



# NEW BRUNSWICK BUILDER

Official publication of the Construction Association of New Brunswick (CANB)

2026



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New Brunswick's trade schools get \$60 million makeover

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# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**John-Ryan Morrison**

2025 and the early months of 2026 has been a time of significant delivery for the CANB, with a continued focus on turning strategy into measurable results for our members and the construction industry.

Workforce development remains a top priority. The New Brunswick Skilled Trades Consortium continues to gain traction as a coordinating body, aligning industry, government, and education to strengthen training and expand participation in the trades. Several new initiatives are advancing into 2026, aimed at building more efficient and accessible workforce pathways.

Through the 100-Day Immigration Challenge, the CANB delivered practical solutions to support international recruitment, including the ongoing development of a CANB Employer Immigration Roadmap and the addition of Radhika Ichhpuniani, our in-house Regulated Canadian

Immigration Consultant (RCIC-IRB), providing free, construction-specific support to members. Together, these initiatives position the CANB as a national leader in delivering practical, employer-focused immigration supports and represent significant, tangible value to our members.

The CANB's consistent advocacy messaging, combined with a memorandum of understanding with Skilled Trades NB, has also led to system-level improvements, including enhancements to Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), recognition of international training programs, pilot out-of-country trade assessments, and secured funding to support members interested in international recruitment missions. These efforts are accelerating the integration of skilled workers into the New Brunswick labour market.

The CANB continues to advocate to the Provincial



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Government and the Department of Early Education and Childhood Development for skilled trades to be treated as a core K-12 priority. Increased funding are needed for materials and teacher training, expansion of existing shop classes, and the inclusion of shop spaces in all new school builds are critical to strengthening the workforce pipeline. This will help reduce reliance on a complex immigration system while ensuring the next generation of New Brunswickers sees the construction industry as a strong and rewarding career path.

At the post-secondary level, partnerships with NBCC, CCNB, and Skilled Trades NB remain strong. Training programs are at or near capacity across the province, and planned expansions at the CCNB Bathurst and NBCC Saint John campuses will be critical to meeting demand and supporting the construction pipeline.

On the advocacy front, the CANB played a central role in delivering the GNB Construction Forum, resulting in 41 actionable items to improve project delivery. We are also seeing practical improvements through closer collaboration with DTI, including project scorecards, digital reporting tools, and ongoing work toward contract modernization and dispute resolution.

However, one issue continues to stand out. Despite being passed more than three years ago, Prompt Payment

and Adjudication legislation in New Brunswick remains unproclaimed. This ongoing delay is unacceptable. At any given time, approximately \$126 million is tied up in unpaid invoices across the construction sector, placing unnecessary strain on contractors and suppliers. The legislation is ready. The models exist. What is required now is provincial government action. The CANB will continue to push the Province for full implementation with no exemptions.

Beyond core advocacy, the CANB continues to expand into emerging areas such as housing, nation-building projects, sustainability, and modular construction, ensuring the industry has a voice in shaping future policy and innovation.

All of this work is being delivered by a small team with a broad mandate. Maintaining this level of impact will require continued focus, strong partnerships, and sustained investment to ensure the CANB has the internal capacity to meet growing demand.

The CANB is delivering real outcomes, strengthening workforce pipelines, improving procurement practices, and ensuring our industry's voice is heard where it matters most. I would like to thank our president, executive committee, board of directors, regional CANB staff, and industry partners across the province. Our continued success as an organization is because of all of you. ↗

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CANB PRESIDENT

**Darren Sutherland, *Owner, Modern Electric***

2025 has been a milestone year for the Construction Association of New Brunswick (CANB), demonstrating what can be achieved when strong governance, clear strategy, and committed leadership come together. This past year has been defined by remarkable momentum. Guided by a highly engaged board and strong executive director leadership, the CANB continues to strengthen its position as the leading voice of ICI construction in New Brunswick. The scope and impact of this work is significant, particularly given the size of our organization.



I would like to recognize the exceptional professionalism, vision, and leadership of our executive director, John-Ryan Morrison. Over the past year, he has navigated complex files, strengthened key relationships across government and industry, and ensured CANB's voice is heard and respected wherever decisions affecting our sector are made.

I also want to acknowledge the commitment of our board of directors. Their leadership and engagement continue to drive meaningful outcomes for our members. Together,

the board and staff are delivering real results across workforce development, advocacy, education, and broader sector transformation.

This past year also marked an important step forward in strengthening alignment across our organization. For the first time, the presidents of the three regional associations and the provincial association met to discuss opportunities for greater collaboration and shared priorities across New Brunswick. There is strong interest in continuing these discussions into 2026, further strengthening how we

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support members across all regions.

We are now in the final year of our three-year strategic plan and are meeting or exceeding nearly all our priorities. This reflects the strength of the plan and the discipline applied in executing it. The past year also included a comprehensive bylaw review—the first in over 12 years—ensuring the CANB remains aligned with best practices and well positioned for the future.

Our advocacy efforts continue to deliver results. The GNB Construction Forum brought together senior government and industry leaders, resulting in 41 actionable items aimed at improving how public infrastructure is delivered. We have also remained steadfast in our call for the Province to proclaim Prompt Payment and Adjudication legislation, an issue critical to the financial stability of our members.

We are seeing meaningful progress in our relationship with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, including the introduction of project scorecards, movement toward dispute resolution mechanisms, bid depository modernization, and a commitment to modernizing standard construction contracts, which are long-standing priorities of the CANB.

The CANB is also taking a leadership role beyond New Brunswick. This past year marked the first-ever meeting of the eight Atlantic ICI and roadbuilding associations presidents and their CEOs, laying the groundwork for a more coordinated regional approach on key issues such as workforce and immigration, including the creation of the Atlantic Construction Alliance.

Despite this progress, we must remain clear-eyed about the challenges ahead. Labour shortages, rising costs, payment delays, and broader economic pressures continue to impact our sector. At the same time, the CANB must ensure it has the resources needed to meet the growing expectations of our members and industry partners.

What gives me confidence is the leadership we have in place. With a dedicated board, an exceptional executive director, and a committed team, the CANB is well positioned to navigate these challenges and continue shaping the future of construction in New Brunswick. ↗



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# 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*The following individuals have agreed to serve on the executive of the Construction Association of New Brunswick:*

*President*  
**DARREN SUTHERLAND**  
 Modern Electric

*Vice-President*  
**ROB CLINCH**  
 Avante Garde Construction

*Past President*  
**ANDREW MYERS**  
 Avondale Construction

*Secretary/Treasurer*  
**CARRIE WATSON**  
 OSCO Construction

*The following individuals have agreed to serve as voting board of directors of the Construction Association of New Brunswick:*

**ANDREW SMITH**  
 Atlantic Masonry Institute

**JAMES MCARTHUR**  
 CANB Moncton NE

**CHRIS WILSON**  
 New Brunswick Merit Contractors Association

**SHAWN MILLS**  
 Bid Depository Chair

**CARRIE WATSON**  
 CANB Saint John

**SERGE LEBLANC**  
 New Brunswick Roofing Contractors Association

**JAMIE SPRAGUE**  
 CANB Fredericton NW

**ROB CARVELL**  
 CANB Saint John

**VICTOR CHAISSON**  
 New Brunswick Road Builders and Heavy Construction

**DARREN SUTHERLAND**  
 CANB Fredericton NW

**LEE MACWILLIAMS**  
 Electrical Contractors Association of NB

**ROB CLINCH**  
 CANB Moncton NE

**JUSTIN BEAULIEU**  
 Mechanical Contractors Association of NB

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- **Advocacy that delivers** – A unified, 600-member-strong provincial voice on procurement, prompt payment, immigration, and workforce priorities.
- **Direct Government Access** – Ongoing engagement with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DTI), Office of the Attorney General (OAG), Department of Finance (FIN), Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL), Service New Brunswick (SNB), and Early Childhood Education and Development (EECD) to influence decisions and help ensure a strong, stable construction industry in New Brunswick.
- **CI Net 2.0** – Access to 1,700+ annual tenders across public and private sectors.
- **Bid Depository** – A trusted system that ensures fair, transparent subcontract bidding, and actively preventing bid shopping.
- **Immigration support** – Free access to in-house RCIC expertise and practical tools for international hiring.
- **Workforce leadership** – Driving solutions through the CANB NB Skilled Trades Consortium.
- **Industry representation** – Member voice at 10+ provincial and national decision-making tables.
- **Events & networking** – 20+ CANB industry events connecting members across the province.
- **Regional support** – Strong local representation through three regional associations across New Brunswick.
- **National reach** – Advocacy strength through the Canadian Construction Association (CCA).



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# CALENDAR of events



CANB Fredericton NW  
**January 29th**  
**Curling Bonspiel - CWCC**

CANB Moncton NE  
**February 11th**  
**AGM & Breakfast - Legends**

CANB Moncton NE  
**March 18th**  
**Job Fair - Avenir Centre**

CANB Saint John  
**March 20th**  
**Hockey Tournament - LBR**

CANB Provincial  
**March 25th**  
**AGM - Virtual**

CANB Fredericton NW  
**March 31st**  
**AGM**

CANB Moncton NE  
**April 16th**  
**Emerging Leaders - O'Creeks Brewing**

CANB Moncton NE  
**April 22nd**  
**New Member Meet & Greet - MNECA office**

CANB Saint John  
**April 30th**  
**AGM & Breakfast - Lily Lake Pavilion**

CANB Moncton NE  
**May 1st**  
**Spring Thaw - Crowne Plaza**

CANB Provincial  
**May 5th**  
**Joint Industry Government Meeting - Kingswood**

CANB Moncton NE  
**May 14th**  
**Workforce Summit - Wingate Dieppe**

CANB Fredericton NW  
**June 11th**  
**Golf Tournament - West Hills**

CANB Moncton NE  
**June 11th**  
**Emerging Leaders - O'Creeks Brewing**

CANB Saint John  
**June 18th**  
**Golf Tournament - Hampton Golf Course**

CANB Moncton NE  
**June 26th**  
**Member appreciation BBQ - MNECA office**

CANB Moncton NE  
**September 10th**  
**Golf Tournament - Lakeside Golf**

CANB Fredericton NW  
**September 17th**  
**Golf Tournament - West Hills**

CANB Moncton NE  
**October 1st & 2nd**  
**Women in Construction - Wingate Dieppe**

CANB Moncton NE  
**October 21st**  
**New Member Meet & Greet - MNECA office**

CANB Moncton NE  
**October 30th**  
**Construction Excellence Awards - Delta Beausejour Moncton**

CANB Moncton NE  
**November 26th**  
**Northern Mixer Christmas Party - Distillerie NB Distillery Bathurst**

CANB Provincial  
**December 3rd**  
**Joint Industry Government Meeting - Crowne Plaza**

CANB Moncton NE  
**December 10th**  
**Christmas Dinner - Legends Moncton**



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# ANNUAL STAT PACK

## 1100+ Days & Counting

waiting for the Provincial Government to enact  
Prompt Payment Legislation.

**15%**

NB construction industries' contribution to the NB Provincial GDP.

**53%**



Percentage of Atlantic companies that are not taking on new construction work due to labor shortages.

**33,000**

New Brunswickers working in construction employment.

**~3.3%**

Average percentage of construction workforce that are Women, Indigenous or Immigrant.

BY 2035

**16,300 openings**

Forecasted job demand in New Brunswick construction industry due to retirements and expansion by 2035.

**\$66,404**

The average **red seal** salary in New Brunswick is **\$66,404** per year or **\$35** per hour.

**\$2.5 billion**

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# INDUSTRY UNITED TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF CONSTRUCTION THROUGH BOLD ADVOCACY



By Rodrigue Gilbert, President, Canadian Construction Association

As Canada navigated a year of political change and economic turbulence, one message cut through the noise in Ottawa: construction is essential to our country's future.

Thanks to the unwavering support and collaboration of valued partners like the Construction Association of New Brunswick (CANB), the Canadian Construction Association (CCA) delivered visible wins on the national stage, strengthened relationships across the country, and reinforced its role as the industry's trusted champion.

Explore the CCA's annual review here: [www.cca-acc.com/about-us/annual-review-2025](http://www.cca-acc.com/about-us/annual-review-2025).

## Advocacy that drives results

The CCA's advocacy has never been more visible, or more vital. Our Public Affairs team are working around the clock to ensure construction priorities are front and centre in federal policy decisions.

During Budget 2025, the CCA delivered an in-depth analysis underscoring construction's essential role in advancing the federal government's building agenda. A targeted media strategy amplified this message, securing high-profile coverage in outlets such as *The Globe*

and *Mail*, *CTV's Vassy Kapelos Show*, and *CBC National News*.

At Hill Day 2025, more than 100 industry leaders participated in over 100 meetings with ministers, Members of Parliament, and senior staff. Record attendance, a high-profile reception, and a coordinated public campaign, including a press conference and major-market advertising under the We Build Canada banner, demonstrated the CCA's growing influence with the federal government.

The CCA also remains deeply engaged with the deployment of Prime Minister Mark Carney's building agenda through consultations on the Major Projects Office (MPO), National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA), Buy Canadian procurement policies, and Build Canada Homes initiative. Both the MPO and NIA represent significant wins for the industry, reflecting long-standing advocacy for reduced red tape, evidence-based planning, and long-term infrastructure investment.

## Programs that strengthen partnerships and professional development

Beyond advocacy, the CCA has broadened its suite of tools and programs, introducing new initiatives

and refining existing resources to help construction businesses manage risk, adapt to change, and plan for the future.

We released a robust suite of publications, including:

- Construction Quarterly Economic Insights, providing timely, data-driven analysis of industry conditions.
- Tariff risk resources to help contractors protect margins and structure contracts effectively.
- A digital maturity report, developed with KPMG in Canada, benchmarking digital adoption and highlighting productivity-driving procurement reforms.
- Practical tools such as the partner evaluation tool, supply chain compliance guide, and climate governance guide, supporting members in navigating regulatory, operational, and climate-related risks.

National Advisory Councils complemented this work with targeted webinars on risk management, BIM, and contract negotiations, while the CCA continued modernizing service delivery through SignaSur™, its new digital platform for construction document access. With successful beta

testing and board-approved pricing in place, SignaSur™ is on track for full implementation in 2027, raising the standard for secure, modern document delivery nationwide.

The CCA also launched its inaugural Best Practices in Construction Symposium, bringing together more than 100 construction leaders in Toronto for two days of practical, operations-focused discussion. Planning is already underway to expand the event into a cornerstone annual gathering for the broader construction community.

### Advancing standards and professional excellence

The Canadian Construction Documents Committee (CCDC), in partnership with 31 local associations, delivered in-person seminars to nearly

1,290 participants across more than 30 locations. Five new documents, including updated construction management and integrated project delivery contracts, were published, reflecting evolving legal requirements and clearer risk allocation.

Meanwhile, the Gold Seal Certification Program has modernized with the launch of the new Gold Seal portal and directory in May, streamlining applications and enhancing certification visibility. With 821 applicants across all categories and 65 recognized Gold Seal Employers, the program remains a national standard for leadership in construction.

### The road ahead

The CCA is moving full speed ahead to ensure the momentum we built is not lost. The construction sector,

backed by partners like the CANB, will continue pushing for the policies and investments that will move the industry forward.

With strong partnerships, a united voice, and a clear vision, we can build a more resilient supply chain, a stronger workforce, and the modern infrastructure Canadians need. The CCA is committed to advocating for the tools, policies, and investments that will allow our industry to thrive – not just for today, but for generations to come.

### Want to stay informed and engaged?

Sign up for CCA's PLUS+ newsletter for regular updates on advocacy efforts, industry trends, and tools to support your business. Subscribe today at [ccasubscribe](https://ccasubscribe.com), and join a community that's shaping the future of construction in Canada. ↗



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# BUILDING EXCELLENCE FROM WITHIN

## Gold Seal Certification and the companies leading the way in New Brunswick



*Simpson Building Contractors Ltd. was named the recipient of the 2025 CCA Gold Seal Award at the Canadian Construction Association (CCA) Annual Conference. Seen here is Kirk White, president of Simpson Building Contractors Ltd., accepting the award.*



*Recent Professional Gold Seal Certified (PGSC) recipients.*



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Gold Seal Certification, administered by the Canadian Construction Association (CCA), is a nationally recognized standard that validates the skills and professionalism of construction management professionals. The program applies to a wide range of roles, including estimators, forepersons, project managers, owner's construction managers, safety practitioners,

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"Being recognized as a Gold Seal Employer is something we're very proud of at Simpson Building Contractors. The program aligns closely with how we view our business, by investing in our people and recognizing the experience, knowledge, and professionalism they bring to our industry," says Kirk White, president of Simpson Building Contractors Ltd.

“Encouraging our team to achieve their Gold Seal designation not only strengthens our company but also gives our employees and their families something they can be proud of. It helps create a culture where people feel valued, motivated, and part of something meaningful.”

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Recent Gold Seal Certified professionals, Sonya King (left), Ryan Wheaton (middle) and Laura Innis (right).

Simpson actively champions Gold Seal across the industry, advocating for higher professional standards and demonstrating, through example, what a culture of excellence looks like in practice.

“It was truly an honour to receive this award, and I’d like to thank our entire team for the effort they put into achieving it,” says White.

Congratulations to Simpson Building Contractors Ltd., recipient of the 2025 CCA Gold Seal Award.

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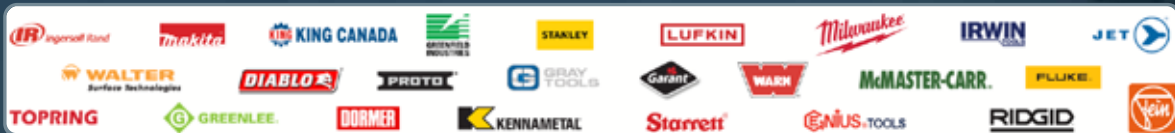
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# FROM TALK TO ACTION



## A turning point for construction in New Brunswick

*Photo courtesy of Susan Holt, Premier of New Brunswick's official Facebook page.*

For years, New Brunswick's construction industry has delivered a consistent message: modernization of procurement, contracts, and project delivery is long overdue. While engagement with government has been frequent, meaningful progress has often lagged, creating frustration across an industry that builds the infrastructure every New Brunswicker relies on.

After three years of sustained advocacy by the CANB, combined with the momentum of a new government, meaningful change began to take shape in 2025.

The Government of New Brunswick's Construction Forum brought together nearly 100 participants from industry, government, and academia to openly

address long-standing challenges and identify solutions to improve how infrastructure projects are delivered across the province. The message from industry was clear and direct: consultation without action is no longer acceptable. This is a pivotal moment to deliver real, measurable change.

"Proud to stop by the GNB Construction Forum where we invited industry experts from across the province to help us figure out how to create efficiencies in construction projects to improve timelines and create infrastructure that will last," said Susan Holt, Premier of New Brunswick, in a Facebook post.

From the CANB's perspective, what stood out most was a shift in approach. The conversation moved away

from the traditional "we've always done it this way" mindset toward one focused on outcomes – how to improve efficiency, increase contractor participation, and build a more collaborative and effective system.

Across all discussions, four priorities emerged. First, the need to modernize contracts and procurement by adopting standard industry contracts, improving clarity, and ensuring fair and balanced risk allocation. Second, fixing planning and design processes through earlier contractor involvement, better design documentation, and greater consistency across departments. Third, accelerating decision-making and payments by addressing long-standing delays in change orders, RFIs, and payment timelines. And finally,

rebuilding trust by shifting from historically adversarial relationships toward a more collaborative, partnership-based approach.

What makes this moment different is what followed. Rather than another summary report, government has already begun implementing changes. Early actions include digitizing and streamlining the change order process, reviewing payment and RFI timelines to establish performance benchmarks, increasing decision-making authority within project teams, improving communication of capital plans, and exploring the use of CCDC contracts with New Brunswick-specific amendments.

At the same time, more significant structural commitments are underway. These include a full rewrite of the Province's Standard Construction Contract targeted for the 2027-28 construction season, the integration of formal dispute resolution across capital projects, a return to a publicly released five-year capital plan to improve industry visibility, and expanded use of digital tools such as Building Information Modeling (BIM) to improve project delivery.

A key outcome of the forum is the creation of a joint industry-government working group—referred to as the “Dream Team”—which will bring together contractors, consultants, and government representatives to test solutions, pilot new approaches, and ensure continuous collaboration as changes are implemented. This represents a fundamental shift from consultation to co-development, ensuring industry remains directly involved in shaping how improvements are delivered.

The CANB has recognized the leadership shown by the Project

& Advisory Services team and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure in advancing this work. Just a few years ago, this level of collaboration—and progress—was not possible. For an industry that has often felt unheard, this progress brings cautious optimism that long-standing challenges are finally being addressed.

“This has the potential to be the single biggest advocacy day in the 55-year history of our organization. If the Province follows through on the commitments made, it could fundamentally change how our industry delivers capital infrastructure in New Brunswick,” says John-Ryan Morrison, executive director of the CANB. “We look forward to working with the Province to ensure these commitments are delivered for our members and the industry.”

The expectations are now clear: success will be measured by results. Delivering on these commitments will require sustained focus, consistent implementation across departments, and continued collaboration with industry. Rebuilding trust will take time, but for the first time in many years, there is a clear path forward.

Construction is the enabling sector. Every housing target, infrastructure investment, and economic growth objective depends on a construction industry that is efficient, collaborative, and financially sustainable. The progress underway has the potential to improve project delivery, strengthen industry capacity, and ensure New Brunswick can meet its infrastructure and housing goals.

The 2025 Construction Forum was more than a discussion, it may mark a turning point. The opportunity now is simple: turn momentum into lasting change. Because this time, it has to. ↗

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# BUILDING FUTURES: INVESTING IN SKILLED TRADES EDUCATION

In communities across the Fredericton and Northwest region, the future of skilled trades is being shaped—one classroom at a time.

Over the past year, the Fredericton Northwest Construction Association

(FNWCA) has made a meaningful impact through its Building for the Future initiative, donating to shop programs in 23 local schools. The FNWCA started making contributions to the shop classes in 2014 and these contributions are more than financial;

they represent an investment in the next generation of tradespeople and a commitment to strengthening the region's workforce.

Shop classes have long been a cornerstone of practical education, offering students hands-on experience in areas such as woodworking, construction, and mechanical skills. However, maintaining these programs requires ongoing support, updated equipment, and access to modern tools that reflect current industry standards. Recognizing this need, the FNWCA stepped forward to help ensure these programs not only continue but thrive.

The donations have enabled schools throughout the Fredericton and Northwest area to upgrade equipment,

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**Shop classes have long been a cornerstone of practical education, offering students hands-on experience in areas such as woodworking, construction, and mechanical skills.**

enhance safety standards, and expand learning opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers in the trades. From new tools to improved workshop spaces, these enhancements are helping to create engaging, real-world learning environments.

Educators say the impact is already being felt. With better resources, students are more motivated and better prepared to explore pathways in construction and related fields. For many, these shop classes provide a first glimpse into rewarding careers that are essential to the region's growth.

The Building for the Future initiative also highlights a broader message: collaboration between industry and education is vital. By working together, organizations like the FNWCA and local schools can address skilled labour shortages while empowering young people with valuable, lifelong skills.

As the demand for skilled trades continues to rise, initiatives like this ensure that students are not only aware of these opportunities but are equipped to pursue them. Through its support of 144 donations to various schools in the Fredericton, Northwest region, the FNWCA is helping to build more than just projects—it is helping to build futures. ↗



The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure's Buildings Division has a **Capital Budget of \$630M in 2026-27** to construct new buildings and improve existing infrastructure.

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# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN CONSTRUCTION

Left to right: Carol Simpson, Louis Landry, Rob Clinch, and Rodrigue Gilbert.



On November 7, 2025, the Moncton Northeast Construction Association held its first-annual Construction Excellence Awards Gala. The event was a great success with almost 200 attendees there to recognize construction companies and individuals for their achievements in a variety of award categories.

The following were recognized:

**General Contractor:**  
**Pomerleau Construction**

**Women in Construction:**  
**Marilou Savoie**

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The highlight of the evening was the awarding of the inaugural member of the MNECA Construction Hall of Fame Award. Louis Landry was recognized for both his business success and personal involvement in many community endeavours over his lengthy career in the construction industry. Board chair, Rob Clinch; CCA president, Rodrigue Gilbert; and MNECA executive director, Carol Simpson were on hand to present the award to Landry. ↗





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# NON-RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITY DRIVES CONSTRUCTION GROWTH IN NEW BRUNSWICK TO 2035



A robust public-sector capital improvement plan combined with a number of projects of note – both planned and announced – across the non-residential sector should elevate construction demands in New Brunswick well into the 2030s

*By Klayton Gonçalves, Senior Economist and Head of Business Intelligence, BuildForce Canada*



*Left: Valued at \$1.5 billion, the construction program at Irving Pulp & Paper's Saint John westside mill is the largest investment in the Canadian forest products industry since 1993. Rendering courtesy Irving Pulp & Paper. Inset: The Atlantic Science Enterprise Centre is one of a series of projects in New Brunswick that are expected to drive non-residential construction growth in the near term. Rendering by Diamond Schmitt.*

Although New Brunswick's economy has faced headwinds in recent years – due in part to the ongoing tariff dispute between Canada and the United States – the province appears poised to benefit from strong levels of non-residential construction activity into at least the early 2030s.

Notable is a long list of projects described in the provincial government's latest – and record-sized – capital budget. Tabled last December,

the budget earmarks more than \$500 million for spending on transportation infrastructure and more than \$240 million each for construction in the health care and education sectors.

Beyond these announcements, the province is expected to see the start of a number of notable large-scale construction projects, including Irving Pulp & Paper's \$1.5 billion Project NextGen, the NB Power Mactaquac Hydro Dam Refurbishment project,

the Atlantic Science Enterprise Centre, and more than \$1 billion in federal investments at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown.

The sum of these projects is expected to elevate non-residential construction activity to a new high in the province by 2027. Investment is expected to be sustained at this elevated level into the early 2030s.

Significantly, BuildForce Canada's

forecast data does not include the potential for construction to begin on several other projects of note, but which are yet to be scheduled in the province. Among these are the ARC Clean Energy Canada Small Modular Reactor, the Belledune Port Authority/Cross River Infrastructure Partners green hydrogen and ammonia facility, and the Sisson Tungsten-Molybdenum Mine & Mill, which was identified as among the federal government's 14 nation-building projects.

The start of activity of any of these projects in the near future will almost certainly elevate non-residential construction demands even further.

### Residential activity steps down from record highs

The outlook for activity in New Brunswick's residential sector is less robust. The sector enters the BuildForce Canada 2026 to 2035 forecast period on a downward trajectory.

Housing starts in 2025 reached a forecast peak of 7,600 units that was driven by high demand for both single-detached and multi-unit dwellings. With population growth in the province expected to slow as the federal government moves toward its goal of lowering the number of non-permanent residents in the country, demand for housing is expected to recede. Housing starts are projected to contract steadily through 2035 – ending the forecast period 56 per cent below the elevated levels of 2025.

Demand for single-detached housing units is expected to be strongest, with starts in that component slowing into 2028 before rising continuously to the end of the decade. Demand for multi-unit dwellings, meanwhile, is expected to contract from its 2025 peak

and across the forecast period with slowing population growth and rising rental vacancy rates. Despite this fact, annual start levels for these unit types are expected to remain above historical norms.

### Which way forward?

The BuildForce Canada outlook for New Brunswick for the period of 2026 to 2035 tells the tale of two different markets: a strengthening non-residential market, driven by major projects activity, and a weakening residential sector, impacted from lower migration and slowing population

growth. As these markets diverge, cross-sector mobility may be the key to staff the multi-billion-dollar projects expected to commence and ramp up over the coming decade.

BuildForce Canada's full Construction and Maintenance Looking Forward Outlook reports for New Brunswick's residential and non-residential construction sectors for the period of 2026 to 2035 are scheduled for release this summer and will include more information on projected labour demand and supply trends across this forecast period. ↗





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# NEW BRUNSWICK'S TRADE SCHOOLS GET \$60 MILLION MAKEOVER

A sprawling redevelopment at NBCC Saint John promises modern facilities for the next generation of tradespeople, replacing buildings that have stood since the '60s.

By Shayna Wiwierski



New Brunswick Community College's (NBCC) Saint John campus is in the midst of a \$60 million transformation.



The project, among the most significant capital investments in NBCC's recent history, encompasses four distinct phases spread across several years.

On a campus in Saint John's Grandview Avenue, where aging concrete buildings have housed electricians, machinists, and carpenters in training for more than half a century, the sound of steel going up signals something long overdue.

New Brunswick Community College's (NBCC) Saint John campus is in the midst of a \$60 million transformation, one that its administrators say will reshape not just the physical campus, but the province's capacity to train the skilled workers it desperately needs.

The project, among the most significant capital investments in NBCC's recent history, encompasses four distinct

phases spread across several years. At its core is \$36.5 million worth of new construction, including an expansion to the college's existing trades building and an entirely new structure rising from what was once a parking lot. Together, the two additions will bring roughly 54,000 square feet of modern training space to a campus that has been making do with facilities built when Canada was still celebrating its centennial.

"We've got shops right now that were built in the 1960s," says Blair Boudreau, senior project coordinator for NBCC's Saint John redevelopment project.

"They were fine at the time, but the programs have changed over the

years, and they're now housed in less than adequate facilities, especially by modern standards."

The six programs moving into the new spaces – machinist, industrial mechanics, electrical, plumbing, pipe fitting, and carpentry – will gain not just new walls and roofs, but proper ceiling clearances, improved lighting, and room to grow enrolment that the current buildings simply cannot accommodate. The existing trades building, constructed in 2018, has set a standard that the rest of the campus has struggled to match. The new project, Boudreau says, is essentially about bringing everything else up to that bar.

Ground was broken in July 2025, with general contractor Springhill Construction leading the build. Substantial completion is targeted for June 2027 with programs expected to migrate into the new facilities in time for the fall term that year. The project is being funded through a combination of federal, provincial, and institutional dollars, with approximately \$22.95 million from the Government of Canada, \$21.1 million from the Province of New Brunswick, and the balance from NBCC itself.

The construction has not been without its challenges. Josh Lawrence, vice-president of the buildings division at Springhill Construction, notes that managing two distinct structures simultaneously presented logistical challenges from the outset. The expansion, which ties directly into the existing trades building, demanded early attention.

"We focused on the additional building first," says Lawrence. "Tying into existing systems has all the issues around coordination and commissioning, so we prioritized that to mitigate risk, and then let the standalone building ride right along."

The winter months posed their own tests. Boudreau acknowledges that construction through a New Brunswick winter is never straightforward but says Springhill had navigated it well. As of this past spring, the concrete work on the new standalone building was wrapping up and steel was beginning to rise, a visible and welcome sign of momentum.

Beyond the two new buildings, the broader redevelopment will unfold in stages through 2028. Phase 2 will address the campus' aging boiler

infrastructure, replacing outdated units with more efficient systems. Phase 3 calls for the full demolition of one of the 1960s-era buildings, relieving the college of a structure that carries significant deferred maintenance costs and consumes energy at rates out of step with modern standards. A fourth and final phase will rebalance office and student-facing spaces across the remaining campus.

"We'll reclaim parking and add some green space," Boudreau says. "It's really about rightsizing the campus once all the major work is done."

Sustainability has been woven into the design from the start. The new buildings are being constructed to the 2020 National Energy Code for Buildings at Tier 2 standards, and the project is pursuing Green Globes




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certification, a first for NBCC Saint John. Boudreau says the team identified specific areas where environmental gains could be designed in, from building systems to materials choices,

with a target of two Green Globes upon completion.

The architects on the project, Saint John-based Murdoch and Boyd

Architects, worked closely with academic department chairs and faculty throughout the design process. Boudreau describes the working groups as an unusual and valuable opportunity; rare moments when the people who will actually use the spaces get a meaningful say in how they are built.

"You don't get the opportunity very often to design your space for the future of your program," Boudreau says. "So, we made sure to work through it carefully with the end users."

The broader stakes of the project extend well beyond the campus itself. New Brunswick, like much of Canada, faces persistent shortages of skilled tradespeople, and community colleges sit at the centre of efforts to address that gap. Expanding enrolment capacity in programs like plumbing, electrical, and industrial mechanics is, in that sense, an economic intervention as much as a construction project. The college's mandate, Boudreau notes, is to supply the provincial workforce with trained graduates, and modern facilities are increasingly part of what makes that possible.

Recruitment, too, stands to benefit. Word travels among prospective students, and the condition of a training facility sends a message about the seriousness of the institution behind it.

"When you come and you're happy with where you're learning, it can only help future recruitment," says Boudreau. "We're expecting some good word of mouth once the students get in there." ↗



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# BEING TOGETHER

**A purpose-built circular centre on Fredericton's Union Street will expand health, education, and cultural services for urban Indigenous families**

*Under One Sky Longhouse & Cultural Centre represents the evolution of an Indigenous-led organization serving urban families in Fredericton.*

*By Shayna Wiwierski*

On a bend of the Wolastoq River, where Union Street traces the water's edge and buses hiss past bike lanes, a circular building with no right angles is taking shape.

When it opens in July 2026, the Under One Sky Longhouse & Cultural Centre will be more than architecture. It represents the evolution of an

Indigenous-led organization serving urban families in Fredericton, one that has outgrown a renovated house and is now building a space that reflects its worldview in concrete, cedar, glass, and earth.

Under One Sky began in 2004 as an Aboriginal Head Start program for urban Indigenous children ages two

to five, helping them develop socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Over time, the organization joined the national Friendship Centre movement and is now one of more than 100 such hubs across Canada, providing 12 to 18 programs annually for off-reserve and urban Indigenous families from its north-side home at 303 Union Street.

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The design of the centre is circular: a ring punctuated by program pods that extend outward like segments of a turtle shell. There are also intentionally no right angles.



A community kitchen will support cooking classes and rentals.

The modest house that once accommodated those programs eventually reached its limits. By 2019, demand for space had become urgent. Mike Crawford, the centre’s director of projects and partnerships, helped launch a feasibility study and needs assessment that quickly ruled out the idea of leasing additional spaces elsewhere.

“We realized we needed a range of different spaces with very specific functionality that we were unable to find through leasing or renting existing spaces,” says Crawford.

The organization identified health suites, cultural workshops, classrooms, and gathering areas that didn’t exist in the city’s existing building stock without compromising the way

programs are delivered. The question shifted from whether to build to where.

The answer was to stay put. The Union Street site already sat close to the community it serves, with transit access, nearby parks, and a dedicated bike lane – many of the reasons Under One Sky chose the location in 2004. After reviewing alternatives, the organization concluded that the best



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*Left: The building is designed to meet the Canada Green Building Council's Zero Carbon Building Standard through a tightly sealed envelope, extensive insulation, and high-efficiency mechanical systems.*



*A dedicated area will allow a sweat lodge to be permanently established or easily reassembled.*

location for a larger centre was the block it already occupied. Over the next year and a half, it assembled that block through a complex process of property acquisition, consolidating parcels from multiple owners around the original house.

To translate the program into a building, Under One Sky hired Fathom Studios out of Halifax in joint venture with Moriyama & Teshima Architects of Toronto. An Indigenous steering committee guided decisions on orientation, circulation, and symbolism to a depth Crawford says he had rarely seen in a contemporary project.

"Everything about the building is unique, frankly," Crawford says. "It'll be unlike any other building in certainly New Brunswick and probably all of Atlantic Canada."

The resulting design is circular: a ring punctuated by program pods that extend outward like segments of a turtle shell. There are also intentionally no right angles.

"The building is effectively a ring with the programming being different pods protruding from or embedded within the ring," Crawford explains. "Everything is on a curve and the pods that are connected to the ring are shaped to represent the segments of a turtle shell."

Inside, the 21,000-square-foot building is organized into four program areas. The health and families wing will include a nurse practitioner clinic, mental health and counselling rooms, inpatient spaces, and a culturally grounded birthing suite. An arts and

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culture workshop will host activities such as canoe building and basket weaving, while a community kitchen will support cooking classes and rentals. An exhibition space will display Indigenous art and artifacts, and an education wing will house early childhood classrooms and an adult learning room.

Outside, the landscape is designed as an extension of the programming rather than leftover space. A sacred garden planted with traditional grasses and medicines will offer a place for reflection. A dedicated area will allow a sweat lodge to be permanently established or easily reassembled. A pond will give children a place to learn about nature and supply water for soaking grasses, cedar, and other materials used in traditional crafts.

The building is designed to meet the Canada Green Building Council's Zero Carbon Building Standard through a tightly sealed envelope, extensive insulation, and high-efficiency mechanical systems.

Wood plays a significant structural role, helping store carbon, while solar panels will generate electricity on site.

The building's wood fin cladding will be produced at the Jamer John W Ltd. mill in Perth-Andover, which is owned by Tobique First Nation (Negotkuk), aligning the project's environmental goals Indigenous economic participation.

Construction costs are estimated between \$21 and \$24 million. Federal funding announced in 2022 contributed more than \$18.5 million toward the project, while the Province of New Brunswick donated land valued at \$284,000. The remaining funding comes from a mix of federal departments, provincial contributions,

and Under One Sky's own revenues.

Earthwork began in the spring of 2024, with full construction starting that September. Completion is targeted for July 2026.

But the timing has presented challenges.

"Construction started in the peak of a major cost escalation and labour

shortage cycle," Crawford says. "Every time we progressed the designs and sent it out for cost estimating, the cost just kept ballooning faster than we could design."

The team ultimately undertook substantial value engineering to reduce costs by several million dollars, though some planned spaces had to be removed in the process.



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*Left: Bird and the design team sourced materials from New Brunswick suppliers whenever possible to support the local economy and limit supply-chain disruptions.*

Bird Construction joined the project early as construction manager, working with the design team to balance vision, constructability, and budget.

“The UOS Friendship Centre posed a lot of constructability challenges both in relation to the shape, the structural components, site logistics, and coordination,” says Alex Webb, project superintendent at Bird.

The building’s curved geometry requires unusual construction approaches. The foundation is built with Nudura insulated concrete

forms (ICF), factory-cut to match the building’s arcs. Surveying firm SurTek Group provided precise layout points not only for the foundations but also for underground plumbing and electrical infrastructure that had to be installed simultaneously due to limited site access later in construction.

Mechanical, plumbing, fire protection, and electrical systems are roughed in while the structure is still being assembled so that pipes and ducts can pass through truss spaces without conflicts.

Custom-curved wall plates cut on

CNC machines allow stud walls to follow the building’s radii, while bendable plywood and flexible steel track accommodate tighter curves. On the exterior, adjustable Soprema ACS thermal clips support the girts for the wood siding while maintaining the building’s thermal performance across its complex geometry.

To cope with complexity, Bird divided the project into smaller construction units, treating each program pod as a separate structure connected by a central corridor.

“This allowed us to focus on each pod separately and the various challenges that arose in each area,” Webb says.

“Supporting Indigenous business, sourcing local New Brunswick materials, and hiring local Indigenous trades people was something we were very successful in on this project.”

The project has prioritized local participation. Bird and the design team sourced materials from New Brunswick suppliers whenever possible to support the local economy and limit supply-chain disruptions. Where materials had to be imported, they were ordered early to mitigate tariff risks and price escalation.

Bird self-performed several critical scopes, including the foundation, structure, and building envelope, to maintain tighter control over schedule and quality.

The project has engaged dozens of local subtrades, including Celtic Construction, City Concrete Ltd., Coastal Entrance Solutions, Classic Stoves and Fireplaces Ltd., CNF Mallet Ltd., David C.A. Williams Renovations,



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For now, the centre is still a construction site, with survey stakes and curved formwork standing in for the future drumbeats and children's voices.

"The real impact of the centre will be the people in the community who will walk in the doors of it every single day who, speaking their own language, participating in cultural practices, gathering for community

feasts, and passing on values, traditions, and knowledge from one generation to the next with spaces, programs, and services that will fulfill a longstanding community vision," says Crawford. ↗



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# TWO BUILDINGS, ONE VISION

## Mount Allison University bets big on campus transformation

By Shayna Wiwierski



*Left: The McCain-McLean Centre, once complete at the end of 2026, will not open immediately as a sports facility. Instead, it will serve as an interim library from 2027 to 2030, housing the university's collections while crews gut and modernize the RP Bell Library building across the street.*

At Mount Allison University, a small liberal arts institution tucked into the flatlands of the Tantramar region, a multi-million dollar construction program is quietly reshaping campus life in a way that is unusual even by the standards of Canadian higher education.

Two buildings. Two budgets. Two distinct purposes. And yet, as Kris

Kierstead, the university's director of facilities management, explains, you cannot fully understand one without the other.

"They're technically two different buildings with two construction teams, but over the past three years this has evolved into one integrated project," Kierstead says.

The first is the Scott McCain and

Leslie McLean Centre for Health and Wellness – a 58,000-square-foot, two-storey multipurpose sports complex currently under construction at roughly the 50 per cent completion mark.

The second is a sweeping renovation of the existing RP Bell Library, a four-storey, 83,000-square-foot structure that has reached the end of its design life. Funding for both comes from a combination of federal and provincial government contributions, supplemented by an active donor fundraising campaign.

What makes the arrangement remarkable is its sequencing. The McCain-McLean Centre, once complete at the end of 2026, will not open immediately as a sports facility. Instead, it will serve as an interim library from 2027 to 2030, housing the university's collections while crews gut and modernize the RP Bell Library building across the street. Only when the library returns to its permanent home in 2030 will crews return to the McCain-McLean Centre for a final fit-up, converting it into the athletics and recreation facility it was always intended to be.



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"We're able to solve two needs with one expenditure, essentially," says Kierstead. "This way we can spend it on something that we're going to use moving forward. That was key to getting the support to pursue both projects."

The need, on the athletics side, had been building for years. Mount Allison's existing athletic centre was designed for a student population of 1,500. Today, enrolment sits closer to 2,400.

"There's just not enough space," Kierstead says.

Intramural sports, for lack of gymnasium time, routinely run deep into the night – a scheduling reality with real consequences for student wellness.

The McCain-McLean Centre, designed by St. John's-based Lat49 Architecture Inc. and built by Maxim Construction Inc., will address that directly. Its centrepiece is a 27,000-square-foot multipurpose sports room – effectively a very large gymnasium – fitted with high-performance rubber flooring and configured to accommodate three basketball courts, nine badminton or pickleball courts, three volleyball courts, an indoor sevens soccer pitch, and two new football change rooms. A two-lane walking track will circle the interior, filling a gap that Kierstead says the broader Tantramar community has long felt.

"The municipality doesn't currently have a walking track," he notes. "We expect that's going to be a popular feature, not just in the university community, but in the greater Tantramar region."



The Scott McCain and Leslie McLean Centre for Health and Wellness is a 58,000-square-foot, two-storey multipurpose sports complex currently under construction.

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The McCain-McLean Centre's centrepiece is a 27,000-square-foot multipurpose sports room – effectively a very large gymnasium – fitted with high-performance rubber flooring and configured to accommodate three basketball courts, nine badminton or pickleball courts, three volleyball courts, an indoor sevens soccer pitch, and two new football change rooms.

The RP Bell Library renovation, managed by Bird Construction, with architectural services provided by EXP, addresses a different but equally pressing institutional need. The campus master plan had flagged the library for major renovation as far back as its 2017 update. The building, Kierstead says, is basically at the end of its design life.

The renovation will add roughly 8,000 square feet to bring the facility to 83,000 gross square feet, with much of that new space devoted to what the university is calling a commons and

café area – an enclosed glass atrium filling an existing open breezeway between the library and the adjacent Crabtree academic building.

"I believe it is going to be very popular amongst our students, faculty, and staff," Kierstead says. "It's really going to be a collision space; a very vibrant sort of space where people go to hang out, chat, and meet."

The redesigned library is built around a philosophy the project team describes as being "alone together" – a mix of quiet individual study spaces,

collaborative breakout rooms, and seminar-style classrooms where community and business partners can work alongside students on research and other projects. A new community entrance on the York Street side of the building is intended to reinforce the library's role as a resource not just for the campus, but for the wider Municipality of Tantramar.

Throughout both projects, Kierstead says, three commitments have guided design decisions from the outset: environmental sustainability, accessibility, and Indigenous consultation. Both buildings are targeting three Green Globes Certification, targeting approximately 75 per cent of available sustainability measures under that rating system. The library renovation will feature a state-of-the-art air source heat pump – one of very few in Canada, according to the project's designers – along with a super insulated building envelope, carbon-neutral carpet tile, and water conservation systems throughout. On the embodied carbon side, the decision to renovate rather than demolish the library building is itself among the most significant environmental choices made on the project.

"One of the single biggest measures we've taken to reduce our carbon



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## The process required extensive consultation with the university community across multiple design iterations, while ensuring that all services continue uninterrupted throughout construction.

footprint is reusing the building," Kierstead says. "There's a significant amount of embodied carbon in that building. That's a tremendous savings."

Indigenous consultation has been equally deliberate. Guided by Indigenous consultant Two Row Architect, the university has worked with partners from Fort Folly First Nation, alongside Indigenous students and faculty, to incorporate Indigenous design concepts into the fabric of the RP Bell renovation.

As for challenges, Kierstead says the significant size and scale of the two buildings required extensive planning, especially given the relocation of the library to its interim location, then back, once all renovations are complete. This is one of the most complex construction efforts Mount Allison has undertaken to date. The process required extensive consultation with the university community across multiple design iterations, while ensuring that all services continue uninterrupted throughout construction.

Furthermore, schedule pressure and cost escalation have been present, as they have across the construction industry in recent years, though

he noted that construction costs appear to be leveling off after a period of sharp increases. The tight interdependency between the two projects leaves little margin for delay.

"There's almost no room left for slip," he says. "We're doing everything that we can to stick to the schedule."

When both projects are fully complete in 2030, Mount Allison will have something it has never quite had before: a compact, walkable campus where a modern research library, a

full-scale multipurpose athletic centre, three outdoor sports fields, residential accommodations, dining hall, and a student centre are all within easy reach of each other, and of the town beyond.

"Unlike almost any other institution in Atlantic Canada, we're on a tight footprint where everything is close by," says Kierstead. "It's going to be very convenient for hosting local, national, and international sporting events, conferences, and more." ↗

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# DOWNTOWN FREDERICTON'S BIGGEST RENTAL BET TAKES SHAPE

Colpitts Developments is turning a vacant lot by York Street station into a three-building, 293-unit rental hub downtown

By Shayna Wiwierski



Colpitts Developments is constructing nearly 300 purpose-built rental units at 390 York Street and two adjoining buildings, in a multi-year build-out that will stretch toward the end of the decade.



The Railyards is designed as a rental community, not a condominium project, and fits Colpitts's long-standing model.

A once-vacant rail yard in downtown Fredericton is steadily transforming into one of the city's most ambitious housing projects, a three-building development that its builder has dubbed The Railyards.

Colpitts Developments is constructing nearly 300 purpose-built rental units at 390 York Street and two adjoining buildings, in a multi-year build-out that will stretch toward the end of the decade. Project manager Ryan Downe says the overall plan calls for 293 units across three structures, a scale that is unusual for the city's core. The company has adopted The Railyards as the name for the entire undertaking, with the first tower marketed as 390 York at the Railyards.

For now, the focus is on that initial 121-unit high-rise, a concrete building rising over the former Canadian Pacific rail lands. From the street, it will sit just behind the provincially owned liquor store that occupies the old York Street station.

The site sat empty for years, despite its central location and proximity to amenities. Contamination from its industrial past as a railyard made it a more complicated proposition than a typical downtown infill parcel.

"The lot was vacant for quite a while," says Downe. "Because the site was

part of the historic railway station lands, it required additional planning and remediation work, which likely contributed to it remaining vacant for many years.”

Colpitts had been interested in the site for a few years leading up to the purchase in 2020. Early design work overlapped with the onset of the pandemic and a sharp rise in building costs. The company produced several iterations but ran into financial issues for what they initially wanted to build. By 2021, even after obtaining local planning approvals, the firm tabled the project as prices and uncertainty mounted across the industry.

However, they never shelved it entirely. Downe says the team would pull the file out every month or so to reconsider options. Eventually, they decided to change the structural system, moving away from a traditional concrete approach toward insulated concrete-form block walls, paired with precast hollow-core concrete floors. That pivot allowed them to rework the budget and schedule. The redesign carried through 2023 and into 2024; construction on the first building began in 2024, and crews were setting the roof at the end of February of this year.

The first tower’s footprint is about 24,000 square feet on the main level, with a step-back above the third floor that reduces the plate on the upper floors. Designs for the second and third buildings are not yet finalized, but Downe says earlier iterations contemplated a second building of roughly 17,500 square feet and a third, closer to York Street, of about 22,500 square feet.

The overall investment is large by Fredericton standards. The first building alone carries a total budget north of \$40 million. By the time all

three structures are complete, Downe says that the final cost will be around \$100 million for the entire project.

The Railyards is designed as a rental community, not a condominium project, and fits Colpitts’s long-standing model. The company serves as its own general contractor and retains ownership of its buildings, managing and maintaining them over time.

Across the three towers, the 293 units are planned to cover a range of sizes and bedroom counts. The first building will hold 121 apartments. The current plan for the second calls for 103, with the third, fronting York Street, at 76, after some adjustments from the original layout.

According to Downe, most of the two-bedroom suites fall in the 1,200- to 1,300-square-foot range, not including balconies. Three-bedroom units tend to run between about 1,200 and 1,500 square feet, with a handful of larger, penthouse-style apartments up to roughly 2,000 square feet. To capture more price-sensitive renters, the company has also designed smaller

two-bedroom units a little over 1,000 square feet, and comparatively large one-bedroom units of around 750 square feet. He described it as a good mix for the market and one they expect to keep fine-tuning.

The number of units and the density of the development created an issue with the parking. Colpitts studied several options and ultimately chose to build two levels of covered parking, one underground and one at-grade, beneath the buildings – a first for the company and, in Downe’s view, rare for the region.

Inside, each building will have its own amenities, including a large gym and a generous common room or social space. The York Street building will also include a significant commercial component on its main level. Colpitts expects the retail mix to evolve as leasing progresses but anticipates the kinds of tenants it has attracted in other projects: coffee shops, personal services such as massage, office space, and other small retailers.

The context may be as important as



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the concrete. The site sits in a great location in downtown Fredericton. A Sobeys supermarket lies directly behind the property and there are plans for a walking trail which will connect the development to the grocery store and the extensive city trail system. A short walk up the street brings residents to the YMCA, and onward to uptown shopping and restaurants in one direction, and the downtown proper in the other. Downe adds that the site is only five or six blocks from the heart of Fredericton.

If the schedule holds, Colpitts plans to start the second building this fall. Each tower is on roughly a 24-month construction cycle, putting the full build-out in the six-year range. That would see the development completed somewhere between 2029 and 2030, though the company is still refining its phasing plan.

For Colpitts, which is more accustomed

to three- and four-storey wood-frame projects, and single-family and commercial work, The Railyards marks a step into a different category.

“The whole thing is quite unique to us in general,” says Downe. “It’s our first one of this size and this complexity. So, it’s a big project.”

The unusual construction method – insulated concrete forms with precast hollow-core floors – is also new to Colpitts Developments, but Downe says that the firm has been quite happy with it so far.

Ultimately, Downe returns to a straightforward rationale. The project, he says, is meant first and foremost to add housing in a country-wide shortage and to do so in a part of Fredericton where the city has been trying to build density. He believes the contemporary, brick-accented architecture will tie into older neighbours like the

former Hartt Shoe factory and the train-station-turned-liquor-store, while the retail and public-facing elements bring new activity to the area.

After years of design work, delays, and redesigns, he says the company is very excited to see the first building nearing enclosure and is looking forward to finishing it, moving on to the next phases and, eventually, watching people make homes in a place that, for decades, was little more than an empty railyard.

If all goes to plan, the once-vacant railyard will become home to hundreds of new residents, and, Downe hopes, an example of what can be done with one of the few remaining sites of its kind.

“We’re very excited about the project,” he says. “We really hope that it turns out the way that we think it will and that it’s successful. We hope that people really enjoy the building and enjoy living there. It’s really exciting.” ↗

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# A NEW CHAPTER FOR 99 KING STREET

A 13-storey mixed-use tower is bringing 150+ homes and new retail to downtown Saint John

By Shayna Wiwierski



*The 99 King Street project pairs affordable and market-rate apartments with new commercial space, underground parking, and energy-efficient systems overlooking King Square and the harbour.*

*Strescon's team saw 99 King Street as a particularly strong fit for their total precast building system because of its tight schedule and the developer's need for a building that "goes up rapidly" without sacrificing architectural character.*

Rising from the site of a long-vacant Woolworths at the head of King Street, the 99 King Street project is reshaping uptown Saint John with a dense mix of housing, retail, and amenities in the heart of the city's historic core.

Rooted in a developer's long-running effort to revive underused properties downtown, the building pairs affordable and market-rate apartments with new commercial space, underground parking, and energy-efficient systems overlooking King Square and the harbour.

For Percy Wilbur, president of 99 King Street Ltd. Partnership, the project is the latest chapter in a years-long campaign to find properties that need some rejuvenation around the city and explicitly in the downtown core. He

began with an 1867 building the city had slated for demolition, restoring it instead and fitting in a few apartments and an art gallery at street level.

"It feels good to salvage and rescue a historic building," says Wilbur.

His next project was more complicated: the old Centenary Queen Square Church, a stone Gothic structure built just after Saint John's Great Fire, was "literally falling apart" and shedding stones from a peak 100 feet above the street, forcing demolition and replacement with an 83-unit apartment building.

Wilbur's attention then turned to the former Woolworths on King Street, beside the city market, which he says is "the oldest market in Canada", and

directly across from King Square. The early-1950s building had sat abandoned for about 22 years. By the time his team went in, the structure was "quite dilapidated" and the basement was flooded. After a thorough look, Wilbur concluded there was not much of an argument for restoring it because it was beyond restoration.

Demolition presented its own difficulties. The site contained asbestos and four feet of water in the basement, adding cost and complexity to the teardown.

"It was an expensive piece of property and an expensive challenge to tear out what was there," Wilbur says. To justify that investment, he felt he had to come up with something big.



*Left: Instead of traditional cast-in-place concrete, Strescon fabricates and cures individual concrete elements – structural components and exterior enclosures alike – in a factory and then ships them to the site on flatbed trucks for installation. Above: Because the windows arrive pre-installed in the panels, the building is effectively enclosed as the structure rises, avoiding the drafts and temporary hoarding common in winter construction and allowing other trades to move in once the precast is two floors ahead.*

The original concept, shaped in part by the municipality, called for two floors of office space below roughly 150 apartments. The city agreed to become a major office tenant and “they were all systems go until the 11th hour”, Wilbur recalls, before withdrawing. That reversal forced a redesign, delaying the project by about two years while the team conceived a new ground-up program.

The revised plan swapped out the office floors for commercial and retail space, with apartments above. Construction ultimately began in late 2024 and is scheduled to finish in late 2026, with tenants expected to start moving in as the tower opens in phases.

“We began the concept of constructing commercial retail space on the first two floors and followed by the apartments above,” Wilbur says. “And that’s where we are today.”

The building’s program is layered from below grade to the top floors. Two levels of underground parking, providing a little over 60 spaces and storage areas,

support residents and retailers in a district where street parking can be scarce. At street level, the King Street frontage will offer about 5,500 square feet of retail space, while Charlotte Street will see roughly 15,000 square feet of commercial and retail uses.

Above the shops, two dedicated floors of housing will combine 32 affordable units with 12 market-rate apartments, all one-bedroom homes. Higher up, another 11 floors will contain one- and two-bedroom apartments, ranging from about 500 to 800 square feet for one-bedroom units, and from roughly 1,000 square feet to more than 2,000 for some of the two-bedroom layouts. In total, the building will house about 152 mixed-income units, according to federal and provincial announcements tied to the project.

Wilbur estimates the building at approximately 200,000 square feet over 13 storeys. The form is supported by two underground parking levels and a structural system designed in close collaboration with Strescon Ltd., a Saint John-based precast specialist that has

turned 99 King into a showcase of its total precast approach.

Inside, residents will find a suite of amenities aimed at making uptown living more convenient. Although each apartment will include its own washer and dryer, there will also be a common laundry room for duvets and other bulky items. A gym will serve tenants on-site, and a common room will be available to rent for birthdays, events, or games. At the top, a rooftop balcony will open toward the harbour, offering views of the Saint John River and Bay of Fundy.

Even as the project adds substantial new floor area to the skyline around King Square, Wilbur emphasizes that energy consumption is a top priority throughout. All mechanical and electrical components in the building are specified as energy-efficient, and heating and cooling will be provided by heat pump systems.

Strescon’s team saw 99 King Street as a particularly strong fit for their total precast building system because of its

tight schedule and the developer's need for a building that "goes up rapidly" without sacrificing architectural character.

Instead of traditional cast-in-place concrete, Strescon fabricates and cures individual concrete elements – structural components and exterior enclosures alike – in a factory and then ships them to the site on flatbed trucks for installation. Total precast is one type of Strescon's precast building solutions. This approach, Matthew Conradi, Strescon's business development associate, says reduces on-site labour, limits weather-related delays by shifting work into a controlled environment, and allows Strescon to deliver not only the frame but also exterior finishes and pre-installed windows.

"The sooner we provide an enclosed space, the sooner other trades can commence their work on the interior of the building," says Conradi.

Andrew LaVatte serves as director of volumetric and panelized building solutions at OSCO Construction Group, of which Strescon Limited is a member company. He was drawn into the project after Wilbur completed a prior eight-storey apartment building using a steel-stud panelized system with precast floors and shear walls. That earlier job, he recalls, took a long time to build and came with a lot of issues on site.

For 99 King Street, Strescon joined the design team at the earliest stages, pre-designing the structure in 3D technology to identify clashes before construction and to maximize the spans between structural elements. Many of the spans in the building are around 38 feet, which reduces the number of interior walls, cuts costs, and gives Wilbur's team more flexibility to lay out apartments without columns or obstructions.

"If you can maximize the efficiency, then that reduces its overall cost," LeVatte says. "It gives them a lot more flexibility because now he has these large open spaces that are column-free."

On the exterior, LeVatte points to the facade as one of the elements he is proudest of, and early reaction from the street has reinforced that view. The panels are detailed to fit into a heritage setting, with brick faces that are hand-placed into the forms at the plant each day before the concrete is poured.

"We were able to integrate a building into a very historic section of the city," LeVatte says. "I've had a number of people comment that it looks like it's always been there."

Window performance was another priority. LeVatte says he helped develop a window system mechanically connected to the precast panel and surrounded by a perimeter frame designed to channel any leakage to the exterior. Because the windows arrive pre-installed in the panels, the building is effectively enclosed as the structure rises, avoiding the drafts and temporary hoarding common in winter construction and allowing other trades to move in once the precast is two floors ahead.

For Strescon, a key element of success in 99 King Street and projects like it, is the importance of being involved very early on with architects and engineers. Total precast construction works best within certain design parameters, Conradi says, and it can be challenging to adapt a design conceived for other building methods.

In this case, close collaboration from the start allowed the team to adjust layouts, optimize spans, and produce an efficient total precast design layout tailored to the developer's and architect's vision.

"The key to success with total precast

construction is early engagement with the design team and Strescon," Conradi says, adding that he expects that pattern to guide future mixed-use and high-rise projects as demand grows for faster builds in New Brunswick and beyond.

Wilbur situates 99 King Street firmly right in the heart of the city, on King Square with the city market next door, the Imperial Theatre and City Hall about a minute's walk away, and shopping surrounding the block. In recent years, he notes, downtown Saint John has really come alive with bike, hiking, and walking trails, the revival of Market Slip and outdoor skating in winter, and festivals like the AREA 506 Festival and Uptown Sparkles drawing people to the core.

Beyond its skyline presence, 99 King Street has become a key piece of Saint John's housing strategy. Government officials have framed the project as part of a broader effort to expand rental supply and deliver new affordable units in the city's core. The building's 32 affordable apartments, reserved for seniors and people with disabilities, are supported through a package of low-interest federal loans and provincial and municipal contributions, while the remaining units will rent at market rates.

Wilbur is modest about his role – "I'm just trying to do my little part," he says – but the scale of the project, and the public investment attached to it underscores how a single site at the top of King Street has become a focal point for Saint John's ambitions: to grow faster, build more sustainably, and draw people back to live, shop, and spend time in the historic heart of the city.

"With cruise ships coming uptown, it's really come alive through the years," says Wilbur. "Why would you not want to live uptown?" ↗

# BUILDING WITH INTENTION

## Why strategic planning matters in construction

Strategic planning is often associated with large organizations and complex processes. In reality, it is just as critical for small- and mid-sized businesses, especially in construction, where margins are tight, timelines are demanding, and decisions carry immediate consequences.

At its core, strategic planning is about making deliberate choices. It defines where an organization is going and how it will get there. Without that clarity, even strong teams can fall into a reactive cycle, responding to urgent issues without a consistent sense of direction. Over time, this leads to stretched resources, inconsistent decisions, and stalled growth.

A well-developed strategy changes that. It provides a framework for decision-making and ensures daily operations align with long-term goals. In construction, this might mean being more selective about projects, investing in the right equipment and workforce, or strengthening internal systems to support sustainable growth.

Clarity is one of the most immediate benefits. When priorities are clearly defined, teams understand what matters most and how their work contributes to broader objectives. This becomes increasingly important as companies grow, take on more complex builds, or operate across

multiple job sites. Even in smaller teams, assumptions can differ. A clear strategy helps align everyone around a shared direction.

Focus follows. Many construction firms face no shortage of opportunity, but growth becomes a challenge when too much is taken on at once. Crews are stretched, quality can suffer, and core strengths may be diluted. Strategic planning helps establish boundaries, allowing leadership to concentrate effort where it will have the greatest impact.

It also strengthens decision-making. When new opportunities arise, leaders can assess whether a project aligns with their long-term direction. That simple filter prevents costly missteps and creates consistency across teams and job sites.



### Applying strategy in practice: The CANB experience

Resonance recently partnered with the Construction Association of New Brunswick (CANB) to support the development of their strategic plan and updated bylaws. This work highlights how structured planning can strengthen both organizations and the broader industry.

Working closely with leadership, the process focused on clarifying priorities, aligning governance structures, and ensuring the organization's direction was supported by clear, functional bylaws. Like many industry associations, the CANB operates in a dynamic environment shaped by evolving member needs, regulatory requirements, and industry trends.



**Like many industry associations, the CANB operates in a dynamic environment shaped by evolving member needs, regulatory requirements, and industry trends.**

Through this process, the CANB established a clearer and more unified direction, supported by governance structures that enable faster, more consistent decision-making at the board and committee level. The updated strategic plan provides focus, while the modernized bylaws reinforce accountability, clarify roles, and create a stronger foundation for execution.

The result is not just a plan, but a more aligned organization, better equipped to respond to industry change while advancing the priorities of its members.

This reinforces an important point. Strategy is not just about vision, it is about alignment. When leadership, operations, and governance work together, organizations are better positioned to move forward with confidence.

One common misconception is that strategic planning limits flexibility. In practice, the opposite is true. A clear strategy provides a stable foundation, allowing organizations to adapt without losing sight of their goals. In construction, where conditions can shift quickly, that balance is essential.

Accountability is another key outcome. A strong plan includes measurable objectives, making it easier to track progress and adjust when needed. It also gives teams clarity around expectations and their role in achieving results.



For many organizations, the challenge is not recognizing the value of planning, it is finding the time to do it well. Stepping back from day-to-day operations to think critically about direction and structure is not always easy.

This is where external perspective can help. Resonance works with organizations across Atlantic Canada on strategic planning, governance, workplace investigations, and conflict resolution. Much of this work begins when challenges arise, offering insight into the underlying issues that affect performance. These are often not isolated problems, but symptoms of broader gaps in communication,

leadership, or structure.

Bringing a legal and human resources perspective into the process ensures strategies are both practical and aligned with evolving workplace requirements. In a regulated industry like construction, this adds confidence.

Ultimately, strategic planning is not about producing a document, it is about creating a tool that supports better decisions, strengthens accountability, and provides a clear path forward.

With the right approach, it becomes a practical foundation for building a more focused, resilient, and successful business. ↗

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# HEAVY EQUIPMENT FATALITIES HIGHLIGHT NEED FOR STRONGER SAFETY AWARENESS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

## Turning tragedy into action



In 2024, four of New Brunswick's six workplace fatalities involved heavy equipment operations. The other two occurred in garages that service heavy equipment. The year before, three of the province's six workplace deaths were also tied to this sector. These numbers highlight a persistent, serious risk in one of the province's most critical industries.

Heavy equipment drives much of New Brunswick's economy. It builds roads, supports forestry and construction, and keeps essential services running. But it also creates some of the most hazardous work environments in the province. Operators, mechanics, and technicians face daily challenges that demand focus, skill, and strict adherence to safety procedures.

"These aren't just statistics," said Tim Petersen, president and CEO of WorkSafeNB. "Each fatality represents someone who was loved – a family member, a friend, a co-worker. Even one workplace death is too many. We must take every opportunity to prevent these incidents before they happen."

Heavy equipment environments are complex and unforgiving. Operators work around large machines with blind spots, moving parts, and limited reaction time. Mechanics and technicians face hazards while inspecting, repairing or servicing equipment, often while operations continue around them. Tight deadlines, production pressures, and routine tasks can increase the likelihood of mistakes – which can have immediate, sometimes fatal, consequences.

To help address these risks, WorkSafeNB produced a series of videos focused on the dangers of working around heavy equipment. The videos highlight real-world scenarios and common hazards. They encourage workers and employers to pause, assess risks, and take action to protect themselves before work begins. The content covers situations such as operating near moving machines, working in blind spots, and following proper lockout procedures during maintenance.

The goal is simple: start conversations about safety. Employers can use the

videos with crews or during safety meetings to reinforce safe work practices. They serve as a reminder that experience alone does not eliminate risk. Situational awareness, clear communication, and following procedures remain essential on every shift, every day.

Prevention requires action. Identify hazards before work begins. Follow safe work procedures consistently. Speak up when something feels unsafe. Take the time needed to complete tasks properly, even when schedules are tight.

By focusing on prevention today, New Brunswick can reduce the risk of heavy equipment fatalities. Awareness, planning, and active participation in safety programs help ensure more workers return home safely at the end of every shift. Turning tragedy into action starts with knowledge, responsibility, and the commitment to do things differently – for every worker, every day.

See the videos on our YouTube channel at <https://surli.cc/yubfkv>. ↗



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