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# YARDSTICK

ISSUE 3 | JUNE/JULY 2019



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# YARDSTICK



## [contents]

### WRLA ADVOCATES

- 7 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- 17 CHAIR'S MESSAGE

### WRLA CONNECTS

- 9 NEXGEN:  
Next Up for NexGEN
- 9 CALENDAR OF EVENTS
- 11 BUYING GROUP PROFILE:  
Timber Mart

### WRLA EDUCATES

- 13 FEATURE:  
Modern Modular: The Evolution  
of the Modular Housing Model
- 15 FEATURE:  
Innovation in Supply Chain  
Transportation and Tracking
- 16 TECHNOLOGY CORNER:  
Investing in Technology



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# SURVEY SAYS...



**83%** of respondents think the content in *Yardstick* is relevant to their jobs.



**65%** of respondents keep the *WRLA Annual Directory & Product Source Guide* on hand for easy reference.



**69%** of respondents value *WRLA News* as part of their WRLA membership.



**Nearly half** of members refer to [WRLA.org](http://WRLA.org) once a month or more often.

“

“WRLA has a well established member group, and the info in their publications is always relevant, timely and helpful.”

**Craig Aldcroft,**  
Domtek Building Products

”

“I have found the WRLA and their publications to be an outstanding industry resource!”

**Darrell Berard, Alta-Wide Builders Supplies Ltd. Timber Mart**

To learn how WRLA and its publications can fit into your marketing plans, contact Angela McDougall at [amcdougall@naylor.com](mailto:amcdougall@naylor.com) or (204) 975-3625.

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# Doing Well by Doing Good

By Liz Kovach, WRLA President

**RECENTLY, I WAS FORTUNATE** to attend an economic development summit featuring an excellent panel of speakers presenting on key economic issues impacting Canadian citizens and businesses. Presentation topics included climate change, economic development in the era of disruption and constant change, workforce worries and understanding your market position.

The presentations not only highlighted issues today's business owners need to be aware of, but how these issues can and will impact their businesses and stakeholders in the future. The key theme of the presentations was how business can take these large issues and translate them into opportunities to reposition themselves in the marketplace for success and profitability.

One presentation resonated with me and I felt many WRLA members might be facing the same questions – how do we innovate while faced with the overwhelming impact of climate change? Are they mutually exclusive ideas? With Canada's climate changing at twice the rate of the global average, businesses need to find new ways to approach their work, select new products, and discover new markets. Can these concepts of being green and being innovative exist together for the benefit of our planet but also the benefit of business?

I believe that the building supply industry can do its part, not only by changing over operations to be more energy efficient and green, but to educate and influence consumers on the benefits of green products and methods.

Some great ideas were shared on how Canadian homeowners and small-to-medium-sized enterprises can achieve energy efficiency, reduce their carbon footprint, minimize the impact of harmful chemicals in our environment, and reduce water usage all through small incremental changes:

- Switching lighting fixtures
- Building envelope upgrades
- Upgrading refrigeration
- Replacing kitchen appliances with approved energy-efficient ones
- Switching to high-efficiency natural gas water heaters
- Switching from plastic to paper or reusable bags
- Reducing the use of tap water with rain barrels
- Composting business and residential waste as an alternative to chemical fertilizers

All these ideas inspire me as I know these are not only changes I can make as an individual, but changes WRLA members can make themselves and become leaders in inspiring change in others. It also made me curious to learn more about some other avenues our members have

been embarking on from the energy efficiency side.

In this issue, we connect with Rick Weste from Triple M Housing to learn about the evolution of modular homes and the key to making modular builds energy efficient through the building envelope. Rick is a leader in this area, and it was inspiring to learn not only about all the work Triple M Housing does, but also about Rick's impact in the area of energy-efficient housing and building codes.

Innovation remains a constant in the business environment. As your WRLA continues to evolve programming and education sessions, we welcome you to share some of the steps you have taken in creating efficiencies and innovation that would inspire and educate other members to do the same.

I would love to hear from WRLA members on ideas for future educational sessions and webinars that would help move and inspire your business to be innovative. Please reach out to me at [LKovach@wrla.org](mailto:LKovach@wrla.org) or 204-770-2416. »





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# Next Up for NexGEN: Supporting Members in Adapting to the Workforce Revolution

By Liz Kovach, WRLA President, and Joel Seibert, 1st Vice Chair, WRLA Board

## ACCORDING TO A RECENT STUDY

from RBC called *Humans Wanted*, Canada is facing a quiet crisis. Over the next 10 years, approximately half of all Canadian jobs will be heavily disrupted by technology and automation. In some cases, jobs may disappear completely while others will require vastly different skill sets.

The report identified that employers, educators and policy makers are not prepared for a shift from a jobs economy to a skills economy. It also identified four key points we need to know about the future of work:

- **Disruption.** It is accelerating and we need to accept that automation is no longer a threat, but a reality. This threat no longer only applies to routine repetitive tasks with the rise in artificial intelligence technology.
- **Flexibility.** Employers need to focus on developing human skills such as critical thinking, judgement and decision making. All of which are transferable skills applied across a variety of job descriptions.
- **Digital literacy.** Understanding how to interact with computers, smartphones, etc. will be a prerequisite.

- **Preparation.** We all need to be prepared for the future of work and ensure that the right people have the right skills. It will require some wholesale changes in the way we educate students and follow through to the recruitment and hiring process as those students enter the job market.

So, what does this mean for the WRLA and LBM industry?

The WRLA must position itself as a strong resource and provider of solutions. We will keep our members informed while continuing to provide relevant solutions and support as members adapt and seek opportunities through accelerated change.

One of the key WRLA support vehicles is to refocus and rebrand the NexGEN program. This will ensure that the WRLA is doing its part to promote the LBM industry as a viable career path for students and jobseekers.

During a recent member-based group strategy session, two key areas in which the WRLA needs to develop initiatives around were identified:

- Developing education programs to address the skills and training requirements for new talent and existing members to the LBM industry. To ensure the WRLA stays

on track to develop relevant courses, we will continue to connect with members to determine training and education needs, like our Fundamentals of the Lumber and Building Supply Industry course offered by Mount Royal University.

- Ensuring our industry is on the radar for the future talent pool. This includes professionals experiencing career transition, newcomers to Canada, and youth. The WRLA will rebrand and refocus the NexGEN program to ensure the industry is brought to the forefront as a career path. WRLA will raise the industry profile and create connections with educational institutions, including colleges, universities and K-12 programs.

As the WRLA continues to professionalize the industry, evolve its programming and adapt to the changing environment, we encourage you to connect with us to share some of your plans and indicate any specific topics you would like addressed in webinars and in-class education sessions. Please reach out by email to [LKovach@wrla.org](mailto:LKovach@wrla.org) or [membership@wrla.org](mailto:membership@wrla.org).

If you haven't taken the opportunity to review the RBC *Humans Wanted* study, we encourage you to do so at [www.rbc.com](http://www.rbc.com). »

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### GOLF

- Saskatoon – August 8, 2019
- Winnipeg – August 21, 2019
- Sundre – TBD
- Kenosee – September 11, 2019

### BOOTH SALES

- Open now until October 31, 2019

### RETAIL REGISTRATION

- Open September 3, 2019

### 2020 AWARD NOMINATIONS

- Open now until October 31, 2019

### MEMBER NETWORKING EVENTS

- Saskatoon – August 7, 2019
- Winnipeg – December 5, 2019

### EDUCATION

- WRLA Fundamentals of the Lumber and Building Supply Industry certificate – Next Session commences October 2019
- CERVUS Operator Safety Training: visit [wrla.org](http://wrla.org) for full details. Available at the CERVUS Equipment Training Centres, and on your own job site. »

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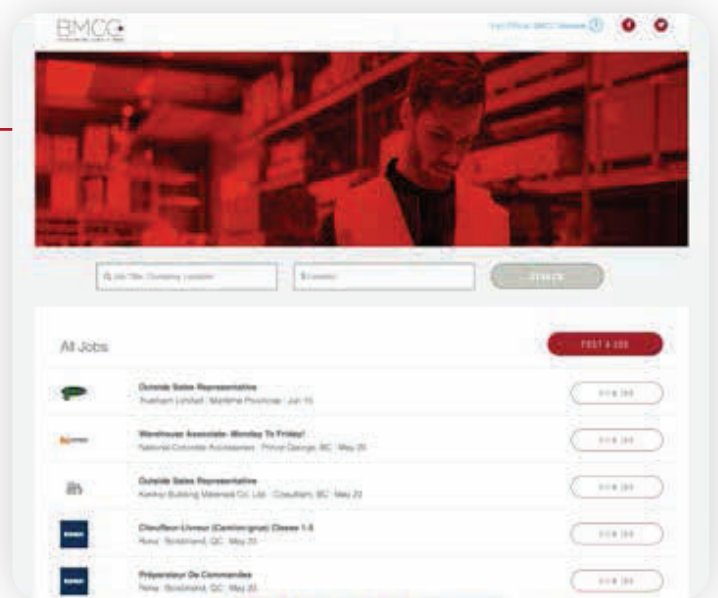
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# Timber Mart: a Successful Past Leads to a Promising Future

By Bailey Hildebrand-Russell, Naylor Association Solutions

## AS TIMBER MART PRESIDENT

and CEO Bernie Owens looks at the group's independent members, he sees success. With hundreds of members across Canada and 50 years under its belt, there's no sign of TIMBER MART slowing down as the buying group looks to the future.

As independent retailers look to remain competitive in the industry, the buying group continues to provide programs to members to help level the playing field amidst their corporate competitors.

"One of the biggest challenges for the Canadian independent over the next five to 10 years will be their ability to compete with big-box retailers and large chains," Bernie said. "Big-box retailers and large corporate chains are gaining steam rapidly in Canada, and doing so at the expense of the

independent. While our many programs and services aim to pool purchasing power and level the playing field, looking ahead, even greater collectivity in purchasing will be necessary to compete."

In addition, Bernie said, TIMBER MART will continue to introduce and offer its members better programs and services with greater returns to set them up for long-term profitability and success.

When looking at its large network of retailers, it's easy to see why they've chosen to operate under the TIMBER MART banner.

"Independent building material and hardware entrepreneurs in Canada appreciate many of our offerings, but especially our buying power on lumber and building materials, as well as easy access to hardlines products through our partnerships with Spancan and Orgill, our marketing, sports and loyalty programs (example, AIR MILES, Moneris, our CFL partnership, etc.), as well as our transparency as a group and low-cost structure," Bernie said. "Our members are our shareholders and they receive some of the highest rebate returns in the industry and that's because we're not a public corporation – we're a buying group, where the returns belong to our shareholders."

In an industry that requires innovation to stay relevant, TIMBER MART continues to ensure its members have the technological tools in hand to make purchasing more efficient and their customers' experiences greater. TIMBER MART offers retailers greater buying efficiency through its dealer intranet, which continues to improve and not only serves as a communication hub for information on buying and marketing programs, but also offers a pool-buying module that facilitates regional and national pool buys on a wide assortment of products for their stores, Bernie said.

TIMBER MART's technological advances at head office are also providing members



"(TIMBER MART members) have leveraged our group's critical mass to gain competitive advantages and because of this have thrived in their local markets and will continue to for decades to come. They are what inspire us to do and achieve more every day."

– Bernie Owens,  
TIMBER MART President  
and CEO



with great service and accuracy for vendor billing and rebate reconciliation.

“From a corporate standpoint, we have increased our organizational efficiency by implementing a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system throughout our organization,” he said. “It has allowed our leadership team to have greater visibility into each business function where they’re able to make decisions based on real-time data collected. This technology has also automated many back-office functions that have worked toward increasing our overall operational efficiency and reducing costs.”

While TIMBER MART is always looking to the future, it’s hard to ignore its successful past. Founded in 1967, Bernie credits the company’s growth to several aspects, including the unwavering determination and passion that TIMBER MART members have to succeed as independents.

“Their ability to adapt to local market needs at an expedited pace versus that of corporate chains is unparalleled,” he said. “They have leveraged our group’s critical mass to gain competitive advantages and because of this have thrived in their local markets and will continue to for decades to



come. They are what inspire us to do and achieve more every day.”

As well, TIMBER MART’s corporate team constantly works toward its core goal: to ensure the success of the independent building material and hardware entrepreneur.

Another one of TIMBER MART’s goals is to give back to the community. TIMBER MART has its own national registered charity, Timberkids. The foundation works with TIMBER MART members across the country to collect and distribute money to organizations that focus on the health and well-being of children in their communities. The foundation’s dealer-matching program matches 100% of donations. The foundation also recently introduced the Timberkids Scholarship Fund for children of TIMBER

MART store owners and their employees. There are a total of five scholarships, one in each region of Canada, for full-time students attending post-secondary educational institutions. TIMBER MART has also partnered with the Children’s Wish Foundation this year to be the title sponsor for the Children’s Wish Hero’s Challenge for 2019.

TIMBER MART has been a WRLA member for more than 50 years – a partnership that is beneficial to both parties.

“We feel it’s important to support our regional associations because they play an important role in bringing our industry together through educational courses, communications and events where we have opportunities to learn, share best practices and build valuable relationships,” Bernie said. “For example, the WRLA offers a myriad of valuable educational courses where individuals from across the industry can learn the necessary skills to operate successful lumber and building material businesses. These courses have returned great value to our members thus far and we feel they will continue to well into the future.”



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# Modern Modular

*The evolution of the modular housing model*

By *Liz Kovach, WRLA President*



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*Modular buildings and modular homes are prefabricated buildings or houses that consist of repeated sections called modules. “Modular” is a construction method that involves constructing sections away from the building site, then delivering them to the intended site.*

Innovation is a buzz word that you hear and see everywhere, but have you ever stopped to think about what innovation means to you?

Innovation is about staying relevant and turning ideas into solutions that add value to your customers. We are in a time of unprecedented change where companies need to adapt to stay relevant for their customer base. What may have helped to make an organization be successful in the past may be the cause of its failure in the future.

I was happy to connect with Rick Weste, President and CEO of Triple M Group of Companies, including Triple M Housing Ltd. and Metric Modular, to discuss innovation in the realm of modular housing and construction.

Did you know that the concept of modular housing started as a mail order program with Sears? In 1908, kit homes were a part of the Sears catalogue. After the Second World War, prefab homes grew in popularity with the growing post-war housing demands by new families. Not only were they affordable, they were efficient and quickly constructed.

Modular buildings and modular homes are prefabricated buildings or houses that consist of repeated sections called modules.

Modular is a construction method that involves constructing sections away from the building site, then delivering them to the intended site.

One of the key modern advantages of modular housing is the energy efficiency delivered by its building envelope. They have a high energy efficiency rating and are meant to last a lifetime. With the construction taking place indoors on large jigs, modular homes can efficiently apply a continuous vapour barrier that controls air flow into the house – a key element of energy efficiency.

Since modular homes have been a part of the housing landscape, Triple M Housing has helped to change the modular home marketplace through innovation. This past March, Triple M Housing/Metric Modular won first place for Jacobson Hall at Trinity Western University from the Modular Building Institute, an organization that represents modular builders from 25 countries. In 2018, Triple M Housing and Metric Modular broke through an industry barrier when they constructed the tallest wood-frame modular housing structure in Canada for Trinity Western University. “The building is a 228-student residence that is five storeys and 60,000 square feet,” said

Rick, and they are currently working on more ground-breaking projects to take their product to the next level.

During that project, having the right professional teams, including the architectural and structural engineering team, was critical. Typically, structural engineers are not familiar with wood frame modular construction buildings that are over four storeys tall and the five-storey university residence project pushed the boundaries of their comfort level. To add to the challenges they faced, the structure itself is in the highest seismic area of Canada. Having the right team willing to embrace this challenge was key to Triple M Housing’s success.

When Rick first started in the industry in 1996, Triple M Housing was building single widens for the dealer network. Under Rick’s leadership, Triple M Housing has expanded its product offering into multi-storey single family residences for urban environments (marketed under the Metric Modular brand), featured by show home builders in Western Canada, and has embarked on building the company’s first hotel and apartment building.

Having the right team that wants to take the journey with you to start breaking



In 2018, Triple M Housing and Metric Modular broke through an industry barrier when they constructed the tallest wood framed modular housing structure in Canada. Jacobson Hall at Trinity Western University won first place from the Modular Building Institute, an organization that represents modular builders from 25 countries.

down barriers was a common theme in my discussion with Rick. The construction industry traditionally has been set in its ways and is often slow to adopt innovation and ideas. However, working outside of that zone is where the opportunities to maximize growth potential typically lie.

When working on new projects and changing existing processes, there are always challenges along the way. When I asked Rick what the key to overcoming the challenges they encountered was, his response was, "The key to our success is getting the right team together who is willing to step out of their comfort zone

and work in the unknown. Having the right team of structural engineers and architects who don't typically work in the area of modular construction shrinks the pool of professionals willing to take on these types of challenges and venture on this innovation journey. "

Getting people out of their comfort zone to embark on new projects can be a difficult process. Often, businesses choose to err on the side of conservative not wanting to be the early adopters of new ideas. However, having a strong leadership team that includes your financial officers can better analyze the risk and reward on new project

ideas. Rick and the Triple M Housing team have proven this to be a formula for success.

In addition to his role as CEO and President of Triple M Housing, Rick is also the Chair of the Modular Construction Council for the Canadian Home Builders Association (CHBA). Involvement in this association has provided Rick and his team with the opportunity to educate the construction industry about the advantages of modular and how proposed building codes can impact housing affordability. Through CHBA, Rick has been actively involved on its Technological Research Committee. This committee helps to provide insight as to how changes may impact the implementation of certain building codes.

Rick's knowledge and experience has provided him with the opportunity to educate others on how energy efficient modular housing is. Recently, that included being a presenter to the Net Zero council on behalf of the CHBA. Rick's dedication to his industry and to being an innovative business leader has helped forge a trail forward for the modular housing industry and ensured Triple M Housing as a leader in that sector. »

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# Innovation in Supply Chain Transportation and Tracking

The advancement of technology in today's world presents opportunities for supply chain managers to collect data faster, more reliably, automatically, and cost-effectively. The fourth industrial revolution of technological innovation has created opportunities to track, measure, analyze, and improve our operations at much lower costs than yesterday. The days of technology implementations that take several years to achieve are gone. With new agile development, open source code, and collaboration in the technology world, you can get data more quickly than ever before.

Technology-driven optimization is changing how we manage our supply chains, bringing down barriers and creating completely integrated ecosystems that are fully transparent with all the players involved. Those who move quickly to adopt advanced technology for their supply chain will gain efficiencies and develop new business models with corresponding revenue streams, all while creating new competitive advantages.

Steve Liang, PhD., CTO of SensorUp, said, "Think about something, and then think about tracking that thing using a little digital sensor, and then think about some kid in his garage developing that thing. That kid is going to eat your lunch." What Steve means is that it doesn't take millions of dollars and research labs to innovate anymore, and access to creating innovative technology has created opportunities that we haven't even thought about yet.

To the supply chain, this means that collecting data in the field and tracking shipments, people, and packages are being done with low-cost sensors that send data to the cloud in real-time. We no longer track shipments using paper, use high administration to manage that paper, or experience long delays investigating, disputing, and resolving issues within the supply chain. Now we're collecting data in real-time within minutes of the event.

The question is what to do with all that data?

As a provider of specialized rail services for more than 40 years, Cando Rail Services helps industrial customers move bulk materials across their supply chains and has recognized the need for the industry to acquire accurate, timely data.

In the rail industry, there are several factors restricting supply chain growth including tight labour supply, infrastructure capacity constraints, 1960s technology, and visibility gaps. The implementation of technology that automates, expedites, and provides more detail will solve several of the constraints to growth. Better, faster, automated data will enable supply chain managers to do more with fewer labour resources.

Cando believes that access to better data will highlight unknown or unforeseen issues and enable its partners and customers to improve their supply chain. Because of this, the company has been working on a supply chain optimization platform called Quasar.

## QUASAR: THE FUTURE OF SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Quasar is a secure, cloud-based platform that allows users to track the location and movement of their railcar assets in real-time, visualize their supply chain from origin to destination and optimize network health. The full Quasar platform includes yard management, shipment visibility, car storage, activity-based costing, alerts, metrics, and prescriptive analytics. Quasar is designed to capture your operational data, calculate the costs of your supply chain real-time, and enable customers to analyze data without needing a data science degree.

Supply chain management has stepped into the new era of the digital economy and Canada's supply chain processes must use advanced technology in order to thrive. In a complex, globalized, digital economy, we need new solutions to position Canada as a supply chain of the future. We believe Quasar will play a significant role in optimizing our supply chain and bringing the industry forward.

We've seen some big holes that needed to be filled to create a more integrated, more networked supply chain in Canada. Quasar aims to make it easier to adopt technology that addresses our challenges. The platform has been tested in real working environments in the Canadian supply chain with positive results. With Quasar, the future of supply chain management is here. ▮

# Investing in Technology

By Trevor Schellenberg, Senior Account Manager/ACCEO ProfitMaster

In summer 2018, I was meeting with a store manager when the store's paging system interrupted us several times.

When I asked why the team didn't use headsets as a communication tool, it boiled down to the fact that one of their staff members had hearing aids – as did the owner.

That begged the question: How do you stay connected to your staff without having a utility belt akin to Adam West in Batman? Phones, walkie-talkies, and inventory scanners are a lot for anyone to carry around.

Situations like these drive innovation in our product offerings as they provide us with the opportunity to solve our customers' problems. In this case, while there were many devices that had integrated scanners, none of them had the ability to connect to the Bluetooth of the hearing aids. Enter the Rugged Smartphone – a powerful and versatile Android device with an integrated scanner and PTT (push-to-talk) functionality. This device provides a viable solution. Employees don't have to choose which device is paired to their hearing aids anymore and the entire staff team could communicate easily while still completing day-to-day job tasks such as creating purchase orders, counting inventory or checking prices.

It's important to listen to your customers to find out what their needs are and to gauge whether employees find learning technology tricky. Below are a few ways we decide on what to come out with next.

## APPLICATION'S EASE OF USE

A quicker onboarding process is vital to a business' operations. Spending a week training a seasonal employee or someone who may only work a few shifts a week won't benefit you and may actually stress your employee out. When developing a new application or introducing new



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hardware, it is important to ensure the product is user friendly and easy to learn. Functionality is useless if the product is too difficult to use.

## CONSIDER MOBILITY

When surveyed, most of our customers respond positively to mobility. It is important to ensure our deliverables address that need. For example, implementing a point-of-sale (POS) system on tablets will help to enhance the customer experience. Being stuck behind a desk isn't the best way to service your end-customer. After all, shoulder time is a great way to increase sales.

## MULTI-PURPOSING

In the kitchen, a chef's knife is incredibly more useful than an avocado specialty scoop. If you're investing in new hardware, having it do more than a few jobs can spread those costs out. A tablet that can act as a POS, as well as inventory control, has double (if not more) the value of a monitor mounted permanently at a POS. When selecting new products to bring to market, we do our best to squeeze as much function out of a device as possible and constantly try to expand on it.

**“It's important to listen to your customers to find out what their needs are and to gauge whether employees find learning technology tricky.”**

## BUDGET FOR THE FUTURE

If you're a smaller store or start-up, an inexpensive system may get you up and running but if your goals are to scale up, you want something that will grow with you. The same theory applies when selecting a server, PC, tablet, and new applications to help run your store – we always have the future in mind.

When combined together, having the option of mobility that enables you to extend your POS to tablets in employees' hands on the sales floor when it gets busy helps you increase sales while keeping your hardware and software investments low. You can have the greatest product in the world, but if your customer doesn't have a need for it, it won't fly. **»**



# Time for Positive Change

By Tom Bell, WRLA Chair

## HELLO ALL,

I am so glad we are finally past the awful start to the year we experienced in 2019. Winter is over and summer is finally starting. During the month of May we started to see and hear from members the first signs of business picking up. While no one is sure if they can make up for the slow start in the first part of the year, it is encouraging to hear that business is picking up. Industry talk indicates that the second half of the season will be better.

We continue to listen to our membership and work on our value proposition to ensure that we continue to further the interests of the industry and represent our membership well. Lots of changes are underway. Some are major ones and some are minor ones, and while some of us senior veterans are slow to understand and adapt, I assure you that great thought and understanding goes into all ideas and decisions made.

It is time for positive change and that is what is happening. Change would not be possible without the support and engagement from our members and I want to thank all the members that came out to our strategy sessions to help us chart the course for the future. The WRLA board and staff team continue to have good discussions and positive debates, making sure we have thought about all ideas.

We have just finished RFP process for the 2021, 2022, and 2023 WRLA Buying Show. We had very positive conversation and open board discussion. We came to a unanimous decision on which city should be the host for the three years following the 2020 show in Calgary and by the time this *Yardstick* issue is released our RFP show decision will have been announced.

We are YOUR board and consider all WRLA members in all our decision making with the future of the WRLA as our major focus. Changes are happening constantly in our industry and staying the same is not an option. The WRLA has always been a leader in our

industry and being proactive and willing to try new things is a positive part of who we are.

We have a great WRLA office team being led by a very strong leader in Liz. The WRLA office and the board are in a very good place and I am proud to be a part of it.

As always, my phone, 204-479-9386, and email, [tombell@mymts.net](mailto:tombell@mymts.net), are always on. I enjoy hearing from you, your thoughts and comments

Take care,  
Tom )



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

**BUILDING MATERIALS**

Can-Cell Industries Inc. .... 4  
[www.can-cell.com](http://www.can-cell.com)  
 Leland Industries Inc. .... 14  
[www.lelandindustries.com](http://www.lelandindustries.com)

**BUYING GROUPS**

Sexton Group Ltd. .... Outside Back Cover  
[www.sextongroup.com](http://www.sextongroup.com)

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 Products Ltd. .... Inside Front Cover  
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**FORKLIFTS/SALES, SERVICE, RENTALS**

Cervus Equipment Materials Handling ..... 18  
[www.cervusequipment.com](http://www.cervusequipment.com)  
 Sellick Equipment ..... 8  
[www.sellickequipment.com](http://www.sellickequipment.com)

**HARDWARE**

Orgill, Inc. .... 3  
[www.orgill.com](http://www.orgill.com)

**PAINTS & STAINS**

Cloverdale Paint Inc. .... 8  
[www.cloverdalepaint.com](http://www.cloverdalepaint.com)

**REBAR**

Harris Rebar ..... 18  
[www.harrisrebar.com](http://www.harrisrebar.com)

**ROOF TRUSSES**

Penn-Truss Mfg. Inc. .... 18  
[www.penntruss.com](http://www.penntruss.com)

**WINDOW & DOOR SYSTEMS**

JELD-WEN Windows & Doors /  
 Willmar Collection ..... 12  
[www.jeld-wen.ca](http://www.jeld-wen.ca)

**WINDOWS**

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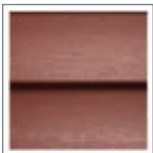
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