

# WOOD INDUSTRY



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**MARCH/  
APRIL 2017**  
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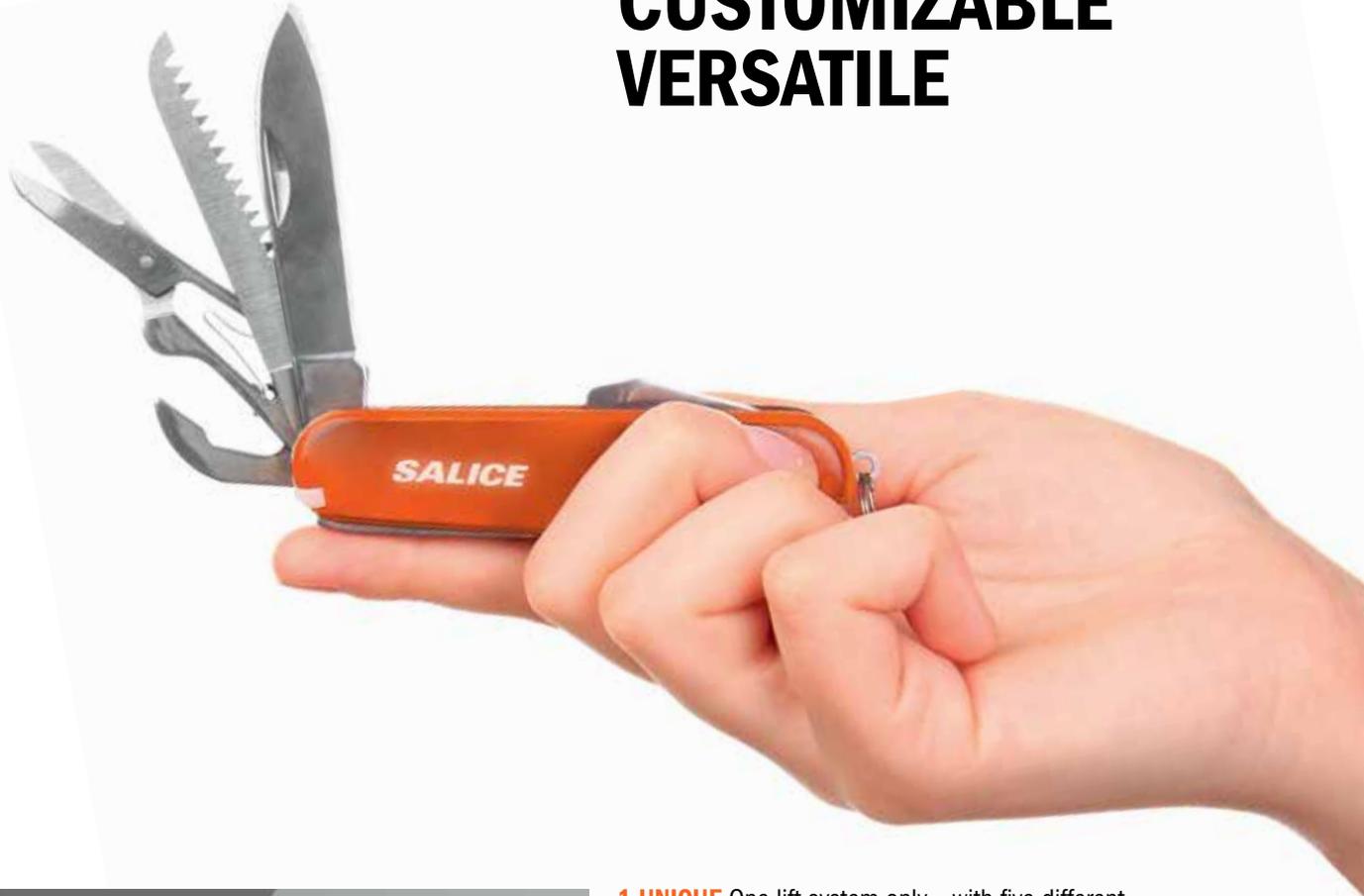
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*The business side of woodworking*

**MARCH/APRIL 2017**  
**Vol. 13, No. 2**

[www.woodindustry.ca](http://www.woodindustry.ca)

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# WOOD

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*From the editor*

## Nothing like face-to-face

**F**or those of you that saw this month's e-letter, you noticed our concern for the increasing rate of pressure being put on entrepreneurs by society and government. If you didn't get the letter, you can sign up at [www.woodindustry.ca](http://www.woodindustry.ca). It's once a month, we don't share your contact info and it gives us a chance to break news quickly if necessary.



**Kerry Knudsen**

We continue to be concerned about not only pressures from outside and inside, but about our general lack of communication regarding upcoming issues, ideas and proposals to

keep our industry vibrant. This is especially difficult in an environment where commercial interests control most of the communication.

In order to break this logjam, we are going to implement a forum many of you may remember from years back called a *Manufacturers' Roundtable*. We need to talk.

**The format is simple.** This Roundtable will be open to manufacturers, managers and their spouses, but will be closed to suppliers. It will be closed to educators. It will be closed to government. The purpose is not to offend or to imply anything, it's just that manufacturers don't always open up if they think it could be used against them in a sales, seminar or regulatory scenario. There will also be no press, except me, sans hat.

The forum will be at a place to be decided, on or about November 2 during the WMS in Mississauga to optimize the number of people that can participate.

I will be the moderator. For 365 days each year, I am an editor and publisher, but for that event I will put up my editor hat. Nothing I see or hear will leave that room. It will be your night to hash out some issues and make some contacts.

Prior to and during the event, we will accept topics for discussion from among the attendees. I will receive and sort the proposals, and will announce the proposals one at a time. From there, I

will see to it that people are called upon to express their ideas and opinions, and I will cut off speeches if they become overbearing.

You may bring up anything you wish, from costs and regulations to U.S. markets and quality control, from labour and raw materials to advertising and transporting. All submitters will be anonymous. This will be your time to close the doors to the outside world and address how the wood industry in Canada is doing, what can be done or what is not right. We will have no other agenda.

Back in the day, this was, hands-down, the most attended, most-discussed and most-appreciated event at the annual Canadian Kitchen Cabinet Association's Annual Forum, and it earned its popularity by holding to its principles of being manufacturer-specific, confidential and open to any topics.

We will cover this event in greater detail in coming issues and e-letters, so be sure to sign up if you have not already done so. Registration will be mandatory, so watch closely for upcoming information. Also, feel free to contact me with questions, comments and observations.

**In a similar vein,** *Wood Industry* is presenting its (either famous or infamous) Canada Night event at AWFS.

Canada Night is based on one simple idea. Canadians fade into the woodwork on the international stage, and we should not. For example, there tend to be as many Canadians by the number at European events as there are Americans, yet we represent only 1/10 of their population.

So on one night at AWFS, *Wood Industry*, along with some sponsors yet-to-be-named, will open the doors to Canadians in Las Vegas that are attending AWFS. The idea will be to have a no-pressure get-together with free drinks and hors d'oeuvres immediately following the show. To address the elephant in the room, yes. This is the same Canada Night event that a few of the over-ambitious suppliers have attempted repeatedly and unsuccessfully to kill.

We are not dead. Quite the contrary, we ran a very successful Canada Night event in Las Vegas last January at The International Surfaces Event (TISE), with which we participate every year for one of our other publications.

It could be this is the next step in Canadian World Domination. Or, at minimum, a great show. 

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# ONTARIO'S HYDRO RATE

# HORROR STORY



**EVERYONE THAT PAYS THE BILLS** in Ontario knows that electricity rates in the province have been on the rise, whether the invoice arrives at home or business.

The conventional wisdom is that, somehow, if you become more energy efficient and consume your electricity in off-peak hours, your hydro rates can be kept under control. So why are businesses and manufacturers in Ontario protesting so loudly that some are threatening to leave the province entirely if they don't get a break soon?

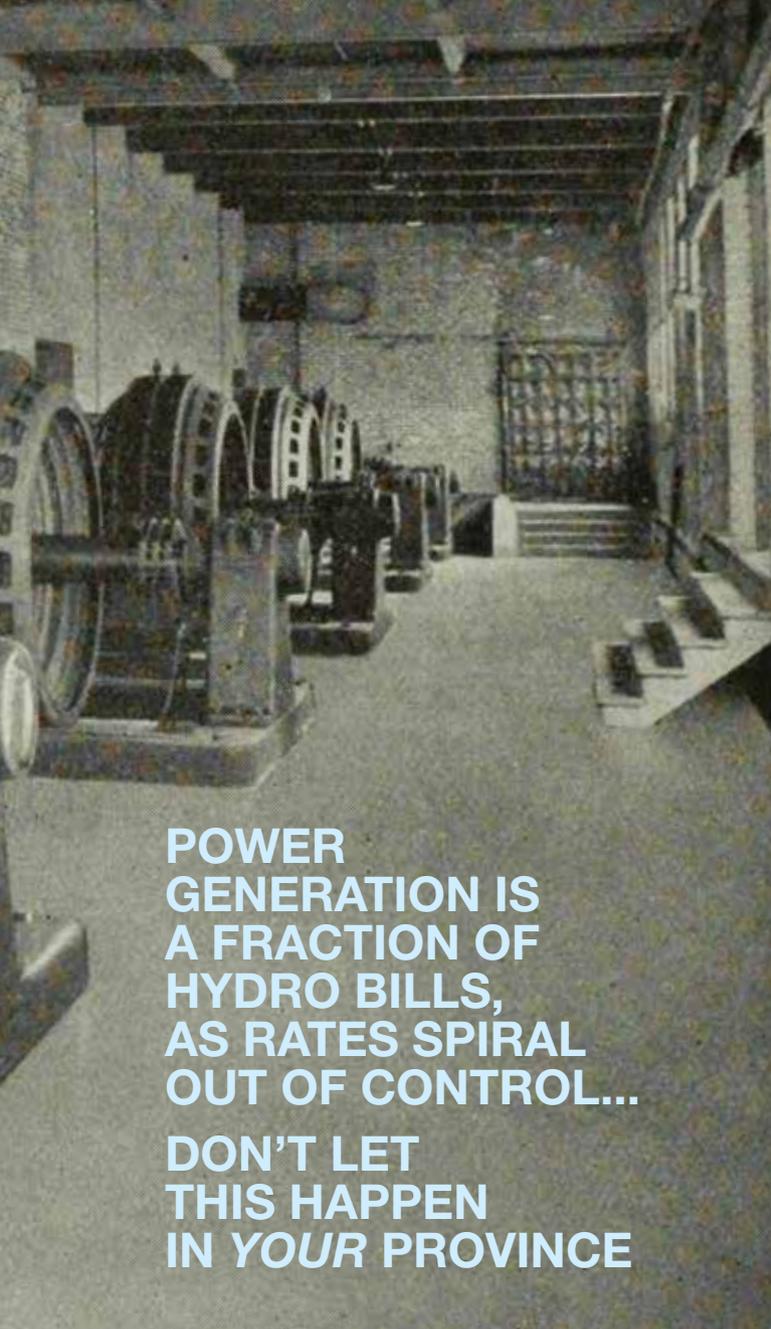
"Ontario's energy costs are rising so quickly many manufacturers are re-assessing whether it makes sense to expand production in this province," says Jocelyn Williams Bamford, vice president of Automatic Coating and spokesperson for the Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers in Ontario (CCMO), both based in Toronto, Ont.

"Industrial electricity bills have soared over the past year, and with Ontario's new cap-and-trade system, electricity and natural gas costs are likely to jump by at least another 20 percent." And although the province removed

the HST on residential electricity in January, that won't come close to offsetting the energy and transportation cost increases that lie in store for smaller manufacturers across Ontario, many of whom are tied to contracts that prevent them from passing costs along in the form of higher prices to their customers, the CCMO ([www.facebook.com/CCMO01](http://www.facebook.com/CCMO01)) says.

Ontario manufacturers, including wood manufacturing shops, have reduced greenhouse gas emissions 15 percent since 1990, according to a study by Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. "Manufacturers have become more competitive and have been able to reduce emissions at the same time because they have invested in new technologies," says Bamford. "Higher energy costs leave us less money for investment. And, if manufacturers can't invest in Ontario, it's not good for the economy or for jobs in this province. Ultimately, it's not good for the environment either."

According to Peter Gallagher, president of Convoy Custom Interiors of Concord, Ont., and president of AWMAC



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Ontario (Architectural Woodwork Manufacturers Association of Canada, Ontario Chapter), taking energy conservation measures only goes so far for a wood shop in the province. On a monthly electricity invoice for Convoy, ten items on the hydro bill are listed, starting with a basic charge at \$0.024 per kWh, the same amount that Ontario charges out-of-province users, such as in the U.S.

**GALLAGHER NOTES THAT THE PROVINCE** has an electricity glut so that this rate is offered in part from the “spillover” from Niagara Falls hydroelectricity. The problem with his bill — and just about every other manufacturers’ — lies in the nine other charges: Global Adjustment number one at \$0.12/kWh for one-third of Convoy’s smart meter reading; Global Adjustment number two at \$0.11/kWh for the other two-thirds; a customer charge per month; distribution charge; transmission network; transmission connection; market service; standard supply charge; and, debt retirement charge.

As a business, Convoy does not receive an HST break, so that in effect becomes an 11<sup>th</sup> charge. Because the manufacturer consumes so much electricity every month, the costs are clearly delineated on each invoice.

**THE DISPARITY IS STARK** on Convoy’s bill: total electricity charges, before HST, are \$7,144 for its November invoice based on 35,752 kWh — but \$4,016 are global adjustment costs and only \$865 towards the basic charge at 2.4 cents/kWh. The aggravating thing for Gallagher and other manufacturers in Ontario is that out-of-province electricity buyers only pay the basic charge.

The CCMO has called on the Ontario government to make all cost increases resulting from its cap-and-trade program visible both to consumers and to all of industry (depending on different factors, some manufacturers don’t see this). It also recommends a tax credit that would offset the impact of higher energy costs and encourage manufacturers to invest in new technologies.

Julie Kwiecinski, Ontario director provincial affairs, Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) based in Ottawa, Ont., agrees about having complete transparency on hydro invoices. “The required global adjustment fee has to be visible and explained on all bills,” she says. “Right now this fee is not seen on any residential bill and even with our small business members, where I would say maybe 10 percent see it on their bill right now.

“Our thinking is you need to be transparent about this so that people understand where their money is going.”

The global adjustment is essentially the difference in the purchase price of energy and the contracts the governments sign, according to Kwiecinski. “These are essentially fixed contracts, generally for 10 and 20 years. No matter what happens in the system the government has to pay the contracts, not just for wind and solar but for nuclear and anything that’s out there as part of the energy mix.”

Although some CFIB ([www.cfib.ca](http://www.cfib.ca)) members took advantage of Ontario government contracts by investing in wind and solar farms to receive subsidies, most are suffering under current rate structure. The association canvassed its Ontario members in January and had close to 3,000 responses for a survey about hydro rates in the province.

One of the questions that was asked was ‘how have your electricity costs changed in the past three years?’ Of those members that responded, 48 percent reported a 20 percent increase or more to their rates. “That is huge,” says Kwiecinski. “It has gotten to the point where it is affecting peoples’ competitiveness.”

Another question on the survey was ‘how have the electricity costs affected your business over the last three years?’ To this, 56 percent of members said they have increased the price of their products or services, 13 percent said they have considered closing their business or mov-

ing to another jurisdiction. Both the CFIB and CCMO realize that moving isn't an option for everyone when the business relies on the local economy, however.

Automatic Coating falls squarely into the 13 percent, according to Bamford. "Since 2012 my hydro rates have gone up from 12 cents per kilowatt hour to 21 cents a kilowatt hour," she says. The company has looked across North America and is looking at moving to Mississippi because the state can provide electricity at 5.56 cents per kWh.

"Ontario really needs to have a plan to be cost competitive in its energy policy for all manufacturers in North America," says Bamford. "This is part bad policy planning and part bad energy policy where we are today. They need to fix it."

Like Convoy's monthly electricity tab, the November 3, 2016 bill at Automatic Coating reveals just what Ontario manufacturers are up against. The company used \$6,577 worth of electricity — but paid a global adjustment charge of \$25,223.73.

**BAMFORD PUTS THE DISPARITY** down to misguided green energy policies such as payouts to wind farms at 18 cents per kWh. "So little of my bill is actually what I can expect through energy usage. We already spent \$200,000 on equipment to try to reduce our energy consumption and electricity costs, but we see our bills continue to go up.

"Now could we shift everybody at night to take advantage of lower rates? We run a day and afternoon shift. I can't go to my employees and say, 'guess what?' I know a lot of our employees have childcare responsibilities. They complete their shifts and then go home and pick their kids up from school. It would be unrealistic for me

to have employees work overnight.

"This is from a government that talks about ensuring that employees have a good work-life balance."

Similarly, Gallagher's company installed new lighting systems and even considered moving to a new building outfitted with solar panels. "Maintaining them just didn't seem cost-effective," he says. Wood shops can defray some energy costs if they create pellets from scrap or burn off-cuts to heat facilities during cold weather months, but this requires a certain material processing volume and further investment, he adds. Convoy also looked at installing soft motor starters on its equipment, but found the return on investment prohibitive in the current climate of climbing electricity rates.

**PART OF THE SOLUTION** for manufacturers in Ontario is to reduce electricity costs would be to remove the debt reduction charge for all businesses, something that the CFIB is lobbying the government for. Another solution is to eliminate the smart meter pricing and institute a tiered system at lower rates with the business getting to choose its peak hours, according to Gallagher.

The *Globe and Mail* reports that "many medium-size manufacturers aren't eligible for the province's new hydro rebate because they use more than 250,000 kWh of electricity a year and exceed a demand of 50 kW. And many also don't qualify for the Industrial Conservation Initiative (ICI), an incentive program for larger electricity users with a monthly peak demand over one megawatt."

The new cap-and-trade system, brought in to reduce Ontario's carbon footprint, is also a challenge for manufacturers, according to the *Globe*. "The system puts a

limit on the amount of carbon dioxide emissions companies can emit and the government issues participating companies carbon credits, which specify the maximum amount of carbon dioxide each company can emit."

The CFIB warns that businesses outside Ontario should be on their toes, too, as the complicated system of calculating additional electricity costs hidden inside green energy and carbon credits threatens to spread.

"We can't emphasize the urgency of the situation enough," says Bamford. "Ontario stands to lose good, high-paying jobs if something is not done to mitigate the negative impacts that cap-and-trade will have on smaller manufacturers across the province." 

*Comment at* [www.woodindustry.ca](http://www.woodindustry.ca).

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## Schmalz adds new faces, new location



**Pablo Barbosa**

Vacuum lifter and clamping material handling specialist **Schmalz Canada** of Mississauga, Ont., has moved to a more central location to within the 401

and Winston Churchill area of the Greater Toronto Area. The 3,400 sq. ft. facility will be able to provide new and improved testing capabilities for most applications in real-time to prove out Schmalz material handling solutions for customers. Specific to the wood industry, Schmalz offers ergonomic vacuum tube and

hoist lifters in conjunction with jib and overhead cranes for panel manipulation



**Keith Cotnoir**

into and out of machines. For the machines themselves, the company offers vacuum clamping solutions such as vacuum pods, as well as the ability to match most woodworking machines in the market. The company can now also train clients in-house on possible products and solutions, or customize a seminar to their needs. In addition, Schmalz has announced two staff additions: Pablo Barbosa, application engineer, and Keith Cotnoir, territory manager for Manual Handling-Ontario.

## Growth and expansion for Richelieu

**Richelieu Hardware** of Saint-Laurent, Que., continued to grow and expand during 2016. The company achieved consolidated sales of \$844.5 million, an increase of \$94.8 million or 12.6 percent over fiscal 2015, of which 10.4 percent from organic growth and 2.2 percent from acquisitions. In Canada, Richelieu achieved sales of \$559.1 million, compared with \$513.7 million for fiscal year 2015. Manufacturers' market sales increased to \$450.3 million, an increase of \$33.6 million or 8.1 percent organic growth. In the hardware and home renovation retailers market, sales reached \$108.8 million, compared with \$97.0 million, an increase of 12.2 percent compared to fiscal year 2015.

## Claude de Lanauze departs Hettich Canada

After 29 years, Claude de Lanauze recently announced his departure from Concord, Ont.-based **Hettich Canada**.



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**Claude de Lanauze**

He completed his tenure at the company as national sales manager. René Dionne, president of Hettich Canada, emphasized the work, dedication

and contribution made by de Lanauze to the German company. According to AFDICQ, the Association of Quebec Manufacturers and Retailers of Kitchen Cabinets based in Lévis, Que., de Lanauze has chosen to go in a new direction with his career.

### CMA awards program now accepting submissions

The Cabinet Makers Association (CMA) of Chicago, Il., has announced that its Wood Diamond Awards program is now accepting submissions for the 2017 contest. The CMA's de-

sign award competition was first offered to the membership in 2010 as a means for members to be recognized by their peers. CMA members can enter their projects, and view earlier winners, at [www.cabinetmakers.org/wood-diamond-awards](http://www.cabinetmakers.org/wood-diamond-awards). The entry fee is \$50 US for each submission received by April 30, 2017. Entries received May 1-15, 2017 will be \$75 US each. No entries will be accepted after May 15, 2017. The winners will be announced on Thursday, July 20, 2017 during AWFS in Las Vegas. New members can join at [www.cabinetmakers.org/membership](http://www.cabinetmakers.org/membership).

### Lower permissible wood dust exposure deemed unnecessary

The Oakland, Calif.-based California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) Standards Board has declined a staff proposal to lower the existing permissible exposure limit (PEL) for wood dust from 5 milligrams per cubic metre to 1 milligram per cubic metre after testimony

from the American Wood Council (AWC) of Washington, D.C. AWC has been engaged in the process for the last several years and coordinated a small coalition, which included several allied trade associations, to oppose the proposal. Ultimately, the Standards Board voted against the recommendation to lower the PEL and asked Cal/OSHA to restart the rulemaking.

### Wilsonart to acquire TFL Manufacturing

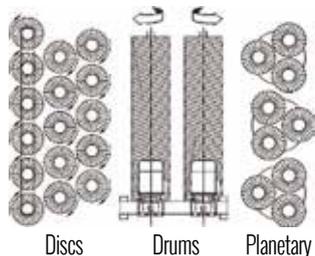
Austin, Tex.-based Wilsonart Engineered Surfaces has announced an agreement with Roseburg Forest Products to acquire manufacturing assets in Oxford, Miss. The facility, which manufactures thermally fused melamine (TFL) panels, will become an integral part of Wilsonart's Coordinated Surfaces program in North America. In 2014, Wilsonart launched the program, a suite of surfacing options including high pressure laminate, TFL panels and edgebanding, featuring The company's designs and textured finishes.

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**New U.S. formaldehyde law gets delayed**

U.S. exporters of wood-based panels or finished goods that contain composite wood products must take note that from next December — not July as was previously feared — a new standard for formaldehyde emissions will become law. According to *Catas*,

the certification laboratory based in San Giovanni al Natisone, Italy, the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Title VI establishes formaldehyde emission standards identical to the California Air Resources Board (Carb) limits which was published in 2009 (Final Regulation Order ATCM §93120). The scope is to ensure compliance with formaldehyde emission standard for producers, fabricators, importers, distributors and retailers. The limits are: 0.05 part per million

(ppm) for hardwood plywood; 0.09 ppm for particleboards; 0.11 ppm for fibreboards and 0.13 ppm for thin (< 8 mm thickness) fibreboards.

The Carb standard also defined the certification process which must be followed by a Carb-recognized third party certifier (TPC); they require quarterly audits with testing activity and also internal company controls on produced batches of boards.

**First projects approved for social housing renovation and retrofit**



**Jean-Yves Duclos, Federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister Responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, made a funding announcement in Edmonton at the Kalaka Housing Cooperative recently. Two homes received more than \$21,000 to repair kitchens and bathrooms.**

Organizations in Canada looking for financial support for renovations and retrofits of social housing now have funding to complete their work. More than 1,000 social housing units for seniors and low-income families and individuals will be repaired and upgraded through an investment of close to \$12 million. Federal Budget 2016 provided close to \$574 million over two years, starting in 2016-2017, through the 2016-2018 Social Infrastructure Fund, to support repairs and energy and water retrofits and renovation of existing social housing units. The majority of this funding is flowing through the provinces and territories. Of this funding, \$77.6 million over two years is provided to social housing units directly administered by **Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)**.

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**Vero Software hires Canadian sales manager**



**Jeff Nesbitt**

Vero Software of Cheltenham, U.K., has hired sales manager Jeff Nesbitt to support sales of the Vero solutions throughout Canada. Based in

Windsor, Ont., Nesbitt is charged with managing Canadian distributors and direct sales of Vero product lines, as well as with increasing overall brand recognition throughout the country. Nesbitt has a background that includes eight years of practical shop-floor experience and 14 years of working with a CAD/CAM supplier.

**Salice completes acquisition of Bortoluzzi Sistemi**



Salice SPA has now assumed full ownership of **Bortoluzzi Sistemi** of Belluno, Italy. Since Novedrate, Italy-based Salice's acquisition of the first shares in 2010, the companies have developed a strong strategic partnership. Now, the company says, the completion of the acquisition enables Salice to further strengthen its role in the field of innovative opening systems, from hinge systems, lift systems, runners and drawers to sophisticated sliding door systems. The products are used in a range of applications, including kitchens, bathrooms, office furniture, living and bedroom furniture.

**Furniture production and interiors take the stage at interzum**

The 2017 **interzum** trade fair in Cologne, Germany, from May 16-19, is aimed at the furniture production and interiors market. The international trade fair takes place every two years and presents the trends of the supplier sector. Highlights include world premieres, product innovations and pioneering concepts.

Concepts such as “interzum award: intelligent material & design” and “innovation of interior” will showcase the key trends. The interzum trade fair is said to be the world's largest event serving this sector, with over 1,500 exhibitors from more than 60 countries. More than 65 percent of the visitors and exhibitors come from outside Germany.



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## *Sexual harassment in the workplace* **Employer's obligation**

By *Damien Buntsma*

**H**appy Co. is a small company specializing in the production, sale and installation of custom flooring products in Ontario. Its head office, fabrication plant and retail location (the “plant”) has 20 employees. Happy Co.’s service and installation department also has 20 employees (techs) that work off-site. At the beginning of each day, the techs must report into the plant to receive their assignments and then report back at the end of the day.

At the end of day on Monday, Bob (one of the techs) reported back to the plant making a complaint to the general manager of Happy Co., John, that one of the plant staff, Julie, regularly harassed him about her perception regarding his sexual orientation. Bob tells John that he feels very uncomfortable coming to work every day, as he is required to check in with Julie to receive his daily assignment, and then be subjected to her comments regarding his sexual orientation.

Bob notes to John that he has been the victim of inappropriate behaviour, name-calling and the like from Julie for the past year, and that this has been witnessed, on a regular basis, by other plant staff. Bob doesn’t want anyone to get fired, but said that he feels humiliated and embarrassed to the point where he fears coming to work.

John is unclear of what to do about the situation, and therefore contacts Happy Co.’s employment lawyer. At

first instance, Happy Co.’s employment lawyer advises John about Bill 132, the new Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act, that came into effect in September, 2016, amending the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Under Bill 132, all employers are required to investigate any complaints of sexual harassment, which Bill 132 defines as follows:

- (a) engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, where the course of comment or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome, or
- (b) making a sexual solicitation or advance where the person making the solicitation or advance is in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the worker and the person knows or ought reasonably to know that the solicitation or advance is unwelcome.

Given the sexual harassment complaint, John is advised by Happy Co.’s employment lawyer that Happy Co. is legally required to complete a full investigation. Since John has never conducted a workplace investigation, yet alone one mandated under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, he asks employment

counsel to provide further guidance.

As detailed by Happy Co.’s employment lawyer, Happy Co. needs to consider the following regarding workplace investigations of this nature:

### **Suspension during investigation**

Happy Co. must decide whether Julie will remain at work while the investigation is ongoing. When deciding whether to have Julie at work or on a paid suspension during the investigation, Happy Co. should consider whether having her remain in the workplace imposes unacceptable risks (i.e. continued adverse effects upon Bob), or whether suspending Julie would make it impossible for her to possibly return to work after the investigation.

### **Hire an outside party to complete the investigation**

John is advised that the investigator conducting the investigation on behalf of Happy Co. ought to be an objective, neutral party and is told that employers often retain a third-party to complete the investigation on their behalf. Hiring a third-party investigator will also aid in insulating Happy Co. from being compelled to complete any further and better investigation by the Ministry of Labour.

### **Interview the complainant and all witnesses**

Bob and all possible witnesses should be interviewed. Upon attending the interview, each participating-employee should sign a confidentiality agreement. The investigator needs to keep detailed notes of each interview.

## Interview the alleged harasser

After interviewing Bob and all possible witnesses, the investigator should then ask Julie to attend her interview. During the interview, Julie should be presented with the allegations against her and provided every opportunity to respond.

## Investigation report

The investigator should provide a detailed report. Upon receiving the report, John should then have it reviewed by Happy Co.'s employment lawyer for a recommendation on how to proceed, based on those objective findings.

## Discipline

Assuming the allegations waged against Julie by Bob are made out, Happy Co. must decide whether Julie will be disciplined, facing a range of penalties up to and including her termination of employment, for cause.

## Meeting with parties

Happy Co. must meet with the direct parties, Bob and Julie, separately, to advise them of the findings of the investigation. The conduct of the meetings and communications provided to Bob or Julie should be as tailored by Happy Co.'s employment lawyer, which will be dependent upon the circumstances, outcome and possible discipline.

## Debrief

With every workplace incident comes a learning experience for the employer. Happy Co. should take advantage of this unfortunate incident by considering whether harassment training should be provided to its employees, and whether it has sufficient policies and procedures in place to address these types of workplace incidents in the future.

Given the many duties and obligations placed upon employers, especially under Bill 132, it is important for employers to seek counsel from experienced employment lawyers, at the outset, when dealing with allegations of sexual harassment.

Being proactive, seeking guidance from legal counsel before taking any action and developing and implementing necessary training, policies and procedures can result in substantial savings in company resources, time and aid in reducing legal liability. 

*Damien Buntsma is a partner at Brampton, Ont.-based Lawrences and heads up its Employment and Labour Law Group.*

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## Millwork and upholstery go **HAND** in **GLOVE**

The Edmonton, Alta.,-based Onsite Group of Companies is part of a family tradition that has retained the manufacturing expertise of both upholstery and millwork. According to Ryan Neumann, its owner, the company produces for both the commercial and restaurant booth and furniture upholstery businesses, but also manufactures and refinishes tables, chairs and custom furniture and has a full-service millwork shop that builds custom architectural woodwork for a variety of applications.

According to Neumann, the company's capabilities are the embodiment of synergy. "The two are very complementary to each other," he says. "Having the upholstery allows us to compete on price so we don't have to put the markups on the sub-trades." He notes that generally, "upholstery to a restaurant is 20 percent of the job," so his price tag doesn't carry the 15 to 30 percent markup of what a shop would typically put on it. This allows Onsite to compete more strongly in certain markets, which has fueled growth for the company.

Neumann's Onsite story starts with his mom and dad, who owned Apex Upholstery where he worked with for nine years while his entrepreneurial spirit grew. "We parted ways and I started Onsite at the end of 2009," Neumann says. Over time, Onsite went from hitting its own target markets to meeting in the estimating field, so Apex was doing some of the restaurant manufacturing and Onsite was doing a lot of the service in the industry.

"But then," Neumann says, "the customers were happy and started asking me to do the manufacturing."

By year four, Onsite and Apex started to compete as their markets overlapped. "Our pricing models were different at Onsite — who began to overshadow Apex in many ways. It put me in a position to offer a buyout to create a win-win situation." Before the merger, the two companies worked together collaboratively while Neumann's father, John, collected his thoughts. "In many ways, Apex was Dad. It wasn't just an asset and it was hard for him to separate mentally from the business."

Paperwork was done up in 2015 for the merger and ink finally hit the paper in the first quarter of 2016. "Since then, it's been really interesting," says Neumann, "because there is no butting of heads and profits have climbed for both Onsite and Apex. Everybody is pulling on the same rope."

Gradually, the Onsite facility will focus entirely on millwork, and Apex will carry its own brand at another site. Through the millwork and the upholstery capabilities, Neumann says, "the culture of 'if I can sell you your millwork, and I can sell you your upholstery, all in one sales call, maybe I can sell you some tables and table bases.'" Onsite uses distributors for chairs and stools. "And maybe," he adds, "we can do the front of your (establishment's) house — not saying that we do construction — but maybe we can tie all of these things to work well together."

According to Neumann, millwork is typically a lower-margin industry. "Being able to sell more volume to the same customer increases the margins a little bit."



Being a dual-purpose company — upholstery and millwork — means that Onsite can complete hospitality industry projects on its own, or with partners that require support. Workers are encouraged to continue on a path of self-development by completing formal training, such as getting a journeyman ticket or entering a project management program.

full service restaurant business has meant that IHOP would now have a hard time finding someone else who can do what Onsite does. “You build trust,” says Neumann.

He cautions that “on the flip side, if something does go sideways, or a timeline needs to get shortened, they only have to phone one person.”

Onsite employs 42 full-time staff and Neumann’s father “still works here and puts in full days and loves it,” says Neumann. Armed with a Project Management Certificate (PMC), he relies on his senior estimators and project managers to get the job done, knowing he can’t do everything. “I’m 37 now and I don’t know it all. I am a technician from the upholstery side and learned how to be a manager, but I think my strength is in entrepreneurship — and I don’t want to do it all.”

Staffing certainly has had its problems for the company with the “transient crowd,” as Neumann puts it. In one example he uses, it could be the truck driver who came in as a helper and suddenly says “Oh, I got my old job back.” Over the years, Onsite has

found many qualified foreign workers that try to work within the company’s system. The latest wave has been eastern Europeans who have a lot of upholstery and millwork skills along with the work ethic. “In the last 15 years, especially in my world, there has been a lot of Filipinos come through, but they have slowed down.

“In every trade you get your riff-raff and you get your top performers, so as an owner you have got to make sure your turnover is extremely low. You have to work with a low selling price, lower margins and make sure everybody’s happy in the back.”

The company tries to hire as many Canadians as it possibly can “because I’m a strong believer in that,” says Neumann, “but it’s sometimes difficult to do that when they come in and start demanding \$35 an hour.

“I’m sorry, I can’t pay that, it doesn’t work for the business model.” Neumann is sometimes frustrated by their mentality and sense of entitlement. “If they are sitting on EI for \$16 an hour and I’ll make an offer for \$22, they basically say ‘are you going

When Neumann started the Onsite millwork shop, revenue was zero, he says. “By the end of third year it was doing \$1.5 million and by the year-end of 2015 it was doing about \$2.3 million — while Apex was doing \$1.2 million. In 2016, combined we’ll be pushing \$5.5 million.”

Neumann uses the business learning curve of working with IHOP restaurants in Alberta as an example. “We did a job with them — and they’ve changed out contractors on every single job and the only thing they’ve kept constant is us. We’ve worked our tail off to keep and maintain the business.” The company’s evolution into a

to pay me \$6 an hour?' C'mon, it's a job and it's more than you're making and it's what I can afford."

Overall, Neumann feels that Onsite is very strong at what it does and that there's enough business out there for everybody. "We're not a big guy doing \$18 million a year, but because we're divided into a couple of different industries, it allows us to not have to fight for everything on the market and we can work with millwork competitors in a collaborative way. We feel we have great relationships with a lot of the other millwork shops to supply the upholstery on jobs that we don't compete with, or on jobs where maybe there's some overlap." Onsite tries to "build fair, morally correct relationships so they carry our numbers and we supply drawings that they wouldn't get from other upholstery shops," Neumann says.

"We always try to take the approach that 'if you have any shortfalls on your restaurant or your project, we're cabinet makers, too. We help fill in the gaps.'"

The company wants to have good



working relationships since there is a mutual source of revenue with partners. Neumann estimates that up to 80 percent of the business comes from the hospitality industry and the rest is miscellaneous millwork from projects such as dental, dermatology and medical clinics. "We normally stay away from the really big projects like schools at \$1 million or a complete millwork package for a casino at \$3 million," says Neumann. "However, we will work with the millwork shop to complete all of the booting and then we will work with them to complete the walls that go around the booth, doing the programming for the booth radius."

Ryan Neumann, owner of Onsite, laments that the local technical college, NAIT, turns out hundreds of welders but only dozens of cabinet makers per year. "We build trust," he says of his relationships with customers.

Neumann comes back to the challenges of finding, or developing, quality staff. He laments that the local college in Edmonton, NAIT, produces 600 welders per year but only 20 or 30 cabinet makers. To compensate, Onsite values self-improvement and encourages employees to finish their journeyman ticket or to take production management certification programs.

Neumann agrees with Steve Jobs, the late Apple co-founder, who said: "it doesn't make sense to hire people and then tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do."

So, next time you tuck into a stack of pancakes at an IHOP restaurant in Alberta, chances are you're sitting in a booth created by a company with a 60-year-plus legacy. 

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## *From efficiency experts to rock stars* **Design earns its due**

It wasn't that long ago that the word design was primarily used to describe a state of scheming, usually nefariously, for the purpose of ac-



**Paul Epp**

quiring something or someone. One might have "designs" on... It doesn't seem to be used that way so much anymore. It now generally implies a connection with creativity. There is an understanding that things look and function as they do because they have been designed that way, that there is a conscious, deliberate and decisive act (or many acts) behind the things that comprise our material world, and possibly even a real person or more.

Our artefacts have always been designed. At one time, what was made was largely a matter of following precedent. Certain forms and configurations had been found to work and those were copied by productive artisans. A few of the makers were more creative than the others and, with time, new forms would be added to the prevailing lexicon.

The world that I was born into, in 1949, was already largely one of industrially produced objects. The hand-made was mostly restricted to the mittens and socks that grandmas knit for Christmas presents. Not that much earlier, during the Great Depression of the '30s, a lot more of the accoutrements of frontier life were hand-made, but this had more

to do with economic and transportation challenges than anything else. However, my grandparents took the making of things as a natural state. In contrast, my father, and his generation, made a point of destroying the material evidence of an earlier poverty (as hand made things were perceived). So I grew up with the fruits of industry, but the word design was never used in the way that we use it now. The existence of things was simply taken for granted.

It seems that the act of design, that deliberate and decisive act, was more anonymously integrated in the production of goods in an earlier era. It is usually hard to learn the identities of the designers who shaped the products we used before the middle of the 20th century. But they obviously existed and some were very talented. A fact that is usually forgotten is that the art schools that were established in the late nineteenth-century, like the school now known as OCAD University, had as one of its principal aims the training of designers for industry.

**The stars of the Industrial** Revolution were the entrepreneurs that launched new ventures, and theirs are the names that we might remember. As an example, at one time agricultural implements were where all the smart money was and Mr. Massey and his eponymously named company, were the biggest deal in Canada. He made good goods and prospered. His designers were just part of a large workforce that included many different types of skills and talents. It also included a large percentage

of workers who were not particularly skilled or talented. They were just inexpensive and interchangeable. That's how industry works.

Efficiency is one of the greatest motivators for industry. With a great deal of preliminary planning, and the necessary capital, the subsequent efficiencies of repetitive specialized labour enable the production of vast amounts of goods in a very cost-effective way. One of the enablers of the efficiencies is the assurance that what is produced is pre-planned (designed) in such a way as to take full advantage of the particular industrial processes.

**Raymond Loewy**, in the mid-20th century, claimed to be the first industrial designer. That is horse-puckey, but what he did advance was the recognition of designers as knowable individuals and their possible value for marketing purposes. The potential for the existence of design-stars, was born. He was not alone in the transformation of the role and visibility of designers, and collectively those mid-century designers initiated a shift in perception of what design was and who did it.

It has taken a long time for this perceptual shift to become embedded in our public consciousness. Now, the word design is used comfortably by almost everyone. It has become a major and highly visible factor in marketing. It also forms a core component of corporate strategies. Designers have moved up from the factory floor to the boardroom, so to speak. About time, to my way of thinking. 

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*Paul Epp is an adjunct professor at OCAD University, and former chair of its Industrial Design department.*



## Canada-EU trade agreement opens doors

People movement and standards top benefits

**AFTER THREE YEARS** of negotiations and two prime ministers, the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) between the European Union (EU) and Canada has been ratified by their respective houses of parliament. But what does this free trade agreement now mean for Canada's secondary wood processing industry?

That Canada is almost exclusively an importer of woodworking machine tools has meant that tariffs have been virtually zero since well before the latest trade deal, according to Jan Backes, a 10-year veteran of international machine tool sales management in both Canada and Germany. In addition to industrial machinery coming from Germany and Italy, he points to Austria and Switzerland as locales that also contribute to the import mix in Canada.

In fact, most of the tariff lines for woodworking machinery from Europe are currently and will remain duty free. Historically Canada has not been a big exporter of woodworking technology to Europe while it sources its technology from China, Taiwan, U.S., Germany and Italy. Statistics Canada reports that the total market for woodworking machinery imports was \$363 million in 2016.

**WITH CETA, THE PRICE OF MACHINES** could come down when technical standards are the same on both sides of the Atlantic. "If safety and electrical standards get closer, that can save real money. For example, molder machines manufactured in Germany require different motors for Canada. These motors are CSA approved so that's fine, but the European manufacturer doesn't buy them in the same volume and the price is different."

The issue of standards flowing from the agreement also affects the cost of spare parts, making life easier — and simpler — for European machine tool manufacturers. CETA calls for thresholds to be met at intervals over the next three to seven years.

James Johnson, Trade Analyst, Industrial Goods — Machines Italia Project, at the Italian Trade Commission in Toronto, Ont., says that it is expensive to undertake a

certification process both in the EU and in Canada. "Standards and certifications are currently a very problematic issue for EU and Italian woodworking technology exporters. And to many Italian and European suppliers it is a big burden especially since safety and building requirements in Europe and Canada are similar and overall very high."

The Italian Trade Commission is often asked to assist Italian companies to locate specific standards (or lack thereof), and to explain the certification process in Canada, says Johnson.

"The CETA will definitely ease the cost of exporting to Canada. Though it will take a few years before precise guidelines and the infrastructure to support the mutual recognition of standards and certifications are in place."

**A STUMBLING BLOCK** in the past has been to allow the temporary entry of individuals for business purposes from the EU into Canada and vice versa. According to Johnson, provisions to support the temporary entry of business persons form an integral part of modern trade agreements due to the important role the mobility of highly-skilled business people plays in growing businesses and expanding trade. "The Temporary Entry and Stay Chapter of CETA addresses administrative requirements such as labour market tests or economic needs tests that can impose time delays and administrative costs on prospective business entrants to Canada or the EU," he says. "The provisions of the chapter are aimed at increasing transparency and predictability of these requirements. The obligations are differentiated in terms of their application to different types of business people, including intra-corporate transferees, investors, contract service suppliers and independent professionals — including a broad coverage of professionals and limited coverage of technologists — and business visitors."

There are also provisions for an independent professional from Canada or the EU providing a service on a temporary basis as a self-employed individual in the other party. In addition, the intra-corporate transferee is accounted for — a person employed by an enterprise of one party for at least one year who is temporarily transferred within the same enterprise to the territory of the other party.

"The provision of the Temporary Entry chapter of CETA will make the provision of technical services and

assistance — as part of contractual agreements — much easier for EU and Italian woodworking technology providers,” says Johnson.

**THE EFFECT ON DISTRIBUTION** and subsidiaries will be improved by the removal of trade hurdles, Backes believes. “All the big players have had subsidiaries here for many years, and 20 years ago there wasn’t a problem to invest in one, either. Canada is known for being open to foreign direct investments and not just in the woodworking industry. To open a subsidiary in Turkey is way more complicated than Canada, for example.”

CETA may attract more investment in Canada from the smaller or middle-sized companies from such countries as Germany and Italy. “An agreement like this makes it more attractive for one of these companies to just say ‘let’s try it.’”

Behind the scenes, having a European bank that has a partnership with a local bank can provide a secure way for manufacturers to invest in Canada. “They know the money is protected and guaranteed,” so that the subsidiary’s bank in Canada has easier access to credit and can operate with a Euro account that simplifies currency transfers, says Backes.

“Free trade presents much bigger advantages than disadvantages,” says Backes. “Wealth will grow.” The agreement will help all manufacturers to export their product and will provide improved, harmonized safety standards, he adds.

“There is also a surprising number of window manufacturers that build in Europe and ship to Canada. Not big volumes, but high quality,” says Backes, who apprenticed at a small window manufacturer.

In his experience of studying automated production in Canada, Backes discovered by comparing the hourly cost and the available hours to the country’s GDP (gross domestic product revenue) put Canada “way too low.” While not a good sign for Canadian productivity, it does pave the way for opportunities by machine manufacturers, he explains.

**“THERE IS POTENTIAL** and customers need to be convinced to automate their lines. Germany is five to 10 years ahead of Canada with automation.”

As an example, Backes notes that in a typical Canadian shop there will be two people on a moulder. “If you buy an automatic return system for \$40,000, you save a person. It makes no sense to have two people on a through-feed machine.”

The lesson is “if others invest in automation and you don’t, you’ll fall behind sooner or later,” says Backes.

CETA means increased competition coming from Eur-

ope, according to Simon Bouchard, president of AFDICQ, the Levis, Que.-based Quebec kitchen cabinet manufacturers and retailers’ association, and president of Ateliers Jacob in Saint-Calixte, Que. “For us, it is important to keep our market competitive with Europe, and we have to change our thinking. It’s kind of like the automotive market when the big Japanese automakers came in and threatened the U.S. producers. North American car manufacturers had to improve the quality of their product and become more efficient.

“In my mind, we have to do exactly the same thing.”

There are about 1,000 kitchen cabinet makers in Quebec supplying the local market of \$1.3 billion without much thought for Europe, Bouchard adds.

Bouchard thinks selling to the U.S. makes more sense,

with his company doing business in Florida, as well as in western and other parts of Canada. “I think it’s easier that way than to go into Europe.” Ateliers Jacob relies on its high-end quality and custom designs to expand product sales outside of Quebec.

Economies of scale are worrisome to Bouchard. There is an imbalance in the market size with the EU hav-

ing a population that is ten times that of Canada’s. “With the free trade agreement I believe it is really bad for us,” he says, “because we are not ready to fight back because they are so big. Unless we can scale up, I’m afraid the European companies will come in and buy up our businesses.

“In the U.S., a \$200 million company isn’t that large, but in Quebec the largest in our market is about \$50 million.”

**CETA WILL DEFINITELY BENEFIT** Italian machinery suppliers, concludes Johnson, who sees opportunity in Europe, not just threat. “It will offer opportunities for Canadian wood processors of finished and semi-finished products to enter and expand their presence in the EU market of 500 million consumers. In order to take advantage of these opportunities Canadian companies need to change their business culture and their strategic approach to exporting.

“There are many reasons why Canadians prefer to trade with the U.S. However, relying solely on one market is risky. The EU is a large, seamless but diverse bunch of markets where Canadian companies may find their profitable niches.”

Italian SMEs sell their products all over the world and it is not uncommon for minuscule Italian companies to export to countries in Asia, Africa and the Americas, says Johnson.

“Hopefully CETA will offer a first safe step for Canadian SMEs toward establishing a broader global presence.”



# New Products

## Abrasives in sheets, blocks, sponges, rolls and pads



Festool Canada has introduced a line of Hand Sanding products for a broad range of applications. Available in sheets, blocks, sponges, rolls and pads, the line is said to feature: a fused aluminum oxide for a high material removal rate; synthetic resin for entirely bonded grits delivering long lasting cutting power; simple cleaning for multiple usage; work-piece adaptability to the thanks to a

flexible, extra-soft foam backing or high-quality latex paper backing; no grooves or scratches in the surface due to a strong grit bonding; uniform surface quality thanks to a foam that distributes pressure; and, no crinkle formation providing optimum surface protection.

[www.festoolcanada.com](http://www.festoolcanada.com)

## Laser distance meters provide easy measurements



Laser distance meters have been announced by Milwaukee Tool. De-

signed to provide easy measurements from any orientation, the instruments feature functionality such as intuitive user interfaces, 2- and 3-position auto-detecting levers, and a digital auto-level feature. Both the 150- and 330-ft meter models have 2 in. colour screens for maximum visibility in low light conditions. Each features a simplified user interface that has been designed so users can quickly choose their function and take a measurement with minimal downtime. Users can add and subtract values and calculate linear distance, indirect height and length, surface area, total area, and volume. In addition, each tool includes memory storage for 30 readings and impact-resistant overmold for jobsite protection.

[www.milwaukeetool.com](http://www.milwaukeetool.com)

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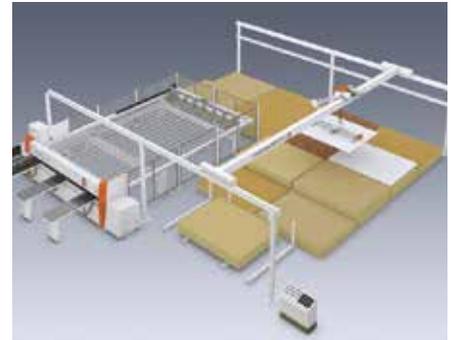
lengths for a uniform look in varying sizes. Units can come with both rounded and squared edges — DP211 and DP212, respectively. All rose gold finished items are anodized aluminum. The anodizing process provides an anodic coating to the surface with a durable, corrosion-resistant finish by passing an electrical current through the material as it is submerged in a chemical bath. Color is applied and absorbed in the material during the anodizing process and then sealed, providing a permanent anodic coat that will not chip or peel.

[www.mockett.com](http://www.mockett.com)

interior woodwork. The product has non-yellowing properties, excellent clarity and dries quickly, the company says. The series can be used over any of its vinyl or post-catalyzed sealers. The topcoat can also be used as a self-seal system to provide a quick build and is suitable for kitchen cabinets, bathroom vanities and furniture. The product is low in VOCs and meets KCMA (Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Association) standards.

[www.canlak.com](http://www.canlak.com)

### Software drives panel storage system



The **Holz-Her** Store-Master panel storage system is suitable for a variety of formats and materials. The panels can be positioned by the manipulator in a chaotic as well as a structured environment. In each case, exactly the right panel is selected by a computer during removal, the company says. Stock panels can be rotated by up to 90° and therefore stored in any desired direction. The system provides storage on up to three levels and can be used in all rooms with heights greater than 3 m.

[www.weinig.com](http://www.weinig.com)



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## Big Ideas Take Shape with ShopBot CNC

When clients call on Manhattan designer and architect Gustavo Bonet, they're usually looking for a problem solver. His Nodus studio is a place where craftsmanship, artistry, and collaboration collide to turn big ideas into tangible installations. For the Nodus team, the ability to accomplish anything relies on an equally adaptable tool.

"We use our ShopBot in a very hybrid way," says Bonet. "It allows us to approach creative ideas from a problem-solving standpoint, bridging the gap between art and architecture."



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## New Products

### Corner shelf technology opens up storage space



To make optimum use of storage space, the Quaturis S corner shelf system from **Grass** swings the contents of the cabinet out of its interior.

The system was developed to ensure an optimized movement curve in terms of ergonomics, aesthetics and function, the company says. The movement system for standard corner cabinets is available in widths of 900, 1000 and 1200 mm, with shelves that swing almost completely out of the corner cabinet. All levels can be moved independently of each other. The product can be equipped with the track-proven soft-closing and damping system or a self-retracting function.

[www.grasscanada.com](http://www.grasscanada.com)

### Horizontal mortising machine



The FD 250 horizontal mortising machine from **Felder** is said to be a versatile unit with a small footprint and the ability to handle large workpieces. The table size is extendable in all three directions by up to 1,000 mm without the requirement of tools. The drilling motor is mounted on roller bearings, providing forward and reverse run (optional). Comfortably operated with a one handed lever, the company says, the machine has a heavy duty eccentric clamp, usable on the left and right hand side. The fence has locking points on the drilling table at  $-45^\circ$ ;  $-22.5^\circ$ ;  $0^\circ$ ;  $+22.5^\circ$ ;  $+45^\circ$  (optional). A dowel indexing system provides an index grid for 16, 22, 25 and 32 mm (optional).

[www.felder-group.ca](http://www.felder-group.ca)

### Spray painting control kit



The Cyclomix Micro Fluid Management Kit from **Sames Kremlin** is for spray painting controls that provide inbound fluid pressure for both catalyst and base materials. Fluid regulators are said to make it easy to adjust pressure for precise

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ratio control. Airmix or low pressure (LP) regulator kits are available with or without filters. The kit is pneumatically operated and can control inbound fluid pressure for both catalyst and base materials.

[www.exel-na.com](http://www.exel-na.com)

### Cabinet-making CNC machine tool for routing, drilling



Designed for the cabinet making and woodworking industry, the Optimus CNC

machine tool from **Axyz International** is said offer a customized configuration, dedicated support and a range of specially designed machine options to ensure a cabinet-maker's or woodworker's job is easier. The CNC machine handles widths from 49.5 to 74.5 in., lengths from 96 in. to 20 ft, and has a high-power router and gang drill. The unit combines a routing spindle and multiple drill head, and has an optional automatic material handling system. Its routing spindle and multiple drill head allows for machining all types of wood, the company says. An aluminum vacuum bed with innovative auto zone management is also said to provide efficient and secure material hold down.

[www.axyz.com](http://www.axyz.com)

### Machine automates dovetail drawer production



CNC-controlled dovetail machines from **Mereen-Johnson** are said to deliver high-production, precision-fit dovetailed drawers and case goods with production runs as small as one. A touch screen operator

interface simplifies set-up and requires no special computer skills. The 2 in. spindle centre design offers a dual cutting path while one touch changeovers between fronts/back and sides can be made. The machines are adjustable with control for joint fit, mortise offset, clamp delay time and cutter cycle speed. Production of up to 80 custom boxes per hour can be achieved, the company says.

[www.mereen-johnson.com](http://www.mereen-johnson.com)

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## New Products

### Router base alleviates dust concerns

The Stacc-Vac router base from **Betterley Tools** has a 7 x 11 in. base and outboard knob, a main base machined



from ½ in. aluminum and an integrated vacuum system and adjustable dust deflector to capture over 95 percent of dust generated in most typical routing applications. The router base works on a variety of materials, such as solid surface material, solid lumber, particle board, MDF, plywood and plastics. It also mounts directly to many popular routers and allows use of template guides with optional sub-base. The unit shields the user from flying debris and the exposed cutting bit. It is suitable for most applications, such as edge profiles, straight cutters, rabbet cuts, dado cuts and grooving cuts, as well as accepts bits up to 3 ½ in. diameter with optional sub-base.

[www.betterleytools.com](http://www.betterleytools.com)

### Mounting plates feature improved cam adjuster

The functionality of BAV snap-on mounting plates from **Salice** is said to be improved with the latest design. Produced in hardened steel for



strength and stability, the mounting plates now feature an important technical development with a new cruciform shape and an enlarged cam. These features are said to allow a greater accessibility and, consequently, a better and easier depth adjustment of the door. The mounting plates, available with different fixings and 0, 2 and 3 mm in height, are compatible with series 100, 200, 400, 700, F, B and M hinges.

[www.salicecanada.com](http://www.salicecanada.com)

### Tooling series includes roughers and chippers



**Vortex** has announced Series 9000 tooling that includes roughers and chipbreakers. Series 9000 and 9100 three-flute low helix roughers are designed for high-feed rates on CNC routers and are used when surface finish is not important. Suitable for dense materials such as hardwoods and plywood, the Series 9000 rough-

ing tools run quieter and leave less of a “rippled” edge, the company says. Series 9200 and 9300 two-flute chip-breaker spiral tools feature chip-breakers that are staggered on each flute to produce a smooth cut, but may leave a visual line in some situations. Series 9400 and 9500 three-flute low helix chipbreakers are a combination of the low helix and new-style chip-breakers. These tools run quieter and last longer as they break the chips up even smaller, the company says.

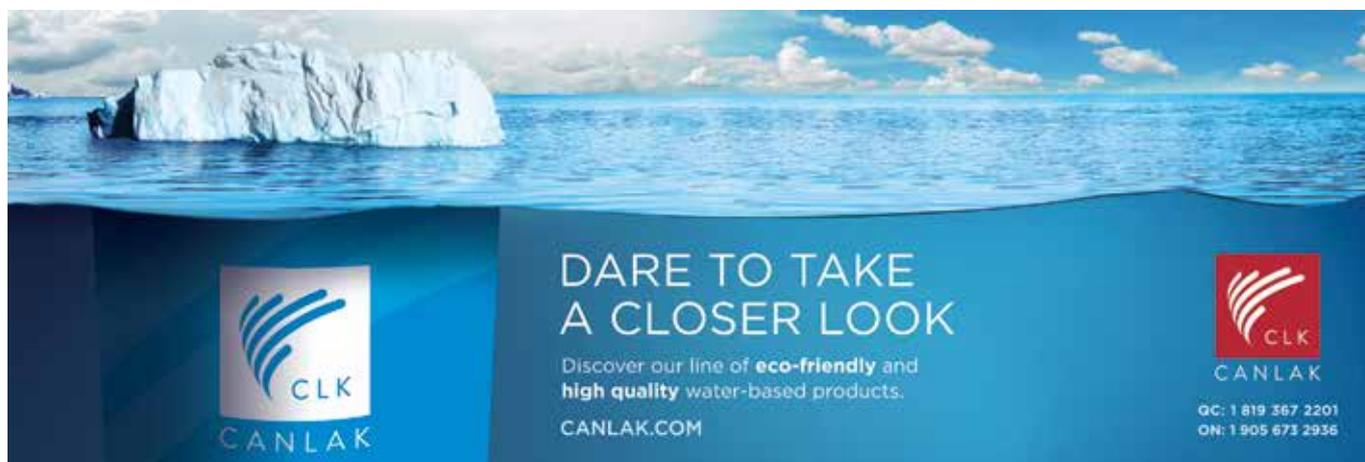
[www.vortextool.com](http://www.vortextool.com)

### Laser engraving system features large table



The Fusion M2 40 in the Fusion Laser Series from **Epilog Laser** features the company’s largest engraving table — 40 x 28 in. (1016 x 711 mm). The machine was designed to engrave the same high-quality image at any point on the table by using a precision motion control system and industry-leading optics, the company says. It adds that benefits include: better flame-polished edge cuts; better engraving and cutting speeds; and, a large viewing door with LED lighting. The unit is also available as a dual-source laser system and can be used with Epilog’s eView Camera Module.

[www.epiloglaser.com](http://www.epiloglaser.com)



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## Current business highlights...

- Year-over-year, the value of building permits issued by Canadian municipalities rose 17 percent to \$7.6 billion in January. On a monthly basis, they rose 5.4 percent, following two consecutive monthly decreases. Six provinces posted increases, led by Alberta and British Columbia. Nationally, construction intentions rose in every component, particularly institutional buildings. —*Statistics Canada*
- Total investment in residential construction rose 5.4 percent year-over-year (y/y) to \$31.4 billion in the fourth quarter of 2016. Higher investment in single-family dwellings, up 11.5 percent to \$7.3 billion, accounted for nearly half of the increase at the national level. Rising renovation spending (3.4 percent to \$13.3 billion) and acquisition costs related to new dwellings (6.9 percent to \$3.6 billion) also contributed to the gain. —*Statistics Canada*
- A higher demand for wood pellets was reflected in a price increase of 4.7 percent in Germany during February, as compared to the previous month. The price of EN plus wood pellets reached an average of €253.39/tonne, 4.6 percent more than in February 2016. —*Fordaq*
- Canada's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 0.3 percent in December. With the exception of October, GDP has increased every month since June. Utilities, construction and wholesale trade were the main contributors to growth in December. —*Statistics Canada*
- Indications point to a likely surge in Indian demand for furniture where this market is forecast to exceed \$27 billion US in five years. —*TechSci Research*
- The German furniture industry sales grew by 3.2 percent in 2016 and reached a new all-time high of €18 billion. This means that Germany's domestic furniture manufacturers achieved an increase for a third year in a row. —*Fordaq*
- According to a new report titled, Folding Furniture Market — Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast, 2014-2022, the global folding furniture market is expected to generate \$13 billion US by 2022, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.8 percent from 2016 to 2022. Asia-Pacific constituted largest market share in terms of revenue in the overall foldable furniture market in 2015, followed by Europe. —*Allied Market Research*
- The global artificial intelligence (AI) chipset market is expected to be worth \$16.06 billion US by 2022, growing at a CAGR of 62.9 percent between 2016 and 2022. Sectors affected by AI include computer vision and robotics, widely used in wood manufacturing industries. —*MarketsandMarkets*
- Canada's consumer price index (CPI) rose 2.1 percent on a y/y basis in January, following a 1.5 percent gain in December. Excluding gasoline, the CPI was up 1.5 percent y/y in January, after posting a 1.4 percent increase in December. —*Statistics Canada*
- The largest upcoming construction projects in Canada have been released, including the top commercial buildings. The Ottawa, Ont.-based \$2 million civic campus at Ottawa Hospital is tops in this category, followed by the \$1.8 million Calgarynext Sport Complex in Calgary, Alta., the \$1.5 million Oxford Place development in Toronto, Ont., and \$1.5 million Stonegate Corporate Centre in Calgary. —*ConstructConnect*

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- The Machinery and Equipment Price Index in Canada increased 2.1 percent in the fourth quarter, following a 0.9 percent gain in the third quarter. The import component was up 2.6 percent, while the domestic component increased 0.8 percent. —*Statistics Canada*
- Out of 33 Canadian cities surveyed, Vancouver's labour market cost increase is in the seventh-place slot in the overall composite ranking. Ottawa-Gatineau and Montreal sit below Vancouver, but well ahead of Toronto (24th) and Calgary (26th). In the top six were four cities in Ontario — Brantford, Oshawa, Peterborough and Windsor — as well as Quebec City, Que., and Victoria, B.C. —*ConstructConnect*
- In 2020, manufactured (prefab) housing shipments in the U.S. are expected to reach 85,000 units, declining as a share of total single-family housing starts and manufactured housing placements, according to, a new study, Prefabricated Housing Market in the US, 14th Edition. In 2015, the median household income of prefab home owners was approximately \$28,400 US, with over three-fourths having annual incomes below \$50,000 US. —*The Freedonia Group*
- The U.S. January ABI (Architecture Billings Index) score was 49.5, down from a score of 55.6 in the previous month. This score reflects a minor decrease in design services to 52.1 (any score above 50 indicates an increase in billings). The new projects inquiry index was 60.0, up from a reading of 57.6 the previous month. —*American Institute of Architects*
- In the fourth quarter of 2016, order bookings in the German machine tool industry fell by four per cent compared to the preceding year's equivalent period. Both exports and domestic orders showed a roughly equal decline. For 2016 as a whole, the rise came to seven per cent, with orders from abroad up by ten per cent, while domestic orders were flat. —*VDW*
- Acimall, the Italian woodworking machinery and tools manufacturers' association, estimates that member production in 2016 in Italy amounted to €2,078 million, 11.5 percent more than the €1,864 million in 2015. This percent variation is very similar to the result of 2015 versus 2014, when an 11.7 percent increase was recorded. —*Acimall*
- Wooden furniture imports into the U.S. increased 8 percent in November to \$1.53 billion US, the highest level since the recession. Furniture imports from most countries grew in November with the exception of Canada. However, year-to-date imports from Canada grew 10 percent compared to 2015, helped by the weaker Canadian dollar in 2016. —*ITTO*
- The New Housing Price Index (NHPI) in Canada edged up 0.1 percent in December compared with the previous month, largely reflecting price increases in Ontario and Alberta. Prices have risen at the national level for 21 consecutive months. —*Statistics Canada*
- The U.S. goods and services deficit was \$44.3 billion US in December, down \$1.5 billion US from November. December exports were \$190.7 billion US, \$5.0 billion US more than November exports. December imports were \$235.0 billion US, \$3.6 billion US more than November imports. —*U.S. Department of Commerce*
- Increasing home prices in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) are having a spillover effect in surrounding centres, particularly those within commuting distance, the latest Housing Market Insight report has found. Scenarios demonstrate that should GTA house prices rise by 10 percent in a given quarter, Hamilton, Ont., house prices could rise by 14 percent within a year. Conversely, a 10 percent contraction in GTA prices could lead Hamilton prices to decline by 14 percent within a year. —*Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation*
- The Construction Union Wage Rate Index (including supplements) for Canada was unchanged in January compared with the previous month. The composite index increased 0.6 percent in the 12 months to January. —*Statistics Canada*
- The home ownership grant threshold in B.C. has been raised to \$1.6 million, a 33 percent increase over last year. The basic grant can reduce residential property taxes on an owner's principal residence by up to \$570, or up to \$770 if the home is located in a northern or rural area. —*Government of British Columbia*
- The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) announced it was increasing its homeowner mortgage loan insurance premiums effective March 17, 2017. CMHC said the higher premium will result in an increase of approximately \$5 to the monthly mortgage payment for the average CMHC-insured homebuyer. —*CMHC*



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April 11 – 14  
**NWFA Wood Flooring Expo**  
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[www.nwfaexpo.org](http://www.nwfaexpo.org)

April 22 – 26  
**High Point Market**  
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April 25 – 28  
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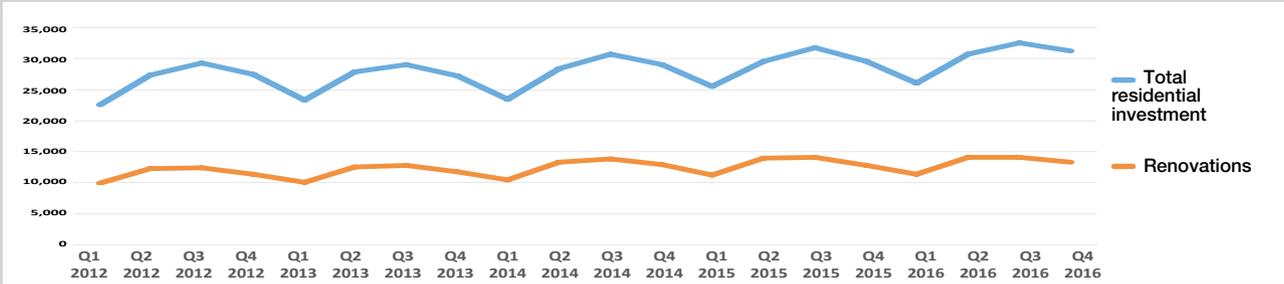
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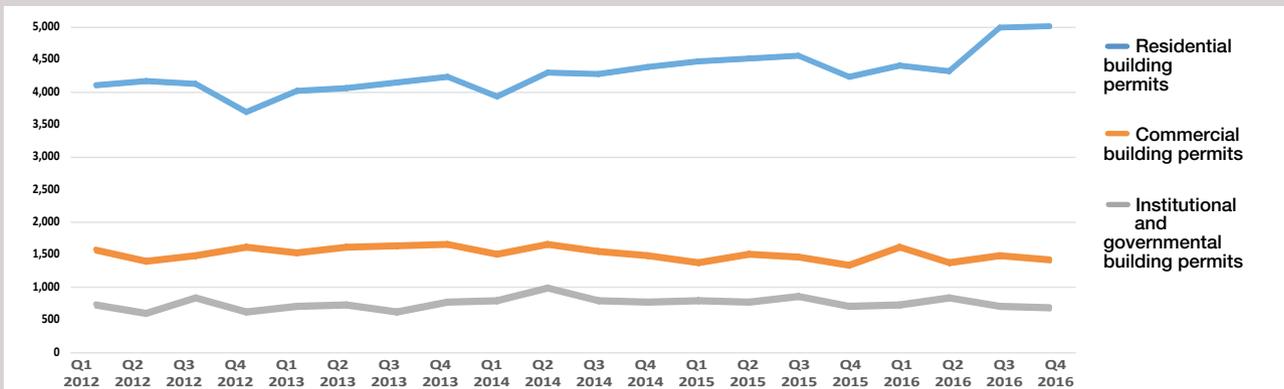
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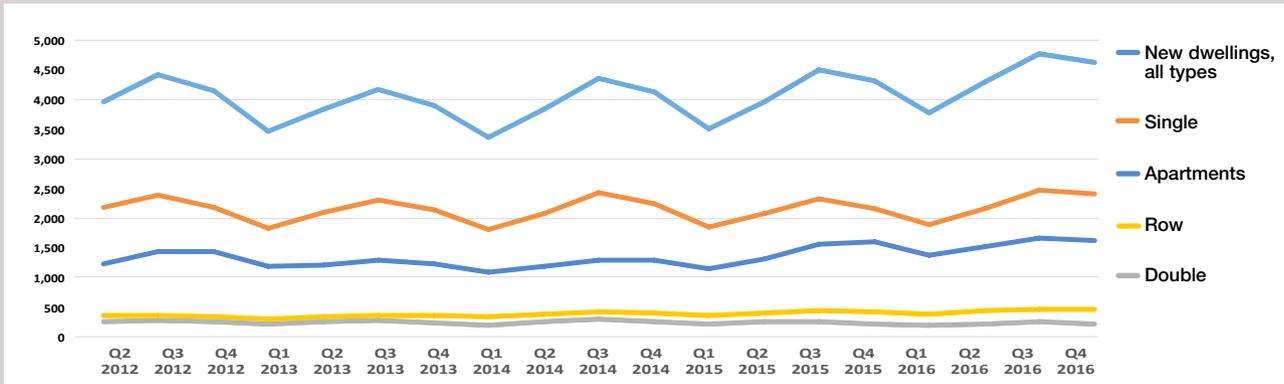
## Residential construction investment In millions of dollars



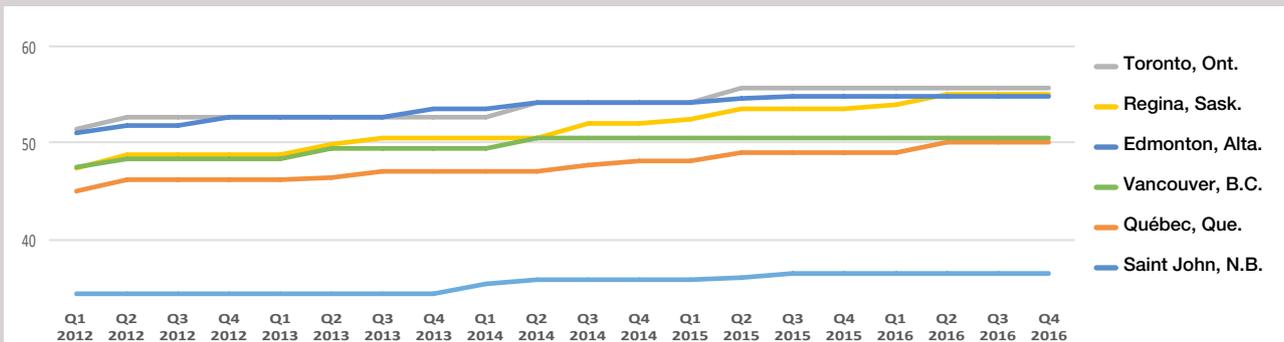
## Canadian building permits In millions of dollars

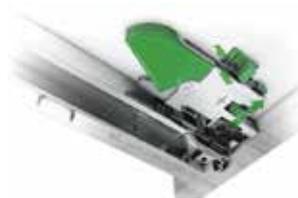


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