

FACILITY FOCUS

The Official Publication of the Alberta Educational Facilities Administrators' Association

FALL 2025



The persistence and dedication behind École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardiff

**From two schools to one
The Milk River Ridge School Project**

**West Coulee Station Elementary
A brand new school for west Lethbridge**

AEFAA Fall Workshop Program



THE ALBERTA EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES
ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION

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AEFAA member benefits



Membership advantages:

- AEFAA memberships can attend all AEFAA functions. Currently, AEFAA conducts a spring conference and trade show that hosts professional development sessions pertinent to the field of educational facilities and their safe operation and maintenance. The tradeshow component of this event showcases all the prominent vendors that provide our industry with the necessary and new goods and services required to properly operate and maintain these educational facilities.
- AEFAA also conducts an annual fall workshop. The primary function of this event is to provide continuing education for its membership. The sessions are hosted by leaders in the industry, with a focus on facility-related PD. We also work with SAIT to provide our membership with

continued growth opportunities in their management skills.

- Members also receive copies of *Facility Focus* magazine, which focuses on all things related to the educational facility operational and maintenance. There are two editions: spring and fall.
- AEFAA members also gain access to the members area of our website. The members area of the website has a platform designed to promote networking with other colleagues from similar educational jurisdictions.
- AEFAA also hosts spring workshops. These events range from facility tours to further education on current challenges.
- Members are also made aware of current and new insurance facility requirements, as well as updates from Alberta Education that are presented at both major spring and fall sessions.

Associate membership advantages (exhibitors and vendors):

- This membership enables all vendors and exhibitors to be invited to participate in the annual spring trade show.
- It also enables those who hold this membership to possibly be invited to the fall workshop.
- Members will receive two copies, spring and fall, of *Facility Focus* magazine.
- Associate members are also able to advertise in *Facility Focus* magazine.
- Members will also receive the full AEFAA delegate membership contact list, complete with names, school jurisdiction, position, phone numbers, and email addresses. ■



PROUDLY CANADIAN



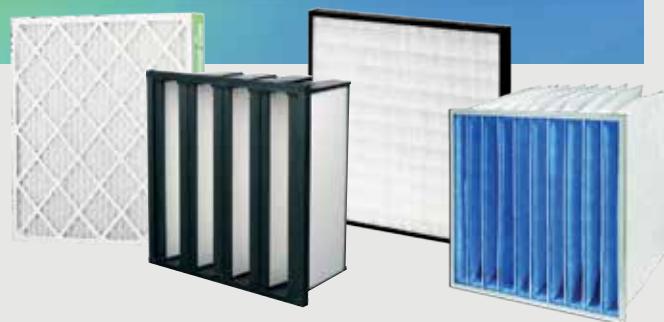
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Message from the AEFAA president **Robert Krahn**

In 2024, AEFAA celebrated its 50th anniversary as an organization. Now, at the 2026 spring conference, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of our partnership with our vendors. Our vendors are an integral part of AEFAA, and we are grateful for their continued support of our organization.

We are excited to return to Jasper this fall for our annual workshop. Last year, we had to pivot and hold our workshop in Lake Louise due to the wildfires that devastated the Jasper area.

We had a very successful spring conference in Red Deer this past spring, and we are excited to return to Red Deer for the upcoming annual spring conference. The executive and I have been focusing on bringing more value to our membership. We have been focusing on facility-related PD sessions and connecting more often throughout the year with our peers to continue our professional growth. Updating the executive job descriptions prior to the spring conference has been a key focus this year. Now that we have navigated the first 50 years, we look to the future and plan for what is to come. As AEFAA

has evolved, the roles of our executives have also continued to grow with the organization. It's time to ensure that our job descriptions accurately reflect both the current duties and the future requirements.

I am very thankful for the role AEFAA has played in my career and the friendships I have gained as a part of this organization. AEFAA already has a long history, marked with many high points, including our 50th anniversary. I want to ensure that we continue to grow over the next 50 years. We have a faithful membership and vendors who consistently go above and beyond to support us. I love what I do and am grateful for the Black Gold School Division's support and commitment to AEFAA. We all have similar roles but approach them in different ways. AEFAA is how we stay connected and continue to learn and grow from each other's experiences.

As an organization, we have a mission and values. Our mission is "to work in partnership with Alberta school divisions in providing safe and caring learning environments." To achieve this, we must provide professional and ethical service, continue our education, create safe and efficient environments, collaborate and network with our colleagues, and promote industry excellence. These are the values of AEFAA that inspire me to create an environment that supports the education of our next generation.

I am very thankful for our executive group and the representation it provides. With members from large urban boards, small rural boards, charter schools, and everything in between, we're well equipped to address the needs of Alberta school divisions. I look forward to the upcoming year and am excited to see how AEFAA will flourish in the years to come. ■



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Message from the EFMABC president **Megan MacDonald**



Dear AEFAA Colleagues and Friends,

As the new school year begins, I'd like to extend warm greetings on behalf of the Educational Facilities Managers Association of British Columbia (EFMABC) to our counterparts at the Alberta Educational Facilities Administrators Association (AEFAA).

September always brings a renewed sense of purpose—and for facilities managers, it also brings a familiar challenge: ensuring our schools and classroom spaces are ready to welcome students and staff. From last-minute repairs to deep cleaning, system checks, and construction wrap-ups, the lead-up to the first day of school is a demanding time. But it's also a moment that reflects our shared commitment to creating safe, functional, and inspiring environments for learning.

It was a true pleasure connecting with AEFAA President Robert Krahn, Vice President Paul Feledichuk, and Secretary Treasurer Kevin Gushulak at our EFMABC Conference this past June. These

conversations reminded us of the value in cross-provincial collaboration, sharing insights, strengthening professional ties, and learning from one another's experiences. We look forward to continuing that dialogue and exploring new opportunities to work together in the months ahead.

As we look ahead, we know it will bring its own set of challenges—from aging infrastructure and rising costs to evolving safety standards and sustainability goals. Yet, it's through these challenges that our profession continues to grow, innovate, and lead.

Together, we have the opportunity to shape the future of educational spaces in ways that truly support student success.

To all AEFAA members: we wish you a successful, resilient, and rewarding school year. May the months ahead be filled with progress, pride, and the kind of teamwork that makes our work so impactful.

Wishing you all the best. ■

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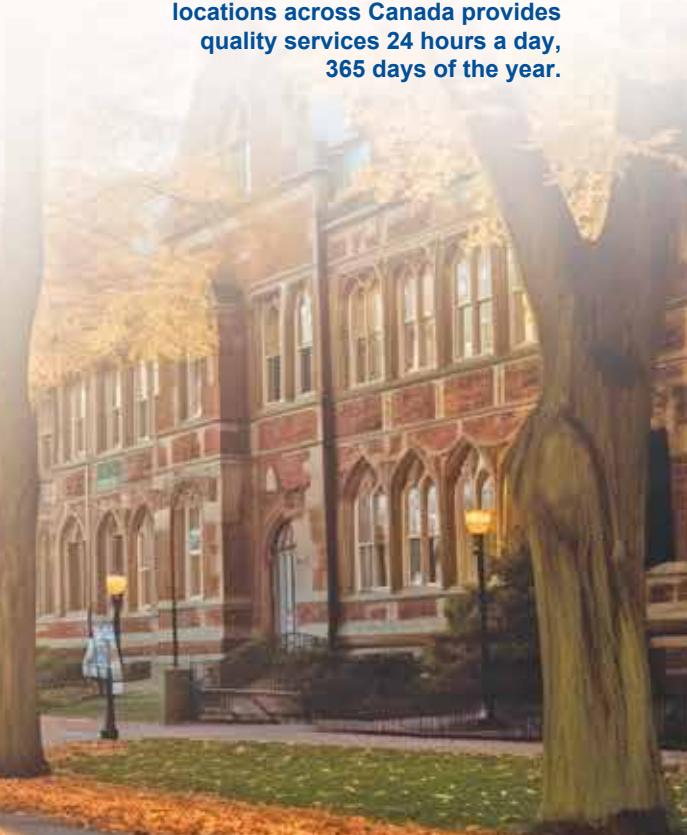
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WEST COULEE STATION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A modern gateway for west Lethbridge



After experiencing rapid population growth on Lethbridge's westside, the Lethbridge School Division recognized the need for an additional elementary school to alleviate overcrowding, serve emerging communities, and support future growth.

Nestled in West Lethbridge at 1350 Abitibi Road West, the new facility is strategically located in a fast-growing residential area. Officially named West Coulee Station Elementary School, the name was selected from a shortlist of 31 community submissions and reflects the region's iconic coulees and railway legacy — a nod to

local heritage and community identity.

As an approved Government of Alberta capital project, West Coulee Station Elementary is designed to accommodate up to 610 students (with potential to expand to 870) from kindergarten to Grade 5. The modern two-storey 64,433-square-foot (5,986 m²) facility is consistent in design scales for similar schools in the region.

With an estimated project budget of \$32.8 million, the school was funded by Alberta's government. Construction on the project began in March 2023 and the school opened to students in September 2025.

Inspired by the school division's objectives and modern educational needs, the design emphasizes inclusivity and flexibility. With additional funding contributed by the City of Lethbridge, the school boasts an expanded gymnasium — elevating it from a typical elementary-school size to one more akin to middle-school standards — enabling broader programming and use for physical education, school-wide assemblies, and community activities.

The school has partnered with the YMCA to provide before- and after-school childcare, offering licensed care on school days, professional development days, and holidays — a valuable amenity for families and staff alike.

While not yet formally LEED-certified, the project targets a minimum of LEED Silver —

With an estimated project budget of \$32.8 million, the school was funded by Alberta's government. Construction on the project began in March 2023 and the school opened to students in September 2025.



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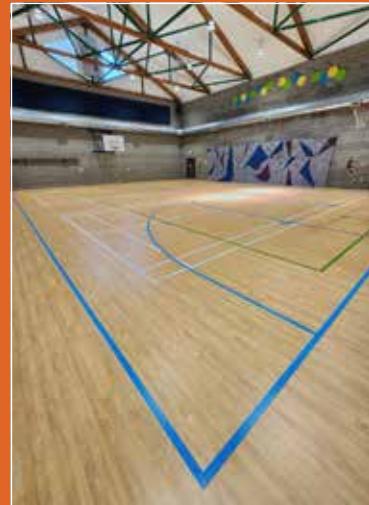
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"The process was a bit different as it was a design-build as opposed to the usual design-bid-build," says Bill Scales, Project Director at Ward Bros. Construction Ltd., the

general contractor for the project. "So, the bridging design was completed before we took it over." Ward Bros. Construction Ltd. and FWBA Architects served as the design-builder for the project, and the bridging consultant was ACI Architecture and OTA.

Like many large capital projects, the school faced schedule delays, pushing completion into mid-2025. Such delays were managed through adaptive project oversight and collaboration between the design-builder team and stakeholders. There was no impact on budget and the school opened as expected in September.

"The gym structure and adjacent area — including the mechanical room and elevator — was built using pre-cast concrete rather than concrete block, which allowed us to keep building through the winter," says Scales, who adds that if they used concrete block they would have been required to enclose and heat the area during construction. "With pre-cast concrete, all the logistics and coordination had to be completed ahead of time, but it meant the structure went up in just one week."

With capacity for 610 students, the new facility will relieve pressure on nearby schools and provide modern learning spaces to a growing population. It stands to enhance educational accessibility, accommodate bilingual programming, and offer community-linked services through facilities like the YMCA childcare — underscoring the school's role as both an educational and community asset.

"It's located on a beautiful piece of property with a park to the south of it," says Scales. "We were happy to be a part of it." ■



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From two schools to one: The Milk River and Erle Rivers Modernization Project

In the southern Alberta town of Milk River, a transformative school modernization project has reshaped both the community and its educational landscape. What was once two separate schools — Milk River

Elementary and Erle Rivers High School — has now become one modernized K-12 facility, Milk River Ridge School.

The decision to consolidate the schools was not made lightly.

Both facilities had served the community for decades, but age, maintenance costs, and declining enrolment prompted the need for change. Instead of operating and maintaining two aging buildings, the Horizon School Division and the Government of Alberta chose to invest in a reconstruction that would bring all students together under one roof, creating a streamlined, efficient, and future-ready learning environment.

From old to new

Erle Rivers High School once stood as the secondary hub for local students, but operating both schools was no longer practical. The solution was to modernize Milk



River Elementary into a full K-12 school and demolish Erle Rivers.

The result is Milk River Ridge School, a 39,438.97-square-foot (3,664m²) facility designed to meet the learning needs of all grades while efficiently serving the community. The project, budgeted at \$24.9 million and funded primarily by the Government of Alberta, also benefited from a local fundraising campaign. Community contributions made it possible to enlarge the gymnasium to accommodate bleachers and spectators, ensuring that sports and special events remain a vibrant part of the community.

Construction began in March 2023 and the new school opened its doors to students, staff, and families in January 2025. While modernization projects often come with unexpected challenges, this one progressed remarkably smoothly. Adjustments were made along the way, but the project remained on schedule, welcoming students on time.

"After renovations and expansions to the elementary school were completed, the new school opened to all students in January, and we demolished the old high school that spring," says Bill Scales, Project Director at Ward Bros. Construction Ltd., the general contractor for the project.

Scales say that demolishing an old school came with some expected challenges and some unexpected ones as well.

"The logistics weren't an issue, apart from dealing with some

hazardous materials that required careful removal," he says. "There were also several reports of ghost sightings. But no ill effects."

Preserving the past, building for the future

One unique feature carried over from the original Milk River

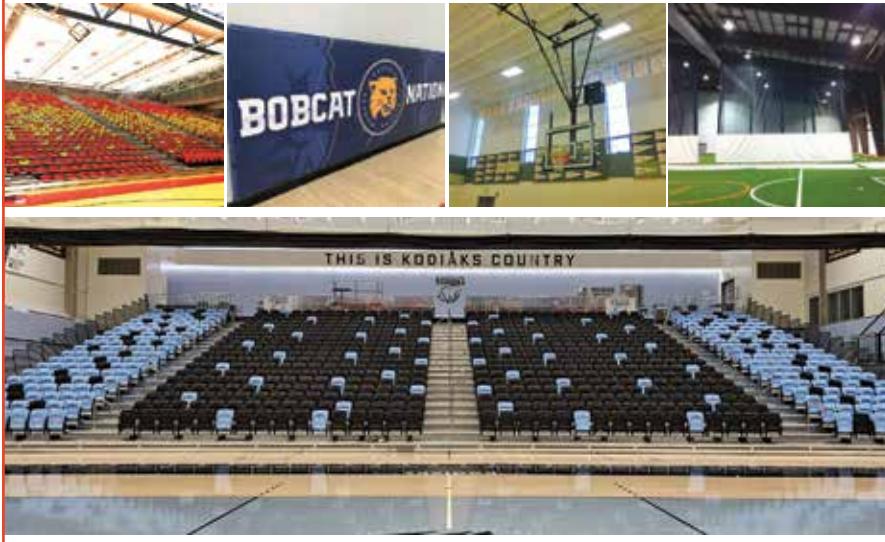
Elementary was its hexagonal classrooms. Built decades ago, the unconventional shape was designed to improve air circulation with cross-breezes and maximize natural light. These classrooms were preserved in the modernization, giving the school a distinct architectural character



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while supporting healthy, daylight-filled learning spaces.

The design, led by Sahuri + Partners Architecture Inc., prioritized flexibility, efficiency, and inclusivity. Ward Bros. Construction served as the general contractor, working alongside multiple subtrades to bring the vision to life. Together, the team created a building that balances tradition with modern educational needs.

The final facility accommodates up to 275 students from kindergarten through Grade 12. The interior

spaces are designed to support a wide variety of programming needs, from early childhood learning to high school science labs and career-focused programs.

Amenities inside and outside

The heart of the school is its expanded gymnasium, made possible in part through community support. With seating for spectators, it provides a space not only for physical education and school sports but also for community events. The school also includes dedicated learning spaces

that align with Alberta's curriculum requirements while maintaining flexibility for future program changes.

Outdoors, Milk River Ridge School features a playground area and sits adjacent to the town baseball fields. This placement makes the school a true hub for community activity, encouraging use by both students and residents after hours.

Sustainable design

The project reflects Alberta's growing emphasis on sustainable school construction. Milk River Ridge School was designed to

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achieve LEED Silver certification, ensuring energy efficiency, responsible water use, and a healthier indoor environment for students and staff. Sustainable design elements also help reduce operating costs, ensuring that resources are directed where they matter most — into classrooms and student programming.

Meeting diverse needs

The overarching goal of the modernization was to efficiently meet the space requirements of a K-12 population in a rural community. By bringing all grades together in one building, the school division reduced duplication of resources and created opportunities for mentorship between younger and older students.

The new design reflects a forward-looking vision for education in Milk River; a school that supports collaboration, individualized learning, and community pride.

A positive transition

While saying goodbye to Erle Rivers High School was bittersweet, the transition has been overwhelmingly positive. Staff have embraced their new teaching spaces, students enjoy modern amenities, and the community has rallied around the new facility as a point of pride.

The success of the project reflects not only careful planning and execution but also strong collaboration between Alberta's government, school division leaders, architects,

Looking ahead

Milk River Ridge School stands as an example of how thoughtful modernization can breathe new life into rural education. By preserving what was unique about the original Milk River Elementary while adding modern amenities, the facility serves both its students and the wider community.

For the people of Milk River, that satisfaction represents more than just a building — it reflects the successful blending of history, community, and innovation into a school built to serve generations to come. ■

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AEFAA Fall Workshop Program

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Tuesday, October 14

5:00pm – 8:00pm – Trade Show Social Evening – Mary Schaeffer Ballroom

22 Vendors have registered for this event to showcase their latest products and services available in Alberta.

*Food and refreshments will be provided

Wednesday, October 15

7:00 am – 8:30 am – Breakfast – Mary Schaeffer Ballroom

8:30 am – 8:45 am – Welcome and opening remarks from AEFAA President Robert Krahm

8:45 am – 9:45 am – Solar Photovoltaics in Alberta Schools

Practical guidance for educational facility leaders on planning, funding, and operating school solar photovoltaics in Alberta. We will cover site screening, roof readiness, microgeneration rules, utility interconnection, grants, tender pitfalls, warranties, safety, and O&M. You will leave with Alberta-specific lessons learned and clear next steps for your facility.



Neil Popson, P.Eng., is a Senior Electrical Engineer and Technology Lead at SMP Engineering in Alberta. He designs and reviews solar PV, lighting, power, fire alarm, and communications systems for schools and public facilities. His focus is Alberta microgeneration compliance, utility interconnection, tender clarity, and O&M readiness. He translates code and constraints into practical, buildable designs.

9:45 am – 10:00 am – Break

10:00 am – 11:00 am – Restructured Electricity Market Seminar – Reliability, Affordability & Sustainability – Energy Associates International

In cooperation with Alberta Education Facilities Administrators Association (AEFAA), Energy Associates International (EAI) would like to share and discuss market trends, risks and opportunities for commercial and institutional electricity customers on Alberta's path to a net zero electricity grid. Unlike most of the provinces in Canada, Alberta's electricity grid continues to experience unique challenges with decarbonization and electrification. External pressures from Ottawa requiring accelerated decarbonization to NetZero by 2035 have had impacts on reliability and costs as witnessed by the emergency alert events in 2024 and recent blackout

events in Spain and Portugal. Upcoming regulatory changes in Alberta's electricity market are intended to minimize electricity price volatility and grid congestion; these changes in addition to load requirements from large data centers are expected to impact new merchant generation investment and wholesale market trading liquidity. Alberta's upcoming restructured electricity market in 2027 will also allow for more distributed generation, batteries and participation by demand-side sources to support grid adequacy and reliability.

At this seminar, senior staff at EAI will draw on decades of wholesale energy trading and origination experience, to explain the new path chosen by Alberta to address reliability, affordability and decarbonization by 2050. Attendees will also learn about opportunities and risks related to renewables investment, including prioritizing energy efficiency and capital investment to succeed in the upcoming restructured electricity market.

Jay U. Manoharan, P.Eng. - Managing Partner, N. America, Energy Associates International (EAI)

With over 30 years' experience in the various energy utilities sectors, Jay leads an energy practice in trading and portfolio management in deregulated wholesale trading electricity and natural gas markets in North America. Jay has worked in senior leadership positions transforming vertically integrated energy utilities to compete in deregulated energy markets including merchant PPA design and origination, wholesale energy trading, renewable energy development, operating reserve markets, distributed generation and energy marketing. With energy transition, Jay is actively engaged developing net zero and carbon market optimization for utilities, energy producers and end-users in deregulated markets in North America and emerging structured markets in Asia.

11:00 am - 12:00 pm - Alberta Roofing Contractors Association

The Alberta Roofing Contractors Association (ARCA) is one of the most respected roofing contractor associations in North America, established over sixty years ago to serve the Alberta roofing industry by providing leadership through the development and promotion of standards, education and professional delivery of roofing services. This session will provide essential insights for facility professionals into new and innovative advancements in roofing systems. Attendees will gain an understanding of the increased scrutiny of roofing materials in response to Alberta's demanding climate, the critical importance of rooftop equipment awareness, roof fire classification, and effective risk mitigation practices that help safeguard facilities during construction and throughout the building's lifecycle.



Kevin Kramers (C.E.T., R.R.O., C.T.R.) is the Technical Officer for the Alberta Roofing Contractors Association (ARCA) and brings over thirty years of construction experience in Alberta. In his role, Kevin is responsible for maintaining the ARCA Roofing Application Standards Manual, managing the ARCA Interdisciplinary Technical Committee, researching new roofing products and application methods, and delivering technical education to building professionals across the province. In addition to his work with ARCA, Kevin actively contributes to the broader roofing and construction industry through his involvement on several key technical committees. He is a member of the Canadian Roofing Contractors Association (CRCA) National Technical Committee, the ASET Discipline Committee, and sits on multiple CSA Technical Committees that help shape and advance roofing standards in Canada.

12:00 pm - 1:00pm - Lunch - Mary Schaeffer Ballroom

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm - Principle Session - Jasper "Lessons Learned"

During the summer of 2024 the Jasper community suffered a devastating loss due to fire. This session will tell the story of what took place regarding Grande Yellowhead School Division and their attempts to resume operation. Alberta Education, Marsh Insurance, Premier Fire & Flood, and ARMIC representatives will also be there hosting a panel discussion and giving their perspectives on the successes and lessons learned. This session holds particular value to school divisions who could be subject to this type of hazard.

Thursday, October 16th

7:00 am - 8:30 am - Breakfast - Mary Schaeffer Ballroom

9:00am - 11:15 am - Alberta Education - IMR, CMR, PO&M

The session will begin with a brief update on the newly released 2025/26 School Capital Manual, highlighting key revisions to chapters on modular classroom requests, leasing requests, and maintenance and renewal. Facility administrators will be encouraged to review the manual and incorporate these changes into their upcoming submissions and reporting requirements.

Following this, Mr. Newton will present an overview of Alberta Education and Childcare's IMR and CMR programs, including details on the School Construction Accelerator Program (Schools Now), increased government funding being requested, reporting expectations, and planning timelines. Government insights into IMR and CMR priorities and direction will also be shared, providing administrators with a clearer understanding of program expectations and future planning considerations.



Ross Newton is a Senior Manager with Alberta Education and Childcare, bringing over three decades of leadership in education infrastructure planning, strategic policy development, and assessment administration. He currently leads the Ministry's Modular Classroom Program, Leasing Program, and Maintenance and Renewal initiatives, advancing responsive and sustainable learning environments across Alberta. Throughout his career, Ross has held key leadership roles in Capital Planning South, Strategic Planning, Capital Planning North, and Exam Administration. His contributions have shaped provincial legislation, policies, and operational frameworks that support the delivery of high-quality education across the province. Ross began his career as a teacher and later served as an examiner, playing a pivotal role in the design and implementation of Alberta's provincial achievement tests. Outside of his professional responsibilities, Ross enjoys staying physically active, gardening, and preparing savory meals. He is married and a proud father of two grown children and grandfather to four grandchildren under the age of eight.

11:15 am - 11:30 am - Closing comments and grab and go lunch



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École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif: A decade-long dream realized

After nearly a decade of determination from francophone families in Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan, a long-awaited milestone has finally been reached. In September 2025, École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif officially opened its doors — offering a modern, purpose-built home for francophone education from kindergarten through Grade 12.

From temporary classrooms to a permanent home

The story of École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif began in 2015, when the first students were welcomed into a temporary space at La Cité francophone in Edmonton. At the time, the goal was simply to give local families immediate access to French-first education without forcing students to travel far from home.

By 2016, enrollment had already outgrown the temporary site.

Portable classrooms were set up at New Horizons School to keep pace with the demand. But as numbers grew, so did the call for a permanent building that could accommodate the community's needs and support a full K-12 program. Parents, school board representatives, and government partners rallied together, advocating for sustainable, high-quality francophone education in Strathcona County.

Their persistence paid off in 2021 when Alberta's government announced official funding for a new school. Construction began in August 2023, and by March 2025, the two-storey building was complete.

Purpose-built for learning and community

Located in Florian Park, in Sherwood Park's Foxboro neighbourhood, the new school is both central and accessible to

the region's francophone families. The 45,176 square-foot (4,197m²) facility was designed not only as a place of learning but as a hub for francophone culture and community life.

The new school has capacity for 420 students from kindergarten through Grade 12 and includes a variety of purpose-built spaces to support both learning and community life. Among its highlights are a dedicated space for arts including drama, music, and theatre; community pre-school and daycare programs, and a large multi-purpose room designed with open common areas to create inviting spaces that encourage collaboration and connection among students of all ages.

Architects deliberately created different zones within the building to reflect stages of student development: playful, vibrant spaces for younger learners, and

more academic, independent environments for junior high and high school students. Outdoors, the site offers flexible spaces for recreation, play, and community use.

The school was also built with sustainability in mind and is on track to achieve LEED Silver Certification, making it an environmentally responsible addition to the community.

What makes the school unique

Unlike English or French immersion schools nearby, École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif is a fully francophone institution within the provincial francophone school board network. Every subject is taught in French, and the school functions as both an educational facility and a cultural anchor — helping francophone families maintain language and identity in a minority setting.

The continuity of having kindergarten to Grade 12 under one roof also sets the school apart, ensuring that students can progress seamlessly through their academic journey without leaving the francophone system.

Investment in the future

The total project budget was \$32.5 million, including \$2.8 million in federal funding to support daycare and pre-school spaces plus a performing arts studio. The school was designed by ACI Architecture Inc. (bridging consultant), with Delnor Construction Ltd. and BR2 Architecture leading the design-build.



Despite a tight 20-month construction schedule, the project was delivered on time thanks to proactive planning and coordination among contractors and subtrades.

A long-awaited benefit for the community

For families in Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan, École Claudette-et-Denis-Tardif represents far more than a new building. It serves as a cultural

anchor for francophone identity, a modern and equitable space for education, and a gathering place that strengthens community ties. At the same time, it stands as a sustainable investment in the region's future, supporting long-term growth and stability for generations to come.

After years of determination, the francophone community now has a permanent home that reflects its resilience, its pride, and its future. ■

The potential hazard of lithium-ion batteries

By Kevin Kramers, Alberta Roofing Contractors Association



The commercial roofing industry has always been acutely aware of the hazards fire presents. Product and application training, safe work practices and fire-safe training are key components to ensure the safety of the building occupants, the general public, and workers as innovations in materials and application techniques continue to drive a safer environment. While continually monitoring the different aspects that are integrated into commercial construction, there is a new hazard that extends beyond construction activities: lithium-ion batteries.

Lithium-ion batteries are popular on construction sites and are used to power cordless tools, communication devices and lighting. Outside construction, they are in personal cell phones, laptops, tablets, e-cigarettes, and every handyman's garage. They are also part of the popular micro-mobility market (electronic

scooters and electronic bikes). The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimates that the micro-mobility market in 2025 is worth \$40B, expanding to upwards of \$215B by 2030. These only include smaller sized lithium-ion batteries and not those used on a larger scale in electric cars, photovoltaic energy-storage systems and back-up electricity for utility and commercial facilities.

The popularity of Lithium-ion batteries is increasing as they offer several benefits, most notably a lightweight, large amount of energy in a small space with a long lifespan. What is often missed is that lithium-ion batteries are classified as a Class 9 dangerous good and come with growing safety concerns.

The largest safety concern with lithium-ion batteries is fire hazard. If a battery is damaged, not used correctly, overcharged, or charged in a non-compliant charger they can experience thermal runaway. This phenomenon occurs when

one cell's failure triggers adjacent cells to fail, leading to a fire. As the fire intensifies the volume of toxic gas increases, releasing a combination of gases including hydrogen fluoride, which can cause severe respiratory distress, skin burns, and eye irritation. The heat of the battery upon failure can reach up to 537 degrees Celsius and occupants could have less than one minute to escape a lithium-ion fire. In addition, these types of fires react differently than normal fires with some producing rocket flames when the pressure builds up within an enclosed space.

Fire professionals undertake specific training on how to handle lithium-ion fires as they do not require an external spark or source of ignition to start. Carbon monoxide, hydrogen, and hydrocarbons are chemical by-products from the electrolyte solution and electrodes are combustible and could ignite

Another risk is using non-

compliant batteries. Products that are not certified and labelled by either the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or Underwriters Laboratory (UL) are more likely to become damaged, catch fire, or explode. Transport Canada requires all lithium-ion batteries to pass the tests set out in subsection 38.3 of Part III of the UN Manual of Tests and Criteria (UN 38.3) prior to transport into Canada. In a recent Transport Canada study, while all OEM batteries passed all safety tests, half of all third-party batteries failed these tests. These third-party batteries can come from an unrecognized brand, are cheaper than OEM batteries, have mis-aligned labels or labels with spelling mistakes, or their specifications differ from the OEM equipment.

To reduce the risk of lithium-ion fires, authorities recommend the following safeguards.

1. Purchase and use devices that are listed by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
2. Only use chargers and cords provided by the original manufacturer.
3. Only use the batteries specifically designed for the device.
4. Do not overload circuits and do not charge too many devices at once.
5. Do not overcharge. Disconnect the charger and remove the battery once fully charged.
6. Keep batteries and chargers away from flammable materials and at room temperature when possible. Do not store below

zero degrees Celsius or over 40 degrees Celsius.

7. If a battery has been dropped or damaged, take it out of service.

If a lithium-ion battery is visually damaged, changes colour, changes shape (bulges), makes odd noises or starts to leak it should be properly disposed of immediately. Do NOT throw it in the garbage, it MUST be safely and carefully disposed of as a dangerous good at a battery disposal site.

As with all hazards, proper education, training and awareness are critical components to minimizing risk. The tools used in construction will continually evolve, but one constant will remain – life safety is the highest priority.

Kevin Kramers (C.E.T., R.R.O., C.T.R.) is the Technical Officer for the Alberta Roofing Contractors Association (ARCA) and has over thirty years of construction experience in Alberta.

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How you can transform replacement hassle into an improvement opportunity

Replacing like for like can be tempting when your HVAC equipment fails. Consider replacing and improving instead.

By Luis Rodrigues,
Trane Canada General
Manager, Energy and
Infrastructure Solutions

Things are going great. You're meeting this month's goals. Then it happens. Your 24-year-old HVAC system fails in the middle of an unexpected heatwave, and it looks like your climate control system is as dead as your plan to achieve this month's objectives. This negatively impacts your building's occupants. In response, you rush to find someone who can get you back up and running as quickly as possible.

Although a system or equipment replacement can feel urgent, it also can be an ideal time to consider simultaneously meeting

other organizational goals, especially sustainability, energy, and carbon-reduction objectives. It provides a chance to evaluate and address needs more broadly and holistically and invest in your building and its operation.

Addressing the considerations below can help you identify a more holistic and long-term solution than a simple replacement – even when facing an urgent need to fix something.

Clarify your goals

While the replacement need is already clear, it's critical to know what else you want to achieve

besides simply replacing the broken equipment:

- Would an improved replacement provide the opportunity to achieve alignment with organizational sustainability and decarbonization goals?
- Is it critical to reduce energy and operational costs?
- How important is it to ensure resiliency to help manage uptime and avoid future failures?
- Are there other factors in play? Is there a need to enhance or improve other building systems? For example, is now a good time to incorporate autonomous building controls?
- Finally, does this replacement need offer an opportunity to take a holistic approach and either bundle or combine the current need with another building improvement? For example, does it make sense to add autonomous building controls?

Resolve financial challenges

It's also critical to identify the fiscal scope of your replacement. Perhaps you've been able to plan ahead and have available capital or the ability to access debt financing. Even so, remember that it's still critical to make the most of your investments with highly efficient, long-lasting solutions.

If your budget is limited, consider leveraging incentives and funding options. These can also help expand the replacement scope to accomplish other organizational

goals such as enhancing decarbonization efforts, increasing sustainability, or improving energy efficiency.

Options may include utility rebates and other available government incentives. In some instances, the replacement equipment and systems will generate significant

energy and operational savings and in those circumstances these savings can, and should, be guaranteed by the provider. This savings stream can then factor into the financial proforma of the project and can be used to fully or partially fund the project. Collaborating with an experienced energy services provider can help



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Identify a reliable collaborator

A simple replacement process can transform into analysis paralysis when you are faced with rapidly changing regulations and financial incentives/options and even shifts in the latest technologies. An energy services provider with the right expertise can help you navigate these complexities to make the most of a replacement opportunity. Collaborating with an energy services provider can also be a great way to take a future-forward approach to achieving one or more organizational

objectives, including helping to reduce energy use or achieving sustainability or decarbonization goals.

Seek out a collaborator who can provide expertise in building systems technology, funding/financing options and a depth and breadth of experience designing a holistic plan to meet your current need. A strong collaboration also will provide both long-term and contingency planning – so that over time, you can take a phased approach to equipment replacement today, preventing catastrophic challenges that could significantly impact your future organization.

About the author: Luis Rodrigues

who serves as Trane Canada General Manager, Energy and Infrastructure Solutions, offers 40+ years of experience helping building owners realize their visions for making their buildings more energy efficient and better performing.

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