. He said this low-cost approach allows Sexton Group to pass on most of the benefits it negotiates to members.

Another benefit for members is Sexton Group's investment in IT infrastructure. The buying group has a state-of-the-art system that allows it to smoothly manage complex



David Pratt from Tarpin Lumber & Truss.



transactions through vendor programs and member financial information.

"The investment in technology has streamlined transactional processes, reduced errors and sped up the remission of rebates," Steve said. "Members have told us they've benefited from the upgrades."

One of Sexton Group's values is to support the community where the buying group grows and prospers. This includes supporting the Canadian Liver Foundation, KidSport, Variety – the Children's Charity,

and Christmas toy drives. Sexton Group also gives employees three paid days to be spent pursuing charitable works.

Sexton Group is also a huge supporter of industry associations, including the Western Retail Lumber Association (WRLA) and the Building Materials Council of Canada (BMCC).

"The WRLA and the BMCC are investments in time and resources we think are very important to our members' future," said Steve.

Looking to that future, Steve said his team will continue to adapt to the marketplace, no matter what the coming years look like. Sexton Group's number one priority will always be members' interests.

"We are a dedicated team of industry experts focused on our independent members' success. We negotiate strong, regionally competitive programs for all members coast to coast. We work for our members every day, so they can focus on what matters most – their business." ■



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# No End in Sight for Seljax's Success

By Bailey Hildebrand-Russell, Naylor Association Solutions

ALL IMAGES SUPPLIED BY SELJAX



Braven Blackwell founded Seljax in his basement in 1994.



Seljax is a customer-focused company and the key to success is always looking after the customer's needs.

**MANY OF TODAY'S HUGE**LY successful tech companies have humble beginnings in the homes of their creators. Seljax is no exception. In 1994, the company began in Braven Blackwell's basement.

The vision? Make estimating for the lumber and building supply industry easier, faster and more accurate.

Seljax provides estimating and 3D design software for houses, decks, garages, and stud frame and post-frame buildings, allowing customers to visualize a project within minutes and make design changes instantly.

Since the early days, Seljx has grown to provide more design and estimating solutions for retailers, as well as suppliers, contractors, and home builders. Seljx continues to refine technology for the retail lumber business by serving over 2,500 companies and 6,000 estimators daily throughout North America.

"Seljx has moved from a 2D/3D platform to an all-encompassing 3D design," said Braven, Founder, and President and CEO. "Another innovative initiative is Seljx Supplier Link; it integrates suppliers' products right into

Seljx, so that retailers can sell their favourite supplier products. Suppliers benefit by having their products right in front of retailers and their products properly calculated."

Seljx is a customer-focused company, and Braven said the key to success is always looking after the customer's needs.

"Seljx provides top quality service with internal software messaging that alerts Seljx customer service to call customers before they realize they have an issue," Braven said. "Seljx's approach

to customer service has always been a proactive approach and is always ahead of the issues. Our customers cannot believe we are calling them."

It's no wonder the growing Alberta-based business has seen its reach increase significantly over the last 25 years. With 20 employees, Seljx is looking to continue its expansion into eastern Canada, particularly Quebec, as well as the United States.

"Seljx is now a bilingual company and is creating a new presence in Quebec," Braven said. "This transformation will see a complete French version with additions to its current French compliment. Et voilà! While Seljx has many American customers, Seljx is enhancing its American presence, by attending multiple industry events all over the U.S.A."

For retailers looking to increase efficiency and grow their business, Seljx recommends starting with the 3D Deck and 3D Garages software. Braven said these programs are easy to use, even for non-estimators, as they were developed by estimators who actually worked in the lumber business.

Seljx is an active member in the industry and supports industry associations across Canada, as well as local community initiatives, including charities, sporting events, galas and fundraisers. One of those associations is the Western Retail Lumber Association (WRLA), of which Seljx has been a member since 1994 for 24 of its 25-year existence. Seljx has also never missed a single WRLA Buying Show.

"Seljx became a (WRLA) member to join the relationship of the industry, working together to refine solutions for our industry," Braven said. "Another benefit of our membership is that the WRLA is in our home base and this is where it all started for Seljx."

Looking to the future, Seljx hopes to continue increasing its market share and visibility in the industry throughout North America. Goals are also in place to continue improving existing Seljx software and developing new programs that will benefit the industry, Braven said.

"Seljx technology is proven, our leadership position has been established, and our customers are happy – there is no end in sight." ▮



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# Welcome to Winnipeg

*Manitoba's Capital Will Host the 2021 to 2023 WRLA Buying Show*

*By Jessica Cranmer, Manager Trade Show and Events, WRLA*



ALL IMAGES SUPPLIED BY TOURISM WINNIPEG

*The RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg will host the WRLA Buying Show for three years starting in 2021.*

**ON JUNE 4,** the WRLA team and Board of Directors announced that the 2021 to 2023 Western Retail Lumber Association Buying Shows will be hosted in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Over the nine-month period leading to the decision to move, the WRLA team visited five Western Canadian cities, touring event facilities, hotels and other venues to get a complete picture of what each city had to offer. We want to extend a big thank you to those cities for their time and hospitality.

So, why Winnipeg?

The WRLA show is the premier LBM show in Canada and continually works on behalf of its members to facilitate new connections and, of course, business development. There is no other show in Canada that brings vendors and dealers from the lumber and building materials together at this scale.

"We feel it is important for the WRLA to engage with all of its members from Western Canada, provide venues that present new business development opportunities and experiences that will also

help to expand the industry community," said Liz Kovach, WRLA President.

"Winnipeg offers a great combination of location and services that will bring enormous value to the membership attending the annual show while enhancing the community feel of the event as well."

With world-class facilities and friendly prairie hospitality, Winnipeg will be the perfect destination to host the WRLA Buying Show. As an official winter city, this is an exciting time for our WRLA members to visit Winnipeg and see how it fully embraces and enjoys the winter season.





*The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is as powerful on the inside as it is on the out. See 11 interactive exhibits that promote change for a better world and document human rights history like never before.*

## RBC CONVENTION CENTRE WINNIPEG

With recent upgrades, renovations and an over-\$180 million expansion, the RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg is the city's premier event facility for a variety of events from international, national, and regional conventions; business meetings from 9 to 9,000 participants; consumer and industry trade shows; entertainment events; gala receptions and dinners; membership luncheons; sporting events; and concerts. Centrally located in Winnipeg's bustling downtown, the three-storey, multi-purpose facility has access to more than 2,300 downtown hotel rooms and is within walking distance to many of the city's best restaurants and tourist attractions.

## HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

The WRLA team is currently working with our Winnipeg hotel partners to set aside room blocks for 2021. Hotel information will be available in September and hotel and event space will be open for bookings starting October 2019.

## WHERE TO EAT OR HOST CUSTOMER APPRECIATION EVENTS?

We will provide a starter list of local restaurants that would be ideal for buyout situations or large groups. If you're looking for something special, Winnipeg is a foodie

city, so feel free to explore options with the team at Tourism Winnipeg as they will be happy to help you identify something unique for your guests.

## WHAT THE HECK TO DO IN WINNIPEG?

As a Winnipegger myself, I get this question a lot. Hey, we know it will be cold, but Winnipeg embraces the cold and the WRLA team is ready to not only embrace it but celebrate it! Tourism Winnipeg has set up a great landing page for members that adjusts seasonally – we have the link on our special Winnipeg 2021 section of the WRLA website ([www.wrla.org/buying\\_show/winnipeg2021](http://www.wrla.org/buying_show/winnipeg2021)). From the Forks to the Manitoba Museum, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights to the historic Exchange District, there are lots of things to see and do in Winnipeg.

## HELPFUL WEBSITES

**RBC Convention Centre:** [wcc.mb.ca](http://wcc.mb.ca).

**Winnipeg Airport Authority:** [waa.ca](http://waa.ca)

**Tourism Winnipeg:** [tourismwinnipeg.com](http://tourismwinnipeg.com)

**The Forks:** [theforks.com](http://theforks.com)

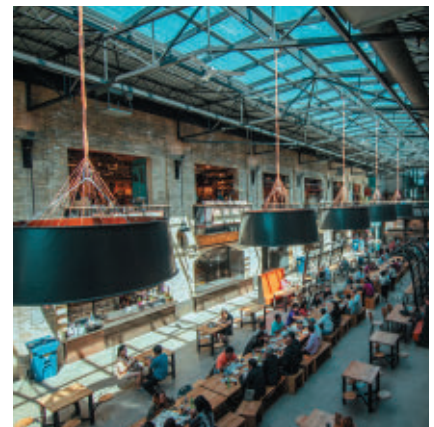
## STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Visit the WRLA website, [www.wrla.org/buying\\_show/winnipeg2021](http://www.wrla.org/buying_show/winnipeg2021), where we will update information as we release it.

Drop me a line at [BuyingShow@wrla.org](mailto:BuyingShow@wrla.org). I am happy to set up a call or answer any questions. **W**



*The Red River Mutual Trail runs along the Red River and Assiniboine River in Winnipeg in the winter months. The trail is accessible at several points along the rivers, including at The Forks, which offers skate rentals.*



*The Forks Market Food Hall and the Common, which features 20 craft beers and 20 wines on tap.*



*Winnipeg's top chefs come together every year for RAW:almond, a pop-up restaurant on the frozen Red River.*

# Effective Merchandising and Store Design for the LBM Industry

By Rob Wilbrink, President and CEO, Burlington Merchandising and Fixtures

ALL IMAGES SUPPLIED BY BURLINGTON MERCHANDISING AND FIXTURES



## RENOVATE TO ELEVATE YOUR CUSTOMER'S EXPERIENCE

One of the best ways for bricks and mortar retailers to compete and thrive is to focus on enhancing the customer experience. The trick is defining that. One of the top factors consumers consider when deciding where to buy is their confidence in a retailer providing what they need. After that is convenience of location, human interaction with friendly staff, and a frictionless shopping experience.

The best way to address this is to pull stores out of the 1970s and renovate them to a standard beyond what consumers have come to expect. Exit surveys of stores I was involved with in the past confirmed that contractors had an equally positive

reaction to the improvements achieved by a well-executed renovation.

Renovating and optimally merchandising your store should have several objectives.

## ENSURE YOUR CUSTOMERS WILL GET WHAT THEY COME FOR AND MORE

The design, layout, and fixturing you select should allow you to accommodate more product. Assign priorities for space allocation and displays by developing category strategies. Expand space for your most important categories and use the opportunity to fix those that aren't performing or eliminate them altogether. Avoid dabbling in categories you're not committed to. Each customer

disappointment hurts your reputation as a reliable destination and risks spilling over into other categories. Make sure products are easy to find by using directional signage and accommodating natural product adjacencies. Incorporate impulse merchandising accessories and locations as part of your design. After you renovate never stop analyzing product movement and keep your product selection up to date.

## CREATE AN INVITING AND FUNCTIONAL ENVIRONMENT YOUR STAFF CAN BE PROUD OF AND CUSTOMERS WILL APPRECIATE

A comfortable, inspiring, well-lit environment with attractive signage, great displays and well-designed service areas





demonstrates attention to detail and sends a message to staff and customers that you care. This instills confidence and pride, which makes it easier to attract and retain great staff and makes customers happy to shop in your store. It is important to strike a good balance between product space and customer space and to design an efficient layout that pays attention to the flow of products in and out of the store.

### CREATE CLEAN, ORGANIZED, AND WELL-MERCHANDISED DEPARTMENTS

Design focal points and clear definition for each department. Employ the right tools for the job by using merchandising accessories that properly display and position the depth and breadth of products

you sell. Housekeeping is much more difficult when incoming product can't be accommodated on the sales floor. Staff members add peghooks, slide products over on the shelf, and forget to add bin labels, while important SKUs disappear. Products get dumped on the bottom shelf or left in the aisle. All this to accommodate case counts there is no room for. The result over time is a dog's breakfast and a loss of merchandising sets that were originally optimized for ease of shopping and to maximize sales and profits. The use of longer peghooks, shelf dividers, specialized accessories, and overhead storage can eliminate this problem making it easy for staff to maintain the store to a high standard of order and cleanliness. We often visit

stores months and years after being renovated with the right fixtures and see standards as good or better than the day the renovation was completed.

### FREE UP STAFF TO FOCUS ON WHERE THEY ARE NEEDED MOST – ENGAGING CUSTOMERS

Traditional merchandising and use of back stock rooms work against keeping staff engaged in positive and helpful interactions with customers. Instead, they are spending valuable time stocking shelves, apologizing for out of stocks, and looking for products that are stored off the sales floor. New systems make shelf maintenance much easier so staff can spend more time focusing on customers.



## SIMPLIFY THE SELECTION PROCESS

Create displays that educate customers as well as your staff. Good examples are plumbing and electrical displays that show application and configurations of products so it's easy to see how and where they should be used. Make it easier for customers to make a purchase decision by eliminating unnecessary and duplicate SKUs that create clutter and confusion. The "less is more" philosophy is a key ingredient in Costco's success and studies have shown that too many options creates consumer paralysis. Use attractive out-of-the-box displays wherever possible so customers can touch, feel and visualize a product better than on a computer or mobile screen. This is a distinct advantage you have as a bricks and mortar retailer and should be maximized.

## INSPIRE AND FACILITATE FUTURE PURCHASES

Dealers often make the mistake of bolting a hardware store onto their lumberyard. This is a huge missed opportunity to properly represent the entire business where it's most easily viewed – in the showroom. Beyond satisfying a customer's needs today there is a great opportunity to plant the seed for future purchases by prominently displaying core categories that are stocked in the warehouse or available by special order. Categories like roofing, siding, trims, decking, and other building materials can be impressively displayed in very little space. The idea is to place your store in the customer's mind as a destination for this category every time they visit even

though they may not be ready to buy these products until months or even years later. Well-renovated stores that effectively display building material categories consistently see their total business grow by double digits rather than simply increasing their hardware sales.

## MINIMIZE STRESS AND DISRUPTION

Renovating a store is not for everyone. We often see dealers in the twilight of their career quite content to ride their current situation into retirement. They may be planning to shut the business down or pass it on to the those from the next generation who have the ambition to take the business to a new level. Some dealers have lived through a previous painful experience of renovating their store with their own staff and dealing with many months of stress, business interruption, and cost overruns. Years later, their projects may have remained unfinished. This reality was the inspiration for founding Burlington Merchandising and Fixtures (BMF). We've simplified the planning process, eliminated the disjointed, inefficient, and costly process of sourcing from numerous untried and unrelated vendors, and concentrated the total project execution into a tight three-to-five-week window using our own installation staff.

## CREATE A SOLID FINANCIAL RETURN

The cost of expanding and/or renovating a store can seem prohibitive. Usually, the largest cost by far is the cost of construction. What many dealers don't

realize is that by just reworking existing space and upgrading the fixtures, capacity for product can increase 30%. We renovated several stores in Seattle for a chain that had been in business for over 100 years. They saw sales improvements of up to 40% with no change in footprint. Over the years, almost all dealers with multiple stores have chosen to renovate additional locations after seeing the results of their first project. Several clients more than doubled their sales in the three-year period following their renovation. Even at modest 10% growth, stores can recoup their investment in just over a year. This is made easier with the 2-3% margin growth most stores experience as they increase the sales of value added products (versus commodities) as part of their mix. BMF has developed a simple calculator to help dealers estimate ROI for a project they may be considering. This can be downloaded from our website ([bmfonline.com](http://bmfonline.com)).

For a dealer whose succession plan is based on a future sale of the business, the returns will be even greater as multiples of EBITDA used for valuation will return several times the cost of the renovation.

## TIMING ISN'T EVERYTHING

The biggest gains in market share are generally made by dealers who have the financial ability and confidence to invest during recessionary times. When business is slower they have more time to focus and add value to the planning process. The relative impact is much greater when competitors are pulling in their horns and they benefit disproportionately when the market turns around. »





Dunn Lumber, Seattle, WA

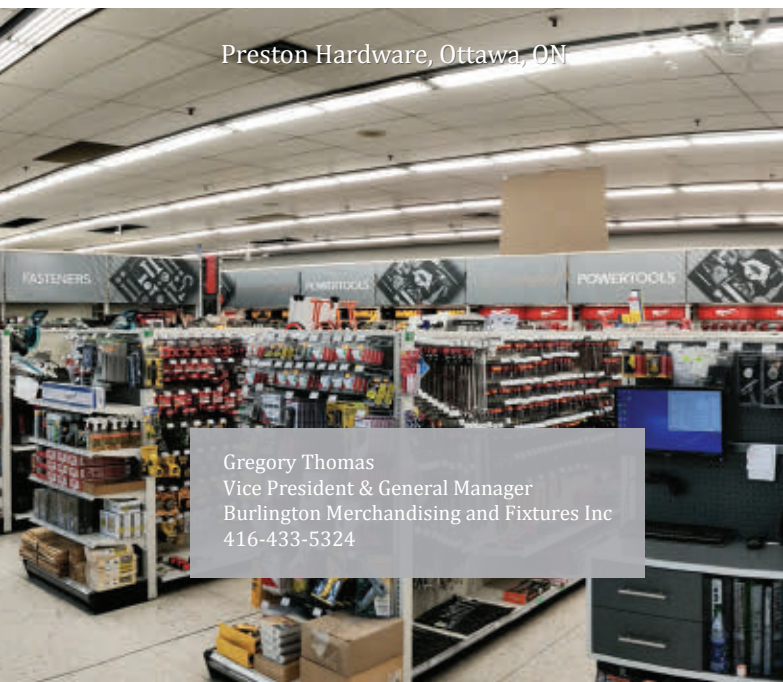


Federated Co-op, Saskatoon, SK



## Customer Experience is What Matters Most

[www.bmfonline.com](http://www.bmfonline.com)



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Wolf Creek Building Supplies Ltd., Lacombe, AB



# Olympic Building Centre: Storefront Merchandising

By Liz Kovach, President, WRLA

ALL IMAGES SUPPLIED BY OLYMPIC BUILDING CENTRE



Customer experience is a concept that continues to grow as consumer behaviour evolves. Customer expectations continue to rise at a fast pace and companies are expected to respond to these demands. Whether the customer is an event planner working with a venue or is a DIYer looking to tackle a weekend project, consumers are expecting an excellent experience from the first point of contact through to project completion.

Customer experience is the heart of the Olympic Building Centre business model. Olympic Building Centre in Winnipeg started out as a traditional hardware retailer, paint store and lumber yard. This





model worked for Olympic for many years. However, as the store's staff team and customer demands evolved, the business model needed to adapt to the changing needs of the building material marketplace.

"We are focused on being great at what we do and honest with the items where we are not, so paint had to go, for example, to make way for the many options of decking," said Marcel Pelland, General Manager of Olympic Building Centre.

"The evolution came serendipitously as we took notice that our customers struggled to make very expensive and key decisions on build projects with little to no real life display options," Marcel said. "They were asking for displays that gave true to life

pictures to help them through the wide array of colours and choices for materials. So, we experimented on a small scale and as we gained success, we added more elaborate displays that create an experience for our customers."

Having toured the Olympic showroom, I experienced the maximization of space, which provides displays that help to bring ideas to life and help consumers visualize how their deck and railing, window and door, fencing, siding, or garage project might look. Their display coupled with the expertise of their Building Coaches supports the continuum of the customer experience by providing a different level of service.

Building Coaches (also known as Customer Experience Specialists) are an important component to the process as they all have hands-on building knowledge and the team continues to foster their education and knowledge from regular product information sessions provided by suppliers.

On my tour of Olympic, I noticed that there were a few Consumer Choice Award symbols and asked Marcel how important these are to the Olympic team. Marcel said, "Yes, we're proud to be recognized and are motivated by doing well in the eyes of our customers and our industry," adding, "Our goal is to exist in our own space and continually outdo ourselves." »

# 3 Simple Ways to Generate More Impulse Sales from Your Retail Space

By Ali Newton



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Shop fittings and display equipment can make or break a store. To make the most of your retail space, ensure that your fittings and fixtures complement your store atmosphere and show off your products.

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**S**mall business owners know that buying or renting and maintaining space can be one of the most expensive parts of running a retail storefront. Every square metre of merchandising space counts and ensuring that your space is optimized is key to making more sales. Generating more impulse sales is a quick and easy way to maximize your footprint.

There are some general rules to merchandising well but nothing can beat thoroughly understanding your product. Brand-specific visual merchandising

also helps customers to remember your store. By merchandising well and creating the right store atmosphere, you can encourage impulse purchases and excite your customers with your products. Good retail experience and clever merchandising can help you make your customers love your store in a way that means they keep coming back.

I have a degree in psychology and experience working in retail and market research. By applying some very simple psychology to retail displays it is easy to help boost displays. There are some simple human instincts that can be capitalized on.

For example, you can change how broad or narrow a person's focus of attention is



by your product placement. If you place a product low down, the customer's focus of attention narrows. This is part of a human instinct that protects us from falling down holes. It also conveniently helps retailers draw attention to particular products. If you want your customer to browse, place items at eye level or higher. It's a more comfortable height to browse things at, and it is also where people look to take in inspiration. It's simple and effective.

Here are three quick and easy merchandising tips to help you increase sales and impulse purchases – and boost your bottom line.

### 1. REMOVE INVISIBLE IMPULSE PURCHASE BARRIERS

There are many things that can prevent impulse sales before your customers have even entered your store. And while you can't control everything, it's useful to be aware of these negative influences so that you can try to take steps to mitigate them.

Here are some examples of impulse purchase barriers:

#### **Unappealing Window Displays or Storefronts**

Uninviting window displays or a storefront that's dark or disorganized could be reducing the number of customers who impulsively enter your store. By ensuring your storefront is clean and your window displays are organized, you'll inspire more customers to enter and make purchases.

#### **Low Foot Traffic Location**

If you are in a location with limited foot traffic, consider adding some signage in a busier part of town to encourage people to visit you. Try to include a lead magnet of some sort, such as an exclusive offer or an invite to an event.

#### **Not Pricing Window Displays**

Not having any prices on your window display can also put customers off. They tend to believe that unpriced items are expensive and likely to be out of their price range. It can actually be better to price expensive items so they know what to expect.

If you're concerned that your prices may be off-putting, try removing the currency symbols from the beginning of your pricing. This tactic is frequently used on menus. By removing the currency symbol, you reduce the psychological link between the price displayed and the customer's perception that they're spending money.

### 2. MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR FOCAL POINTS AND ANCHORS

A good store design should comprise of focal points and anchors by using the different selling zones to maximize impulse purchase potential. It's essential that you take the time to plan your store layout.

Your most important space is by your entrance because it encourages customers to enter your store. It should contain a sale line or your trendiest items. It could be worth putting some of your most interesting or unusual (but still popular) products here.

Your focal points should contain items that can act as anchors. They should serve to catch your customers' eyes and to encourage them to visit that part of the store, even if it's right at the back.

Many retailers find that by using key brands in these focal points, they can encourage customers to browse the whole shop. This maximizes impulse sale

potential by leading the customer around the whole store, instead of just one part.




### 3. OPTIMIZE YOUR DISPLAY EQUIPMENT

Shop fittings and display equipment can make or break a store. To make the most of your retail space, ensure that your fittings and fixtures complement your store atmosphere and show off your products.

This includes the arrangement of your fittings, as well as their condition. Many retailers fail to realize that their fixtures need updating as they have become worn, damaged or are not in line with the current visual merchandising trends.

Also, impulse sales can be boosted very effectively by positioning an impulse shelving unit by the tills. These units usually contain small extras that customers can easily pick up and add to their purchase. »

*Ali Newton is the Marketing Executive for The Display Centre, where the team of creative experts provide shop fittings and display equipment, including bespoke items. Ali combines her fine art and fashion qualifications with her market research experience and psychology degree to help retailers drive their sales.*



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# All Hands In: Hand Health and Safety Awareness

By Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association

Hand injuries account for nearly 30 percent of all injuries in the construction industry.

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A case can be made for hands being ranked as the most valuable and widely used tools in the workplace. Hands are relied on to perform the simplest and most difficult tasks. They are used every day to get dressed, drive, type, text, and even play with kids and pets. The temporary and permanent inability to use one or both hands can make day-to-day activities more challenging. That's why it is critical that this part of the body be protected from serious injury on the job. According to Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board claims made in 2017, hand injuries accounted for nearly 30% of all injuries in the construction industry.

"Even though our hands are extremely valuable tools, we still see workers that think cuts are just part of the job or complain that they can't do their job properly when they have safety gloves on," said Sebastian Marktanner, certified National Construction Safety Officer and Senior Safety Advisor with the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA).

"When hand protection is properly selected and used, it should not hinder how you perform a task, and if it does cause an inconvenience, this is minor compared to loss of fingers or permanent nerve damage," added Marktanner. Selecting the proper glove is essential in protecting these tools from on-the-job hazards. The wrong gloves risk injury to the worker and a loss of productivity. It is important to remember that no single glove will provide protection against every hazard or substance.

During the glove-selection process, identify key elements that are required to perform the job safely:

- Are chemical hazards present? Do the chemical hazards occur in liquid, gas, powder, or vapour form? Will workers' hands be subject to light splashes or total immersion?
- Are abrasions and punctures from sharp objects a problem? Many gloves are designed to protect from slashes caused by sharp objects, but few provide high levels of puncture resistance from objects such as the ragged edges of a piece of metal or glass. Will the abrasions or punctures occur to the palm, top of the hand, or both?
- Is a secure grip vital to the application? When workers cannot grasp objects securely, especially those that are wet or oily, the objects may slide through their hands and result in injuries or damaged products.
- Is dexterity important? Working at high speeds requires having the dexterity and tactile sensitivity to handle small parts or objects quickly.
- Is protection or dexterity the priority? Thinner-gauge gloves offer more dexterity; heavier-gauge gloves offer greater hand protection.
- Are the gloves properly sized for individual workers? Gloves that are too large will slide around on the hands, won't provide protection where it is needed, and could become caught in machinery or moving parts. Gloves that are too snug

can decrease a worker's dexterity and may become so uncomfortable that workers will remove them.

- Will the gloves be required to offer protection from heat or cold temperatures? Insulated gloves should be selected to protect from extreme temperatures.
- Will the worker be wearing the gloves for a few minutes at a time or all day? Comfort is important for longer wear.

Several types of gloves are available. The following are a few examples:

- Electrical insulation gloves are designed to protect employees when working with exposed energized conductors.
- Leather gloves are designed for welding or for other general purposes.
- Cut-resistant gloves, depending on the level of hazard and the type of work environment, include stainless steel mesh, kevlar fabric, and other materials for lighter weight cut resistance.
- Chemical resistant gloves are made from many different materials and include different cuffs, lengths, and thicknesses.
- Heat/cold resistant gloves carry many general purposes and will provide heat/cold protection. ■

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association is a member of the Canadian Federation of Construction Safety Associations (CFCSA), which works as an umbrella organization for member provincial and territorial construction safety associations. To find a construction safety association in your province or territory, visit: [www.cfcsa.ca](http://www.cfcsa.ca)



# SCSA Fall Protection Tour Demonstrates Safety

By Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association

**A**ndrew Hann was on his way to a promising career when a workplace accident took his life in 2013 — he was just 25 years old.

Andrew was a scaffolder working at a mine southwest of Saskatoon when he fell. On that day, Andrew had gone for lunch but when he returned he didn't have his fall protection gear with him. No one will know why he felt safe enough to continue with his work because he fell through an open hole in the scaffold and died.

His family wanted to turn their tragedy into an opportunity to promote workplace safety. In Andrew's name, a fall protection demonstration trailer was donated to the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) and the Andrew Hann Memorial Scholarship was created for Occupational Health and Safety Practitioner program students at Saskatchewan Polytechnic.

“Our future construction workers really see just how important it is to use the right system for fall protection. For more experienced workers that may never use a system or have become complacent, we get to re-apply this learning with them.”

— Mike Moore, SCSA Safety Advisor

Today, the trailer visits work sites, is present at safety meetings, North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) events, and at industry safety days across Saskatchewan. Included with this trailer are educational and visual components, both of which are intended to deliver impactful reminders of the importance of proper fall protection equipment.

“The point of this (Andrew Hahn) story is that this kind of tragedy can be prevented,” said Mike Moore, a Safety Advisor with SCSA. Mike went on to say, “We can't turn back time, but we can learn from this horrible incident. In fall protection training, we learn a lot of stuff in theory, but this (trailer) is a practical exercise that is visual. You can tell me things over and over, but when you show me, I believe what I see.”

During the SCSA Fall Protection demonstration, observers are introduced to a 165-pound Rescue Randy mannequin that is placed in fall protection safety gear and used in various demonstrations. With it, there's an interactive discussion centred on proper anchor points and connecting components like lanyards and proper fits for harnesses.

The Rescue Randy is raised with a pulley system and dropped five feet. “When he (Rescue Randy) hits, the actual impact is seen and heard,” Mike said. In the first fall, there is no shock absorber in the lanyard. In the second fall, where the shock absorber is used, the force applied to the body is significantly less. In each demonstration, the force is measured and shared with observers.

Mike shared that the reactions from observers vary, but mostly there's a lot of shock and awe, with many leaving the demonstration with an appreciation for



Andrew Hann.

fall protection safety gear and practices. “Our future construction workers really see just how important it is to use the right system for fall protection. For more experienced workers that may never use a system or have become complacent, we get to re-apply this learning with them.

“Whether I'm 16 or 65, if I fall from 25 feet the outcome is not going to be very good,” Mike said. “The message is to make sure you trust your gut and don't do anything you're not comfortable doing. And just because you're comfortable doesn't necessarily mean you're properly trained.”

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# WRLA Networking and Awards Night: Recognizing Industry Leaders

*By Tom Bell, Chair, WRLA*

**HOPE THAT YOU HAVE** all had an amazing summer. As August draws to a close we are working on finalizing our programming for the 2020 Buying Show and also working to plan our awards evening event. This means it is time to start submitting your nominations for the Industry Achievement Award in addition to the Sales Representative of the Year Award.

In an effort to continually provide recognition to in our industry, we implemented a Sales Representative of the Year Award in 2018 to represent the regions of our membership.

There are many professional and talented individuals in the LBM industry – these awards are your chance to nominate your sales representatives and recognize him or her for their contributions to the industry. Retailers can nominate any sales representatives who they feel should be recognized for all their work.

Finalists will be notified in mid-December and will be asked to attend a pre-award reception at the Hyatt Regency Hotel during the Buying Show. The award recipients will be announced at the Networking and Awards Night. Nomination regions are as follows:

- British Columbia
- Alberta/Northwest Territories/Nunavut
- Saskatchewan
- Manitoba/Ontario

The WRLA Industry Achievement Award is celebrating its 49th Anniversary in 2019.

This award recognizes a member (past or present) of the WRLA who has contributed to their business, the building supply industry, the WRLA, and the communities in which they live.

We are now collecting nominations for the annual Industry Achievement Award and I encourage you to submit a nomination. The LBM industry is full of strong leaders and we want to celebrate them!

Deadline for nominations is end of day on October 31, 2019 and applications are available on our website [www.wrla.org](http://www.wrla.org).

Take care,  
Tom **»**



## INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

### ADHESIVES

Dural, une division de Multibond Inc. .... 13  
www.duraproadhesive.com

### ASSOCIATION SOLUTIONS

Naylor Association Solutions ..... 36  
www.naylor.com

### BUILDING MATERIALS

Building Products of Canada Corp. .... 34  
www.bpcan.com  
Can-Cell Industries Inc. .... 4  
www.can-cell.com  
CGC Inc. .... 34  
www.cgcinc.com  
Champagne Edition Inc. T/A Eco-Flex ..... 34  
www.eco-flex.com  
Leland Industries Inc. .... 35  
www.lelandindustries.com  
Taiga Building Products ..... Inside Front Cover  
www.taigabuilding.com

### BUYING GROUPS

Castle Building Centres ..... Outside Back Cover  
castleindependent.ca  
Timber Mart Ltd. .... 21  
www.timbermart.ca

### CONTRACTOR PRODUCTS

Champagne Edition Inc. T/A Eco-Flex ..... 34  
www.eco-flex.com

### DECKING

Champagne Edition Inc. T/A Eco-Flex ..... 34  
www.eco-flex.com  
The Sansin Corporation ..... 6  
www.sansin.com

### DOOR MANUFACTURERS

Steel-Craft Door Products Ltd. .... 8  
www.steel-craft.ca

### ENGINEERED WOOD PRODUCTS

Pinkwood Ltd. .... 35  
www.pinkwood.ca

### FENCING

Champagne Edition Inc. T/A Eco-Flex ..... 34  
www.eco-flex.com  
Master Halco ..... 35  
www.masterhalco.com

### FLOOR PROTECTION & TOOLS

Alldec-Armson Sales Ltd. .... 34  
www.alldec.com

### FLOORING PRODUCTS/RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL

Champagne Edition Inc. T/A Eco-Flex ..... 34  
www.eco-flex.com

### FOOTING FORMS

Bigfoot Systems, Inc. .... 16  
www.bigfootsystems.com

### FORKLIFTS - SALES, SERVICE, RENTALS

ARW Truck Equipment Ltd. .... 14  
www.arwtruck.com  
Cervus Equipment Materials Handling ..... 20  
www.cervusequipment.com

### GARAGE DOORS

Creative Door Services ..... 35  
www.creativedoor.com

### HARDWARE

Orgill, Inc. .... 3  
www.orgill.ca

### I-JOISTS

Pinkwood Ltd. .... 35  
www.pinkwood.ca

### ICE MELTERS

NSC Minerals Inc. .... 16  
www.nscminerals.com

### LAMINATED POLES

Hillier Manufacturing Inc. .... 31  
www.laminatedposts.com

### LUMBER & BUILDING SUPPLIES

Pinkwood Ltd. .... 35  
www.pinkwood.ca

### MOULDINGS

Alexandria Moulding ..... 34  
www.alexandriamoulding.com

### PAINTS & STAINS

Cloverdale Paint Inc. .... 18  
www.cloverdalepaint.com  
Old Masters ..... 38  
www.myoldmasters.com  
PPG Architectural Coatings ..... 35  
www.ppgpaints.com

### REBAR

Harris Rebar ..... 35  
www.harrisrebar.com

### ROOF TRUSSES

Penn-Truss Mfg. Inc. .... 38  
www.penntruss.com

### STORE FIXTURES

Burlington Merchandising & Fixtures Inc. .... 27  
www.bmfonline.com

### TRUCK MOUNTED CRANES

ARW Truck Equipment Ltd. .... 14  
www.arwtruck.com

### TRUCK MOUNTED FORKLIFTS

ARW Truck Equipment Ltd. .... 14  
www.arwtruck.com

### WINDOW & DOOR SYSTEMS

All Weather Windows Ltd. .... 34  
www.allweatherwindows.com  
JELD-WEN Windows & Doors/ Willmar Collection ..... 10  
www.jeld-wen.ca

### WINDOWS

Mitten Inc. .... Inside Back Cover  
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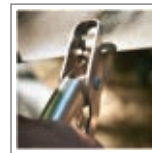
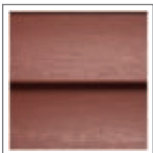
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