

BUSINESS

in Edmonton

Building something tangible.

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Helping Edmonton Businesses Grow with Confidence at Every Stage

In the years that I've had the opportunity to work with businesses across Alberta, I've come to admire the staying power of Edmonton's business community. From logistics and construction to professional services, trades, and community-based organizations, Edmonton is home to businesses that build for the long term.

Edmontonians are builders and planners — deeply invested in where they live and work.

They're focused on what lasts: succession, reinvestment and steady growth. What they need from a financial partner is simple: responsiveness, continuity, and personalized advice they can count on.

At Servus Credit Union, we've been supporting Alberta businesses since 1938. That's 87 years of showing up for our members through every economic cycle. We were founded by gutsy, independent thinkers who wanted to create a better alternative to the big banks, rooted in local decision-making, trust, and long-term relationships. That belief still guides us today.

As Canada's largest and strongest credit union, we've backed Alberta-based businesses with over \$10 billion in commercial lending, because we believe in building the future of our province, together.

We're more than just bankers. We're long-term partners.

Think of us as part of your team, ready with the support and tools to help you grow. We offer a full suite of business financing and cash management services, all backed by deep local knowledge and a commitment to helping you thrive. Our approach is holistic, practical, and personal, and our advisors are empowered to provide timely, reliable decisions — because we know that momentum matters.

Some financial institutions see numbers. We see the people behind the business.

We take the time to understand how your business works so we can structure the right solution for your goals, not just your balance sheet. We get the full picture: seasonal cycles, growth ambitions, and the realities of operating in our province. That proximity matters, especially when big decisions need to happen quickly. Add that to the peace of mind that all deposits are 100% guaranteed by the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation, and you've got the freedom to keep building with confidence. Whether you're a small, mid-sized, or large enterprise, we're here to support your vision.



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ALLISON DOWHANIK
VP, Commercial Markets
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Nuclear power:

Alberta's next big leap toward clean, safe and reliable energy.

By Catherine Brownlee



Alberta Enterprise Group (AEG) puts Alberta businesses first by sharing information, advocacy and building bridges to new markets. AEG members are business owners, senior executives, investors and entrepreneurs representing firms in every major Alberta industry. AEG members employ over 100,000 Albertans and generate billions in economic activity each year.

Premier Danielle Smith's recent announcement to begin public consultations about nuclear power this fall could not be timelier. At Alberta Enterprise Group (AEG), we applaud this move as a powerful signal that Alberta is ready to lead in one of the safest, cleanest and most innovative forms of energy available.

Yes – safest! While perceptions of nuclear energy are often shaped by outdated fears, the facts tell a different story. According to the Our World in Data research group, nuclear power has one of the lowest death rates per unit of energy produced. In fact, it's safer than almost all forms of power generation.

Nuclear energy results in only 0.03 deaths per terawatt-hour while coal (24.6), oil (18.4), biomass (4.6) and natural gas (2.8) have much higher rates. Wind and solar are equally safe (wind at 0.04 deaths and solar at 0.02). However, unlike wind and solar, nuclear can provide large-scale, stable baseload power 24/7.

This conversation isn't just about safety; it is about vision. The Premier's announcement highlights both small modular reactors (SMRs) and the potential for a large-scale nuclear plant in Peace River, modelled after work that is being done in Ontario. Together these options could reshape Alberta's energy mix, especially as we face surging demand from industries like artificial intelligence and data centres. A private proposal to build a 4,800-megawatt facility in Peace River, equivalent to nearly a quarter of Alberta's entire electricity capacity, shows the seriousness and importance of the opportunity.

In previous articles we have talked about nuclear innovators like Aalo Atomics and Antares, and how they are rethinking nuclear power. Aalo is developing modular reactors using proven fuel and supply chains, while Antares is building ultra-compact systems ideal for remote and rapid deployment.

Yet innovation without public dialogue is a missed opportunity. That's why these consultations matter. Premier Smith is right to prioritize citizen engagement. Energy policy must be shaped not only by engineers and economists but also by the people it serves. If done right, these conversations will help Albertans see nuclear not as a threat, but as a tool to power growth, reduce emissions and strengthen energy and economic sovereignty.

As we face carbon regulations, volatility in oil markets and growing pressure to electrify everything from vehicles to agriculture, nuclear stands out as a reliable backbone for Alberta's energy future. AEG is proud to support this initiative, and we encourage our members, and all Albertans, to participate in the consultation process.

Alberta is open for business, open to innovation and now open to nuclear.



Don't put your boots away.

By Cheryll Watson



Cheryll Watson is the President & CEO of Junior Achievement Northern Alberta and a recognized thought leader in economic development. She previously served as Vice President of Innovate Edmonton and ran for Mayor of Edmonton with a platform focused on economic growth, downtown revitalization and stronger partnerships between business and government. Cheryll also serves as Chair of the Downtown Revitalization Coalition and Board Chair of STEM Collegiate. She believes in empowering the next generation of leaders and is known for championing free enterprise. Cheryll is passionate about building a city that supports both business and community.

For nearly a decade, my work in economic development and entrepreneurship has taken me to the Calgary Stampede, and every year I attend with admiration. The numbers alone are staggering, with over 3,000 volunteers, 3,500 seasonal jobs, 1,500 year-round employees and more than 50,000 young people participating in the events and agri-education programs. It's a masterclass in how an event becomes a movement – and how a movement builds a brand for a city.

Thousands of Edmontonians attend the Stampede every year, and while it's tempting to put away our cowboy boots when it ends, I'm asking you not to. Why? Because the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) is just around the corner on October 1-4, 2025!

Here is a quick history lesson. The first CFR was held at Calgary's Stampede Corral in 1974. In 1975, it moved to Edmonton's Northlands Coliseum (later Rexall Place), where it stayed for over four decades – from 1975 to 2017. In 2018, we lost this event to Red Deer. Now, it's back!

Edmonton has secured a three-year agreement (2024–2026) to host the CFR at Rogers Place.

We're no strangers to big events and bold ambitions. Just look at the electric energy during the Oilers' playoff run. That atmosphere united us and spotlighted Edmonton on a national stage.

But here's the thing: we don't always package our other events with the same intention or rally around them as a city. So, what if we did?

What if we stopped chasing the idea of a single "signature event" and leaned into who we really are – an event portfolio city where music, sport, culture, business, agriculture and innovation collide year-round? A city where community and corporate leaders stand together behind events that matter, because they understand what's at stake: jobs, visibility, tourism and investment.

Calgary has the Stampede. Edmonton? We have the rhythm of a full year – Oilers playoff hockey, the Fringe Festival, Riverhawks baseball, Folk Fest, K-Days, Elks football, the CFR, Startup Week – events that reflect who we are: diverse, creative and fiercely proud.

I work across the street from the Enbridge Centre and I love seeing their window art and lobby events. I love it when local restaurants and retailers get involved with special features and promotions. Every business has a role in showing up for this city. That's how events grow. That's how energy builds. That's how cities win.

We need to nurture that momentum, because when we elevate our events – not just attend them, but champion them – we generate the kind of buzz that lifts a city, invites the world in, creates jobs and reignites belief in what Edmonton can be when we're united.

Don't put your boots away just yet. We've got work to do – and a city to celebrate.



Off the top. News.

ATB Financial to acquire independent investment bank Cormark Securities Inc.



Curtis Stange, President & CEO, ATB Financial.

ATB Financial, the largest financial institution headquartered in Western Canada, announced that they have entered into an agreement to acquire all of the outstanding shares of Cormark Securities Inc. (Cormark), a strong Canadian independent investment bank with offices in Toronto and Calgary.

Founded in 1981, Cormark is an established institutionally oriented industry leader recognized for its knowledge and commitment for mid-cap and emerging growth clients. It has participated in over 1,000 equity financings over the past decade, raising gross proceeds of more than \$100 billion. Cormark provides investment banking, broad based equity research coverage and institutional sales and trading to clients in Canada and internationally. It has been ranked as a top five Canadian mid-market dealer by institutional investors for the last 10 years, as compiled by Brendan Wood International.

“Combining Cormark with our ATB Capital Markets business significantly broadens our collective breadth and depth to deliver deeper value to clients as a full-service capital markets firm,” says Darren Eurich, CEO of ATB Capital Markets. “Together, our complementary expertise expands our ability to serve clients in Canada and the U.S., attract exceptional talent and accelerate our growth strategy.”

The acquisition is expected to close in the fall pending customary closing conditions, including required regulatory approvals.

“Joining ATB Capital Markets marks an important milestone in Cormark’s evolution,” says Scott Lamacraft, executive chairman of Cormark. “We’re proud of our more than 40-year history and even more excited about where our combined business will take us. This partnership allows us to deliver greater solutions for our clients, expands opportunities for our team and positions the combined firm for accelerated growth.”

The ATB Capital Markets and Cormark firms will integrate their operations under ATB Capital Markets’ CEO, Darren Eurich. Cormark’s Scott Lamacraft and Susan Streeter will join as executive chair and head of strategy and growth respectively.

“As our clients across Canada navigate an increasingly complex economic landscape, the enhanced capabilities of the combined firm will contribute to a strong, competitive and client-focused capital markets industry that supports economic growth nationwide,” adds Curtis Stange, president and CEO of ATB Financial.

PricewaterhouseCoopers Corporate Finance Inc. is acting as exclusive financial advisor and Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP is acting as legal counsel to ATB Financial. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is serving as legal counsel to Cormark Securities Inc. while SHEUMACK GMA, along with its affiliate, SGMA Capital Markets Limited, is serving as Cormark’s exclusive financial advisor.





The bank of mom & dad.

Lending money to adult children.

By John Hardy



Bernadette Churchill, private wealth advisor and portfolio Manager with CWB Wealth.

“Most would agree that a parent’s job is never done,” says Churchill, “and as we strive to set our kids up for success, a well-planned financial gift from mom and dad can certainly make a difference.”

Of all the strategies in the art and science of wealth management – like balancing a portfolio, tax mitigation, risk and asset protection, estate strategy, the Rule of 72 and the 80/20 rule – there is not much practical theory or sage advice about lending money to the kids. Yet, it is a relevant and important aspect of smart wealth management.

As savvy financial planners and wealth management professionals acknowledge (and caution), the cold and hard rules and protocols of wealth management get blurred by emotion when it comes to The Bank of Mom & Dad. Emotion and family are notorious deal changers.

The serious factors and implications kick in when the money is more than helping with maxed out credit cards, phone bills, groceries or missed rent or car payments. A recent Abacus poll found that 41 per cent of parents of children aged 18 to 38 chipped in to help finance their home purchase. Whether the wealth planning parents are gifting or loaning money to their adult children, there are tricky income tax, retirement, family law and estate planning speedbumps to consider.

“Most would agree that a parent’s job is never done,” says Bernadette Churchill, private wealth advisor and portfolio manager with CWB Wealth, “and as we strive to set our kids up for success, a well-planned financial gift from mom and dad can certainly make a difference.

“However, before one moves forward with gifting or lending to adult children, the parents should have a firm understanding of their current finances and future needs. Especially nearing or in retirement, it is important to ensure that the gift fits within personal financial capabilities and does not create a debt obligation for the giver.”

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A vital factor to consider about lending or gifting money to adult children are immediate or foreseeable Canadian tax implications and who is impacted: the lender or the recipient?

There are generally no tax implications for giving cash to your children. Gifts to adult children are neither taxable to them nor subject to income attribution in Canada, though there may be gift or estate tax implications for U.S. citizens in Canada.

If an asset is transferred to a child and appreciates in value, it may trigger a capital gain for the lender. Assets like stocks or real estate have a deemed disposition at their fair market value, even if it was gifted. If the asset subsequently produces income for the adult child, that income is taxable to them.

Anne Wildfong, also a private wealth advisor and portfolio manager with CWB Wealth, emphasizes that, "It is important to consider being purposeful with family gifting to ensure that you are not creating a dependence with your adult child. If you are intentional with your financial gifts, you can empower them with greater financial flexibility. There is a difference between providing money for higher education so that they can further their career, versus putting it toward day-to-day expenses.

"Be clear and let your child know that the money is a gift, an advance on their inheritance or a loan. This will alleviate any confusion and set clear boundaries. If it is a loan, documenting the terms will ensure that both parties understand the expectations," she says.

Experienced financial planners urge that, although lending money to adult children is ultimately a selfless, generous and invariably emotional decision, the focus must remain on the individual's wealth management needs and priorities. It is all part of the do's and don'ts about sensible and wise gifting money to adult children.

"Parents must review their own financial plan thoroughly – in particular, their detailed retirement plan—to ensure they have the financial capacity and flexibility to give money to their adult children in the first place," cautions Markus Muhs, a portfolio manager and financial planner with Canaccord Genuity Wealth Management (CGWM) in Edmonton.

"Often emotions and family bonds drive such decisions without consideration for whether or not what's left will get the parents through retirement. The adult children may be able to defer the purchase of their first home or fund their wishes through some other form of financing, while retired people have far fewer options."

Muhs points out some common risks and pitfalls when it comes to parents gifting or lending money to adult children.

"For example, when gifting money for a home downpayment, it is important to have a proper gift letter signed, specifying that the money is an irrevocable gift. Banks and mortgage brokers will generally guide people through the requirements, because it is important for the lender to be assured that the downpayment itself is not comprised of borrowed money. A gift letter is a good idea in any case, whatever the purpose of the gifted money is, so that there

is a paper trail of money transferring from the parent to the adult child."

Wealth management professionals are adamant about dotted i's, crossed t's, details, paperwork and agreements.

"Before giving large monetary gifts to your adult child, be sure to understand the implications," Churchill points out. "Will it trigger tax consequences for the parent and possibly the recipient? It might be prudent to sit down with a financial advisor or accountant to review and understand all potential outcomes, and possible tax consequences, that would result from the gift."

Muhs urges a focus on the tax implications about lending or gifting to adult children.

"Often most of a parent's assets are inside of registered plans (RRSP/RRIF). Technically the balance of such an account represents a pre-tax value, not actual wealth at hand," he says. "When withdrawn, this money becomes taxable income. Parents should never make a big lump sum withdrawal from an RRSP/RRIF to help their children buy a home. It is a very inefficient use of assets which had their taxes deferred for so many years."

Wildfong adds, "Consider the complexities within relationships that will be affected by the gift and be sure about the details of how it will be distributed or retained. Intentions should be clear and possibly mentioned in a cohabitation agreement or pre/post nuptial agreement."

"Parents may think that their gift will always remain with their child," she adds, "But when it is comingled with marital or cohabitation assets, ownership can become unclear. Family dynamics may mean these conversations with an adult child will be challenging, so consider involving a trusted financial advisor or lawyer to create clarity and legality around the gift."

Awkward or not in family situations, verbal deals and promises may be nice, but a paper trail is essential.

"Money can be a sensitive topic," Churchill notes, "and it can easily impact family relationships. Under certain circumstances, having a formal document outlining the terms of certain monetary gifts or loan obligations can minimize any confusion."

She adds that putting it all down on paper is important and involving a wealth manager for large amounts or commitments can help ensure that the arrangements are within the person's financial plan and that the larger commitments will not cause undue hardship.

Spelling it all out on paper also helps to determine how the gift will impact the person's tax situation and other aspects of the retirement or estate.





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Producing a Leader

When visions align, the results are life changing

Written by Nerissa McNaughton

In a world where content creation is king, it's hard to remember a time when YouTube channels and podcasts were not only rare – but impossible. In the early 2000s, however, a couple did just this – gave up well-paying, stable jobs to become content creators. What followed was a journey that took them from concept to being on the set of the world's most iconic movies, in front of incredible directors and to the locations around the globe where it all happens – and ATB Wealth was a part of the journey from the start.

Yet, living the dream does not come without a few nightmares. The journey was anything but smooth. This is the story of Michelle Gayse Leader and Allan Leader, and their company Leader Productions Inc. You may not have heard of them before, but you have seen – and been impacted by – their work for many, many years.

Michelle has a diverse experience range that spans decades as a television anchor, reporter and producer. With Leader Productions, she is a field producer and social media content creator. Allan Leader is a member of the Canadian Society of Cinematographers. He was the cinematographer and associate producer for the theatrical documentary, *Unclaimed*, which was long listed for an Academy Award. Through Leader Productions, they collaborate with the likes of HBO, Amazon, Disney+, Apple+, Netflix, Focus Features, National Geographic, Discovery Channel, US Air Force, Pentagon, Toyota, Alberta Beef Producers and Suncor on sites locally and around the world.

Michelle says, “Our partnership, in business and in life, goes back to 1988 when Allan and I met at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT). I was in broadcasting and he was in cinematography. We both started our careers in the news media, me as an anchor and him as a cameraman. We decided to strike out on our own, which was a very new concept back then.”

The timing alarmed friends, family and colleagues. Allan had just landed a great job at the CBC. Both

had successful careers and bright futures with their employers. They had also recently returned to Calgary after working around Canada in increasingly plum roles. So, why this? Why now?

“We could see the direction the industry would take,” shares Allan. “As visionaries, we were ready for the leap of faith.”

Today, Leader Productions is the company behind the cinematic moments, the ideological-changing stories and the hype behind the brands that go viral. When you see hybrid trailers in the movie theatre featuring show footage mixed with director and actor interviews, that was shot and created by Leader Productions. When you hear about an upcoming show on major streaming platforms, that commercial has been created by Leader Productions. When a national brand is rolling out a new product, chances are Leader Productions brought it to your attention. They also collaborate with corporate clients such as Ernst & Young (EY) and Janis Care Services to tell their stories for both internal and external audiences. Just a few of Leader Productions' projects include *Reminders of Him*, *The Abandons*, *The Last of Us*, *Ghostbusters*, *Prey*, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, *The Order*, *Land*, *High School*, *Fraggle Rock*, *The Thicket*, *My Life with the Walter Boys* and *Billy the Kid*.

“Anything you might watch on your phone, iPad, computer or television, we have had a hand in that,” says Allan. “However, with the tremendous growth in Alberta's film and television industry in recent years, we are increasingly filming promotional content. We are contracted to go to movie sets and film the making of the movie and interviews with the stars and key creatives. When they are ready to start promoting, you may see a trailer in a theater with interviews with directors, plus footage. That is our work.”

It didn't happen overnight. In fact, it nearly didn't happen at all. Michelle and Allan were right about where the industry was going. The millions of cre-





ators across social media and the constant machine of content across every digital platform more than prove this point. However, at a time when smartphones didn't exist and Blockbuster was still renting VHS tapes, that vision was lost on the people that needed to see it the most – banks.

"I'm not exaggerating when I say we met with 10-15 banks attempting to borrow \$250,000. That was just to cover the very basic foundation and not even everything we needed to get started. Every bank asked questions about our business plan, such as, 'why do you need this particular camera? Why not just get a HandyCam at Future Shop for less?' We had to educate them that we needed broadcast-quality equipment to be taken seriously by the clients we wished to attract. The banks said we were too young and it was too much risk. We started to lose hope."

The lowest point came when one of Canada's largest national banks wouldn't even agree to a meeting with the Leaders. "We said, just let us give you a 15 minute pitch," Allan says, "but they said no." It seemed like taking the leap was about to end in a crash landing – until Michelle and Allan contacted ATB.

"The difference was phenomenal," shares Michelle of their first interaction with the Westhills (formerly Signal Hill) branch. "Salma Garde, senior financial advisor, listened to us. ATB talked with us and they were 100 per cent on board. They understood we were taking a risk, and they shared that risk along with sharing our alignment and vision. The ATB difference is that they are Albertans genuinely interested in helping Albertans."

"ATB Wealth is our clear choice professionally and personally for investments and advice, even for our children," adds Allan. "They started investing in their teens and having meetings with ATB to learn how to invest for their future. Our kids are now in their early 20s and still on board with ATB. Our financial advisor, Salma, is their financial advisor."

About 15 years later, the national bank that refused the pitch reached out to Leader Productions Inc., seeking a pitch of their own to show the company how its bank could be involved.

"It gave me great pleasure to say that 'ATB is our bank. ATB gave us the chance. No, I am not taking your meeting,'" recounts Allan. "ATB believed in us. They stuck with us, so we stick with them. We remember all too well who took the leap of faith

alongside us and believed in us when nobody else would. We will always be loyal to ATB."

Supporting Albertans and the dreams of local entrepreneurs is not the only way ATB is one of Canada's most progressive banks. In fact, the Leaders are excited to see another massive shift in the content and entertainment industry, one that ATB has been invested in for many years. ATB is committed to diversity and inclusion (D&I) in its own organization by creating a culture of belonging. Guided by four pillars—culture and awareness, inclusive talent systems, inclusive leadership and D&I organizational enablement, ATB is driving meaningful change.

"When we started, the broadcasting industry was not very diverse," shares Michelle. "These days, there is so much more diversity on the sets! I had the opportunity to interview the first deaf, Black actor for *The Last of Us* and to also host a show on neurodiverse individuals looking for work. We talked to the individuals, their employers and their families and learned that there was a huge improvement in outcomes for all when diversity is part of workplaces. We also see it in sports. TSN is a longtime client; we help promote TSN Kruger Assist. This program helps make hockey more accessible for female players, underprivileged children and ethnically diverse youth. We are also excited to see the growing number of female-led movies and documentaries, female-led casts and female key creatives."

The Leaders took an idea that was far ahead of its time into a thriving business that touches every aspect of the entertainment and communications industries, sparking meaningful conversations and change. ATB recognized the spirit of innovation, vision and tenacity. A shared vision made for a pairing between entrepreneurs and a financial institution that set a course of action in motion that became a true game changer.

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innovative catering at Edmonton's TELUS World of Science.

The business, the art and the science of events.

The transformation.

By John Hardy

Events, particularly in the Edmonton area, continue to be transformed.

For a long time, the traditional formula for business or private events was a smooth and tried-and-true success. Keynote speeches in the main hall. Breakout room meetings. Networking cocktail reception. Buffett and sit-down feasting. Celebrations. Schmoozing at its best.

Consumer trends, technology and COVID changed all that.

While private events like weddings and anniversaries still tend to cling to traditions and routines, the planning and the focus of contemporary business events continue to be re-imagined in planning, delivery and event follow through.

For the business of conventions and corporate events of all sizes, The Edmonton Convention Centre (ECC) is a much-in-demand facility. Edmonton's official marketing pitch for event planners brags that Edmonton is "located at the foot of North America's largest urban parkland and in the heart of a thriving downtown, offering over 150,000 square feet of flexible and creative event space."

New trends are also re-shaping the ECC focus but, for 32 years, it has hosted almost every type of conference or convention imaginable.

For various reasons, Edmonton events are also embracing some smaller event locations, like Fort Edmonton Park, the Telus World of Science facility and the unique Métis Crossing, which is a popular event facility and the first major Métis cultural interpretive centre in Smoky Lake, Alberta.

Although event planning and event management are often used interchangeably, the jobs are different. Event planners primarily focus on the creative and conceptual elements of an event as the visionaries, responsible for design, themes and ensuring every detail aligns with the client's goals. Event managers are the operational backbone, executing plans and overseeing the logistics that bring the event to life.

Event professionals agree that technology is transforming events at warp speed. Inflation (being blamed for many things) has taken its toll and rising costs for event marketing, and hospitality teams to do more with less is a basic reality. There's a greater demand than ever for experiential events, as well as a renewed focus on inclusivity and sustainability.

Smaller Edmonton event venues tend to be more hands-on in collaborating with clients and event hosts.

Several event management surveys point out some key event trends.

- In-person events will dominate but virtual is huge.
- Planners must consider experience-first events.
- Technology is critical.
- AI is becoming more and more a standard event component.
- Finding new ways to reimagine attendee engagement.
- Marketing plays an important role in effective events.

Smaller Edmonton event venues tend to be more hands-on in collaborating with clients and event hosts.

"There is an increasing demand for distinctive venues that leave a lasting impression," explains Kate Wylie, director, guest experience at Edmonton's TELUS World of Science. "We are thrilled to see a diverse range of clients envisioning unforgettable experiences within our extraordinary space.

"Customization is important. Clients are looking to build a unique experience with a growing emphasis on customization. Our exceptional team goes above and beyond, collaborating closely with each client to plan every detail. Even when requests extend beyond our typical scope, we are committed to meeting their needs and delivering events that are as unique and memorable as their vision."

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Being in a national historic site along a heritage river adds to Métis Crossing's specialness.

Whether it's cocktail schmoozes or big banquets, the food is always an important feature of events. Wylie mentions that TELUS World of Science works closely with local caterers to provide an exceptional culinary experience tailored to every event.

"For family-focused gatherings, we proudly offer a delightful array of fun, child-friendly menu options that are always a crowd pleaser. For adult events, elegant charcuterie boards remain a standout favourite. Our versatile spaces are also ideal for cocktail receptions, where guests can enjoy thoughtfully curated hot and cold hors d'oeuvres or interactive food stations."

She points out that COVID has significantly impacted event expectations. There is a noticeable shift in the tightening of timelines for planning, RSVPs and other event logistics. While not universal, some events are now being organized and executed with much shorter timelines than prior to COVID.

She adds that technology is a key aspect of today's event planning, noting that the popularity of hybrid events combines in-person hosting with live-streaming capabilities.

"To meet this growing demand, this year we are making significant technology upgrades to our IMAX Theatre to ensure a seamless and exceptional experience for hybrid events. In addition to creating unique and memorable experiences for their guests, clients are also prioritizing tech-enhanced features, sustainable practices, exceptional support and a commitment to accessibility and inclusivity. These values align perfectly with what we offer, making it the ideal venue for events ranging from conferences and client appreciation gatherings to award ceremonies and weddings."

Métis Crossing, 1.5 hours northeast of Edmonton, is a popular and singular event facility. With its unique charm and commitment to heritage and culture, it is a special facility offering legendary event experiences, not only for event success but, "an event experience that elevates the spirit," says a representative of Métis Crossing.

"We are seeing more value-driven decisions being made when it comes to selecting venues and modes of event delivery. Discerning clients want to ensure they are working

with businesses that share the same values. Clients choose Métis Crossing to host their events for many reasons, partially because our values and that we are Indigenous owned.

"People want a connection to their experience through story. They want to know how the food was prepared and where it comes from. We have a mandate to support local and Métis suppliers. As an example, Métis Crossing is working with a local rancher to establish a bison herd that supplies our bison and beef. There is also an indoor garden that supplies the kitchen with greens and a field of saskatoon and haskap bushes.

"Good service and quality experience are a must. How the guests feel during their stay is what makes the difference when selecting a venue. We have comfortable offerings that allow the participants to focus on the event. Being in a national historic site along a heritage river setting adds to Métis Crossing being special."

Although technology is an important aspect of Métis Crossing events, it is just one of several components for the facility being a popular event draw.

The biggest shift from COVID is the movement to more virtual event delivery.

"We invested in AV equipment and production opportunities to allow us to deliver meetings, events and experiences virtually. However, there is a connection that happens in person that virtual cannot capture. As a cultural destination, we rely on the in-person delivery of experiences and events. There is a sense of place at Métis Crossing that is hard to capture virtually," the rep notes.

Professionals in the event planning and management sector are positive about 2025 events, but caution that, with attendees bombarded with more content than ever, event planners and marketers must find creative new ways to engage with their audiences. There is more focus on crafting compelling content and breakout sessions, wellness spaces and greater networking opportunities.





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Building something tangible.

For PCL's President and CEO Chris Gower, building means more than lumber and nails.

By Nerissa McNaughton

PCL's President and CEO Chris Gower.
Photo by Amanda Bachelot, PCL Construction

“You show up in the morning, put in a day’s work and when you leave, you’ve built something – that’s what I love about it,” he says with a smile. “You never do it alone. No one builds a house by themselves. It takes a team of people working together toward a common goal. That sense of collaboration really speaks to me.”

For more than 119 years, PCL Construction has changed city skylines and grown communities. With an incredibly unique corporate culture for a corporation of its size, along with a passion for giving back to the communities it serves, PCL has moved beyond building and into the realm of transformation for people and projects locally and abroad.

PCL has had just nine CEOs, all of whom came into the position with hands-on experience in the field. This is especially true of current president and CEO Chris Gower, who assumed the role on November 1, 2024.

His journey with PCL started 30 years ago.

“I started in October of 1995,” Gower reminisces. “I was working in consulting but missed my previous job where I was using tools. Wanting to get back to building instead of advising, I listened to the advice of a good friend who said PCL was hiring.”

After a successful application and interview process, Gower would have a first day that would transform his career and set the course of his own leadership style.

“My first day at PCL happened to coincide with the company’s year-end meeting – a celebration that brings the entire team together. During the event, Ross Grieve, who was CEO at the time, came over and introduced himself. To my surprise, I found myself having a beer and a conversation with the most senior leader in the company on day one. He spent about 20 minutes asking thoughtful questions about my life—not out of obligation, but from a place of genuine interest. That moment left a lasting impression on me. It set the tone for my entire career at PCL and inspired me to lead with the same authenticity and impact.”

Gower framed houses part-time during college and has always enjoyed construction because of “that feeling of accomplishing something tangible that creates value for someone.”

“You show up in the morning, put in a day’s work and when you leave, you’ve built something—that’s what I love about it,” he says with a smile. “You never do it alone. No one builds a house by themselves. It takes a team of people working together toward a common goal. That sense of collaboration really speaks to me.”

These are values he carried through his career as he worked his way from the field to CEO.

“When we, as a management team, set policies and practices, we never forget that someone in the field is out there doing the work—and it’s tough work,” Gower says. “That’s the advantage of starting my career in the field. I’ve seen firsthand the value each person brings to a project, and that perspective keeps me grounded. You can’t lose sight of who’s doing the work and the purpose behind it.”

It goes beyond PCL. Gower is very aware of the looming skilled trades deficit and is an active advocate about what needs to be done to address the problem.

"We're facing a trades crisis—and if we don't have people willing and eager to build our hospitals, bridges and roads, we're heading for real trouble," he says. "There simply isn't enough awareness or education about the vital role trades play in Canada's infrastructure ecosystem. That needs to change."

Gower explains, "The government has the power to decide which parts of the economy to support through subsidies and incentives. When you consider the massive economic impact construction has on Canada's GDP—and the essential role tradespeople play in building the infrastructure we all rely on—it's surprising that the skilled trades shortage hasn't received more national attention."

"I've been actively raising this issue, and I'm fortunate to sit in forums with others who care deeply about this province and country. Whether I'm meeting with CEOs or economists, I use the opportunity to bring the trades conversation to the forefront—because the industries that depend on this workforce need to understand what's at stake."

"I realize it can be politically difficult to support one segment of the population, and I know the debate can be complex. However, given the economic engine behind construction and its critical importance to our future, I'm genuinely surprised this hasn't become a larger national priority."

There has been some hope and a bit of progress in this area, Gower confirms.

"When I think about Prime Minister Mark Carney's recent announcement on infrastructure, one thing is clear: it must include a serious investment in the skilled trades," he says. "Infrastructure doesn't build itself—it requires labour. When labour is in short supply, costs rise disproportionately."

"Many people focus on basic labour cost as a driver of inflation, but it's important to understand the full picture. If we don't address the workforce side of the equation, the cost of delivering infrastructure will continue to escalate well beyond basic labour and material cost increases. Those who plan and fund these projects care deeply about cost—and that cost is directly tied to labour availability."

"As construction leaders, it's our responsibility to advocate for workforce development. We need to help governments and industry stakeholders understand the barriers, the long-term impacts and the urgency of investing in the people who make infrastructure possible."

Gower's firm and proactive stance on increasing the volume, visibility and sentiment about trades is echoed in another divisive and disruptive aspect of the construction industry.

"You can't be slow to adopt AI. You would fall behind and not be able to match customer demand," Gower says. "AI is part of innovation and PCL has been innovative for decades. We built our own software solutions long before it was popular and in demand. We leverage or create technology so we can work smarter, safer and with greater efficiency."

Innovating also means allowing the team to bring their ideas forward.



Chris providing a company update at one of PCL's Fireside Chats.



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“Being an employee-owned company gives people an equity stake and therefore the authority and ability to implement changes and take action,” says Gower. “PCL needs to be able to change as fast as the world around us, which is easier said than done without a diverse array of invested voices at the table. Sometimes their ideas work. Sometimes they do not, but every idea is an opportunity to learn and adapt or adjust and retool.”

What Gower finds most meaningful is PCL’s 100 per cent employee-owned model—it allows him to witness firsthand how shared ownership empowers individuals and drives collective success.

“When the company is employee owned, people care about outcomes. That is the pride of ownership. Our job is to connect what creates future value for the company to every employee who is an owner. If they see the outcomes could be enhanced by innovating, then you instantly allow your organization to be agile. Financially and emotionally invested individuals organically improve the company and the corporate culture. The wins of the employees are, to me, more powerful than any career win I experience myself. My joy comes from seeing our employees get promoted or achieve success. I learn so much from the people around me.”

Another source of daily inspiration for Gower is the alignment between his personal values and PCL’s deep-rooted commitment to community giving.

“Our founder, Ernie Poole, wrote down on a piece of paper the importance of philanthropic behaviour. It was part of PCL’s DNA from the start. Our 55 years of giving back to the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region is just one example.”

As his first year in the president and CEO role draws to a close, Gower broadens his reflection and thinks about the gratitude he has for PCL’s role in helping to make Alberta a place to thrive.

“The modern Alberta advantage is that this province has a history of solving problems, creating opportunities and driving entrepreneurship,” says Gower. “PCL is intent on fostering all of these advantages for Alberta. I would like to see this province partner with other provinces and with the federal government and have two-way conversations about moving forward together.

“Currently, Alberta has been doing most of the work to bridge the gaps. For Alberta to be truly successful, we must establish more relationships with other parts of Canada and with the federal government. It is unfortunate to hear all the good things happening locally, but for that message not to be returned to me when I’m in places like Ontario. Together, there is an opportunity to create that mutual understanding through meaningful partnerships, which will create benefits and opportunities for all Canadians.”

Despite the challenges of helping to position Alberta on the national stage and the ongoing discussions around the labour shortage, Gower can’t help but be thrilled to go to work every day in a company that is driving meaningful change for its people, the province and the communities that keep it all connected.

“Alberta has a real sense of community. We don’t waste time making excuses—we just get things done,” he says. “It’s easy to see why people choose to immigrate here. Edmontonians are resilient, forward-moving and that spirit is reflected in PCL’s journey.

“We’re globally diversified in every sense—from our people and culture to the projects we deliver. Our headquarters right here in Edmonton is the hub of a company that competes on the world stage. In fact, we recently delivered the number one project in North America, as recognized by Engineering News-Record.

“As Albertans—and especially as Edmontonians—we’re humble about our achievements, but the truth is, we’re doing incredible things both locally and around the globe.”

As his career progressed, Gower was both pleased and humbled to be included in Canada’s Top 40 Under 40 when he was 39. Gower also recalls the surprise and pride he felt when Dave Filipchuk, board chair, informed him that he was going to be PCL’s ninth CEO.

PCL’s President and CEO Chris Gower.
Photo by Amanda Bachelot, PCL Construction



"The recognitions are great, but the by-products are what give me value. They give me a chance to look internally and check in. Am I meeting my own values and goals? Am I a good person and acting as a well-rounded human being? It is a gift to be able to check in with oneself and be accountable."

From field labour to the C-suite, Gower remains humble, grateful and knows that success professionally or personally stems, in part, from teamwork.

Despite the challenges of helping to position Alberta on the national stage and the ongoing discussions around the labour shortage, Gower can't help but be thrilled to go to work every day in a company that is driving meaningful change for its people, the province and the communities that keep it all connected.

"Things are going very well," he says as his first year in the chair concludes and he looks forward to many more in the future. "Someone once asked me what I would change as CEO and the truth is, if I had to change a lot of things now, I would have been a terrible former COO and board member. The leadership and board act as a collaborative, cohesive team. Former president and CEO Dave Filipchuk excelled at focusing on what matters now to create future value. When I was granted my current role, my hand was already on the steering wheel because we steer this ship with collective wisdom, not as individuals – and that is never going to change. We are proud enough to know what each of us brings to the table, and humble enough to recognize the opportunities for growth and improvement."

Gower concludes with a story that shows the power of PCL and how it connects people, places and communities.

"One of my first jobs at PCL was helping to build a major performing arts centre. We spent countless hours perfecting the acoustics and stage design. A decade later, my daughter performed in a dance recital on that very stage. That was a standout moment for me—seeing something I helped create come to life in such a personal and meaningful way. It was incredibly validating and, honestly, just really cool. It reminded me of the deeper purpose behind what we do at PCL—creating spaces that bring moments to life for people and communities, both within and beyond our company."

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MACEWAN UNIVERSITY PILOT PROJECT AIMS TO ASSIST STUDENTS WITH OFF- CAMPUS HOUSING



MacEwan University has spent the past many months working with developers and property owners to find solutions for student housing. An initial pilot phase with local developers Qualico Properties and Maclab Development Group will give students a discount on nearby housing. Ensuring students have housing that is affordable and suited to their needs is key to their academic success.

"Improving housing accessibility and affordability takes a creative approach to address the pressures our students are experiencing," says Dr. Annette Trimbee, president and vice-chancellor. "Eighteen months ago we started talking with developers about how they might plan and build for the growing demand for housing near campus in a way that meets student needs. I'm proud to be collaborating with Qualico Properties and Maclab Development Group



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Starting in summer 2025, MacEwan's off-campus housing pilot program will offer student discounts on select downtown rentals allowing them to live near campus, walk to class and explore the heart of Edmonton.

"We are extremely pleased to be collaborating with MacEwan on this pilot project since we all have a vested interest in providing housing support to students," says Mike Saunders, senior vice-president, Qualico Properties. "All businesses benefit from ensuring that young people are getting a quality post-secondary education before they enter the workforce and contribute to the economic success in this city and this province."

"We always seek to involve the community in all of our

MacEwan plays an important role in the vibrancy, safety and revitalization of downtown, so this pilot project plays a part of that commitment. This is just one element of a larger initiative by MacEwan to help students succeed while facing higher costs of living.

developments,” says Bill Blais, president and CEO, Maclab Development Group. “As an Edmonton-based developer, partnering with MacEwan is a source of pride for us and we want to be part of the solution for students who are looking for housing now and into the future.”

Students who are interested in benefiting from this pilot project can do so by contacting the select property owners to learn what units and lease terms are available. A lease on an eligible unit must

be signed before September 1, 2025, to qualify for the discount.

MacEwan plays an important role in the vibrancy, safety and revitalization of downtown, so this pilot project plays a part of that commitment. This is just one element of a larger initiative by MacEwan to help students succeed while facing higher costs of living. The participating properties with units that are available for discounts are The Switch at 10465 101 Street and The Parks at 10135 108 Street.



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Carrie Armstrong founded Mother Earth Essentials with a vision to **share the richness of Indigenous culture and the restorative power of traditional plant medicine**. What started as a small selection of handmade soaps, rooted in teachings passed down by Elder Francis Whiskeyjack, has blossomed into a nationally recognized brand offering wellness and lifestyle products inspired by Indigenous knowledge. Today, the company's offerings include aromatic teas, bath and body care, candles, and skincare products—all created with **reverence for the land and a commitment to sustainability**.



Located in a welcoming space overlooking Edmonton's river valley and the sacred Medicine Wheel Garden, Mother Earth Essentials serves not only as a retail shop, but as a **gathering place for education, ceremony, and community engagement**. The store also

offers cultural gifting and protocol options, including ceremonial tobacco and sage, making it a trusted resource for both personal wellness and traditional practices.

As a proud new member of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, Mother Earth Essentials is **eager to connect with like-minded businesses, amplify Indigenous voices, and continue building a brand that supports healing, cultural pride, and local economic growth**.

 motherearth.ca | [@motherearthessentials](https://www.instagram.com/motherearthessentials)

At the Edmonton Chamber, we know that every successful business has a story worth sharing. Each month, we highlight Chamber members who are making an impact in our community, showcasing their contributions, innovations, and the goods and services they provide to Edmontonians.

Read their stories and support the local businesses that help our city thrive.



Shannon McCarthy leads Trade Winds to Success, an Indigenous-led nonprofit that empowers First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals through hands-on training and support in the skilled trades. Since launching in 2005, **the organization has guided more than 3,000 participants toward meaningful careers** in high-demand Red Seal construction trades, with a focus on cultural inclusion, mentorship, and real-world experience.

Under Shannon's leadership, Trade Winds has continued to grow its reach through innovative programming, including mobile training opportunities that serve remote and rural communities across Alberta. One of the organization's standout initiatives involves building **energy-efficient homes that are gifted to Indigenous families**—giving trainees practical skills and a powerful sense of purpose.



By joining the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, Trade Winds to Success has **expanded its network of employers and collaborators, raising awareness about its mission and creating new opportunities for Indigenous tradespeople**. As the organization continues to strengthen its impact, it looks forward to connecting with local businesses that value diversity, inclusion, and workforce development grounded in reconciliation.

 tradewindstosuccess.ca



The value of mixed use.

Revitalizing downtown Edmonton.

By John Hardy

Commercial real estate is both a catalyst and a reliable gauge for measuring the revitalization of downtown Edmonton. Lease rates, amenities, mixed-use spaces, market flux, mergers and acquisitions, inventory, vacancy and absorption stats and trends are all important aspects of Edmonton's commercial real estate.

The numbers and trends confirm that Edmonton's downtown has transformed over the last 10 years, with more than \$4.7 billion in developments in the residential, office, educational, cultural and entertainment sectors.

When it comes to the bottom line, the most recent Avison Young Edmonton Office Market report tracks that, although Q1 2025 was the second consecutive quarter of negative absorption, downward pressure has decreased. There was 56,920 square feet of negative absorption, which was an improvement from the negative absorption of 121,500 square feet at the end of last year.

The report also showed that the downtown sector had an overall vacancy increase of 36 basis points, with Financial B and Government C class space having the only reduction in vacancy.

“There are many factors affecting Edmonton’s office market,” explains Mark Anderson, vice president of CBRE in Edmonton, “but one of the most significant is the cost of construction. As construction prices continue to rise, due mostly to tariff uncertainty and labour shortages, the feasibility for companies to relocate and build new offices has fallen. It invariably puts more pressure on companies to stay within their current premises and it slows market activity.

“This can also slow the rate at which vacancy is absorbed. Those who may otherwise benefit from relocating and marginally expanding their office footprint may be pressured to stick with a space that is a little too small and make it work.”

According to Robynn Holstein, executive director of NAIOP Edmonton, the voice of commercial real estate development in the Edmonton region, “Our area’s commercial development industry is facing key challenges, including high downtown office vacancies, reduced foot traffic and retail instability. Lower pedestrian activity driven by hybrid work trends has hurt street-level retail and hospitality, making it harder to sustain vibrant mixed-use areas.”

She adds that access issues, due to ongoing infrastructure projects, uncertainty in permitting, underutilized sites and being the highest in non-residential tax rates in the region, are further deterring investment.

NAIOP points out that, despite rising costs and labour shortages adding pressure, there is encouraging momentum in mixed-use and suburban projects. Edmonton’s commercial real estate professionals agree on the positive value of mixed-use space.

“Mixed use is absolutely essential to a healthy and vibrant downtown and urban neighbourhoods in general,” explains a representative of the Edmonton Downtown Business Association (EDBA). “That could mean several different things. Residential with retail on the ground floor, a tower that is split between residential and office or even a hotel mixed with retail and residential. There are endless combinations to make the most out of downtown real estate.”

The EDBA references successful mixed-use properties, including Connect Tower and Connect Residences (the former Phipps-McKinnon building), where the residential is still under construction and the ground floor retail is fully leased; The Legends Residences; SKY Signature Suites, Stantec Tower and others.

Edmonton’s zoning bylaws allow for various mixed-use zones, including residential mixed use, commercial mixed-use and general mixed use. The zone categories support housing, recreation, commerce and employment while enhancing public spaces and pedestrian-friendly environments.

Holstein notes that, “Mixed-use developments are playing a pivotal role in reshaping Edmonton’s urban landscape, offering integrated spaces that combine residential,

commercial and recreational uses. These projects not only enhance the vibrancy of neighbourhoods but also contribute to economic resilience and community engagement.”

Some other successful examples of Edmonton’s mixed use projects are the City Centre Mall, the major mixed-use redevelopment project credited with jump starting the revitalization of downtown Edmonton; the high-profile Rogers Place and ICE District, Canada’s largest mixed-use sports and entertainment district; The Parks, a multi-use complex at the corner of Jasper Avenue and 108 Street; West Block Glenora, the 3.5 acre mixed-use site combining high rise residential units with office and retail spaces and The Switch at Station Lands, the transformative project featuring two residential towers built on top of a retail podium.

Anderson suggests a mixed-use qualifier, “Mixed-use developments are valuable but not as important as having mixed uses in proximity to each other. Edmonton needs more residents to choose to live downtown, whether it be in mixed-use buildings or dedicated residential properties. Mixed-use buildings are great, but cohabitating those uses together adds cost and planning. These properties make a lot more sense in settings where there is limited land, but Edmonton does not have this constraint in many of the areas where attracting residents is a priority.”



Mark Anderson, vice president of CBRE in Edmonton.

“There are many factors affecting Edmonton’s office market,” explains Anderson, “but one of the most significant is the cost of construction.”



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The experts agree. While mixed-use development and other factors are vital for downtown revitalization, a basic key ingredient is people.

“A strong downtown starts with people,” emphasizes Holstein. “Revitalizing Edmonton’s core means attracting more people to live, work and spend time downtown. This is key to addressing high vacancy, safety concerns and economic uncertainty. Investing in housing, cleanliness, public safety, business growth and vibrant public spaces should be considered minimum expectations of all Edmontonians, in addition to public and private policies that support return to office and clear City policies and programs that enable private investment.”

She mentions some Edmonton downtown visuals, which are revitalization obstacles.

“A strategy for addressing abandoned or underdeveloped sites is important, as some properties affect both the perception and value of the entire area. Acting strategically and without delay will help maintain momentum, attract new investment and deliver lasting benefits for the entire city.”

The EDBA emphasizes that increasing downtown’s residential population is the single most important factor for revitalization.

“Property owners are getting creative with their assets, with options like much more recreation uses in existing retail spaces, healthcare assets and other development opportunities. On the government side, we have a major problem

The EDBA emphasizes that increasing downtown’s residential population is the single most important factor for revitalization.

with old and deteriorating infrastructure in areas of downtown, like the entrances to our LRT stations, that detract from vibrancy and economic viability. The City making the necessary investments would also make a big difference.”

Anderson stresses some basics for downtown revitalization.

“Downtown must be safe, clean and attractive. The major factors are improvements to real and perceived safety and security concerns, improvements in maintenance and cleanliness and attracting more people – residents or office workers.”

He is revved about the momentum and the future of Edmonton downtown.

“We expect 2025-2026 to be another good year for revitalization in our core. Progress has and is being made, maybe not at the pace that some would like to see, but there are many reasons to be optimistic about the direction the core of our city is heading.”



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From foundations to fine Wine.

Celebrating the 50-year legacy of the Giusti Group.

Written by Rennay Craats



CELEBRATING
50 YEARS

To find the quintessential Canadian Dream success story, one needs only to follow the tale of Ermenegildo (Joe) Giusti, a young Italian immigrant who took Canadian construction by storm. As a child, his relatives in Vancouver enticed him with stories about Canada and he dreamed about one day seeing it for himself. Three years working in a factory as a teenager showed him that he wanted to control his own destiny, so in 1973, the 17-year-old set out with \$20 in his pocket to chase that destiny across the ocean.

“It started with a dream to immigrate to a different world, to have an opportunity to build something big, to create my own fortune with my own family and to work hard to set the stage for the next generation to continue it,” says Joe Giusti, founder of the Giusti Group of Companies.

Joe’s brother, Fanio, followed him to Canada and within six months they started a framing and cribbing business together in British Columbia’s Fraser Valley. They had a strong passion for construction and were determined to not only always do their best but to improve upon their best every day. Giusti Brothers Construction (GBC) grew quickly to meet the growing demand, but despite that growth, they never let their high standards falter; they could be counted on to keep their word, go above and beyond for clients, and be reliable and honest in an industry that all too often lacked those qualities. From the onset, clients were viewed as partners and the brothers worked at forging strong relationships to make them robust enough to last for decades. Fifty

years later, the Giusti Group’s long list of repeat clients shows that the brothers vision succeeded.

These early partnerships were built on trust and sealed with a handshake, and for his entire career, Joe worked to earn that trust by exceeding expectations and contributing to his partners’ successes, one job at a time. Thanks to these partners, Giusti Group earned a stellar reputation for high quality, integrity and great customer service in the industry.

Joe found the balance between efficiency and excellence, and he reinvested his profits to grow his vision for both. He expanded his service offerings with Julian Ceramic Tile in the mid-’70s, ventured into the multi-family housing market in the mid-’80s and extended his reach into Calgary’s construction sector in the mid-’90s. He partnered with a B.C. client on his



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first project in Calgary, and once here he recognized such huge potential in the area that he relocated his family and the company’s head office to Calgary in 1997.

This move marked a turning point for the company. Fanio returned to Italy to care for aging relatives and the next generation of Giustis stepped in to fill his shoes. Joe and Maria’s three boys had been learning the business since they were young and there was little question that they were destined to join the family business after university.

“When we were kids, we took advantage of any leftover construction materials and used them for elaborate tree forts and such,” says Jiuliano Giusti. “All three of us grew up around it so I think it was a foregone conclusion for us.”

And since the early 2000s, they have certainly left their mark on the organization. Gildo handles commercial business development and client relations throughout Alberta and B.C., Jiuliano oversees the overall operations and finances for the Giusti Group of Companies, and Roland now oversees the day-to-day operations of the Giusti division in B.C. The multifaceted organization employs over 750 people and has grown across five main business areas: Giusti Group LP, Giusti Wall Tech, Viper Concrete, Giusti North Construction and Julian Ceramic Tile. These businesses have expanded



with branches across Western Canada and the U.S. Together, these entities make the Giusti Group of Companies a leader in heavy industrial, commercial and multi-family residential construction.

The Giusti Group’s continued growth is supported by the entire hardworking and dedicated team across the organization, some of whom have been with the company for more than 40 years, including the head of Giusti Wall Tech who was one of the company’s first hires nearly 50 years ago. Giusti Group started as a family business and each person hired since became part of the extended Giusti family. That’s why it’s important to the family that their employees feel respected, valued and set up for success so they can flourish.



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- Creating placing drawings and fabrication production order
- Scheduling the fabrication and delivery as required to meet the concrete pour schedule

When asked about pivotal projects completed in the past, Gildo Giusti shifted the focus to Giusti's clients. "Rather than highlighting our key projects, we want to recognize our clientele, as each and every one of their projects are special to us. Our clients are the envy of our competitors – they are among the most loyal and dedicated companies in the industry. Many are based in Calgary, and like us, are second-generation businesses committed to their craft and driven to be 'best-in-class.' Our clients, our people and the family's commitment to investing back into the industry that has given us so much are the cornerstone of our success."

"Our success comes from our own commitment but also the commitment of our people. They go hand in hand. Without our people and their commitment every day, we're only as good as the four of us. That DNA of hard work is bred into our people and has been ingrained in the culture since my dad started the company," says Roland Giusti. "These are things that don't happen overnight. It's just year after year, continued dedication from our people."

Not only does Giusti invest in top-of-the-line equipment to make employees' jobs easier, they also thoroughly train their employees on how to use it safely and effectively. The family invests heavily in organization-wide training and is proud to be an industry leader in safety with six full-time safety professionals who have earned the Nationally Certified Safety Officer (NCSO) designation. Each employee at the Giusti Group lives the safety and quality standards, and takes pride in doing the best possible job every day.

That dedication goes both ways. The family doesn't hesitate to stand shoulder to shoulder with the team and roll up their sleeves to make sure jobs get done and clients are completely satisfied. This dedication and drive was all Joe needed to see to know the second generation was as invested in the wellbeing and growth

of the organization as he was. In 2015, he handed the reins to his sons and confidently stepped away from the business to pursue his other emerging passions: Italy and wine.

The Giusti family has worked the land in the Montello Region for hundreds of years and despite the challenges and hardships of that life, Joe loved growing up on the farm. It's no wonder then, that after retiring, the land and memories of Italy called him back home. In 1998, Joe and Maria started buying land and rebuilding the family property. Shortly thereafter, the winery evolved from selling grapes to other wineries to making its own wine. Today, the Giusti family is the largest landowner in the area and has built an award-winning state-of-the-art winery on his stunning Veneto property. Guests can even book a B&B stay at the winery to experience the beauty, and of course the incredible wine. This is a spectacular package that the Giusti Group has donated to charity auctions to help raise money for worthy causes in Canada.

"We were named one of the best wineries in Italy and are considered to be one of the best in Europe," says



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Joe. “Producing the best wine possible is a way to say thank you to the world because I’ve been so blessed.”

Just as in construction, the Giusti wine business is a family affair. Joe surrounds himself with exceptional people like the renowned winemaker Graziana Grassini. His nephew Gabriele Zanatta is learning the business under her to carry on the Giusti legacy in the area.

The family is proud of all they have accomplished to date to create this legacy but they know they have a few more generations’ worth of work left to do.

“This milestone represents a generational commitment that spans 50 years. We are every fortunate that our father established deep roots, and had a strong commitment to not only our clients, but also to our Industry as a whole. That same level of commitment has been ingrained in both of my brothers and myself” Says Giuliano. “Given that we are a family based business, we are looking forward to seeing the next generation embrace this commitment, and share the same passion for our craft, that their fathers and grandfather had.”

The Giusti passion and work ethic runs deeply through the family, and that strong foundation will support future generations as they add more chapters to the Giusti family’s Canadian Dream success story.

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Focused, agile and dedicated to the families they serve.

Encore Master Builder celebrates 41 years.

Written by Nerissa McNaughton

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EXPECT TO BE IMPRESSED

Encore Master Builder was founded in 1984 by Doug Hoffman. “He started the business out of our house,” present day co-owner Kim Gibbons remembers. “He had been working for a different company, but when that company shut its doors, he decided to start his own business. That was the beginning of Encore Homes.”

Hoffman built up the brand at a steady pace, achieved his Master Home Builder certification, and changed the name to Encore Master Builder.

Co-owner, president and Gibbons’ brother-in-law, Kevin Read joined Encore after obtaining his university degree and also obtained his Master Builder certification. Gibbons and Read took ownership of Encore in 2015.

Encore Master Builder is a long-term partner of the City of Edmonton, helping to develop communities such as La Perle, Miller and Brintnell, and being a driving force in the City’s secondary suite garage program. The work with the City led Encore to one of its most ambitious projects to date – Blatchford.

A project designed to revolutionize the sustainable way homes can be built, and to showcase how Edmonton is a leader in the development of long-term housing in efficient, walkable communities, Blatchford’s green building codes demand 70 per cent higher energy performance over industry standards.

“Currently, Blatchford is our primary community in Edmonton,” says Read. “We have morphed out of our focus on infill and large-scale residential renovations.”

Blatchford and Encore are a natural fit.

“Certainly, Blatchford has had its challenges in the public eye,” Read admits, “and the process to be involved as a builder was very rigorous. However, Encore has done many green projects over the years. Even though this is a step above the usual sustainability standards, we are willing and excited to take the lead. We are builders. This is what we do!”

In addition to bringing their expertise in green building to the project, the Encore team was also interested in the learning curve – and it was a very steep one. For example, learning how to incorporate the community’s geothermal system was a challenge.

“We spend the first four years of the project learning alongside planning,” smiles Read. “Now we are seeing the growth phase, and that is truly exciting. The demand has come full circle and we are building more units this year than ever before.”

Gibbons adds, “To go from the company office being the kitchen table to building in Blatchford feels wonderful. When we took over the company from my



parents, our vision aligned with their original iteration of the company. However, our vision also differed in some ways because the world itself is changing. The idea of Encore being in a community competing with other showhomes became less appealing. We made the conscious decision to focus on sustainable housing and suites. It's been about 20 years, and we are seeing proof that we made the right choice."

The decision to focus firmly on sustainable building, living the values of expertise in customer service, practicing and engaging in KYC (know your customer) principles and remaining a small-volume builder despite having the ability and capacity to be a large volume builder were driving factors in an incredible opportunity for Encore. In addition to focusing on Blatchford, Encore Master Builder was invited to take part in another, very special, project – rebuilding Jasper.

Read previously sat on the board of BILD Alberta Edmonton chapter, and, "As such, we got asked to take part in the Jasper rebuild," he explains. "Kim and I took some time to think about the request, and we said yes. We are loving being a part of this!"

Gibbons adds, "The residents of Jasper are beyond resilient and are just phenomenal. We find the project very exciting. Things are at the permitting stage and moving forward smoothly. It is a highlight for Encore to be asked to be a part of this inspiring chapter for Jasper, and we couldn't be prouder of being involved as a Master builder."

Encore is also a part of Building Futures.

A unique program aimed at supporting the province's teachers, Building Futures works in tandem with the education system to give students practical, hands-on life and job skills. St. Albert public school invites Grade 10 students to work on building a house alongside tradespeople and the Encore team. This is immensely beneficial for students seeking direction in the trades.

"It is also important for our industry, knowing the trades deficit," adds Kim. "We are helping to build a quality trades base for the future."

Encore Master Builder succeeds for many reasons, chief among them is knowing who they are and knowing who their customers are. This is far from accidental. The foundational values set by the Hoffmans were built on by Gibbons and Read. This attracted a like-minded team who are all on board about the laser focus on sustainable, attainable builds that suit each individual family, over being a large-volume builder.

"We are not afraid to take risks," Kim shares of other things that drive Encore's success. "Every time we do





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something, we learn a lot and as a team. We are all hands on in every aspect, from the management to the field. As a small builder, we get to leverage all the strengths of our team. They get to work on multiple aspects of every project, and this keeps them engaged.”

Read agrees, “Things will always ebb and flow in this market. Sometimes there are trade shortages or even a lack of access to land. Other times it’s a very busy year. Staying true to our identity and path while having the ability to remain agile, but most importantly, being a cohesive team that genuinely cares about what we do and whom we do it for, sets us apart. We know who we are; we know how to pivot and move with the times.”

Both agree that for them and for the team, whether it is a green-built home in Blatchford, a restored home in Jasper, a community boosting infill in Edmonton or an income-generating suite in the city, the moment they hand over the keys and see the look on the homeowner’s face is the most moving part of the process.

“That look of joy,” smiles Gibbons, “reminds us of why we do what we do.”

She adds, “If I could tell our clients anything, it would be that building a home is a very emotional and stressful journey for the homeowner, and we know that. Everyone at Encore Master Builder cares. We really do care, and we really do treat you as a person and as a family. In our staff meetings, we know your names. Your project is not just a house. It’s your house. We intentionally do not build a lot of homes each year so we can keep the focus where it belongs, which is on the homeowner.

“The size of our company is very intentional,” says Read. “As a small volume builder, we remain agile. We did build 80 homes in one year, as we have the capacity to do so. However, we found that the personal connection to our clients dipped, so we reduced our build numbers to align with our foundational values.”

In 2022, Encore Master Builder won a BILD® Edmonton Excellence in Housing Small Volume Builder of the Year award.

“That is a tough award to win,” says Gibbons. “It includes those who build as few as four houses per year. The award was driven by client feedback, and we had to get the same feedback as a small volume builder that did 40 homes. The validation of seeing our values recognized and appreciated was deeply felt on every level. It was proof that choosing to remain smaller, agile and focused over profits was the right path.”

Encore is also pleased to have recognition through the Constellation Homebuilder Systems CustomerInsight™ awards as Builder of Choice



(winner 2021, 2023) and Best Customer Experience (finalist 2022, 2023).

Gibbons and Read thank Doug and Linda Hoffman for launching both Encore. “They founded the company and they supported us as we took it over. They still support us to this day.”

They also thank the subtrades and the team. “You cannot be a builder without trades and your team. Some of our people have been with us for 40 years. We are blessed to have an awesome team behind us.”

The future of Encore Master Builder is an exciting one as they innovate in Blatchford and help rebuild Jasper.



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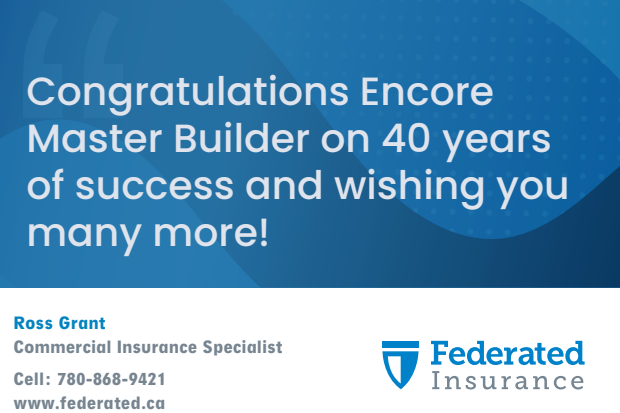
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Written by Nerissa McNaughton with photos by Theresa Muth Photography

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Joel Helm, CPM, broker, has been in property management all his life. “My father owned and managed properties,” he reminisces. “As a boy, I would help my parents by cutting the grass and collecting rent.” As time went on, his path became clear. He greatly enjoyed the work and decided to open Helm Property Management & Realty Ltd.

Although only in his 30s at the time, Joel had both the experience and an aptitude for the business. He partnered with Jeff Rubin, a licensed Realtor, and worked alongside him as he grew his own list of certifications and designations. In time, Joel and Jeff’s paths naturally diverged and Joel continued to grow Helm.

Now, 35 years later, Helm is widely known as the trusted, experienced choice for the management of buildings, turnarounds, rentals and condominiums; providing financial management services to clients, along with owner representation/liaison services; managing homeowners associations and commercial properties and more. Anything under the umbrella of making life more efficient for commercial or investment property owners is under the purview of Helm.

For Joel and his team, working with clients starts long before contracts are signed and continues consistently with a very high level of focus and attention to detail as they work collaboratively with clients.

“With our rental properties, we are always monitoring activity and vacancies, keeping an eye on trends and the needs and wants of prospective tenants. We continually tweak what we can to maintain steady occupancy,” says Joel. “For all of our properties, we are focused on ensuring the clients get the best value. We are methodical and detailed in having the right contractors or trades in place to do the work that needs to be done. We look for the best way to accomplish goals alongside our clients.”

When Helm comes on board, some property owners ask if they will continue to work with the contractors already in place. Joel notes that they not only can – if those in place are the best for the job and will provide the maximum value – but they would be happy to add such contractors to their network for other opportunities. This applies across the board for trades, insurance and utilities. Helm will seek quotes and do due diligence, and will always proceed with the best choice for each unique situation.

“There is a high focus on working in tandem with our clients,” shares Joel. “It is a continual growth journey for them and for us. We strive to make things better for our clients, and that means we don’t hold to things we have done for 20 years just because we have ‘always done it that way.’ If new solutions or professionals to add to our network are available and those solutions and people align with our goals and values, we remain



Joel Helm

For Joel and his team, working with clients starts long before contracts are signed and continues consistently with a very high level of focus and attention to detail as they work collaboratively with clients.

open and agile. A lot of time, effort and thought go into ensuring our clients receive the best service possible, and that means being open to the new ideas, processes and people that improve outcomes for clients.”

The level of care doesn’t stop once the contract is signed.

“We will always make suggestions, based on our years of expertise, to help clients maximize their returns,” shares Joel. “There are many things we have picked up over the years that our clients may not have realised, and vice versa! We are always learning and looking into what works. It’s a collaboration that we leverage to help each client maximize their returns.”

The Capital Tower project is a testament to Helm’s commitment to service and client care.

“That is a building with about 200 units,” Joel explains. “The owners were facing challenges with high vacancy rates and ongoing safety concerns. Social workers were hesitant to visit clients in the building, and the environment made it difficult for tenants to feel secure. The owners had tried hiring security, but the issues persisted.”

Joel and his team approached the situation with a focus on long-term solutions rooted in respect, compassion and professionalism.

“We started by hiring external security professionals who were independent and committed to maintaining a safe environment,” Joel shares.

The next step was bringing in a strong site manager who could address challenges effectively. Within a year, the building underwent a remarkable transformation. Tenants who had previously felt unsafe were now able to live in a secure and supportive environment. Many tenants, who were transitioning out of difficult circumstances, expressed their gratitude through letters to Joel and his team. With safety restored, the property owner was able to focus on deferred maintenance, further improving the quality of life for residents.

The success of this project not only strengthened the relationship between Helm Property Management and the building’s owners but also demonstrated the positive impact of their thoughtful management approach. The owners continued to entrust Joel with additional properties, allowing them to extend their approach to improving communities across the city.

Capital Tower is just one example of many of the care and customized solutions that goes into every property Helm manages. Each property is different; some require assistance in overdue rent collection, some in catching up on maintenance and some are already running smoothly and require extra hands for administration due to high occupancy and demand.

Joel notes, “Our solutions demonstrate the care we take in looking after each property as if it was our own. All the people in the Helm office are naturally caring and we want to resolve situations efficiently, effectively and respectfully.”

This is reflected internally as well as client-facing.

“In our office, we keep up with technology,” shares Joel. “We had software that we were familiar with for many years, but times change. When we moved from a server-based application to a cloud-based application, that naturally came with some trial and error and new things to learn. The staff remained dedicated in working through such changes.

Some of those changes and challenges can be urgent. Joel explains, “On Friday, April 14, 2023, a fire broke out in the building next to my office, causing significant damage to our own space. The roof was compromised and the basement flooded, leaving us with only my laptop and cell phones to manage day-to-day operations. Despite the challenges, the team demonstrated incredible commitment and dedica-

Joel notes, “Our solutions demonstrate the care we take in looking after each property as if it was our own. All the people in the Helm office are naturally caring and we want to resolve situations efficiently, effectively and respectfully.”

tion, working tirelessly over the weekend alongside the insurance company to get us back on track. By Monday, we were up and running, ensuring our clients were well taken care of during this unexpected disruption.”

“I feel fortunate to have good people working with me. I want to help my team with their goals and have Helm Property Management as a place of empowerment,” Joel smiles. “Everyone on this team is incredible. The staff are dedicated and take the time needed to get things done for our clients. We work cohesively with everyone doing their part.”

It all comes down to a passion for the work rooted in a value of care that sees Helm seeking to add value to each client, each tenant and member of its team.

“This is why we have a variety of services, backed by decades of experience, for our clients,” says Joel. “The fundamental value of Helm Property Management is care. We care for each property as if it was our own. We really do. And that means being proactive, agile, respectful, open to learning and adopting new processes and sharing the processes that have stood the test of time. Starting from a value of care is what has attracted a like-minded team that works seamlessly from the office to the field in support of the best client outcomes.”

He concludes, “When we started, we didn’t have a lot of properties. It was challenging, but some good advice I received was just to keep doing what we were doing. By sticking to our values and putting people first, both clients and team members, we have achieved success and continue to grow. In the end, it’s all about growing, caring and learning together.”

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A true team effort.

Central Painting celebrates 30 years of innovation and excellence as a team.

Written by Nerissa McNaughton



For 30 years, Central Painting has been a trusted name in transforming buildings across Canada. From commercial and industrial projects to retail and institutional spaces, the company has built a reputation as a one-stop shop for floor-to-ceiling solutions. The company's sister brand, Industrial Floor Systems, further enhances their offerings with polished concrete, epoxy coatings, floor leveling and concrete repair. Together, they continue to set new standards in the industry. Behind the projects, progress and this incredible milestone is a team committed to the success of the brand.

Founded in 1995 by David Graham, Central Painting began as a one-man operation inspired by his university days with College Pro Painters. Combining his education, construction background and painting experience, Graham launched the company's head office in Ontario and steadily expanded it across Canada.

Business in Edmonton shared the story of Central Painting in 2020. How have things changed over the last five years?

Graham shares, "The COVID years were challenging. We had to continuously adapt our protocols to navigate the uncertainties. The strong corporate culture we built from the beginning became our lifeline. It's what allowed us to stay agile and emerge stronger than ever."

The team agrees with Graham. Senior Operations Officer Ben Anderson says, "Our commitment to innovation, clear client communication and the use of evolving technology keeps us ahead of industry standards. Watching the entire team work collectively towards the same vision and goals is incredibly rewarding."

Senior Manager and National Operations Leader, Scott Gribbon, has been with the company for 24 years. Gribbon credits his loyalty to the respect and camaraderie within the team. He points out another reason why the team is so successful at Central Painting, "In this corporate culture, no one person is more important than the next."

The agility and resilience of the company and the team are reflected in the continued growth of the brand. What started with just five employees in its early days has now expanded to a team of 60-100, depending on project schedules and not including subcontractors. Graham credits this growth to the team's internal "get it done" attitude and their ability to innovate and adapt to client needs.

"Our team's strength lies in their knowledge, experience and willingness to support one another," Graham explains. "Whether it's our East team helping out in the West or vice versa, the communication and collaboration across offices are what make us successful."



Pam Irwin, Bob Johnston and Ben Anderson.



Anderson recalls many memorable projects that stand as a testament to this, like the remediation of Heavy Metal Place in Spruce Grove, where the team had to prep steel surfaces meticulously and train on a new DFT scanner to ensure the highest quality. Another standout was the two million square foot Amazon warehouse project, which showcased the company's ability to operate on a large scale using specialized textured coatings.

For Anderson, it's projects like this that have him saying, "This career has brought more purpose to my life and made me more motivated in and out of the work environment."

Innovation has always been a big part of Central Painting's operations. From developing low-temperature paint that can be applied outdoors in -30°C to fireproof coatings, the company has consistently pushed the boundaries of what's possible. Their impressive portfolio includes high-profile projects like the JW Marriott in Edmonton's ICE District, Champion Petfoods' Acheson headquarters and numerous retail locations across Western Canada.

Site Superintendent Adam Locke reflects on his 15 years with the company, saying, "There's never been a day where I was out of work or had nothing to do. The management team has always been accommodating to me and my family. I've learned so much more about the trade here than I would have elsewhere."

Team Leader William Olaguer, who has been with the company for 14 years, also values the opportunities for personal and professional growth. "I've gained problem-solving skills and reduced my dependency on others. I'll never forget the moment my project manager gave me the chance to become a foreman."

Word of mouth has always been a driver of Central Painting's success, as clients are quick to mention to their industry partners who completed their projects and how happy they are with the brand.

Sales and Estimating Manager Shannon Guenther, who joined four years ago, appreciates the trust clients place in Central Painting to complete critical projects and the testimonials they provide. She describes the company as "having integrity, honesty and being innovative" and looks forward to more exciting projects and growth in the years ahead.

"What keeps me here are the people, the job itself and the opportunities. The camaraderie and respect among the team are unmatched," she adds.

Central Painting is not just innovating in the field. They are agile and proactive on every level, including in the office. Pam Irwin, office coordinator, who cites the company as being "family oriented and loyal to the team," explains, "We've implemented new software to



handle our increased bookings, which has improved efficiency and quality."

Another key component of the Central Painting team is the health and safety department, led by Robert Johnston. He spends countless hours meticulously tracking painters' records on job sites, keeping field teams on track and ensuring the company has maintained COR Certification for over a decade. His dedication not only safeguards our crews but also upholds the highest standards of safety and quality across every project.

As Central Painting celebrates this milestone, Graham expresses his gratitude to the team, clients, vendors and communities that have supported the company over the years. "We wouldn't be here without our incredibly loyal clients and the dedication of our team. Thank you for being part of this journey."

On a personal note, Graham adds, "I am grateful Central Painting has allowed me to see more of Canada, meet incredible people and build lasting friendships across the country."



At its core, Central Painting embodies what Graham has set out to achieve years ago – a place where success is a testament to its people. Whether they’ve been with the company for decades or are just starting their journey. Every new member is an equal part of this team.

Here’s to 30 years of innovation, collaboration and excellence – and to many more ahead! For floor to ceiling solutions backed by expertise and an engaged team, Central Painting is here to help.



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