



CAPSTONE MAGAZINE

Canada's Construction Intelligence

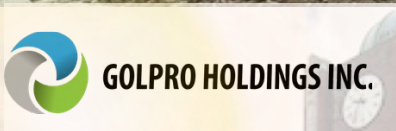
The Build Issue



South Okanagan earthworks and civil contractor for commercial, agricultural, and environmental projects

“Our growth has surprised a lot of people, hearing where we're at now versus five years ago.”

Felicity Johnson



Ottawa real-estate company specializing in acquisition, development, and asset management

“The market thought we paid too high a price. I saw potential in it.”

Bill Sioulas



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Independent
coverage of the
companies,
projects, and
people building
Canada.

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Welcome to the inaugural edition of Capstone, Canada's Construction Intelligence.

This issue exists because the country's construction industry rarely gets the kind of sustained, independent attention it deserves. The companies in these pages were not chosen for size alone. Each one tells you something true about how Canada actually gets built.

Read through this issue and a pattern emerges that has little to do with scale. Triple One Properties in Calgary has added one asset every eighteen to twenty-four months for nearly four decades, financed conventionally, with no outside investors. Plainsman Group of Companies in Kamloops is preparing to hand its second generation of leadership to a third. Golpro Holdings turned a hundred-year-old Ottawa office building into one of the city's most closely studied retrofits. KD Construction grew from two pieces of equipment to twenty by doing the work in front of it rather than chasing a market. Facet Custom Builders in the Comox Valley still treats every client relationship as a negotiation between design and budget, settled before a shovel touches the ground. Alwind Industries has spent forty years engineering its own aluminum systems out of a single plant in Markham. And ph5 architecture in Vancouver has built a practice on a simple premise: that a building succeeds only if it still looks the same, unaltered, three years after the people inside it move in.

None of these stories are flashy. All of them are durable, which is harder to build toward.

Every fact and quotation in this issue has been verified directly with its source before publication. If you find an error, tell us. We will fix it.

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Ottawa real-estate company specializing in acquisition, development, and asset management

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ph5 Architecture 
Elevating experiences of people and place.

Facet Custom Builders 
Elevated Planning. Expert Construction.
Built for the Island.

Plainsman Group of Companies 
58 years of building BC.

7 • 3 • 192

COMPANIES FEATURED • PROVINCES REPRESENTED • YEARS IN BUSINESS, COMBINED

"Build less. Build well. Keep it."
— Sameer Mawji, Triple One Properties

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Capstone profiles the companies, projects, and people building Canada. If your company has a story worth telling, we want to hear it.

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The Build Issue Insights

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"The homes cannot be built faster than the workforce that builds them." Sebastien Ameur





GOLPRO HOLDINGS INC.

From a single Ottawa strip mall to a hundred-year-old heritage office tower and two high-rises now in the pipeline, Golpro Holdings has grown by reading where a building, a tenant, or a market is headed next.





"The market believed that we paid too high a price for it I saw some potential in it."

Golpro Holdings traces its origin not to real estate but to wholesale petroleum. Founder Goldy Singh built a petroleum distribution business that expanded across Canada and the United States before he diversified into property, opening a small real estate arm in Ottawa in 2008 focused on smaller condominium rentals and buildings.

Bill Sioulas joined Singh in 2015, and the two began pursuing larger acquisitions almost immediately. Their first major purchase was a 20,000 square foot strip mall at 1356 and 1366 Clyde Avenue at Baseline Road. The second, in the same period, was a building that would come to define the company's reputation in Ottawa: 377 Dalhousie Street, a 75,000 square foot office building in the ByWard Market known as Mercury Court.

A CENTURY-OLD BUILDING, MODERNIZED

Mercury Court has a longer history than Golpro's ownership of it. The building opened in 1923 as Larocque's department store, was sold during the Great Depression to Joseph Hirsch Vineberg, and passed through Toth Realty Corporation by the 1970s, when the RCMP was among its tenants. Architect Barry Padolsky led a retrofit that added the building's rooftop dome, with a weathervane following in the 1990s.

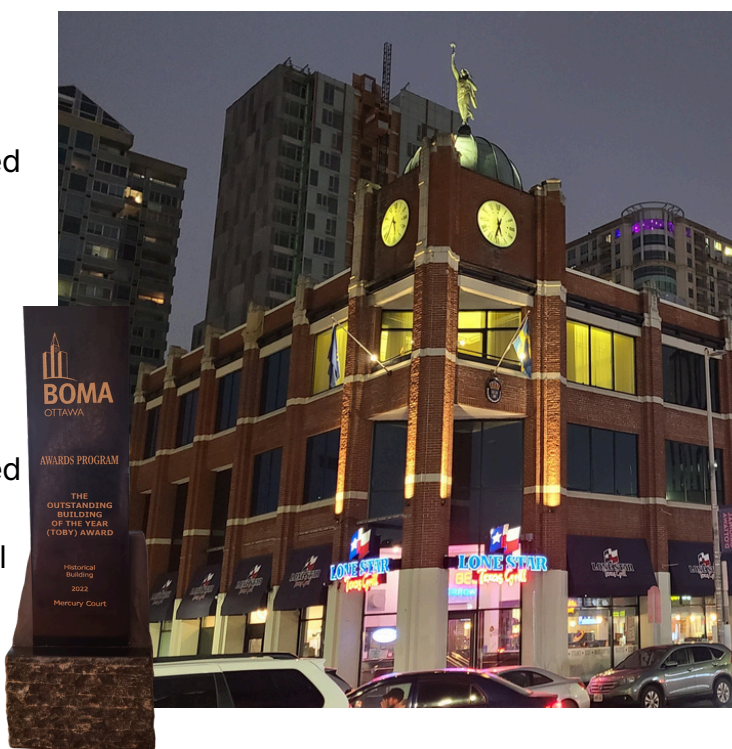
Golpro's renovation, layered onto that history, ran an additional three to four million dollars on top of the purchase price. Sioulas describes the priority as starting with what tenants and their employees actually feel day to day: life safety systems, accessibility upgrades, and indoor air quality. The company installed 56 individual heat pump units, a system out of Calgary that measures CO2 levels in real time and adjusts fresh air supply automatically as occupancy in a space changes, rather than relying on a fixed thermostat setting. Filtration was upgraded to MERV 13, the standard used in surgical rooms, with UV lighting installed behind each filter to neutralize bacteria and germs before air recirculates.

The renovation earned Mercury Court a TOBY Award, the Outstanding Building of the Year recognition from the Building Owners and Managers Association, judged against six nominees including federally owned buildings managed by the National Capital Commission. The building, purchased for 25 million dollars, is now appraised at 36.5 million.

THE TENANT-FIRST LEASING MODEL

Mercury Court's retail component recently welcomed McDonald's back into the building under a 20 year lease, on the condition that the location operate without seating, a structure that has worked well enough that the tenant is now looking to expand storage to reduce delivery frequency. A cybersecurity firm, leased 12,000 square feet of office space and runs a 24 hour, 120 person call center out of the space.

At 830 Campbell Avenue, an industrial building Golpro gutted to structure before leasing, engineering firm HTS Engineering signed a 10 year deal that it renewed for a further five years this past week, a year and a half ahead of its original expiry. Sioulas's deal volume across these and other transactions, including 708 Somerset and a Whitestown property, earned him recognition as CoStar's Power Broker of the Quarter for the last quarter of 2025 in the Ottawa market, an award based on closed transaction data CoStar tracks across its LoopNet and CoStar platforms.





ACQUISITIONS ACROSS OTTAWA

Golpro's portfolio has grown steadily outward from Mercury Court. The company owns 708 Somerset Street, a roughly 8,000 square foot retail corner property in Chinatown that is fully leased, and the Trafalgar Building on Queen Street, a recognizable heritage property. On the residential side, Golpro owns a 55 unit building at 305 Metcalfe Street in Ottawa's Golden Triangle, near Elgin Street, where 36 of the 55 units have been fully renovated alongside underground and surface parking.

SECURITY AS A DIFFERENTIATOR

Mercury Court's security model has become something other landlords, and other countries, come to study. Golpro worked with Ottawa police and the fire and paramedic services to establish what is known as a police agency agreement, giving emergency services their own keys and 24 hour access to the building, along with standing authority to remove trespassers without needing separate landlord sign-off in the moment.

The building is also in the process of installing an AI-assisted camera system, which Sioulas refers to as Loretta IO, that analyzes behavior rather than identity.

The system is designed to flag a medical event, such as a fall, an unattended bag left in a lobby, or behavior consistent with intoxication or distress, and to track a flagged individual across multiple camera feeds without requiring security staff to manually search footage camera by camera.

Mercury Court counts the Swedish Embassy among its tenants, and the embassy's director of security flew in from Stockholm to spend a week studying the building's approach as a model for embassies elsewhere. "They were concerned at first because of privacy," Sioulas says. "But then when I showed them that it doesn't do facial recognition, it does body language recognition, they approved it immediately," starting with a test run on the ground floor.

CONSTRUCTION AND EMBASSY WORK

Beyond its own portfolio, Golpro operates a construction and project management arm that handles smaller scoped work: restaurant build-outs, office fit-outs, and renovation projects for clients including foreign embassies. Sioulas holds a government security clearance that allows him to work directly inside embassy buildings and residences, a credential that has made Golpro a recurring contractor for diplomatic clients on projects ranging from roofing to security doors to HVAC systems, much of which cannot be discussed publicly.



CHOOSING PARTNERS BY SPECIALTY

Golpro's approach to outside partners is built around matching the specialist to the project rather than relying on a single roster of go-to firms. The company has worked with SNC-Lavalin on major systems work and with architecture firms such as Lahey Architects, who specialize in high-rise design, for new development.

"If I see a small structural requirement for a heritage building, I'll go to a heritage structural engineer," Sioulas says. "I can't go to an architect that does high-rises and ask for a drawing for a 3,000 square foot pharmacy. You have to know several firms with several different experiences to handle whatever the project requires."

ONE TEAM

Golpro's day-to-day operation runs on a level of cross-trade communication Sioulas has built deliberately. Before taking an extended vacation, he gathers roughly 30 people, trades and staff across every active project, for a single breakfast meeting to walk through every building, every tenant, and every job in progress.

"The electrician, instead of calling me to say he's done with the hookup, calls the mechanical guy directly. They learn how to communicate with each other, which is a better team than having all that information come through me."

That structure has also shaped Golpro's standing with third-party clients. Sioulas says other landlords have approached the company directly to take over buildings from less responsive managers, to the point that Golpro can now be selective about which third-party management contracts it accepts.

CLYDE AND BASELINE: THE NEXT SCALE

Golpro's most significant project to date is also its first ground-up residential development. The company recently received zoning approval for two towers at Clyde Avenue and Baseline Road, 28 storeys and 18 storeys respectively, totaling 525 units. Renderings are being finalized for the company's website alongside other recent deal announcements.

The project is roughly three years from breaking ground, with architectural and structural planning underway ahead of city site plan approval. It represents a meaningful shift in scale for a company that has built its reputation primarily through acquisition, retrofit, and leasing rather than ground-up construction.



READING WHERE THE MARKET IS HEADED

Sioulas is deliberately cautious about projecting Golpro's next five years, in a way that reflects how the company has operated since 2008: watching the market closely before committing capital. Office space demand, the effect of AI on how much space tenants need, and Ottawa's population trends are all live questions the company is tracking rather than answering in advance.

That includes the company's legacy ties to petroleum. Sioulas describes a shift already underway in how the industry talks about fuel real estate, moving away from the term gas station toward energy station, as EV charging, trucking infrastructure, and quick service retail reshape what those properties need to offer. On vacant land the company holds, the preference now leans toward build-to-suit deals with a single long-term tenant over 20 to 25 years, rather than speculative construction.

"Are we going to shift to data centers? Are we going to shift to EV, energy stations, trucking stops? We have to look at where the market is heading and then we'll make our decisions at that time."





CONSTRUCTION



Since 2020, KD Construction has grown one project at a time: no investors, no acquisitions, and a fleet that's gone from two machines to twenty. Inside an Okanagan based, family run company completing earthworks, environmental and civil infrastructure projects.



KD Construction was founded in 2020 by Kyle Demelo and Felicity Johnson, in Oliver, British Columbia. Demelo, a third-generation farmer in the South Okanagan, had spent years operating skid steers and excavators on agricultural land before the company existed. Johnson came from a business management background, having served as general manager of Area 27, a motorsport facility in Oliver, with no prior construction experience but a clear understanding of how to help on the business administrative side. In early 2022, Joe Vieira, a cousin of Kyle's, bringing more than thirty years of industry experience, became the third business partner and general manger to propel the company and lead the operations.

With Joe's knowledge and field expertise, Kyle's dream and dedication, and Felicity's administrative organization, the three of them, along with their committed team members, have built the company from the ground up to where it is now.

"We started with two pieces of equipment. Now we're up to twenty."

Felicity Johnson

ROOTS IN THE SOUTH OKANAGAN

KD Construction is headquartered in Oliver, a town of fewer than 5,000 people in the South Okanagan, and the company's early work reflected where it came from.

Agricultural contracts, taking out orchards and preparing land for new vineyards, were the first jobs on the books.

The Okanagan Valley's shift toward wine country development in the years prior had created steady demand for that kind of earthworks, and KD built its early reputation on those projects, working across dozens of sites from Osoyoos to Kelowna.

The agricultural work remains an active part of the business. The company's project list includes orchard earthworks across Pyman Road in Kelowna and Old Camp McKinney Road in Oliver, vineyard site preparation in Osoyoos, and ongoing agricultural contracts for repeat clients, including a current project involving large-diameter HDPE pipe installation and spillway upgrades on a 1,500-acre cherry property in the Valley. That scope, supplying and fusing large-diameter pipe in addition to the earthworks, is not something most excavating companies in the region can execute.



MOVING INTO THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN

As KD's capabilities grew, so did the geography it was working in. The company's centre of gravity has shifted toward the central Okanagan, where Kelowna's sustained growth has produced a pipeline of institutional, commercial, and civil work that keeps expanding. Schools, in particular, have become a significant part of the business.

The Chief Tomat Elementary addition in West Kelowna is one of the company's most substantial projects to date. The scope involved installing full civil services including sanitary, storm, water, and city tie-ins; bulk excavation and export of approximately 8,700 cubic metres of material; design and installation of approximately 500 square metres of lock block retaining wall; and concrete and asphalt prep and installation, in addition to relocating the existing playground. At North Glenmore Elementary in Kelowna, completed in fall 2024, KD handled footing and foundation excavation, underground utility installation, lock block retaining walls, and subbase preparation for paving.

"I love these school projects. Seeing the excitement on the kids' faces when they get to walk into the new school, that's something."

The company has also completed significant commercial work in Kelowna's Airport Business Park, providing full earthworks and underground civil scopes for Bartek Construction at Mountain Lake Industrial, a 19,900 square foot concrete tilt-up structure completed in spring 2024, and the Quail Ridge Business Centre, a three-building industrial project totaling 66,000 square feet. As well as the Kyle Road Business Park in West Kelowna, involving site preparation of a lot exceeding 315,600 square feet and full underground civil installation across five insulated precast buildings.

ENVIRONMENTAL WORK: THE BRENDA MINE

Among KD's most technically demanding completed projects is the Brenda Mine Compost Facility in Peachland, executed across two phases between April 2023 and June 2024. Phase one involved 50,000 square metres of land clearing and site grading, site preparation and backfill for a 4,000 square metre MegaDome structure, excavation and installation of a 12,500-litre leachate storage tank, subgrade and subbase preparation for approximately 9,000 square metres of asphalt paving, and the excavation and liner installation of a stormwater pond with a capacity of over 470,000 litres.

Phase two covered supply and installation of site infrastructure and utilities, including new gravel access roads, a truck scale, electrical services, a customized site office trailer and a retrofitted sea container repurposed as an electrical services building. The work is representative of an area Joe Vieira has spent decades developing expertise in:

environmental and mine-site work including creek diversions, spillways, reservoir construction, and site remediation at operating and closed mine sites. Upcoming environmental projects include a spillway installation and a reservoir upgrade that KD is currently working through with engineers.

TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

The company runs a fleet of approximately twenty pieces of heavy equipment, anchored by CAT machinery sourced through Finning. The fleet is kept young by design: buying new equipment allows KD to leverage manufacturer financing programs, reduces maintenance liability, and ensures the machines showing up on client sites are performing reliably.

When a new contract requires a piece of equipment the company does not yet own, the contract informs the acquisition.

Underpinning the field operation is a technology stack built around precision surveying. The company uses Trimble Business Center, a civil engineering design and survey software platform, to design and adapt grade models on the fly.

A drone capable of imaging approximately 200 acres in a matter of minutes provides aerial survey data to two-centimetre accuracy. For fine tolerance work, including layout for lock block walls, concrete sidewalks, and building corners, the team uses a Sitech Total Station capable of two-millimetre accuracy. The Trimble TSC7 handheld rover rounds out the kit.

SiteDocs, a cloud-based safety records platform, handles documentation across project sites. The company is currently working toward a Certificate of Recognition, a designation requiring an occupational health and safety program that exceeds regulatory requirements.



PARTNERSHIPS AND THE ONE-STOP-SHOP MODEL

All partners have said publicly that they will not grow in a way that costs them their culture, and Johnson is specific about what that means. Growth is welcome, but it has to be systematic, deliberate enough that employees never turn into headcount. She wants to know every worker's name, to ask how a kid's birthday went or how a weekend was.

The company is family-run in the literal sense, but also figuratively too. Many of the company's employees and owners have known each other for several years, stemming from before the incorporation of KD Construction. The goal is for workers to feel comfortable bringing anything to the owners, and to feel valued.

Bartek Construction gave KD one of its first major opportunities in the civil and commercial space, and the relationship has been a defining one. Rather than presenting as a single-scope earthworks subcontractor, KD's approach has been to offer general contractors a consolidated scope: earthworks, underground civil, asphalt paving, concrete installation, landscaping coordination, and related work, delivered through a managed network of reliable subcontractors, under one price.

"Instead of having to go to eight different trades, you just come to us and we'll manage those trades," Vieira says.

For repeat general contractors and construction managers, the model reduces coordination overhead. For KD, it deepens the relationship with each client and expands the value the company delivers on any given project. Neway Landscaping is among the regular subcontractor partners, collaborating with KD on irrigation, sod, and planting scopes adjacent to the civil work.



BUILDING A COMPANY THAT TAKES CARE OF ITS PEOPLE

The culture that surrounds that core, Johnson says, is one the company works deliberately to maintain as it grows. ***"We don't want our people to become numbers,"*** Johnson says. That posture extends into how KD shows up on the subject of mental health in the trades.

Construction carries one of the highest suicide rates of any industry, a statistic the company has cited publicly, including a post marking World Suicide Prevention Day that pointed followers toward the Canadian Mental Health Association's Ride Don't Hide fundraiser. For Johnson, the issue is not abstract. She has lost people close to her and describes her involvement with the CMHA as something near and dear.

Editor's note This profile touches on suicide and mental health in the construction industry. In Canada, the 988 Suicide Crisis Helpline is available 24/7 by call or text at 988. The Canadian Mental Health Association (cmha.ca) offers further resources and local support.



THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

KD Construction's pipeline heading into the next several years is built on the work that has defined its recent history: school projects, commercial civil in the central Okanagan, agricultural contracts in the Valley, and an expanding footprint in environmental work. Coming up is continued work in the Kelowna and West Kelowna areas, along with a condo project in Peachland that Demelo describes as exciting for what it means for smaller communities managing growth pressure from Kelowna.

The company has added equipment and headcount each year since founding and expects that pattern to continue. Johnson is deliberate about not attaching specific targets to that growth. "I don't want to say a specific ceiling of revenue or amount of people or equipment. I just want to see if we can keep adding a little bit each year without pulling all of our hair out," she says jokingly.

COMPETING ON CAPABILITY

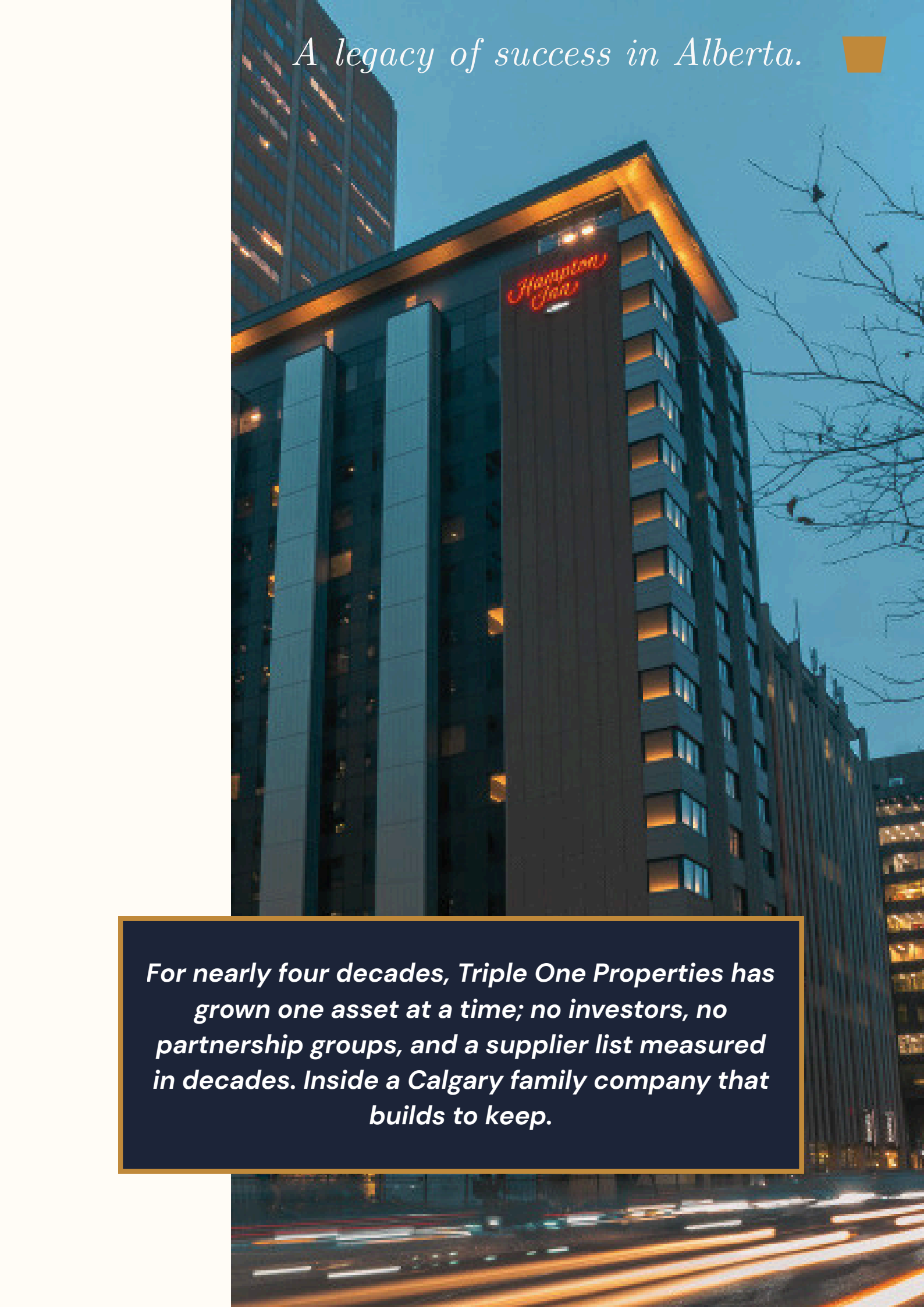
Environmental work is the area she most wants to push into, following Joe's experience in creek diversions, spillways, and reservoir construction. The company is already moving in that direction, with the Brenda Mine work behind it and upcoming environmental contracts in the pipeline. Felicity Johnson also holds a designation from the Canadian Playground Safety Institute, a credential she pursued to support the school work, and one that reflects the company's broader philosophy: if the work is there and the skill gap can be closed, KD will close it.

From two pieces of equipment to a fleet of twenty working across schools, industrial parks, agricultural properties, and closed mine sites in the Okanagan, the trajectory is not a difficult one to read. The company has grown by doing the work rather than chasing the market, and in a valley that keeps building, that has turned out to be a strategy that compounds.



TRIPLE ONE

PROPERTIES



A legacy of success in Alberta.

For nearly four decades, Triple One Properties has grown one asset at a time; no investors, no partnership groups, and a supplier list measured in decades. Inside a Calgary family company that builds to keep.

In the early 1970s, a young immigrant from Tanzania landed in Alberta with five hundred dollars and no contacts. He started knocking on doors in Fort McMurray, selling insurance. He would go on to build the first Hampton Inn ever to open outside the United States.

That man was Shiraz Mawji, known to almost everyone as Sam. The company he founded in 1988, Triple One Properties, has spent the better part of forty years doing something that has become quietly unfashionable in Canadian real estate: building things slowly, holding onto them, and answering to no one but the family that owns it.

In a national construction economy fixated on speed, scale, and the next financing round, Triple One is a deliberate outlier. It takes no outside investors. It runs on traditional financing and retained ownership. And it adds, on average, a single asset to its portfolio every eighteen to twenty-four months. The strategy is not built for headlines. It is built to last.

"We grow slower," says Sameer Mawji, Sam's son and the company's principal today, "but we own and operate everything that we have."

Sam Mawji arrived in Canada in the early 1970s, part of the Ismaili community that would soon swell with families fleeing Idi Amin's expulsion of South Asians from Uganda. He came before that exodus, and he came with almost nothing. The figure his son still cites, five hundred dollars, has hardened into family lore for a reason. Everything that followed was built on it.

It is, by his son's own description, a rags-to-riches story, the kind Canadian immigration produces more often than the construction trade press tends to record. What distinguishes Triple One is less the origin than the discipline that came out of it. A company started by a man with no margin for error grew into one that still refuses to over-extend.

THE ASSET THAT WENT FIRST

A HAMPTON INN, BEFORE HAMPTON CROSSED THE BORDER

In December 1996, Triple One opened the Hampton Inn & Suites at the Calgary Airport. It was the first Hampton Inn to open anywhere outside the United States; the brand's first international property, planted not in a global gateway city but on the apron of a Prairie airport.



**“EVERYTHING WE HAVE TODAY
IS ON HIS BACK AND HIS
EFFORTS TO CREATE”**



It performed. By the time the family sold the hotel in January 2024, after roughly twenty-seven years of ownership, it had spent much of its life ranked among the top-performing Hamptons in the entire system. For a debut international franchise, run by a single-family operator, that is not a footnote. It is the proof of concept the rest of the portfolio was built on.

Sameer Mawji joined the business full time in 2003, at around twenty-four, after a marketing degree and a brief detour into a career of his own. His brother, who held a finance degree and would become his partner in the business, had joined earlier. Neither had been groomed as heir apparent. "There was no context for us to necessarily take over the business," Mawji says. "It was more about: you're living under my roof, you're going to help in the business." More than two decades later, that help has become stewardship.

BUILDING UP, NOT OUT

The company's newest project rewrites the formula that made it. Triple One has just completed a Hampton Inn by Hilton in downtown Calgary, and almost the architectural opposite of its predecessor.

The airport hotel was a suburban build: concrete, low-rise, four storeys on a two-acre parcel, 104 rooms. The downtown property is an urban one, a tight, narrow site rising seventeen storeys above ground and two below, with 151 rooms. That is close to fifty per cent more rooms, on a fraction of the land.

The most telling decision is underground. Rather than a conventional ramped parkade, which on a site that size would have yielded perhaps ten stalls at considerable cost, Mawji installed an automated underground parking

lift system. It was cheaper to build and returned nearly three times the parking. "It's proven to be quite beneficial," he says, with the understatement of an operator who has run the numbers.

THE PEOPLE

Ask Sameer Mawji how many people run Triple One at the centre, and he hesitates at the obvious answer. "I don't want to say it's a one-man show," he says, but the operation is strikingly lean. He keeps accounting in-house. His mother helps with some purchasing. Beyond that, the company leans hard on the general managers at each property to execute against his expectations. The GMs report to him directly; he describes himself as hands-on in "almost every aspect" of both operations and development.

That structure was tested this year. Mawji's brother and business partner died three months before this interview, a loss that has fallen on the company's operations as much as on the family. Mawji has absorbed much of the work and is candid that the road ahead requires advancing others in the organization and handing them more responsibility, a transition many founder-scale family firms never manage cleanly.

ownership, Mawji says not a single employee on the team had less than four years of service. His executive housekeeper was there from opening day to the day it sold the full twenty-seven years. His current general manager has been with him for nearly a decade, as has much of the senior team. In an industry defined by churn, retention like that is its own competitive advantage.

THE LEDGER OF TRUST

If there is a single idea Triple One inherited intact from its founder, it is this: relationships are everything. It is the line Sameer Mawji returns to when explaining how a family company without institutional capital manages to develop and operate at the level it does.

The philosophy runs against the grain of standard procurement. Triple One does not chase the lowest bid or run trades through competitive tenders. It uses the same trusted partners, project after project, on the theory that the cheapest quote is rarely the one you want holding up an asset you intend to own for decades. "They may not be the cheapest," Mawji says, "but we know they're the best."

The receipts are long. The supplier who provides the lighting in the new downtown hotel has sold to the Mawji

Because we're a family-owned and operated business, we look at the members of our team as an extension of our family — and we treat them as such.

— Sameer Mawji

If that sounds like the boilerplate every company recites, the tenure numbers give it weight. At the airport Hampton, across twenty-seven years of

family for forty-five years, and they have never used anyone else. The wallpaper installer goes back fifteen years; the tile supplier and installer, twenty each. On the construction side, the relationship with Flynn Group of Companies runs roughly two decades.

As Mawji puts it, “It’s not about going through a hundred people to get a price. It’s using the people you’ve always trusted.” That trust changes how projects are run. On the downtown build, Mawji skipped the traditional drawings-out-to-bid cycle entirely. He shared his drawings directly with the trades he already knew he would use, his electrician, who had completed two prior projects, and his plumber, a longtime friend, and treated the work as a collaboration rather than a contest. One contract, one partner per trade, signed. When something goes sideways on site, as it inevitably does, those relationships are what keep a problem from becoming a crisis.



THE 24-HOUR PROBLEM

EFFICIENCY WHERE IT IS HARDEST TO FIND

Mawji is unusually frank about his industry’s environmental reality. Hotels, he notes, are among the worst contributors to a building’s environmental footprint for one structural reason: they never switch off. Unlike an office tower or an apartment block that ebbs with occupancy, a hotel runs lights, heating, and ventilation around the clock. There is no overnight setback for an entire building that always has guests in it.

Triple One’s response has been to attack

consumption at the level it can control. The company moved to LED lighting across its properties early, in the 2012 Saskatoon Courtyard, when LEDs were still a novelty rather than a default, for reasons both environmental and operational: far less energy on fixtures that run constantly, and far less maintenance labour replacing them.

Every property runs a centralized energy-management system with in-room motion sensors. When a room is empty, the system sets back the heating or cooling to a predetermined level, letting air conditioning drift to 24°C rather than holding 20°C, then restores comfort the moment a guest returns or the door opens. The new downtown hotel pushes further, using a curtain-wall system with a higher efficiency coefficient and better insulation, alongside high-efficiency equipment throughout. None of it is marketed as a green crusade. It is treated as good operations that happen to be good environmental practice.

THE PIPELINE

THE NEXT 24 MONTHS

Triple One’s growth map stays close to home, by design. The 2014 Courtyard by Marriott in Saskatoon, a 140-room property that Mawji says leads its market segment and has collected numerous awards, was always part of a larger master plan built around two hotels and an office building. That plan is set to complete next year. Next in the Saskatoon pipeline is a Home2 Suites by Hilton beside the existing Marriott, near the airport, with development expected to begin within about a year.



Beyond that, the company is weighing several Calgary moves it can only describe in outline, citing non-disclosure agreements: a resort property outside the city, near a ski destination of the Banff or Canmore variety; a downtown conversion under the city's conversion program; new development near the arena; and an additional asset in the southwest part of the city. The brand conversations are with Hilton and Hyatt.

The one direction Mawji rules out is diversification for its own sake. The only scenario that would take Triple One outside Western Canada is an acquisition in the United States (most likely California) and even that, he says,

hinges on the political climate. Naturally, given the trade and tariff turbulence reshaping cross-border construction economics, that is a condition, not a plan.

Where does he see Triple One in five years? On the same trajectory: growing slowly but firmly, independent, financed conventionally, adding roughly one asset every eighteen to twenty-four months mostly through new development, and mostly held rather than sold. In a Canadian construction landscape straining to build faster than its workforce and capital can manage, Triple One's answer is almost contrarian. Build less. Build well. Keep it.



ALWIND
industries ltd.



Since 1985, Alwind Industries has designed and manufactured its own thermally broken aluminum window systems out of Markham, Ontario, serving schools, hospitals, and government buildings across Canada.



Alwind Industries was founded in 1985 to supply institutional aluminum windows and entrances, identifying early demand in a market that has remained the company's focus ever since.

Alwind designs and engineers its own hardware and extrusion profiles rather than licensing existing systems, a practice that has shaped its product line from the outset.

Today the company operates out of a roughly 30,000 square foot facility at 130 Esna Park Drive in Markham, employs about 35 people, and remains privately owned with no association to any parent company or industry group.

MANUFACTURING AND THE THERMAL BREAK

Alwind's core product is the thermally broken aluminum window, a system that uses a PVC insert between the interior and exterior extrusions to interrupt the transfer of heat and cold through the frame. Adam notes that fully non-thermal aluminum glazing has become rare in the market, generally limited to unheated structures such as storm fronts, as energy codes have pushed nearly every manufacturer toward some form of thermal break, whether through hybrid PVC and aluminum systems, straight PVC, fiberglass, or steel.

"Aluminum seems to be the strongest material choice. It's adaptable to many different types of extrusions, which we can form into designs that benefit the end product."

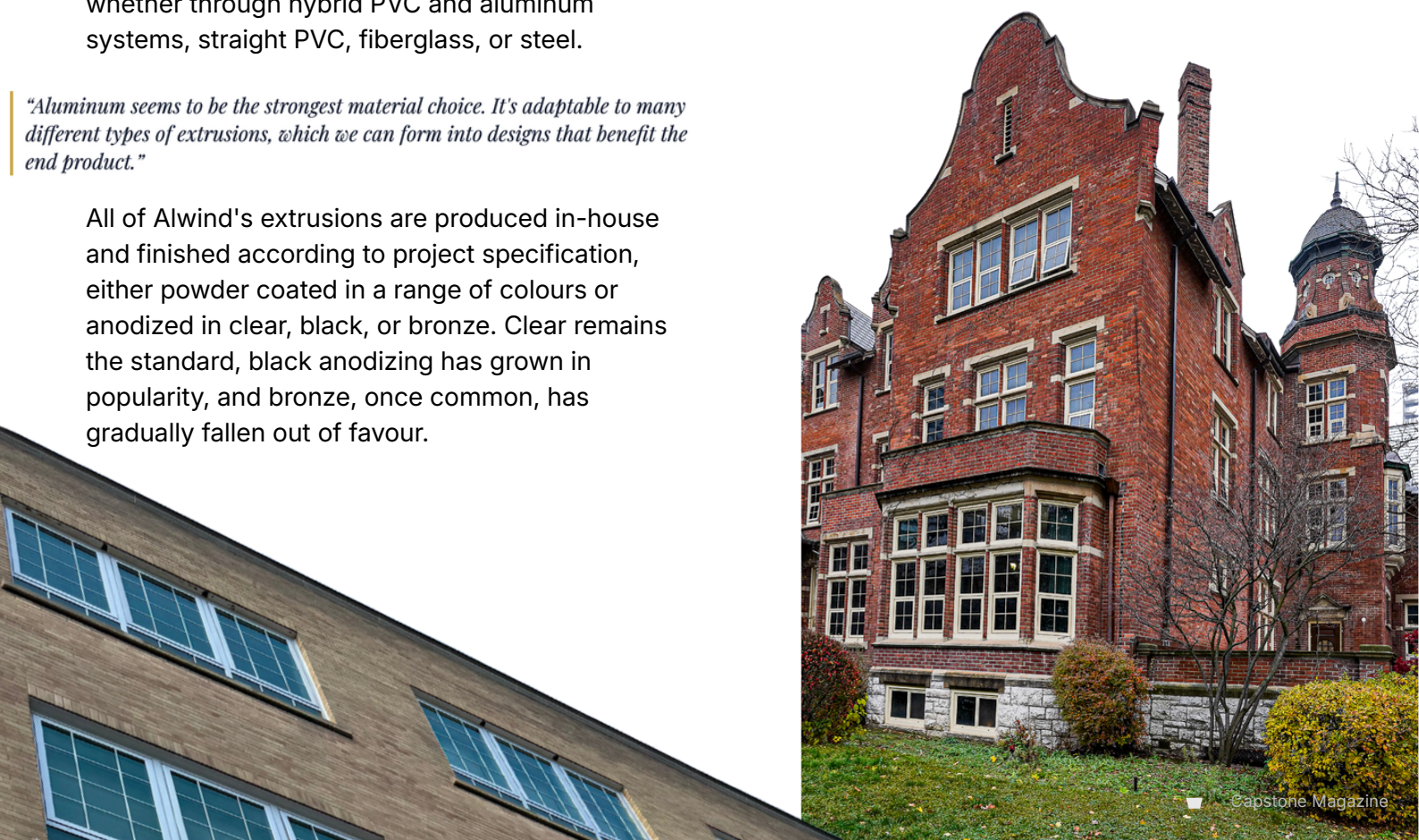
All of Alwind's extrusions are produced in-house and finished according to project specification, either powder coated in a range of colours or anodized in clear, black, or bronze. Clear remains the standard, black anodizing has grown in popularity, and bronze, once common, has gradually fallen out of favour.

A LIVE RETROFIT AT YORK UNIVERSITY

Alwind's current work at York University's Keele and Steeles campus illustrates the range of a typical institutional retrofit.

Installers are midway through a five-phase replacement project at the Winters Residence, a student dormitory, timed around the building's seasonal vacancy to remove and replace windows without disrupting residents.

The project uses awning-style windows, hinged at the top and opening outward, a configuration Adam says architects increasingly favour for operable units. Alwind manufactures a range of awning, casement, and sliding window types, and has discontinued product lines that saw declining demand in favour of concentrating on the designs the market is currently specifying.





WHAT TESTING TAUGHT ALWIND ABOUT WATER

Meeting institutional bid requirements means submitting Alwind's products to third-party laboratory testing for thermal resistance, structural deflection, forced entry resistance, and water penetration. That testing process, Adam says, produced a counterintuitive finding about how a window should be sealed.

"We found that the more you seal the operable window, the more likely it is to fail."

Standard water penetration testing applies negative pressure to the interior of a window while spraying water against the exterior, simulating wind-driven rain. Adam compares the effect to placing a finger over the top of a straw submerged in water: with the opening sealed, the water has nowhere to go and is drawn inward under pressure. Alwind's solution was to introduce small gaps in the weather stripping at the head of operable sections, allowing water to drain on the exterior side rather than collecting and ultimately leaking into the interior. Removing a portion of the seal, counterintuitively, produced a better-performing window.

DESIGN COLLABORATION FROM TENDER TO INSTALL

Alwind's involvement with architects and contractors frequently begins before a project is formally tendered, with the company providing budget pricing and design consultation that architects sometimes carry directly into tender documents using Alwind's own shop drawings. Once a bid is awarded, Alwind measures every opening on site, since institutional retrofit work involves custom trims, panning, and detailing specific to each building.

Final shop drawings are reviewed and approved by the architect before fabrication begins, at which point Alwind orders its sealed glazing units and extrusion stock and begins cutting, punching, and assembling frames in house. For most projects the company delivers a fully loaded trailer of finished material directly to site for its own installers; for clients managing their own installation, Alwind arranges freight for pickup instead.



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INSIDE THE PLANT

Alwind's shop floor is organized into four departments: an operable department for awning and casement units, a framing department for fixed frame fabrication, a cutting department supporting both, and shipping.

Demand is seasonal and concentrated, since most institutional clients want retrofit work completed while schools are unoccupied in July and August, which makes early summer the company's busiest period.

Adam describes a workplace built around providing staff what they need to keep projects moving, with PPE provided throughout the shop and a focus on maintaining steady working relationships across departments.

WHAT SETS ALWIND APART

Alwind competes against established manufacturers in the institutional glazing market, including Metro Aluminum and larger national brands. Adam attributes Alwind's positioning to the amount of work the company completes in its own shop rather than leaving for the job site.

"We want to make sure we're not wasting any of the installer's time. Everything that can be done in our shop, we'd rather do in our shop."

Every Alwind window ships with its vent already glazed into the frame and sealed, a step some competitors leave for the installer to complete on site. For retrofit work in particular, where an existing window is removed and replaced within the same day, Adam says that difference can determine whether an installation closes out on schedule.



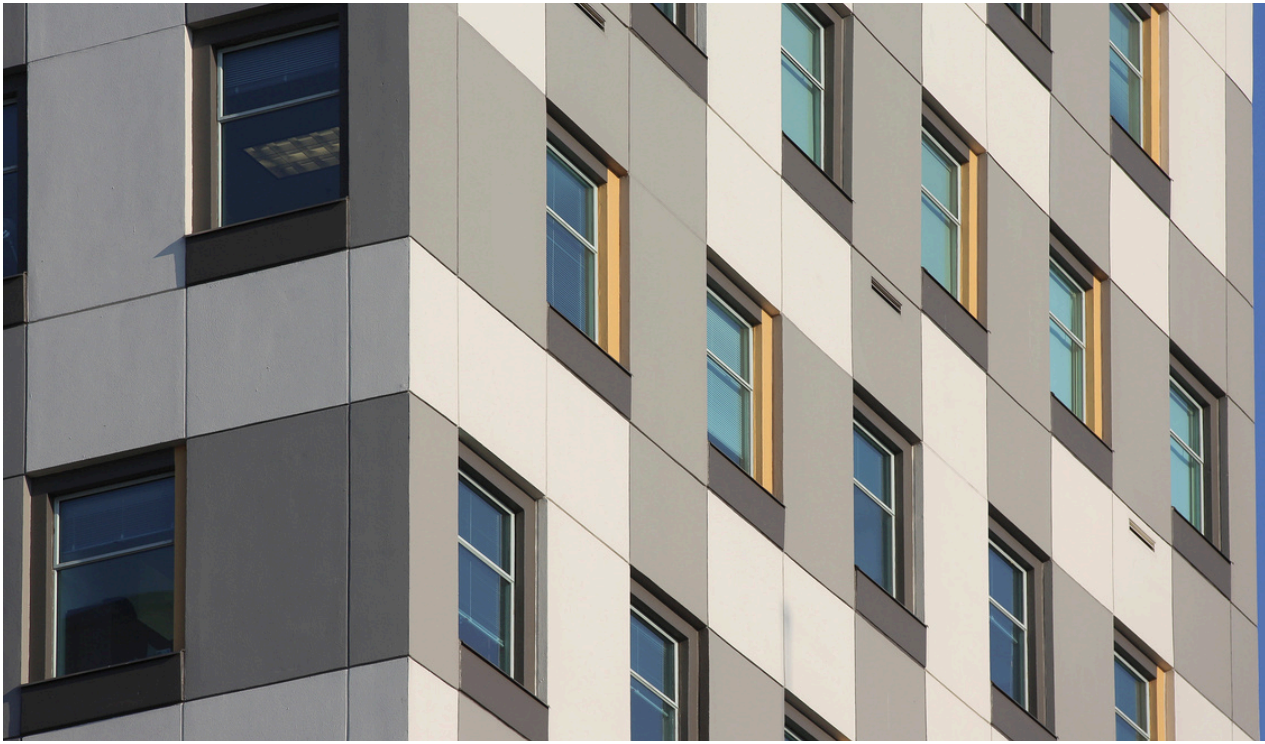


THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

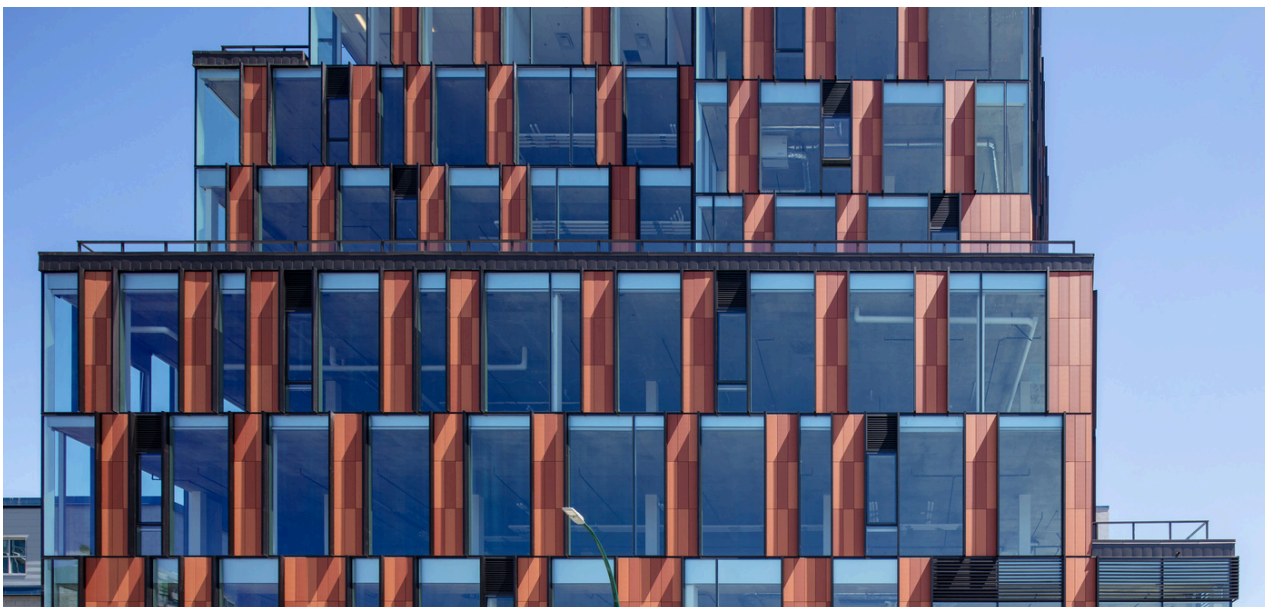
Alwind's near-term growth plan centers on expanding into curtain wall and door systems. The company previously offered a thermally improved curtain wall product years ago but is now developing a fully thermally broken version, alongside a thermally broken door system that Adam says remains difficult to find in the current market. New curtain wall extrusions are expected to arrive within the month, with formal product testing required before launch.

Looking five years out, Adam's goal is to open a second Alwind facility dedicated specifically to curtain wall and door production, while continuing to manufacture window vents at the Markham plant for use across both locations.

ph⁵ architecture inc



For nearly two decades, ph5 architecture has built quietly and deliberately in Vancouver. No signature style. No single project type. Just a rigorous process, a belief that buildings should serve the people inside them, and a growing body of work that is starting to get the recognition it deserves.





Peeroj Thakre founded ph5 architecture in 2008. *On paper, Henning Knoetzele was a shareholder from the start. In practice, Knoetzele joined formally in 2015. What they built together in the decade since is harder to describe than it is to recognize: a practice defined not by a signature aesthetic or a preferred project type, but by a way of working.*

The project most associated with ph5 in recent years is Focal on 3rd, an eight-storey hybrid industrial building on a fifty-by-one-hundred-and-twenty-foot lot in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. It has collected awards. It has been written about. But to hear Thakre and Knoetzele discuss it, the building is less a statement of arrival than a demonstration of method. The real story of ph5 is the method.

THE FOUNDING

Thakre started the firm with a background in community buildings and a parallel interest in public realm installations. In the early years, ph5 also operated a nonprofit called Urban Republic, which produced a series of public interventions visible on the firm's website. That experiment eventually gave way to the demands of running an architecture practice, but the instinct that produced it has never left.

"You really do have to focus on the architecture firm," Thakre says. "But the ethos carried through."

The work in those early years was mostly renovation: projects that arrived rather than projects that were chosen. Over time, the firm worked its way back toward the community and public clients that now make up the majority of its workload. The private sector has slowed across British Columbia, but ph5 has found its footing elsewhere, in libraries, community centres, churches, and urban design studies for municipalities grappling with what their streets are actually used for.



"The process does not end at handover. Ph5 returns to completed projects one, two, and three years after occupancy to measure whether the building is performing as intended. No alterations made is the best compliment we can receive."



THE PROCESS

Ask either principal how ph5 operates and the answer begins not with style or typology but with process. The firm describes its approach as integrated design, though Knoetzele notes that the term now has wide currency: "We have done this for many years. It just finally has a name."

The emphasis begins at pre-design. Before a line is drawn, ph5 spends significant time engaging with the client to understand what the project actually requires, what success means for that particular client, and what the constraints of the site, the budget, and the construction market will actually allow. For projects in existing buildings, this means a careful reading of what is already there and how to work with it rather than against it.

The integrated design approach means consultants are brought in early, and where possible, so is the contractor. The goal is to avoid value engineering by making sound decisions before the project reaches the point where costs need to be cut. "We are very comfortable saying: this is the best option," Knoetzele says. "Value engineering becomes unnecessary because we have already done that work." Construction documents are designed to the ability of the people who will actually build the project. Specifications are written to work for the contractor as much as for the client. Lead times for materials are tracked from early in the process.

The result, the firm says, is projects that stay on schedule and on budget reliably. Site presence during construction administration is a point of particular emphasis. "We go to site often," Thakre says. "Working with the contractor and subtrades on site to solve issues as they arise is usually the most successful and most cost-effective approach." Over the years that presence has built a reputation.

Contractors are comfortable calling ph5 to the site. Problems get resolved before they become crises.

The process does not end at handover. Ph5 returns to completed projects one, two, and three years after occupancy to assess whether the building is performing as intended. The firm looks for alterations or additions made after handover; if there are none, it takes that as a sign the original design was right. "Ideally, the project looks the same three years after it is in use as it did at the outset," Knoetzele says. Two examples illustrate what this looks like in practice. At a Burnaby library, the firm installed an automated book-handling machine and redesigned the work area. One to two years later, the librarians reported that it was the branch where the sorting system worked best, and that it had meaningfully improved their daily workflow.



At a church completed a few years earlier, Thakre visited on a Saturday morning to find the building in full use: families with children, a senior group, throughout the whole space alive across the week rather than reserved for Sunday. "That is not accidental," she says. "That is the fulfillment of the vision that was set at the beginning."

ON RENOVATION AND ADAPTIVE REUSE

Ph5 declines the label of adaptive reuse specialists, not out of false modesty but out of a genuine resistance to categories that limit. "I find these descriptors too limiting," Knoetzele says. "To us, working with an existing building is just a logical extension of what we already do."

The firm's position is that renovation, particularly of post-Second World War buildings now reaching the age of major mechanical and structural intervention, is as intellectually demanding as new construction, and in some ways more so. There is a level of care and attentiveness involved in renovation that is different from a new building. You have to understand what the existing structure is telling you and how to respond to it.

Vancouver does not have a deep stock of heritage buildings. What it has, increasingly, is a generation of mid-century structures that are good buildings with good bones, requiring the kind of thoughtful intervention that can make them viable for another fifty years. Ph5 is currently working on several of them.

URBAN DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

Alongside the architecture practice, ph5 has carries out urban design studies.

"We are not urban planners by any means," Knoetzele says. "We are designers. We look at what physically needs to change in public space for it to work better for the people who live or visit there."

The firm's office is in Gastown, the historic neighbourhood in central Vancouver that draws significant tourism while also accomodating social housing, local businesses, and a complex mix of uses that creates ongoing tension between different definitions of what the neighbourhood is for.

Ph5 has been working on the Gastown public realm through design studies since 2019, in collaboration with the Gastown Business Improvement Association and with the City of Vancouver's Engineering Services Department.

Knoetzele notes that this kind of work, architecture-adjacent but data-driven and engagement-based, is relatively new in Vancouver. As far as he knows, there are few architecture or landscape architecture office doing something quite like it. It is, he says, a natural evolution from the public installation work that defined the firm's early years.



"As we can avoid destructing existing buildings, that is the best way to limit our carbon output."
— Henning Knoetzele

FOCAL ON 3RD AND THE QUESTION OF AWARDS

Focal on 3rd sits at 107 East Third Avenue in Mount Pleasant, a neighbourhood transitioning from low-rise industrial to higher-density mixed use.

The building is eight storeys on a fifty-by-one-hundred-and-twenty-foot lot, with light industrial space at grade, offices focused on digital entertainment and technology above, and a programme designed to demonstrate that high-density development can retain, rather than displace, the employment character of urban industrial land.

The facade is its most remarked-upon feature: prefabricated curtain wall panels produced by Phoenix Glass, assembled through a close collaboration between the firm and Jim Gorovich, Owner of Phoenix Glass, who understood the design intent well enough to realize it within the constraints of the assembly system.

The project also incorporates intensive green roof terraces, a car elevator accessing below-grade parking to maximize the site's density, and connection to the Neighbourhood Energy Utility, making it fossil-fuel free.

The building has received the LOOP Design Award in two architectural categories, Architecture MasterPrize honourable mentions, and an AFBC Award of Excellence.

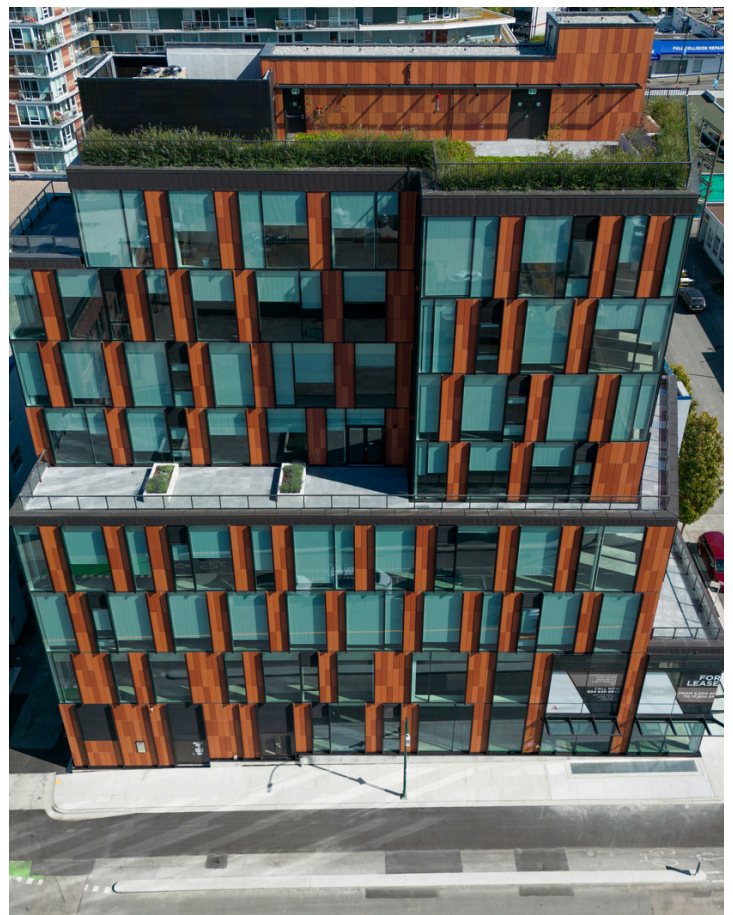
Thakre is measured about awards as a category. Any recognition is nice, she says, but it is not the reason they do what they do. Projects come through good references. It is hard to verify what impact awards actually have on potential clients.

CONTRACTOR RELATIONSHIPS

The collaboration with Phoenix Glass on Focal is an example of something ph5 considers fundamental to how architecture gets made well: genuine mutual respect between the people who draw and the people who build.

"There has to be, from the architect's side, a great deal of respect for the people who build what we are drawing," Knoetze says. "That does not happen often enough."

What made Focal so successful was that the design was clearly articulated on the drawings, Jim Gorovich understood what the firm was trying to do, and the result was a facade that realized the intent within real-world material and assembly constraints. "We create design intent. They create a facade. Those are two very different things. As long as there is mutual respect for each other's work, you can do wonderful things together."





These relationships are built slowly. Ph5 trusts the contractors and subtrades it works with and engages them in genuine dialogue rather than simply handing over drawings. The second time around working with a contractor, Knoetze says, it just gets easier. You already have the relationship and can move faster. Good relationships with your client, your trades, your contractor, and even the permit officials are all incredibly important for a building to actually get realized.

SUSTAINABILITY

Much of ph5's project base is with municipalities, and electrification of building systems has become nearly standard across that work. Where the firm is touching mechanical systems, those systems are moving off natural gas. The exceptions are narrow: some existing community kitchen infrastructure where the available electrical capacity cannot support commercial cooking equipment.

On the materials side, formal sustainability certification is typically the client's decision. Ph5 uses the materials and resources criteria within rating systems as an internal framework for judgment, ranking material selections by whether they are non-toxic, circular, or locally sourced, even when certification is not the goal. "We try to find material specifications that fit the project," Thakre says. "Even if we are not required to abide by an outside standard, we try to incorporate sustainable products where they fit."

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Ph5 is a small firm, currently seven people. In a firm that size, Thakre notes, every hire shapes the culture of the office in a meaningful way. The firm looks for both skills and alignment on values. It has hired people who did not yet have the full skill level a position required but demonstrated the right fit, on the theory that skills can develop but values rarely change.

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

After nearly eighteen years, Thakre says the firm is hitting its stride. The process is refined enough to be repeatable and teachable. She would like to see ph5 grow, take on more complex projects, and expand into housing, a sector both principals find compelling and have never found quite the right entry point into.

"I feel like this process is now repeatable and expandable to new employees," she says. "I want to do good work that really hits this idea of being together better, as much as I can before I retire."

Knoetzele frames it differently but arrives at the same place. The firm has never been interested in doing a particular type of building. It is interested in solving problems that matter. If a developer wanted to genuinely revisit how residential buildings get financed, designed, and built in Canada, he says, ph5 would be interested. Not because residential is a box to check, but because the question is real and the answer has not been found yet.

In a city whose relationship with its built environment is being renegotiated block by block, ph5 is making a particular kind of argument: that process matters more than product, that buildings should outlast the moment in which they were built, and that the measure of a good project is whether the people inside it, years later, still find it exactly right. That is a long game. Ph5 seems comfortable playing it.



"There are many issues to be solved and we are interested in solving them. But it has to be fulfilling. These values need to be attached to it. Without that it just becomes a pretty dull exercise."

— Henning Knoetze



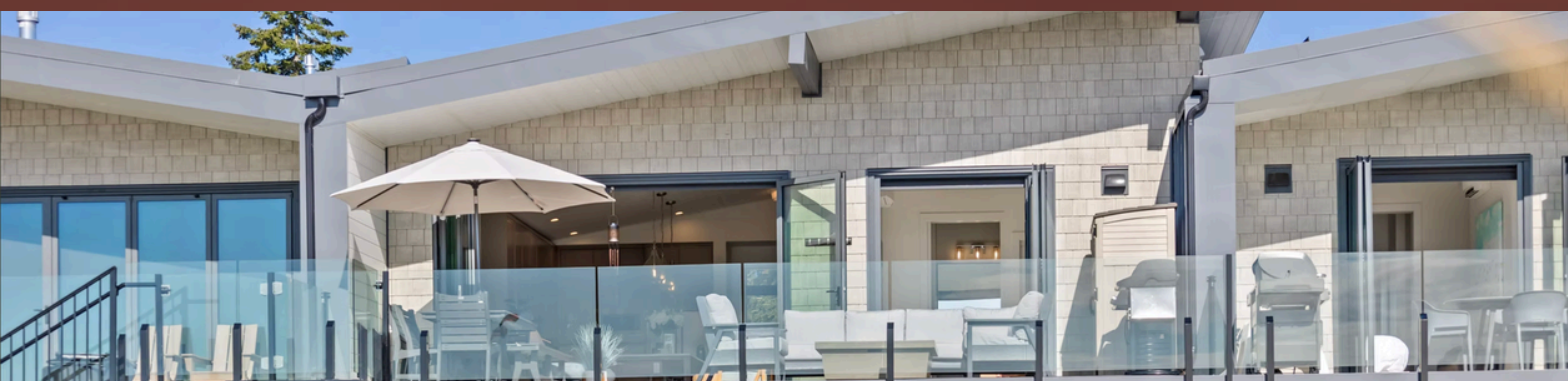


Since 2013, Facet Custom Builders has grown from small renovations into one of the Comox Valley's sought-after custom home builders, working from new single-family homes down to carriage houses, with a pre-construction process built to keep design and budget aligned before a shovel hits the ground.



TRUE ELEMENTS MEDIA

Photography for Facet Custom Builders' feature in this issue.



True Elements Media specializes in architectural and construction photography across Canada, capturing the craft, scale, and detail that builders need to tell their story. From job site documentation to finished project portfolios, True Elements Media works with custom builders and developers to produce imagery built for marketing, proposals, and editorial features like this one.



“Our job is to work with them through planning and execution of construction to turn that rough idea into this polished, multifaceted product that shines on many levels.”

Facet Custom Builders was founded in 2013 by Silas Straathof, who had learned carpentry working on custom homes in Vancouver, North Vancouver, and West Vancouver before relocating to the Comox Valley. Drew Henderson, now the company's head of production, began working with Straathof before Facet existed, starting his carpentry apprenticeship under him and becoming an employee once the business launched.

Henderson made partner roughly three years ago. The company did not begin with large custom homes. Its early projects were minor renovations and deck additions. Straathof built toward a larger vision over time, growing both the scale of project Facet could take on and the team needed to deliver it.

Today the company specializes in new single-family detached homes across the Comox Valley and is regarded as one of the region's established custom builders.

THE NAME

Facet takes its name, and its logo, from the cut surfaces of a diamond. Henderson describes a homeowner's initial idea for a property as the rough or uncut diamond, with the company's role being to guide that idea through planning and construction into a finished home that, like a cut diamond, shows multiple facets at once.

The same idea extends internally. Henderson describes the company itself as made up of many facets, with team members across roles each contributing something specific to the result.

SCOPING AND RESOURCING A PROJECT

Facet's project range runs from large new home construction down to small renovations, additions, and carriage houses under a thousand square feet. Every incoming project is assessed for fit against the company's current program and schedule, alongside an assessment of the client relationship itself.

Henderson says Facet favours early collaboration over a more conventional sequence where a client arrives with finished drawings to be priced. Brought in at the concept stage, the company can develop a rough budget alongside preliminary design, helping clients reach a home and a price point they are comfortable with before too much design work has been done.

Much of that pre-construction process is about expectation setting. Many of Facet's clients are undertaking their first major home build, and Henderson says clear, early communication about cost and process prevents the kind of conflict that develops when expectations go unaddressed.

TWO SKI CHALETS ON MOUNT WASHINGTON

Among Facet's most demanding recent projects are two ski chalets built on steep lots on Mount Washington over the past two years. High snow load calculations drove heavy structural engineering requirements, and a prefabricated component to the home structure limited how much the design could be adjusted to work around the slope.

The mountain elevation also meant a far shorter construction season than the company is used to at sea level in the Comox Valley, where work can generally proceed through every phase year-round. Foundation work reached a scale the company had not previously undertaken, with foundation walls rising 32 feet from open excavation. The projects also introduced Facet to log packages sourced from Finland, a building method new to the team that involved substantial crane work and heavy steel construction alongside a significant learning curve.



ASSOCIATIONS AND EARLY RECOGNITION

Facet is a member of the Canadian Home Builders' Association, along with its provincial and regional affiliates, the BC Builders Association and the Vancouver Island Builders Association. Through the CHBA, the company also participates in RenoMark, a program that certifies qualified renovators.

Facet entered industry awards for the first time last year, submitting a project to the BC Builders Association's Georgie Awards and to the Vancouver Island Builders Association's awards program. The project was a finalist in its category with the Georgies and won the corresponding award through the Vancouver Island Builders Association.



Georgie AWARDS

Celebrating Excellence
in Home Building
2025

Presented to

Facet Custom Builders Ltd.

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE FOR

Best Single Family Residential Renovation
over \$1,500,000

SUPPLY CHAIN AND TRADE PARTNERSHIPS

Facet runs an open-book, cost-plus billing structure with clients, who see the bids the company receives from subcontractors and participate directly in choosing trades for their project. Facet has preferred trade partners it has worked with for years, but cost remains a factor in every decision.

"You often learn the hard way that making those decisions purely based off cost can really put some hardship on the process of construction."

Henderson describes the balance as finding good partners, working with them collaboratively, and continuing to test the market to ensure clients are still getting strong value on each project.



SUSTAINABILITY, BALANCED AGAINST THE CLIENT

Energy-efficient construction is part of Facet's offering, but Henderson is direct that the company does not impose it on clients who are not asking for it.

Tighter building envelopes, added exterior insulation, and higher thermal values are recommended and frequently built into Facet homes where clients have an appetite for it, but those measures carry an upfront cost that has to be balanced against a client's other priorities.

Henderson distinguishes a home's operational energy performance from the environmental footprint of the materials used to build it, an area he says draws less client interest but that Facet considers in its own practices.

On renovation projects involving demolition, the company's first option is to relocate a structure intact through a house-moving company when possible; where demolition is unavoidable, materials are streamed by type, with metal directed to recycling and wood to organic waste. Facet also runs a staff carpool incentive program to reduce vehicle trips to job sites.

WHAT SETS FACET APART

Asked what clients point to after working with the company, Henderson credits the team first.

"A huge amount of the credit for the success is just the people that we have working that care deeply about the success of the projects."

Beyond the people, Henderson says clients consistently cite the company's level of professionalism and its follow-through on cost and communication commitments made during pre-construction, alongside the home itself as the lasting result of that process.

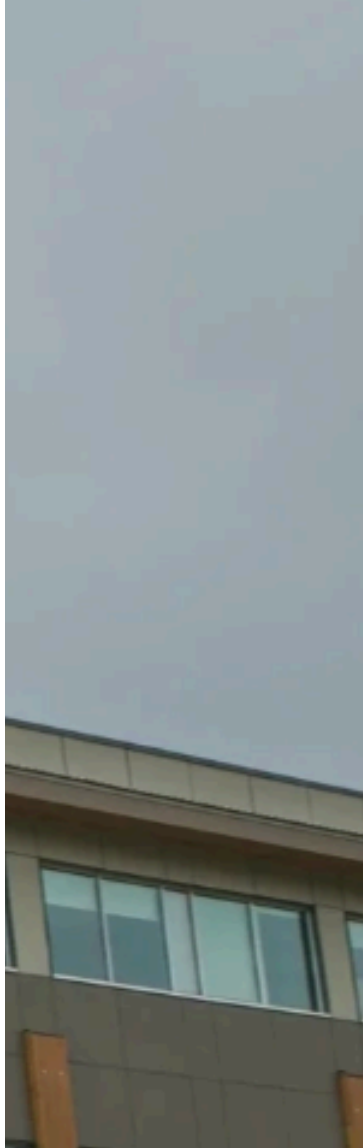


THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

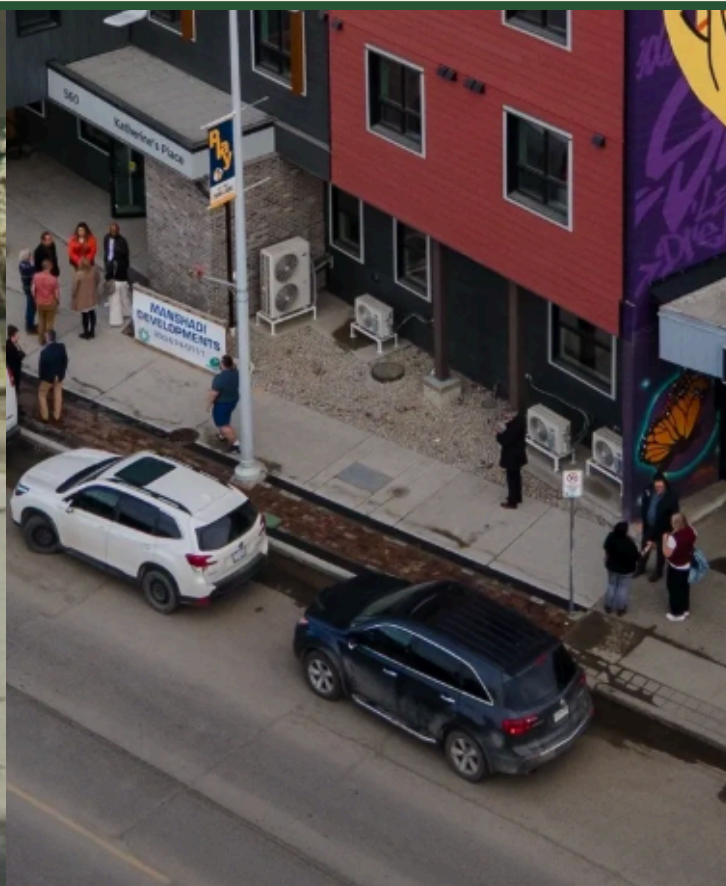
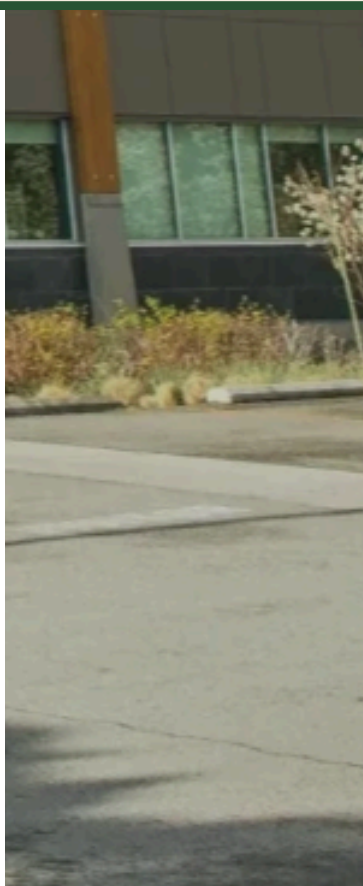
Facet has no concrete plans to diversify away from custom homes, which Henderson describes as the company's niche and the area it intends to keep building its reputation in. At the same time, he points to a softer regional market and recent changes to British Columbia's zoning bylaws, which now permit four-unit development on most R1 residential lots, as an opening worth watching.

Facet is open to taking on small commercial and small multifamily residential work, particularly on infill lots, as that zoning shift plays out. Henderson frames the company's posture as staying nimble enough to adjust to market conditions while keeping custom home building as its primary focus.





Three generations into running general contracting work out of Kamloops, Plainsman Group of Companies is preparing to hand the reins to the next generation, without changing the model that built it.





Plainsman Group of Companies was founded in 1968 in Saskatoon by Harry Koehn, and within little more than a decade had grown into a Western Canadian operation with eight branch offices stretching from Manitoba to British Columbia. Jim Thomson joined the company as an estimator after starting his career as a construction surveyor and working through university, where he studied science before completing a degree in business administration. He worked his way up through branch offices in Calgary and Edmonton before arriving in Kamloops to help manage a handful of large projects already underway in the region.

By the end of the 1980s, Jim had obtained full ownership of the company and relocated its head office to Kamloops, where it has remained ever since. Today Plainsman is run by Jim's sons: Greg Thomson, Vice President and Construction Manager, who joined the company in 2008 after a career in environmental engineering consulting, and Ryan Thomson, Vice President of Projects and a professional engineer who joined in 2023 after managing mining projects across Canada, Australia, and overseas.

"My dad started this journey decades ago, and he's been a huge influence on the building industry, the community, and our company. He's not only built structures of all kinds all over Western Canada but also built trust."

"There's no point trying to tell a client something they don't want. We find out what would work best for them, and then we make it fit."



MATCHING THE MODEL TO THE CLIENT

Unlike many general contractors who manage a project at arm's length, Plainsman has built much of its reputation around what the company describes as an owner's perspective: staying hands-on at every stage of construction rather than simply overseeing trades from a distance. With construction management, fixed price, and design-build all on offer, the firm's starting point with any new client is not a delivery model at all. It is a conversation.

Greg Thomson describes a process built around questions rather than templates: understanding what a client already has, what they are trying to achieve, and how much certainty they need around cost and schedule before a method is chosen. Some clients arrive knowing exactly what they want. Others are looking for guidance. Plainsman's role, as Thomson tells it, is to listen first and let the project's own requirements dictate the structure around it.

BUILDING FOR GOVERNMENT

Among the projects that have defined Plainsman's reputation in the Interior are two government buildings in Kamloops, built behind the city's courthouse for the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Forests and Range. Both were design-build assignments, and both required Plainsman to commit to a building cost and lease structure before a shovel had touched the ground.

"We had to get in right at the very start, find out what the lease rates were going to be on a finished building," Thomson says. "You had to see a narrative of what they want and tell them exactly how much their building would cost, how much the lease rates were going to be, and how long the lease would have to be." Only once those terms were settled did the company assemble its team and build to the price it had already committed to, with no room to revisit the numbers later. It was, Thomson says, a tricky process, but one that worked out well for everyone involved.

BUILDING THROUGH A PANDEMIC AND A WILDFIRE SEASON

Plainsman's most recently completed design-build followed a similar structure, this time for McElhenney Engineering. The company sourced a property, costed the build, and set lease terms before construction began. What followed was anything but routine.

The project broke ground before the pandemic and was completed in 2022 and 2023, spanning one of the most disruptive stretches the Kamloops construction industry has seen in recent memory.

"That was during COVID and also one of the worst wildfire seasons Kamloops had seen," Thomson says. "BC Hydro had to abandon all their power projects and go put out fires in the Shuswap and rebuild infrastructure. We lost some time that way. We also had door shops in Kelowna get evacuated from fires."

A REGIONAL PORTFOLIO

Plainsman's footprint across Kamloops spans residential, retail, and commercial work built up over more than five decades. The list includes the 96-unit Woodlane Manor apartment and condominium complex on Whitesheid Crescent, the Harrison Heights apartment condominiums in Aberdeen, the Columbia Place shopping centre anchored by Save-On-Foods, and the Columbia 300 professional and commercial centre across from Royal Inland Hospital.

The Plainsman Building at Third Avenue and Victoria Street, now known as the Kelson Building, is a four-storey steel and masonry professional and commercial building with underground parking. The company has also worked on the Gateway Casino project, along with hundreds of single-family and multi-family homes across the Sahali, Aberdeen, and Juniper neighbourhoods, ranging from affordable to luxury product.

BUILDING FOR BC HOUSING

In recent years, Plainsman has taken on a series of projects addressing housing need directly. The company recently completed housing for the Skuppah First Nation outside Lytton, and converted the former Fortune Motel into functional supportive housing. Its most prominent recent project is Katherine's Place, a BC Housing development providing thirty-nine supportive housing suites and sixteen offices for at-risk youth, built as construction manager for local pharmacist and developer Missagh Manshadi before being turned over to Away Home Kamloops, a not-for-profit dedicated to ending youth homelessness in the city.

Thomson points to the project's opening as proof of the model working as intended. "From the very first startup meeting, we presented a schedule and said occupancy would be December 2024, and we got occupancy on December 2024," he says. Plainsman's current pipeline includes Genesis Place, another Kamloops-based BC Housing initiative aimed at supporting people on the brink of homelessness, part of a broader provincial effort to expand housing and support services.

"The clients are really happy with the outcome. Everyone from BC Housing is really happy. It was right on schedule, right on budget, which is especially impressive given the inflation period we just went through."



Thomson points to the project's opening as proof of the model working as intended. "From the very first startup meeting, we presented a schedule and said occupancy would be December 2024, and we got occupancy on December 2024," he says. Plainsman's current pipeline includes Genesis Place, another Kamloops-based BC Housing initiative aimed at supporting people on the brink of homelessness, part of a broader provincial effort to expand housing and support services.

HALF A CENTURY WITH THE HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION, AND BEYOND

Plainsman has held membership in the Canadian Home Builders' Association for close to fifty years, and that involvement has run deeper than most. Jim Thomson served as local, provincial, and national president of the association over the course of his career, a level of engagement his son describes as a defining source of pride for the company.



"There's some prestige that goes with that, and you kind of put your company on the map," Greg Thomson says. "You also get to get out and travel the country and see how everybody else is doing everything all over the country, see what's working, what's not working. You get a lot of new good ideas and meet a lot of people too. It gives you a lot of connections so you can always call on them for advice, or just see if they know any new resources."

Jim's industry and community involvement has extended well beyond the association. He served as founding chair of the Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust, a fifty million dollar economic development fund established by the provincial government, sat on the board of a large credit union and on a committee of the National Research Council, and served on the Board of Governors of Thompson Rivers University, including three years as board chair. Plainsman has also maintained ties to the New Home Warranty Program of BC and Yukon throughout its history.

FROM LEED SILVER TO NET ZERO

The Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of Forests and Range buildings are also Plainsman's two LEED Silver design-build leaseback developments, the only private sector projects of that type and accreditation level the Kamloops region has seen. Getting there was not a quick exercise. "It involved a lot of paperwork, and a lot of chasing down suppliers and trades that didn't like paperwork," Thomson says. "But it was a good experience, and it was good to get the recognition afterward."

LEED has since given way to a different set of benchmarks in British Columbia, as the province's energy step code has tightened what new buildings are required to meet. Plainsman has positioned itself ahead of that curve, and the company has also been recognized with industry awards for its safety leadership along the way.

"We're certified net zero builders now, and we've done some passive house designs and all the BC Housing stuff. We're trying to stay ahead of the game," Thomson says. That same posture runs through everything from material selection to stucco specification on Plainsman's current slate of projects: building to where the code is headed rather than where it currently sits.

THE TRADES THAT BUILT PLAINSMAN

Delivering projects on time and under budget, the reputation Plainsman has built over five decades in the Interior, depends on the reliability of the trades and suppliers behind the company. Thomson points to long-running relationships with Home Hardware in Kamloops, concrete and steel suppliers, and equipment partners such as United Rentals, including longtime rental contact Barry Minsing, who has called on the company for years.

"We wouldn't be able to do what we do without competent, good sub-trades and suppliers," Thomson says. He notes that ownership of some of these supply businesses has changed hands over the years as smaller operators have been acquired, but the people Plainsman deals with day to day have largely stayed the same. The company also makes a point of bringing on younger trades who are just getting established. "It's always good to give them a shot and make sure they can deliver."

SAFETY AS A CONSTANT

Plainsman's standing as a leader in safe and sustainable building practices in the region is maintained through ongoing work with WorkSafeBC, regular updates to internal safety literature and manuals, and consistent training requirements for staff. "You can't build a good project if it's not safe," Thomson says. "For one, nobody will want to work for you. For two, you get shut down right away." He describes the company's approach as constantly evolving rather than fixed, with the same forward-looking posture that defines its approach to building codes and energy performance.

CONTINUITY AS THE BUSINESS MODEL

Plainsman is, by Thomson's own description, a smaller company that takes on very large projects, and the reason it can do so traces back to how the company is structured around its own people rather than its size.

"We're involved with the project right from the very start to finish. It's the same people: myself, my brother Ryan, and our father Jim. We're not handing the project off."

Thomson contrasts that model with larger competitors in the Interior, where an estimator hands a bid to a project manager who did not build it, who in turn hands the trades off to someone else again. "So there's a lot of continuity that really helps," he says. Without the overhead and process layers of much larger firms, Thomson says Plainsman can also move faster. "Some of these really large companies are almost like government, with all their processes and red tape. We're quick and nimble, and we can adapt and pivot quite quickly to get things done."

PEOPLE WHO STAY

Plainsman's continuity extends to its people. Bookkeeper Val Prince has been with the company since 1992, and the firm was among the first in its industry to bring a chartered professional accountant in-house, with CFO and Controller Rob Guercio joining in 2023. On the field side, superintendent Bryan Fischer has spent more than fifteen years delivering projects from the Gateway Casino and a Hinton, Alberta housing development to hospital renovations and high-end Kamloops homes. "We're not super large, so we're close-knit. It's kind of like family," Thomson says, noting that the stability is part of why so much of Plainsman's business comes from repeat clients.



"We're good at what we do, and our long-standing trust with local trades and suppliers helps us secure competitive pricing. It's all about doing things right, with integrity and honesty, and a proactive approach to managing safety and risk, and building relationships people can rely on."



THE NEXT CHAPTER

Jim Thomson is gradually stepping back after more than four decades building the company, and Greg and Ryan are preparing to take the reins. Ryan, who came to Plainsman from a mining career managing risk, cost, and quality on projects across Canada, Australia, and overseas, points to the same long-standing relationships as the foundation for what comes next.

Looking ahead, the brothers intend to maintain Plainsman's partnerships with organizations like BC Housing while also exploring opportunities to develop and manage projects of their own, alongside continued investment in modular building techniques and sustainable materials. Greg's hope, more specifically, is for more of the work he describes as the company's favourite: design-build leaseback developments like the two that earned Plainsman its LEED Silver certifications.

"Those don't come around as much, especially in a smaller market like Kamloops," Thomson says. "It takes the exact right client to reach out, and then we find a project or an empty plot of land for them and build them their dream building." For a company preparing to change hands for only the second time in its history, that remains the model Plainsman intends to keep repeating.

Capstone Insights

THE BUILD ISSUE

LABOUR & WORKFORCE

The 80 Billion Dollar Labour Problem Behind Canada's Build Agenda

Canada's federal government has committed to building its way out of a housing deficit and an infrastructure backlog. The workforce to do it does not yet exist.

Sebastien Ameur



The Carney government entered office carrying an infrastructure mandate it branded with a slogan borrowed from American political shorthand: build, baby, build. The signal was clear. Canada would construct its way out of its housing deficit, modernize its infrastructure, and assert economic sovereignty in the face of American trade aggression.

The ambition is legitimate. The arithmetic is challenging.

A Deloitte analysis conducted for the Future of Canada Centre estimated that meeting federal housing and infrastructure targets between 2026 and 2030 would require an additional 410,000 to 520,000 construction workers. That is a one-third increase in the current national construction workforce over five years. For context, that growth rate has not been achieved since the pre-financial crisis construction boom of the mid-2000s.

Canada's construction workforce is not expanding at anything close to that pace.

BuildForce Canada's national projection for 2025 to 2034 identifies more than 270,000 workers, roughly 15 per cent of the 2024 labour force, who will retire during that period. Those retirements represent institutional knowledge, supervisory experience, and Red Seal certifications that take years to replicate. The industry will need to recruit and train its way past that attrition before it can begin to net-add the workforce the build agenda requires.

At the same time, the skills pipeline is not producing enough graduates. Apprenticeship completion rates in the trades have stagnated. Younger workers are still steered disproportionately toward university credentials by guidance counsellors, parents, and public messaging that has not caught up to the reality that a Red Seal journey person earns a median wage well above the national average. Statistics Canada data from early 2025 shows that construction employment grew by roughly 58,000 jobs year over year. That is a strong number in isolation, and still not sufficient against projected demand.

Immigration has historically served as a pressure valve. It is less available now. Canada significantly reduced its immigration targets following the post-pandemic surge that strained housing and social services. The federal government's own projections anticipate population decline in both 2025 and 2026 before growth resumes. Category-based Express Entry draws targeting trades occupations were announced for 2025, which represents a policy shift in the right direction. The credential recognition bottleneck, however, remains. Internationally trained workers in construction trades face bureaucratic timelines that can stretch years before they are eligible to work in their field.

The Conference Board of Canada released a report in November 2025 projecting that without urgent intervention, the skilled trades shortage will cost Canada approximately \$8 billion annually in excess costs by 2045. Insurance costs rise when rebuild timelines lengthen after disasters. Project budgets inflate when contractors bid risk premiums into labour. Housing completions fall below permit levels when crews cannot be staffed.

The construction industry understands this. It has been raising the alarm for years. The gap between the industry's analysis and government policy response is the real infrastructure problem, and it will determine whether Canada's build agenda is a decade-defining program or a decade of press releases.

The Train That Trudeau Launched on His Way Out the Door

In February 2025, with his resignation already announced, Justin Trudeau committed 3.9 billion dollars to Canada's largest infrastructure project ever. Whether it gets built is a different question entirely.

Mehdi El Oudghiri



In February 2025, with his resignation already announced and a Liberal leadership race underway, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stood in Montreal and declared that Canada would finally build a high-speed rail network. The project, branded Alto, would connect Quebec City and Toronto at speeds of up to 300 kilometres per hour. Montreal to Toronto in three hours.

It was, by every measure, the largest infrastructure announcement in Canadian history.

It was also, by some measures, the most convenient timing in Canadian political history.

Trudeau had floated high-speed rail in three successive election campaigns. Three mandates of studying, consulting, and committing to future studies. What changed in February 2025 was not the feasibility of the project. It was the political calendar. An election was weeks away. A new Liberal leader would be selected by March 9. Trudeau's window to shape legacy was closing fast.

The federal government committed \$3.9 billion over six years for what it called a co-development phase, the stage at which the project's route, station locations, and construction specifications would be finalized. No track would be laid. No trains would be ordered. The actual construction cost, according to Transport Canada's own estimates, could reach \$80 billion.

The private consortium selected to co-develop the project, named Cadence, includes some names that have drawn scrutiny. AtkinsRéalis, formerly SNC-Lavalin, brings a record that includes legal settlements tied to corruption charges and criticism over its role in Ottawa's troubled O-Train Line 1 expansion. Air Canada sits at the table as well, a carrier whose commercial interest in limiting rail competition raises questions about its role in designing the very network that would compete with its routes. CDPQ Infra, the infrastructure arm of the Caisse de dépôt, rounds out the group. It is a credible infrastructure builder, though one whose REM decisions in Montreal have drawn criticism for routing choices that will now require Alto to construct an additional tunnel just to reach Central Station.

Trudeau acknowledged at the press conference that a future government could modify or cancel the project. He expressed confidence it would proceed regardless.

That confidence has not been tested yet. The Carney government inherited Alto, and as of mid-2025, the co-development phase is nominally underway. But with construction not expected to begin until the design phase concludes, a window of four to five years, and with a total price tag that has never been formally acknowledged, the project exists in a familiar Canadian infrastructure state: funded for planning, uncertain on delivery.

For the construction industry, Alto represents something real and something speculative simultaneously. Real in that \$3.9 billion in professional services, engineering, and planning work will flow in the near term. Speculative in that the workforce required to build 1,000 kilometres of new dedicated rail corridor does not currently exist in Canada and would need to be assembled at precisely the moment when housing, hospitals, and energy infrastructure are all competing for the same tradespeople.

The question the industry should be asking is not whether Canada needs high-speed rail. It clearly does. Canada is the only G7 country without it. The question is whether the country has the labour, the coordination capacity, and the political continuity to build it. Or whether Alto joins a long list of nation-building infrastructure announcements that live in design phases indefinitely.

The train was launched. Whether it ever leaves the station is a different matter.

Steel, Lumber, and the New Cost of Building Canadian

The 2025 tariff war between Canada and the United States landed hardest on the construction sector. Here is what changed and what did not go back to normal when the tariffs were partially lifted.

Faris Khan



The trade relationship between Canada and the United States, stable for decades under successive agreements, deteriorated sharply in the first quarter of 2025 when the Trump administration imposed a 25 per cent tariff on most Canadian goods and a 50 per cent tariff on Canadian steel and aluminum. Canada responded with retaliatory tariffs on \$155 billion of American imports, including construction-critical materials.

The Canadian construction industry found itself on both sides of that equation.

An Altus Group analysis estimated that Canada's exposure to American construction inputs, materials and labour combined, represents roughly 8.1 per cent of total construction costs, or approximately \$33.1 billion nationally. That figure sounds manageable until you look at where it concentrates. Roughly 40 per cent of HVAC and mechanical equipment used in Canadian construction is sourced from the United States. Boilers, chillers, and fabricated steel components cross the border and, under the 2025 tariff regime, face compounding duties when Canadian steel is used to manufacture American products that are then imported back into Canada.

Lumber tells a different story. Canada is a major softwood lumber exporter to the United States, and American tariffs on Canadian lumber reached a combined rate approaching 45 per cent in 2025. Those tariffs were intended to protect American mills. The effect on American homebuilders was higher input costs. The effect on Canadian producers was market access disruption and price pressure at home as supply rerouted.

For Canadian contractors working on fixed-price contracts, the tariff environment created immediate legal exposure. Standard fixed-price contracts place tariff cost risk on the contractor unless specific escalation clauses exist. BDO Canada estimated that Canadian counter-tariffs alone were projected to increase infrastructure project costs by \$1 billion over two years. Contractors without escalation language in their agreements absorbed those increases directly.

By September 2025, Canada removed counter-tariffs on most American imports after the United States agreed to restore tariff-free access for CUSMA-compliant goods. Counter-tariffs on steel, aluminum, and automobiles remained in place, as the United States maintained tariffs on those sectors regardless of CUSMA compliance.

The net effect for the Canadian construction industry is a cost environment that has not returned to pre-2025 baselines. Material costs that spiked during the tariff escalation period did not fully retreat when the tariffs were partially unwound. Contractors who absorbed cost overruns during the peak period did not recover those margins. And procurement teams across the country began, for the first time in a generation, seriously evaluating domestic sourcing alternatives for materials that had always been purchased across the border as a matter of habit and price efficiency.

That shift, if it sustains, has long-term implications for Canadian manufacturing and supply chain investment. The tariff episode was disruptive. Its secondary effect, a serious national conversation about domestic material supply capacity, may prove more consequential than the tariffs themselves.

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Canada's Housing Math Does Not Add Up

The CMHC says Canada needs 5.8 million new homes by 2030. Residential permits grew 3.5 percent last year. The construction workforce is already overextended. Something has to give.

Sebastien Ameur



The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has stated that Canada needs to build approximately 5.8 million additional homes by 2030 to restore housing affordability to 2004 levels. The federal government has committed to a build agenda. Municipalities are being pushed to accelerate permitting. Zoning reform is underway in multiple provinces.

None of it addresses the fundamental constraint: the homes cannot be built faster than the workforce that builds them, and that workforce is already overextended.

Residential construction permits increased modestly, 3.5 per cent, between June 2024 and June 2025, according to Statistics Canada. Single-family residential permits contracted by 11 per cent over the same period. Non-residential construction, by contrast, surged. Non-residential building intentions rose 24.1 per cent year over year, driven by major hospital projects in Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, along with broad commercial and industrial activity.

The result is a construction labour market being pulled in competing directions simultaneously. The same electricians, ironworkers, and project managers required to build housing are also required to build hospitals, transit systems, and industrial facilities. When major projects hit peak labour demand at the same time, as happened in British Columbia during the 2022 to 2023 period when four megaprojects overlapped, the outcome is wage inflation, schedule slippage, and budget overruns that cascade across the sector.

Modular and prefabricated construction has been cited as a mitigation strategy. The technology is real and improving, and several Canadian manufacturers have expanded capacity. It is not, however, a near-term solution at the scale the housing target requires. Modular construction still requires skilled assembly, certified installation, and site preparation. It reduces but does not eliminate the labour demand per unit.

For the real estate development and construction industry, the housing target functions less as a goal and more as a benchmark against which the gap between policy ambition and delivery capacity becomes visible every quarter. Developers seeking to bring projects to market are not primarily constrained by financing or land, although both are factors. They are constrained by the availability of qualified contractors to build on the schedule that project economics require.

The policy response needed is not faster permitting alone, though that matters. It is a coordinated national labour strategy that sequences major projects to avoid simultaneous peak demand, accelerates credential recognition for internationally trained tradespeople, and funds apprenticeship expansion at a scale proportionate to the target. That strategy does not yet exist in a form the industry recognizes as sufficient.

The Internal Trade Problem Canada Built for Itself

While Ottawa focused on American tariffs, a quieter barrier to construction productivity has existed for decades inside Canada's own borders. Interprovincial labour and supply chain restrictions are costing the industry more than most people realize.

Capstone Editorial



While much attention in 2025 focused on trade friction with the United States, a quieter but structurally significant barrier to Canadian construction productivity has existed for decades within the country's own borders: internal trade restrictions that limit the movement of labour, materials, and professional credentials across provincial lines.

A Red Seal certification, Canada's interprovincial standard for skilled tradespeople, was designed to address exactly this problem. In theory, a journeyperson certified in Nova Scotia can work in British Columbia. In practice, the process of establishing credential equivalency across provinces remains administratively complex in enough trades that contractors facing acute labour shortages in one region cannot easily access surplus capacity in another.

The federal government announced in February 2025 that it would remove more than half of the remaining exceptions under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, a response partly triggered by the trade tension with the United States and the resulting political urgency around economic sovereignty and internal market integration. The announcement was substantive. The implementation timeline and the specific exceptions removed will determine whether it translates into meaningful relief for the construction sector.

The construction industry's exposure to internal trade barriers is direct. A contractor awarded a major project in a province where local labour supply is tight cannot simply hire from a province with available workers without navigating a compliance process that can delay mobilization by weeks. Materials procurement faces analogous friction. Some provinces have historically prioritized north-south trade relationships with American suppliers over interprovincial supply chains, creating dependencies that the 2025 tariff environment exposed as vulnerabilities.

The Canadian Construction Association has advocated consistently for internal trade liberalization as an infrastructure priority. The argument is straightforward: if Canada intends to build at the scale its housing and infrastructure targets require, it cannot afford to treat its own provinces as semi-foreign jurisdictions when it comes to labour and supply chain mobility.

Progress on this file tends to be incremental and politically unremarkable, which is precisely why it rarely receives the attention it merits. It is also why the construction industry has more to gain from internal trade reform than from almost any single infrastructure funding announcement.



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The Project That Did Not Make the News

Non-residential construction intentions grew 24 percent year over year in 2025. Alberta led at 136 percent. Nobody is talking about it.

Capstone Editorial



While housing affordability dominates the public narrative around Canadian construction, a quieter story has been unfolding in the non-residential sector that deserves attention from everyone involved in the supply chain.

Non-residential building permit intentions grew 24.1 per cent year over year between June 2024 and June 2025, according to Statistics Canada. Alberta led with 136.1 per cent growth. Saskatchewan followed at 86.8 per cent. Ontario posted a 17.2 per cent increase. The primary drivers were major hospital projects in all three provinces, alongside broad activity in industrial, commercial, and infrastructure categories.

This is not a cyclical uptick. It reflects a structural shift in where capital is being deployed. Governments are investing in health infrastructure after years of deferred maintenance. The energy transition is generating industrial construction demand, including battery storage facilities, grid upgrades, clean fuel production facilities, and data centres that require significant structural and mechanical work. Reshoring of manufacturing activity, accelerated by trade uncertainty with the United States, is driving industrial construction in Ontario and Quebec.

For construction firms with the capacity to take on non-residential work, the pipeline is substantial. The challenge is the same one facing every segment of the sector: workforce availability and project management depth. Non-residential projects are typically more complex than residential builds, require more specialized trades, and demand tighter coordination between general contractors and the mechanical, electrical, and structural subcontractors that deliver the technical scope.

Suppliers operating in the non-residential segment, including steel fabricators, mechanical contractors, electrical distributors, and HVAC manufacturers, are navigating a market where demand is strong and delivery timelines are tight. Relationships with general contractors and developers who have a consistent pipeline matter more in this environment than in softer markets.

The non-residential construction story in Canada in 2025 and 2026 is one of genuine activity. It is also a story that has not been told with the specificity the sector deserves.

About Capstone

Capstone was founded on a simple premise: the Canadian construction industry builds everything, and almost nobody covers it with the seriousness it deserves.

We are an independent publication focused exclusively on the business of construction in Canada. Every issue profiles the firms, project leaders and industry figures whose work shapes the built environment from coast to coast. Our editorial is not commissioned by the companies we cover and is not contingent on advertising relationships. We report on the industry as it is, not as it presents itself.

Our readers are the people making decisions in Canadian construction. Project managers, general contractors, developers, engineers, executives and the supplier networks that keep major projects moving. They read Capstone because the coverage is specific, grounded and written for people who already know the industry.

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