

Commentary-Dave Pasolli-Western Wood Truss Association of Alberta

**Betting the House on Housing with Our Money**

In the recent 2024 federal budget, there was no shortage of money to be thrown around on affordable housing. The budget promises to make buying a home more accessible for Canadians while also increasing the housing supply by 3.87 million homes by 2031-**two million more than the current expected pace**- with a slew of measures and funding to scale up the pace of new home construction. It's all part of the Trudeau government's \$82 billion 10-year strategy laid out in their National Housing Strategy that they keep adding to.

When governments are in trouble in the polls, they start throwing our money at the wall, hoping enough of it sticks to boost their sagging political fortunes.

The problem is that this is the worst way to tackle a genuine affordability crisis in housing because it's a breeding ground for future government spending scandals. Every year, the federal auditor general produces report after report on government misspending in various and sundry government departments, leaving beleaguered taxpayers scratching their heads and asking themselves one basic question.

That is, "How could spending on this program possibly have gotten so out of hand while no one did anything about it?"

Well, the answer is that this is how it starts. You need to look no further than the current Arrive Can testimony that is currently going on. There is no doubt that smart consultants will be lining up to hit the taxpayer lottery here.

Before the budget was even presented the government had spent or committed over \$42 billion to housing over the past 5 years, but was it invested wisely and strategically, without unnecessary waste and duplication to expand the housing stock.

What we can say is that it didn't avert the housing crisis from 2018-2023 although the government will of course claim it would have been even worse without it, which raises the question of what will happen to the next \$43 billion, or thereabouts, to be spent between now and 2028?

Behind the scenes, public servants are now scrambling to get the housing money out the door as fast as humanly possible, because the next election has to be held on or before Oct. 20, 2025 and their Liberal political masters are desperate to get it out there, visibly building more housing, before the writ drops.

Bribing us with our own money is a time-honoured tradition of ruling parties, inevitably leading to a financial train wreck by the time they're defeated.

### **There are Always Strings Attached**

Alberta's Finance Minister Nate Horner responded to the budget by saying that the federal government "poured gasoline on the inflation crisis in Canada" by overspending, overtaxing and over-regulating Canadians.

Horner said the "excessive" spending is fuelling inflation and will harm young Canadians by increasing their debt and deficits.

"This federal government has failed to take decisive action on critical issues, like Canada's alarmingly slow economic growth and the economic pressures Canadians are experiencing," Horner said at a news conference on Tuesday.

"This budget is another missed opportunity to any of these problems."

Horner also said tax increases and red tape will increase costs and further add to the affordability crisis. He pointed to the proposed housing reforms, saying the regulations tied to federal housing funding will make it difficult to increase housing supply in Alberta.

"We are seeing increasing intrusion into areas of provincial jurisdiction with red tape and strings attached to any kind of funding," he said.

Among the money the federal government has dedicated to tackling an affordable housing crisis across the country is a \$6-billion Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Municipalities could use the money to build or upgrade water, wastewater, stormwater and waste collection infrastructure in new or redeveloped neighbourhoods.

For provinces to access \$5 billion of that money for municipalities, they must meet five criteria, including adopting upcoming changes to the national building code to create "accessible, affordable and climate-friendly housing options," according to a federal government news release.

Provinces must also require municipalities to allow construction of multi-unit housing, such as fourplexes, on residentially zoned land, and freeze development charges for three years in larger cities.

Watching the rollout of federal programs with interest is Scott Fash, CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) of Alberta. Scott recently presented at our AGM with their concerns about requirements for funding.

Fash says requiring the province to mandate that builders adhere to a new building code they have yet to see is frustrating, because the proposed changes could add tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of building each new unit.

The government has proposed new building codes with the goal of achieving a 65% reduction in energy consumption for new residential buildings and a 59% reduction for new commercial buildings by 2030, compared to 2019 levels.

At our meeting Scott also brought up the idea of the building code restrictions becoming more intrusive into the renovation market as well.

The federal policies that have most successfully stimulated rental housing construction are eliminating the GST on select projects and a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation lending program that allows borrowing for up to 40 years, Fash said. He also was pleased at the announcement that the amortization period for insured mortgages on new builds was going to be extended from 25 to 30 years.

He said some of the biggest barriers to rapidly building new housing are wait times for permitting, and uneven application of rules within municipalities by employees. The province could potentially lower those hurdles with legislation, Fash said.

### **Cash Cow: Government Taxes and Fees on New Housing**

While spending all this money to create affordable housing, new housing is typically good for the bank account of all levels of government.

“The only difference between death and taxes,” said humorist Will Rogers, “is that death doesn’t get worse.” Another distinction is that death tends to be fairly obvious. Taxes, however, are a different matter.

The average new home buyer is generally unaware of the amount of their home is going to the government. Instead of spending our tax money on programs, perhaps they could look at ways to reduce their piece of the action.

Most of the buffet of taxes and charges on housing, never make their way to the consumer’s Agreement of Purchase & Sale. They are buried in the “supply chain” never to be seen again, except in the inflated total figure at the bottom of the page.

According to the 2022 CMHC report [\*Housing Market Insight – Government Charges on Residential Development in Canada’s Largest Metropolitan Areas\*](#), government charges on new development may be defined under the following categories:

- **Taxes**, which can be levied at the municipal, provincial, or federal level and can pertain to transactions to buy or sell a property, as well as simply holding it. Taxes are a tool to raise revenue to provide government services;
- **Warranty fees** provide insurance to the end user against construction defects in materials, labour, and the building envelope and structure. These fees are typically charged on a per unit basis by a new home warranty program administered by an independent entity under provincial laws;
- **Municipal fees** are charged according to site area or on a per unit or fixed fee basis to review amendments for a given site, site plan approval, development agreements, and other approvals needed from various municipal and regional departments;
- **Development charges**, also known as a Development Cost Levies, are fees that may be assessed at the regional level to contribute to capital costs for infrastructure (e.g., sewage treatment plant expansion) necessary to accommodate growth. They can be assessed according to site area or per unit;
- **Density payments** relate to the amount of density permitted on the site and are designed to raise revenue for community amenities (e.g., swimming pools; parks, etc.). They vary widely by municipality and even neighbourhoods within the municipality, as well as the tenure type of the project (e.g., rental; condominium, etc.). The size of contribution payments can be subject to negotiation, introducing an additional layer of complexity and uncertainty. The amount levied is related to the incremental value of the site pending rezoning (“land lift”) or additional density being permitted on a site (“density for benefit”);
- **Permit fees** cover administrative costs associated with issuing building, development, and occupancy permits, among others. The number of permits required, as well as the time needed to obtain each, can introduce costly uncertainty to the development timeline. The fee amount can be fixed or charged as a per cent of hard construction costs.

In 2019, the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) [reported](#) on a study by Altus Group, which found government fees, taxes and charges added \$222,000 to the cost of an average new single-family home in the GTA, three times higher than San Francisco, Miami, Boston, New York City, Chicago and Houston.

## **Trudeau was in Calgary to pledge \$600 Million to Hasten Home Construction Across Country**

Against the backdrop of a Calgary-area modular home factory, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged to spend \$600 million to fast-track the construction of homes across the country. [Changing how we build homes in Canada | Prime Minister of Canada \(pm.gc.ca\)](https://www.primeminister.gc.ca/2024/04/16/prime-minister-pledges-600-million-to-fast-track-home-construction-across-canada)

The new programs will include \$500 million in low-cost loans to build homes using “innovative” techniques, such as modular construction, and another \$50 million to kick-start an innovative technology fund.

Another \$50 million is to be invested in expediting home building through regional agencies such as municipalities.

Trudeau said the moves, among others announced ahead of the April 16 federal budget, are meant to instil hope among Canadians struggling with the cost of living.

“So many people have good jobs but mortgages are pushing them out of balance . . . Canadians are hurting right now and we need solutions around housing and affordability,” said Trudeau.

One of the solutions is to build homes more rapidly, said federal officials, particularly in indoor factories such as Calgary’s NRB Modular Solutions, whose cavernous, hangar-like confines Trudeau toured. Why he was not making an announcement with the home builders or with anyone from the Alberta Government is a bit of a mystery.

“They’re continuing to bypass the provincial government to work with municipalities, which are clearly our jurisdiction, Alberta Seniors, Community and Social Services Minister Jason Nixon said Friday.

“It’s left us with a situation where if mayors have a good relationship with the federal government, they seem to be getting money from these announcements, and if mayors don’t know the federal government — particularly in smaller communities in our province — they continue to be left out from these conversations.”

“We won’t be taking money from the federal government that requires us to make housing more expensive, that will damage our housing industry — which by the way is working at a record pace.”

Trudeau said if Alberta chooses not to participate in the programs, that’s up to the provincial government.

“If they don’t want to do more, then don’t take our money,” said the prime minister.

If you have an idea for a commentary or would like to submit your own commentary for a future newsletter please let me know at [dave@wwta.ab.ca](mailto:dave@wwta.ab.ca)

## Economic Update

In Alberta, urban housing starts totaled 3122 in March 2024, a year-over-year increase of 55.4%. Canadian housing starts increased by 15.56% over the same period. Edmonton had a strong month with a 44% increase compared to March 2023, and Calgary was up by 61%. Housing starts in Alberta were down from 3679 the previous month of February 2024.

Housing Starts Alberta						
	Mar-24	Mar-23	% Change	YTD 2024	YTD 2023	% Change
Alberta	3122	2009	55.40%	9744	6200	57.16%
Edmonton	1162	807	43.99%	3487	2246	55.25%
Calgary	1760	1094	60.88%	5385	3627	48.47%
Red Deer	8	5	60.00%	186	34	447.06%
Grande Prairie	9	8	12.50%	34	19	78.95%
Lethbridge	11	5	120.00%	138	29	375.86%
Wood Buffalo	2	1	100.00%	2	5	-60.00%
Whitehorse*	N/A	N/A	#VALUE!	N/A	N/A	#VALUE!
Canada	17052	14756	15.56%	49389	43798	12.77%

\*Whitehorse Starts are for the quarter, statistics are not available monthly.

## Housing Starts by Dwelling Type (Centres 10K+)

	MAR-24	MAR-23	YTD-24	YTD-23
Total	3,122	2,009	9,744	6,200
Single	1,000	698	2,804	2,031
Semi-detached	310	205	797	530
Row	398	306	1,292	1,036
Apartment	1,414	800	4,851	2,603

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reported that the total monthly seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) of housing starts for all areas in Canada **declined 7%** to 242,195 units in March, down from 260,047 in February.

The six-month “trend,” which measures a six-month moving average of the SAAR, fell 1.6% from 247,971 units in February to 243,957 units in March.

CMHC reports that the actual number of housing starts in urban centers of 10,000 population and over increased 16% to 17,052 units in March, compared to 14,756 units in March 2023. The year-over-year increase was led by higher multi-unit starts, up 19%, and higher single-detached starts, up 2%.

### **In Alberta**

An influx of migrants has put pressure on Alberta’s housing market. Home inventories are falling and [prices are rising](#). Fortunately, builders have stepped up to the plate as of late.

Housing starts averaged 45,154 units (seasonally-adjusted at an annual rate) in the first quarter, 58% above last year and the highest quarterly average in nearly a decade. Construction of all types of dwellings rose last quarter, with multi-dwelling units leading the charge. [Residential permits](#) have also picked up steam.

Given last year’s jump in population, ATB sees ‘catch-up’ construction continuing. In our [March outlook](#), they upgraded our 2024 Alberta housing starts forecast to 41,000. With the recent momentum, that’s starting to look a tad conservative.

### **Living together: Multi-family housing starts in Alberta -Rob Roach-ATB**

Multi-family homes (a.k.a. townhouses and apartments) vary widely in price, but are generally less expensive than single-detached homes.

According to the [Canadian Real Estate Association](#), the average benchmark price of a single-family home in Alberta in March was \$575,600 (seasonally adjusted) compared to \$405,000 for a townhouse and \$296,700 for an apartment.

This is an important difference in general, but it is particularly salient given the [housing affordability challenges facing many Canadians](#).

More multi-family units is only one piece of a complex housing affordability puzzle, but it is an encouraging sign that there has been an uptick in multi-family housing starts.

As of the first quarter of the year, multi-family starts in Alberta were 69% higher than the same quarter in 2023 compared to a 38% increase in single-detached starts. In Edmonton, multi-family starts were 67% higher in Q1 compared to the same quarter in 2023. The increase was smaller, but still large, in Calgary at 51%.

Housing starts are notoriously volatile, but an upward trend in multi-family starts is

evident over the last three years. Annual multi-family starts in Alberta have increased every year since 2021 and their share of total annual starts has gone from 55% in 2021 to 64% in 2023.

### **US New Residential Single-family Home Sales Increase 8.8% Month-Over-Month in March**

On April 23, the US Census Bureau and Department of Housing and Urban Development jointly announced that new residential single-family home sales for March were at a seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) of 693,000, according to estimates. This is **8.8% above** the revised February rate of 637,000 and 8.3% above the March 2023 estimate of 640,000.

The median sales price of new houses sold in March was \$430,700. The average sales price was \$524,800.

The seasonally adjusted estimate of new houses for sale at the end of March was 477,000, an 8.3-month supply based on the current rate of sales.

### **Core Inflation**

It's tempting to dismiss a lower 'core' inflation reading as an aberration. But we've had a few of them lately, and that's exactly what Governor Tiff Macklem said he wanted.

Sure, headline inflation was higher last month due to gasoline. But core inflation (which strips out more volatile price movements) is unambiguously trending lower. And it's not just a function of the year-ago levels. On a month-over-month basis, median and trim measures of core prices rose by less than 1.5% (3-month moving average, annualized). Excluding shelter costs, annual inflation was 1.5% last month.

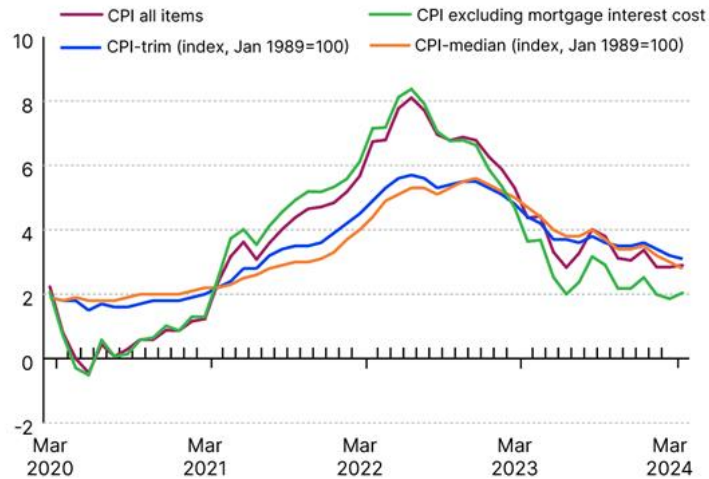
Does this make a June interest rate cut a slam dunk? No, but it remains our base case view. There's still one more inflation print before the June decision. If the April core reading shows further progress, it could be hard for the Bank to justify yet another (seventh straight) pause.

That said, it will be interesting to see how patient the Bank is. It could wait until July with a fresh set of forecasts. That will buy it more time to collect more data, and likely bring them closer to the U.S. Federal Reserve first cut (looking more like July or September these days). But it's also a risk, potentially leading to more economic weakness than necessary to get back to the 2% target.



### Inflation in Canada

Year-over-year % change



Source: Statistics Canada Table 18-10-0004-01 and 18-10-0256-01

### Lumber

Lumber prices plunged to around \$500 per thousand board feet, a level not seen since November 2023, pressured by worsening demand prospects from the key property sector. Latest releases revealed that housing starts, a crucial gauge of future demand, in the two of world's largest consumers, the US and Canada, fell sharply below forecasts in March. The poor need for building materials coincided with rising output since Canadian lumber production surged by 16.4% year-over-year in January 2024, while sales growth lagged at 11.2%. Furthermore, strong US economic data and hawkish pronouncements from Fed officials have dampened bets of regulator's interest rate cuts. A prolonged period of tighter monetary policy translates to higher mortgage rates, ultimately weakening the construction activity outlook.



## Quality Control

### Major and Minor Defects

In CSA S349:20 5.1 Quality Assurance Manual item “g” states that your manual must include a clear delineation of what constitutes major and minor defects.

This is one of the most common questions I get asked about and it was brought up by several people at our recent Annual General Meeting.

Normally a manufacturer of a product would be able to determine their own acceptable defects based on their customer expectations or requirements. For example, if you were making garments and the sewing process left untrimmed thread you may consider that a minor defect, because the customer is not likely to return the product. However, if there were missing stitches that affected the seam strength you may consider that a major defect that would lead to customer dissatisfaction.

As we are building structural trusses that are part of a structural system how you deal with non-conforming product is very important as the design of the truss only takes into account limited tolerances in the manufacturing process.

That being said, we are not building Steinway pianos and we are not expected to meet that high of a customer expectation. Whether a defect is considered minor or major depends on its impact on the product’s fitness for use.

Minor defects are typically issues that do not significantly affect or compromise the functionality or performance of the product. Minor defects may still exist within acceptable tolerances or limits defined by quality standards. They may be issues that can be corrected without impacting the design.

Major defects are those that significantly impair the product to perform as designed creating a safety or performance issue. These defects can render the product unusable, unsafe, or unfit for its intended purpose. These defects would require corrective action to bring the product back into compliance with quality standards and customer expectations.

So where do you draw the line?

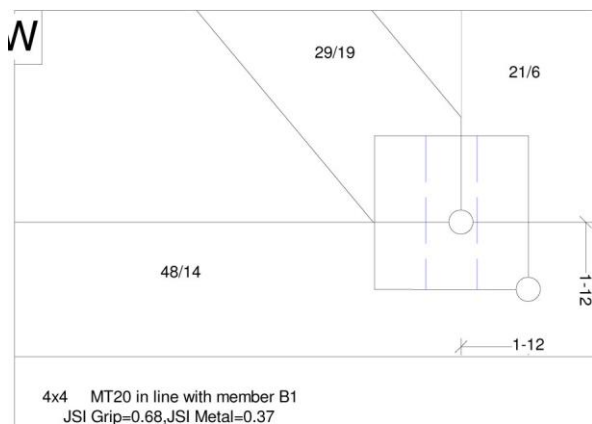
It is my opinion that in the manufacturing of trusses that the line between minor and major is made when you determine that there is corrective action that needs to be taken. If no corrective action is determined to be taken it can be considered a minor defect. If it is determined that you have to repair something it is a major defect. So, you must clearly define who makes this call. Is it the Inspector, Production Manager, Truss Designer, or Engineer?

Let’s look at some examples.

The tolerance of plate placement is  $\frac{1}{4}$ " and it is determined that the plate on the front side of the truss is placed correctly, but the plate on the back is shifted by  $\frac{1}{2}$ ". You could consider this acceptable because the average of both plates is within the  $\frac{1}{4}$ " tolerance and no action would be required. This would be a minor defect.

A lower grade of lumber was used than was specified. This is most likely a major defect, and the lumber would have to be replaced. However, you could check with the Truss designer before the repair was completed, you may get lucky.

A 4x4 plate is placed with the teeth in the wrong orientation. Upon checking with the Truss designer, the truss still works with the wrong orientation. This may be considered a minor defect because the truss design still works, and the plate does not have to be removed. However, the truss design drawing should be revised to show the actual orientation.



*4x4 plate installed in the wrong orientation*

There is a gap between top chord members that exceeds the tolerance of  $\frac{1}{16}$ ". This would usually be considered a major defect and either a repair would be designed by the truss designer, or the member would have to be replaced, which would most likely require the plates to be removed and replaced. The new plates would have to be specified to ensure that the minimum number of effective teeth into the members is acceptable.

The plates are placed within the design tolerance, but there is wane on the lumber that is reducing the number of effective teeth into it. If it was determined that the minimum number of effective teeth were still into good wood, this would be considered a minor defect as there would be no corrective action that had to be taken. It should be noted on the inspection form that this was checked. This could be determined by the truss inspector.



In the above example it was determined that 72 teeth were ~~not~~ effective, and the minimum required was 70. This is why it is important to have the joint details that indicate the minimum number of effective teeth. If you do not have this information you have to assume that all the teeth are required.

A 18 gauge HS plate was installed instead of the specified 20 gauge plate. This would have to be checked with the Truss designer as it may work. If it does it could be considered a minor defect and documented. If the plate did not work, it would have to be removed and replaced with a plate considering the damage to the wood.

A plate is missing on one side of the truss. Obviously, this is a major defect and would have to be corrected and documented.

The overhang of the truss is  $\frac{1}{2}$ " too long. You would have to answer the question "Why is it too long?" Is there a gap at the other end of the member? If it was determined that it was just cut too long and did not affect the performance of the truss it could be considered a minor defect. However, you may want to address it as it could result in customer dissatisfaction or a back charge.

Upon inspection it is noted that the plates are not fully pressed and there is a  $\frac{1}{16}$ " gap between the plate and the wood. This would be a major defect as these teeth would be considered totally ineffective. The repair may be re-pressing the truss, but there may be issues with the calibration of the truss press. This is an instance where the previous trusses would also have to be examined. The truss could be pressed again, but it is still a major defect.

While pressing the truss the bottom chord splits significantly. A major defect as this could affect the performance of the truss when in service. A repair would have to be designed or the truss may have to be re-built.

Issues that are within the tolerances of Appendix G of TPIC need not to be considered defects and do not have to be addressed. Issues that are outside of tolerance, but are determined to be acceptable through a review, usually by the Truss designer, can be considered minor. They still must be documented though. Any issue that results in a repair such as plates being removed, or lumber replaced would be considered a major defect. There must be documentation of the repair.

Why is it important to document minor defects? Because you want to determine if there is a pattern contributing to the defects and determine how to correct them.

It is important that in your Q.C. manual you have a hierarchy in your inspection process laying out the steps to determine how defects are corrected and by who. Your truss inspector should be able to determine if there are enough effective teeth in a member, but only the Truss designer will have the ability to determine if a misplaced plate is acceptable or must be replaced. The Production manager is usually responsible for ensuring that a repair gets done correctly. If there is a significant issue or one that affects multiple trusses the Senior management may be involved as well.

It is typically the responsibility of the truss inspector or the Q.C. manager to ensure that the issues are documented properly.

## Health and Safety Toolbox

Similarly to the Quality topic the WWTA would like to give you a monthly item you can discuss when doing your Safety Toolbox meeting.

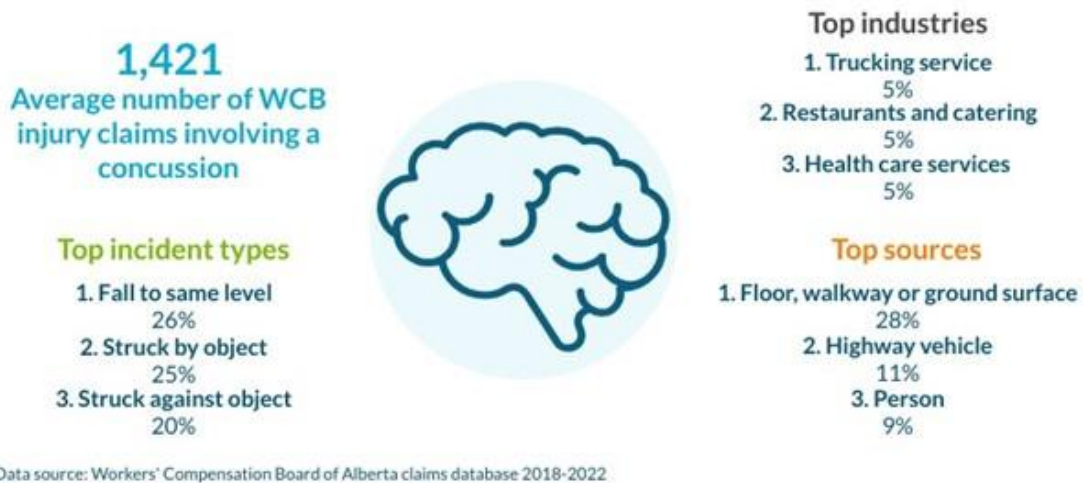
### **Concussions**

I was reading through the April OHS newsletter and lo and behold I came across an article of a concussion incident example at a truss plant, so I thought it would be a good topic.

Concussions are a common type of traumatic brain injury, usually resulting from an impact or jolt to the head. The symptoms of a concussion can vary widely in severity and duration, with people experiencing either mild or severe symptoms that can last anywhere from a day or two to several years.

Between 2018 and 2022, an average of more than 1,400 concussion claims per year were accepted by the Workers' Compensation Board – Alberta (WCB). The trucking, restaurants and catering, and health care industries had the greatest number of concussion injury claims (with five per cent each), but concussions are pervasive across the entire labour force – almost 300 industries had at least one concussion-related WCB claim.

Among concussion-related WCB lost-time claims, the average time lost per claim was 41 days.



As illustrated in the image above, several types of incidents and sources of impact can cause a concussion. A hazard assessment (which is required by Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety Code) can help identify the hazards at your work site that can cause a concussion; controls can then be put in place to mitigate these hazards.

For example, in one recent incident, a worker was forcefully using a hammer to try to get lumber to fit into a building truss jig and lost control of the tool, resulting in a concussion. After this incident, the company's standard work procedure was updated to recognize the hazard of fitting lumber into jigs; it now requires lumber to be trimmed for proper fit so that it doesn't have to be hammered into place with excessive force. To learn more about hazard assessment and control, see the [hazard assessment and control handbook](#) on the OHS Resource Portal.

### Signs and Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of a concussion include a new onset of one or more of the following symptoms, but are not limited to:

- loss of consciousness
- headache (or a sensation of pressure in your head)
- nausea or vomiting
- dizziness
- seeing stars or lights
- blurred or double vision
- slurred speech

- balance problems
- sensitivity to light and/or noise
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty remembering
- confusion, drowsiness, and an incoherent thought process.

Some symptoms may not be present immediately after the injury but may emerge in the subsequent hours or days. It is therefore important to monitor for symptoms several days following a head injury.

### **How to Manage a Concussion**

Workers who experience any of the above symptoms after an injury should alert a supervisor and seek immediate medical attention. It is important to consult with a medical professional on how best to manage a concussion. Someone with a suspected concussion should not be left alone or drive.

With proper diagnosis and treatment, most people with concussions recover fully within a short period of time. In some cases, symptoms linger for weeks or months making it challenging to resume normal activities or return to work. The ability to return-to-work can be influenced by co-existing medical conditions and an individual's concussion history.

### **Preventing Concussions**

The following tips may help prevent concussions in the workplace:

- Remove tripping hazards. Make sure walkways and work spaces are free of clutter, cords, puddles of water, or anything else that can cause a slip, trip or fall.
- Use proper signage to alert employees of wet surfaces.
- Keep shelves and storage areas and your work space clean and organized to avoid falling objects.
- In a warehouse or storage facility, place the heaviest objects on the floor or the lowest possible shelving.
- Wear the proper type of safety footwear to prevent falls if you work in slippery, icy or other types of rugged terrain.
- Do not stand on chairs, desks or tables, but rather use an appropriate step stool, access platform, or ladder to avoid falls.
- Use caution when working from heights. Know how to use fall protection and fall restraint equipment.
- If a job requires wearing a hard hat, make sure it's appropriate to the job, properly fitted, and in good condition.
- Report all unsafe conditions to the nearest supervisor.

The Alberta Government has a new format OHS eNews you can subscribe to with all kinds of good material at: <https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/>

## News and Events

The Western Wood Truss Association of Alberta would like to welcome a new member.



**801 Laut Ave.  
Crossfield Alberta**

### **The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and Meeting of the Western Wood Truss Association of Alberta**

We recently held our annual meeting April 11 at the River Cree Resort near Edmonton. There were 90 registered guests and the feedback from the group was quite positive.

In the morning, I gave a presentation on building your Q.C. program to meet the CSA S349:20 standard. This was based on the work that is currently underway for the CWTA to create and accredit a Certifying Body. There are still a couple of details to get sorted out, but the presentation will soon be available for members in a form that they can incorporate into their training.

Scott Fash, Chief Executive Director of BILD Alberta gave an insightful presentation on the home building industry including code changes, policy changes that support affordability and government relations.

Next Jay Summach from Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute (AMII) presented a non-technical overview of the methods of machine learning. He talked about how businesses can go about developing cases for AI and approaches that machine learning can take including the importance of data.





*Jay Summach speaking at the WWTAA Annual Conference*

Finally, Bruce Alton, CEO of RoBIM Technologies talked about how technological advances in robotics could impact Alberta's construction and manufacturing companies. He showed some case study examples on how robots are being used to reduce costs and improve profitability. It was very interesting to see how Alberta and our institutions are becoming world leaders in the field of robotics and creating a talent pool of experts.

### **The WWTAA AGM**

#### **Dues and Fees**

The membership present at the WWTAA AGM unanimously approved that the fixed fee for fabricator members remain at \$1000.00 annually and that it be invoiced yearly as opposed to the current practice of invoice quarterly.

The membership also voted to increase the current plate levy to \$.02 from \$.019 for plate purchases per company up to 250,000 lbs and from \$.011 to \$.012 for plate purchases exceeding 250,000 lbs. Effective immediately.

The membership voted to increase the annual associate membership fee from \$1000.00 annually to \$1200.00 annually effective for 2024.

Board of Directors

The membership approved the following to serve on the WWTa Board of Directors:

- Derek Foss (President)
- Paul Foreman
- Laura Barber
- Brad Cuthbertson
- Darrell Curtis
- Kent Drescher
- Brent Feyter
- David Klassen, P.Eng
- Sam Wentzel
- Wendy Murphy
- Dave Codrington
- Vikrant Khanna (new)
- Jesse Van Duffelen (new)
- Sascha Wittke (new)

**2023 Alberta Building Code**

While I am not in the habit of reading the building code when it comes to siding there is a change that may affect truss plants if you are building gables. The following is taken from BILD Albertas summary of code changes.

Rating	2023 ABC Section	Summary of Code Change	Impact of Code Change
1	<b>9.27.12.2</b> <b>Vinyl Siding, Insulated Vinyl Siding and Vinyl Soffits</b>	<p>New standards that suppliers will need to comply with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vinyl Siding: ASTM D3679 (CAN/CGSB-41.24)</li> <li>• Insulated Vinyl Siding: ASTM D7793 (CAN/CGSB-41.24)</li> <li>• Rigid Vinyl Soffits: ASTM D4477 (CAN/CGSB-41.24)</li> </ul> <p>The attachment of the cladding must be as per Table 9.27.5.4-A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 400 mm (16") on center for horizontally applied vinyl, insulated vinyl and polypropylene siding, aligning with manufactures installation instructions.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Previous code allowed "The attachment of vinyl siding shall conform to the requirements in Subsection 9.27.5. for metal siding." (which was 600 mm (24"))</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 300 mm (12") on center for vertically applied.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spacing of studs to allow fastening at 16" O.C. and still allowing the installation of an exterior gypsum sheathing.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This can affect your energy model because of the additional thermal bridging at 16" O.C. compared to 24" O.C.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Change in the minimum embedment of the fastener from 25 mm (1") to 32 mm (1 ¼").</li> </ul>

This new requirement seems to mean that your vertical framing would have to be at 16" o.c. or 12" o.c. if the siding is applied vertically.

Something to keep a look out for.

## WWTA Online Training

With the provincial building codes now coming into force and referencing TPIC 2019 there have been several inquiries and sign-ups about our online training courses from outside of Alberta now that truss plants are starting to implement their QMS systems and determining that training of their workers is crucial to being in compliance.

If you have not yet taken a look at the WWTA online training program I would encourage you to, as no doubt you will be hiring new workers in the near future and it is a good method to get them productive earlier and safer. If you want an overview of the program go to the WWTA website at: <http://www.wwta.ab.ca/truss-training-online.html>

### Did You Know?

When the Minister of Housing Sean Fraser announced in December 2023 that the government would be launching a pre-approved home design catalogue to accelerate the home-building process that the CWTA sent a letter off to the minister requesting to be involved.

It's a reboot of a federal policy from the post-Second World War era, when the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. developed straightforward blueprints to help speed up the construction of badly needed homes, Fraser said.

"When many thousands of soldiers were returning home to be reunited with their families at once, Canada faced enormous housing crunches," he said.

"We intend to take these lessons from our history books and bring them into the 21st century."

Many of the post-war home designs — including those for modest detached homes known as "strawberry box" houses — are still scattered in neighbourhoods across the country to this day.

The modern-day version of the catalogue will instead focus on low-rise builds, such as small multiplexes, student housing and seniors' residences, then explore a potential catalogue for higher-density construction.

We received a response acknowledging our interest in engagement opportunities around this effort.