SPECIAL FEATURE  October 8, 2018
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
Journal of Commerce
www.journalofcommerce.com
CCA to publish project management guide in early 2019

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A construction industry task force on project management services delivery expects to publish a guide on the subject in early 2019.

The purpose of the document is to set out guidelines on how construction project stakeholders can work with project management (PM) firms and to iron out what everyone’s roles and responsibilities are.

The task force is made up of representatives of the Canadian Construction Association (CCA) and its region-partner associations, the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, PM firms and project owners — all together, more than a dozen people.

“The task force has been working on the guide for the past two or three years,” said Eric Lee, CCA’s vice-president of industry practices.

“When it is completed and published, the guide will be approximately 20 pages long.”

The task force’s mandate has evolved over time. Initially, it was to help owners who were considering hiring PM firms.

“The scope of construction projects has become larger and more complex, and many owners want to engage project management firms,” said Lee.

“The task force thought it useful to develop guidelines to help them.”

But since the task force’s inception, its mandate was expanded to include developing best practices for all stakeholders, including PM firms, consultants and contractors.

“An effective project manager needs to be objective, with nothing personal or corporate invested in the project,”

Rory Kulmala
Vancouver Island Construction Association

“We want to develop a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities and the relationship between all the stakeholders when PM firms get involved in a construction project, and to communicate that understanding,” said Lee.

On big construction projects there is often a lack of “clarity and understanding” of the roles and responsibilities of PM firms, Lee says.

“Complicating matters are varying project organization structures and different amounts of authority delegated to PM firms,” Lee said.

“The guide will include an RACI (Responsibility, Accountability, Consulted and Informed) Matrix that explains the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders in cross-functional projects and processes.

The matrix provides a detailed list of project management activities and the stakeholders’ relationships to those activities.”

Jonathan Huggett, a Surrey, B.C. engineer, who has acted as a project manager on public sector infrastructure projects, says the increasing complexity of construction projects is the source of much of the friction between the various stakeholders, project managers included.

“The construction industry has changed dramatically,” Huggett said.

“In Vancouver, 30 years ago, there were numerous small consultants with good reputations. Today the design industry is controlled by four or five multi-nationals and that presents major problems.”

In addition, “the big four management consultants and the law firms” have entered the construction industry in a major way, Huggett says.

“It’s a lucrative market,” he said. “Forty years ago, the B.C. market was all low-bid tender work. Now there are P3s (public-private partnerships), construction management at risk, design/build, etc.”

It used to be that project management was performed by architects and engineers, Huggett says.

Today we have professional project managers,” he said.

“Although they have their positive sides, many of them have no technical knowledge. It’s a problem if you don’t know what questions to ask.

“In my training I worked in a design office, then on a construction site, then in small-p political management. I have stood on a concrete pour on a dark night in heavy rain. If you haven’t had that experience, how can you discuss project risk?”

Huggett says many of the present-day project managers, sages could be resolved, or at least mitigated, by better communication.

“Project managers need to better understand that public projects necessarily involve communicating with the public,” he said.

“It is a fundamental requirement to understand the political framework we work in and to be able to navigate it.”

Rory Kulmala, the CEO of Vancouver Island Construction Association and a project manager with 25 years of experience, says the various stakeholders in large, complex construction projects have their own and different objectives and friction between them is inevitable.

“So there is great value in nailing down the business processes early in a project,” Kulmala said.

“An effective project manager needs to be objective, with nothing personal or corporate invested in the project. All the ducks need to be lined up so the contractor can do the work and keep the project moving forward.”

Kulmala says a good project manager focuses on a project.

“They bring best practices and accountability to a project, and able to challenge the conventional wisdom on a project.”

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**PETER CAULFIELD - CORRESPONDENT**

The Canadian College of Construction Lawyers (CCCL) is considered an all-star team of senior construction lawyers nationwide. The CCCL was founded as a non-profit association in 1998, “to facilitate and encourage the association of outstanding lawyers who are distinguished for their skill, experience and high standards of professional and ethical conduct in the practice or teaching of construction law and who are dedicated to excellence in the specialized practice of construction law.”

The CCCL has approximately 100 Fellows and Emeritus Fellows, and a 20 Honourary Fellows, says CCCL president Matthew Alter.

"That number includes several current and retired members of the judiciary, including The Right Honourable Justice Beverley McLachlin, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada," said Alter. "Fellows are admitted by invitation only."

Alter says Canadian construction law did not used to be as distinctively identifiable as a legal practice area as it is today.

"The Fellows of the college contribute to the development and growth of construction law in Canada by providing a forum for members to exchange views and ideas on construction law, including legislative changes," he said.

For example, since 2007 the CCCL has published the Journal of Commerce, the state-of-the-art publication on all aspects of construction law.

"A main difference is the degree of specialization," he said. "Many construction disputes involve contracts and commercial agreements that involve statutory provisions unique to the industry, such as construction and builders lien legislation."

Another difference between construction lawyers and general and lawyers in some other practice areas is that many construction lawyers provide solicitor services, such as contract drafting and negotiation, in addition to barrister work as counsel for litigation and disputes.

"Also, what makes construction law different from many other branches of law is the large number of documents involved in a construction dispute, especially in a project that is large and complex," said Alter.

Another CCCL Fellow, Marc MacLwign, says he is one of about 30 lawyers in Greater Vancouver who practice primarily construction law.

"Unlike other forms of law in Canada, construction law cuts across many types of law — contract, negligence, liens, insurance, bonds and regulatory," said MacLwign. "Every case is different, covering many different legal issues."

One of the unfolding trends that MacLwign has been seeing is an increasing number of disputes involving residential construction.

"In large, growing centres like Vancouver, there is an increasing number of disputes being built, some of which are very expensive — in the millions of dollars," he said.

MacLwign says disputes concerning the construction of such houses can involve many dollars, and therefore some of them become more common in construction.

"Such disputes can become legally complex and expensive to resolve, especially if the owner is inexperienced with contracts or if the contractor draws up an unclear legal document," MacLwign said.

MacLwign’s colleague Seema Lal also says litigation is becoming more common in construction.

"There’s more construction taking place, and therefore there are more opportunities for disagreements,” said Lal. “In addition, individuals and small businesses are becoming more aware of their rights and are prepared to fight for what they believe to be their due.”

Another trend — a regrettable one, in Lal’s opinion — is that some people are going online and copying and pasting parts of contracts they like and trying to write a do-it-yourself legal document.

"The results are often sub-standard,” Lal said.

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Members of the B.C. chapter of the International Building Performance Simulation Association (IBPSA) recently were treated to a presentation on the Future Climate Impacts Consortium (FCIC) that incorporates projections of future climate conditions into computer-based building performance assessment.

"Designers of large buildings commonly use computer models to support the design of energy-efficient buildings and ensure the appropriate design of heating and cooling systems,” said Ralph Wells, one of the presenters. "However, these models use weather files that represent current climate conditions,” said Wells, community energy manager at the University of B.C. campus and community planning executive committee elected for a minimum one-year term by the members.

"That’s important because buildings last for many decades," he said.

Wells says the project also includes a study to explore design options for multi-family residential buildings that are resilient to future climate conditions.

Co-presenter Trevor Murdock, a climate scientist with PCIC, says the focus of the talk was to find out if B.C. energy modelling capacity to unify and streamline the way B.C. local governments can opt in or they can continue to use the provincial building code, which is not as strict as the Step Code.”

As of the third week in September, 31 B.C. local governments have adopted the Step Code.

The Modus/Brantwood report found that there is sufficient energy modelling expertise in B.C. for large buildings, but not enough for small, single-family residences.

**LEGAL**

**CCCL helps drive development and growth of construction law**

Energy modelling employs scenario analysis to investigate different assumptions about technical and economic conditions at play for a project. The model output can include system feasibility, natural resource use, financial costs and energy efficiency.

Energy modelling, or energy system modelling, is the process of building computer models of energy systems in order to analyze them.

The models often employ scenario analysis to investigate different assumptions about the technical and economic conditions at play.

Model outputs can include system feasibility, greenhouse gas emissions, cumulative financial costs, natural resource use, and energy efficiency of the system under investigation.

“Modeling a building's energy use can take anywhere from a few days to several weeks, depending on the building's size and complexity,” said MacDougall, who is an engineer and building performance advisor.

"The results are often sub-standard," Lal said.

**BC Energy Modellers discuss impacts of future climate conditions**

IBPSA Canada, for its part, is a non-profit international society of building performance simulation researchers, developers and practitioners whose goal is to improve the built environment.

IBPSA BC consists of a general membership (mostly energy modellers), external partners (typically organizations that represent other industry groups), and a five-position executive committee elected for a minimum one-year term by the members.

Susan MacDougall, who is chairwoman of the BC chapter, says its main focus is energy modelling education.

IBPSA BC offers two kinds of education programs.

One is intended to raise the level of experience and education of association members, and to make the skills of modellers more consistent across BC.

The other is aimed at the general BC population, to improve their understanding and appreciation of energy modelling.

In addition to education, IBPSA BC provides a forum for energy modellers to share knowledge, solve problems and discuss emerging technologies.

Energy modelling expertise is not spread evenly throughout British Columbia, with most of it concentrated on the province’s larger buildings.


The purpose of the Modus/Brantwood study was to find out if B.C. energy modelling service providers were ready for the Step Code.

The Step Code is non-mandatory provincial legislation that was passed in early 2017 to unify and streamline the way B.C. local governments regulate energy efficiency in buildings.

“Some local governments had adopted their own mandates for energy efficiency,” said Brantwood’s Helen Goodland. “Now, local governments can opt in or they can continue to use the provincial building code, which is not as strict as the Step Code.”

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Supply chain consultants look to optimize the project process

In 1921, several NAPA chapters combined to form the Council of Canadian Purchasing Agents Association (CAPA). In 1969, CAPA changed its name to the Purchasing Management Association of Canada (PMAC), to reflect the purchasing function's increased professionalization.

And in 2013, PMAC and Canadian Association of Supply Chain and Logistics became one, as the Supply Chain Management Association (SCM).

"The association has 7,000 members across the country," said Ferber. All SCMs are not identical. Some are in-house employees, while others are hired contractors.

"At the management level, they are usually in-house permanent employees," said Ferber. "However, the remainder of the staff is a different story and it varies. It is largely dependent on the organization.

Larger, more established firms have a stable department of supply chain individuals."

Other, smaller firms, or others that staff-up for projects as they are awarded, will use contract engineering, procurement and construction management (EPCM) firms.

"Right now, in Alberta, the number of contractors in supply chain is increasing as more firms are utilizing contractors due to the ease of hiring and letting them go," said Ferber. "They tend to focus on just one aspect of the process, instead of the process in its entirety, and then choreographing it."

Other challenges facing construction SCMs are a shortage of skilled labor, increasing cost of construction materials and a shortage of some kinds of steel.

"Too many of them don't think strategically," said Munro. "They tend to focus on just one aspect of the process, instead of the process in its entirety; and then choreographing it." Managers need to be strategic, and think of where they want the company to go.

"Supply chain management involves looking at the whole flow of goods and services in a construction project and bringing everything together," Munro said.

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