

# Builders' Digest

Toronto Construction Association's Quarterly Perspective

Vol.5 No.1 Quarter 3 2010

## A NEW DAY TCA's Construction Day 2010

**A HAND UP**

**BID COMPETITION**

**MEMBERS' DAY**

**NEW MODEL**

**GREEN CENTRE**



# The Way Forward



Glenn Ackerley, Chair  
Weirfoulds LLP

**New board chair Glenn Ackerley believes that the TCA's strengths will be essential in crafting new responses to new challenges**

BY ANDREW BROOKS

**FOR GLENN ACKERLEY, A CONSTRUCTION LAWYER WITH WEIRFOULDS LLP** and the new chair of the TCA board of directors, challenges come with the territory, and they can be opportunities too. That kind of mixed bag is an accurate reflection of the state of the industry in 2010 as he sees it.

As the first lawyer to be named to the position, Ackerley sees divergent viewpoints as one of the most important advantages the TCA has in working to advance the industry. "I've always felt that one of the TCA's biggest strengths is its character as a mixed-trade association," he says. "Anyone in the ICI sector can be a member, whether you're a lawyer, architect, accountant, a mechanical contractor, an electrical contractor, a supplier... the list is huge."

That diversity also poses a challenge. "The association has to offer value to all the different types of members," Ackerley says. "We have to focus on being relevant to all of the members in those various disciplines."

One way to remain relevant, Ackerley believes, is to focus on education — both in the usual, institutional sense, and in terms of the ongoing learning that should take place throughout a career. Remaining adaptable is an essential survival skill, especially in uncertain times.

"BIM [building information modelling] is one example," Ackerley says. "We already have a program to educate members about what BIM can do and how to get the most from the technology. And I think firms that don't take the time to learn about technology tools like BIM now will be left behind over the long run."

BIM has benefits beyond its obvious advantages in articulating the stages and processes that go into project scoping. "Everyone has to work together, because the technology draws in all the different roles and shows how they interact," Ackerley says. "It short-circuits a lot of the potential conflict that can arise." By clearly delineating the roles played by different disciplines, BIM helps to ensure that any 'conflict' that does arise will be over specific problems and challenges that would have had to be addressed in any case.

In another way, education touches on the future health of the industry itself. The industry is aging, and the need for fresh, young talent to fill the ranks is only going to get more acute as the years go by. "There's a real shortage of skilled trades and skilled management," Ackerley says. "So we as an industry have to strive to attract people, to show them the kinds of opportunities they can have in this field."

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## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Initiatives such as the TCA's Construction Day partnership with Junior Achievement present construction as a promising career choice to high school students long before they have to make their decision. If they're won over, then it's up to the higher education system to make sure that they can follow through. In that context, the development of first-class higher-education programs in construction, such as the School of Construction Management and Trades at George Brown College, is one of the reasons Ackerley is optimistic about the future.

### STEPPING UP?

Public-sector initiatives have loomed large in the last couple of years with the introduction of public-sector infrastructure

spending as a form of economic stimulus. Investment in areas like transit has a long-term benefit, Ackerley believes, because the infrastructure is large-scale and takes time to build. However, along with a growing number of construction industry observers, he is keeping an eye on the private sector, which will inevitably be expected to play a greater role as public-sector funding for infrastructure projects is stepped back.

"I'd say the spirit in the industry is one of cautious optimism," Ackerley says. "Overall the industry has come through the recession better than some others, but if new opportunities don't materialize, or if we do hit a second dip as some people are saying, there could be problems."

Private-sector building, notably

office-tower construction, has always made up a large proportion of construction work in Toronto. There's a longer-term payoff here too, Ackerley believes. After a building is constructed, there's a lot of ongoing work to be had not just in building operations and management, but also in work like interior design, renovation and equipping suites in advance of new tenants. Ackerley has legal clients in this kind of work, so he understands the benefits to be had.

"I don't know if those who are warning about a double-dip recession are right," he says. "But whether or not it turns out to be true, as long as there's some uncertainty the people in the private sector with money to invest will tend to hold off, and they're the ones we need in the long term." | **B**



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