

Commentary-Dave Pasolli-Western Wood Truss Association of Alberta

AGAR: Carney and Poilievre’s housing plans aren’t very realistic

Jerry Agar Published Apr 21, 2025

No matter who wins the election, we’re promised a housing boom.

Mark Carney and the Liberals will build 500,000 modular homes per year, for a total of two million homes.

No to be outdone, Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives promise [build 2.3 million homes](#) in five years.

How will they do it?

Carney says he can facilitate building 400 square foot homes for \$70,000 apiece.



Recently a prefab home was put up in three days in Toronto, but that was after the required infrastructure was put in place.

Speaking with the Winnipeg Sun, Ellery Broder, who has been in the property development and modular housing business for over 40 years, doubted Carney.

He said, “Our company has built modular homes for decades. We were one of the first to really scale it. Even back then, we couldn’t build a 400-square-foot unit for \$70,000, and that was before the rise in material and labour costs. Today, you’re looking at closer to \$130,000 — at least.”

He pointed out that the \$70,000 estimate doesn’t include essential infrastructure such as water, sewer, hydro, and roads, nor does it cover site preparation, landscaping, delivery, or placement.”

The National Post writes, “Until he quit just four months ago to run for the Liberal leadership, Carney was chair of Brookfield Asset Management, one of the world’s largest investment firms. In 2021, the firm spent \$5 billion to acquire Modulaire Group, a major manufacturer of modular buildings.”

Carney's plans and his business interests seem to intersect.

As for the Conservatives, Poilievre said, "I have a plan to build the homes Canadians need and restore the Canadian promise. We will get gatekeepers out of the way, cut taxes on homebuilding, and sell off land to build 2.3 million homes over the next five years."

I spoke with Frank Cohn, a home renovator and contractor, and host of the Home Improvement Show on NEWSTALK1010 Saturday mornings.

He says that Canada does not have the worker base to build homes at that rate.

Cohn said, "Where is the land to do it and the labour to do it, because we've got an aging labour force and we are suffering for a lack of trades."

He also listed a problem of labour strikes and tariffs in terms of supply as issues.

CMHC reports, "Nationally, actual 2024 housing starts were up 2% in centres of 10,000 population and over, with 227,697 units recorded."

It might be more reasonable, as opposed to Carney's half million little boxes, to build condo buildings and call each of the 400 units, 400 homes. In urban areas, where the price of housing is so expensive, land is at a premium.

Reports also tell us that contractors and developers are drawing back on building condos.

Poilievre's plan would, "Require cities to permit high-density housing around federally funded transit stations as a condition of receiving federal funding."

Carney plans to build more bureaucracy through a new federal agency called [Build Canada Homes](#), which he says would function as a **public developer**, acquiring land, managing housing projects, and issuing bulk orders for modular homes.

I asked Cohn if any government had a good track record as a project manager and builder.

His response was an explosive burst of laughter.

It is doubtful either party can deliver on their promise.

In the 2025 Canadian federal election, both the Liberal and Conservative parties have proposed housing policies that would impact Alberta, including cities like Calgary and Edmonton. Here's how each party's platform could affect the province:

Liberal Party (Mark Carney)

Key Measures:

- **Housing Accelerator Fund:** A \$4 billion fund aimed at helping municipalities speed up housing construction by reducing red tape and increasing density. This could support Alberta cities in expediting affordable housing projects.
- **GST Rebate:** Elimination of the GST on new capital investments in affordable rental housing, providing tax incentives to increase and renovate rental housing supply.
- **National Housing Co-Investment Fund:** Doubling funding to \$2.7 billion over four years to assist affordable housing providers in acquiring land and buildings, preserving units, and developing projects for vulnerable groups.
- **Conversion of Vacant Spaces:** Allocating \$600 million to convert empty office and retail spaces into housing, which could be utilized in Alberta's urban centers.
- **Multigenerational Home Renovation Tax Credit:** Supporting families in adding secondary units to their homes, potentially increasing housing availability.

Impact on Alberta:

- **Urban Development:** Calgary and Edmonton could benefit from the Housing Accelerator Fund to fast-track affordable housing projects, addressing the growing demand in urban areas.
- **Rental Market:** Tax incentives and increased funding could stimulate the construction and renovation of rental properties, potentially easing rental shortages.
- **Utilization of Vacant Properties:** Converting unused commercial spaces into housing could revitalize downtown areas and increase housing stock.

Conservative Party (Pierre Poilievre)

Key Measures:

- **Housing Construction Goal:** Aim to build 1 million homes over three years, focusing on increasing supply through private sector involvement.
- **Municipal Incentives:** Require municipalities receiving federal transit funding to increase housing density near transit areas, encouraging urban densification.

- **Federal Property Utilization:** Review and release 15% of the federal government's real estate portfolio for housing development, potentially increasing available land for housing projects.
- **Tax Incentives for Rental Housing:** Allow capital gains tax deferrals when reinvesting in rental properties, encouraging investment in the rental market.
- **Conversion of Office Space:** Explore converting unneeded office space into housing, which could be applicable in Alberta's cities with vacant commercial properties.

Impact on Alberta:

- **Private Sector Engagement:** Policies aimed at reducing regulatory barriers could encourage private developers to invest in Alberta's housing market, potentially increasing supply.
- **Urban Densification:** Tying federal transit funding to increased housing density could lead to more high-density developments near transit hubs in cities like Calgary and Edmonton.
- **Utilization of Federal Lands:** Releasing federal properties for housing development could provide new opportunities for housing projects in Alberta.

Both parties propose strategies to address housing affordability and supply in Alberta, with the Liberals focusing on government-led initiatives and funding to support affordable housing, and the Conservatives emphasizing private sector solutions and regulatory reforms to stimulate housing development.

Alberta's urban centers could see significant impacts from these policies, depending on the election outcome and subsequent implementation of the proposed measures.

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

Economic Update

Housing Starts

In Alberta, urban housing starts totaled 3958 in March 2025, a year-over-year increase of 26.78%. Canadian housing starts decreased by 17% over the same period. Edmonton was up 21% from last March, while Calgary was increased 27% from a strong number last year. Housing starts in Alberta were down from 4074 in the previous month of February.

Housing Starts Alberta						
	Mar-25	Mar-24	% Change	YTD 2025	YTD 2024	% Change
Alberta	3958	3122	26.78%	11470	9744	17.71%
Edmonton	1406	1162	21.00%	4095	3487	17.44%
Calgary	2235	1760	26.99%	6271	5385	16.45%
Red Deer	9	8	12.50%	46	186	-75.27%
Grande Prairie	19	9	111.11%	118	34	247.06%
Lethbridge	40	11	263.64%	184	138	33.33%
Wood Buffalo	2	2	0.00%	3	2	50.00%
Whitehorse*	125	1	12400.00%	125	1	12400.00%
Canada	14924	17952	-16.87%	45295	49389	-8.29%

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

Housing Starts by Dwelling Type (Centres 10K+)

	MAR-25	MAR-24	YTD-25	YTD-24
Total	3,958	3,122	11,470	9,744
Single	1,180	1,000	3,279	2,804
Semi-detached	290	310	866	797
Row	423	398	1,567	1,292
Apartment	2,065	1,414	5,758	4,851

Relentless - Home construction keeps booming in Alberta ATB Financial Mark Parsons

Reading the trade war news, you'd think everything was heading in the wrong direction. Not so.

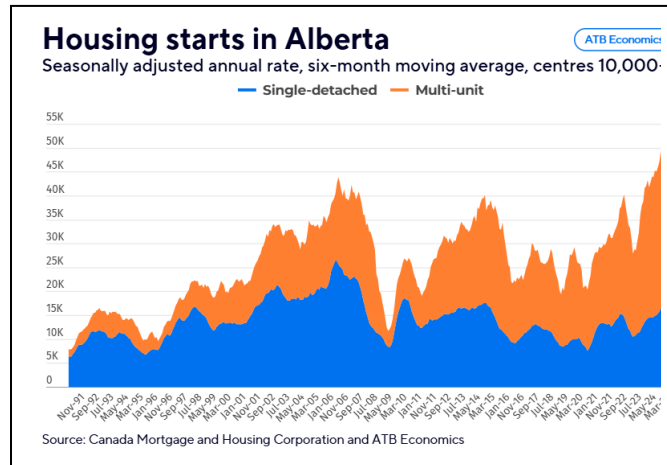
Take home construction in Alberta.

Alberta recorded 53,000 (seasonally adjusted annual rate) housing starts last month. This was the second month in a row starts were over 50K, and well above the five year average 36,700.

How strong is homebuilding in Alberta? Alberta accounted for 23% of all starts in Canada in the first quarter of 2025 with only 12% of the population. Alberta is now running, on a trend basis, ahead of the housing boom of 2006-07.

This is a good thing. With the population soaring (Alberta continues to lead in growth), Alberta needs homes to support affordability. Fortunately, builders have stepped up to the plate.

As the chart below shows, multi-unit dwellings accounted for the largest portion of new construction. The spike in housing starts since mid-2023 has been led by Calgary, though Edmonton has also gained momentum over this period.



We now see upside to our March forecast. We called for 40,000 starts this year, though that partly reflected larger concerns about U.S. tariffs and countertariffs on Canada raising costs. Given recent data and a lighter touch on U.S. tariffs than originally thought, we are tentatively increasing our forecast closer to 45,000

Heading north - Edmonton catches Calgary’s real estate fever

We’ve been on the ‘chasing affordability’ kick for a long time. One of our early calls was that we’d see an ‘inside Alberta’ edition of the broader theme of Canadians coming to Alberta in search of cheaper housing.

Recall the first wave was Calgary. The CMA has seen population growth of 6% in each of the last two years. Explosive population growth translated into more expensive housing.

Now it’s Edmonton’s turn. As Calgary’s housing market cools, Edmonton’s is taking off. Home sales were up 12% year-over-year (y/y) in the first quarter of 2025 (vs. a 10% decline in Calgary). Benchmark home prices were up 12.6% y/y in the first quarter in Edmonton and only 2.5% in Calgary, though both have outpaced the national average of -1.2%.

The gap between Calgary and Edmonton prices is \$154K (as of March 2025), still wide by historic standards but the narrowest since March 2023.

[Bank of Canada holds rate](#)

US New Residential Single-Family Home Sales Rise 7.4% 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 724,000, according to estimates. This is 7.4% above the revised February rate of 674,000 and 6.0% above the March 2024 estimate of 683,000.

The seasonally adjusted estimate of new houses for sale at the end of the month was 503,000. This is 0.6% above the February estimate of 500,000 and 7.9% above the March 2024 estimate of 466,000.

This represents a supply of 8.3 months at the current sales rate—6.7% below the February estimate of 8.9 months and 1.2% above the March 2024 estimate of 8.2 months.

The median sales price of new houses sold in March was \$403,600. This is 1.9% below the February price and 7.5% below the March 2024 price.

The average sales price was \$497,700. This is 1.0% above February but is 4.7% below March 2024.

Builder Confidence Levels Indicate Slow Start for Spring Housing Season

Robert Dietz, NAHB April 16

Growing economic uncertainty stemming from tariff concerns and elevated building material costs kept builder sentiment in negative territory in April, despite a modest bump in confidence likely due to a slight retreat in mortgage interest rates in recent weeks.

Builder confidence in the market for newly built single-family homes was 40 in April, edging up one point from March, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI).

The March dip in mortgage rates may have stimulated some sales activity in recent weeks. However, builders have expressed growing uncertainty over market conditions as tariffs have increased price volatility for building materials at a time when the industry continues to grapple with labor shortages and a lack of buildable lots.

Policy uncertainty is making it difficult for builders to accurately price homes and make critical business decisions. The April HMI data indicates that the tariff cost effect is already taking hold, with the majority of builders reporting cost increases on building materials due to tariffs.

When asked about the impact of tariffs on their business, 60% of builders reported their suppliers have already increased or announced increases of material prices due to tariffs. On average, suppliers have increased their prices by 6.3% in response to announced, enacted, or expected tariffs. This means builders estimate a typical cost effect from recent tariff actions at \$10,900 per home.

The latest HMI survey also revealed that 29% of builders cut home prices in April, unchanged from March. Meanwhile, the average price reduction was 5% in April, the same rate as the previous month. The use of sales incentives was 61% in April, up from 59% in March.

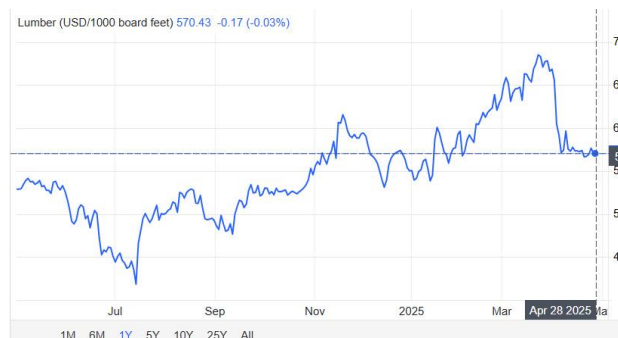
Derived from a monthly survey that NAHB has been conducting for more than 35 years, the NAHB/Wells Fargo HMI gauges builder perceptions of current single-family home sales and sales expectations for the next six months as “good,” “fair” or “poor.” The survey also asks builders to rate traffic of prospective buyers as “high to very high,” “average” or “low to very low.” Scores for each component are then used to calculate a seasonally adjusted index where any number over 50 indicates that more builders view conditions as good than poor.

The HMI index gauging current sales conditions rose two points in April to a level of 45. The gauge charting traffic of prospective buyers increased one point to 25 while the component measuring sales expectations in the next six months fell four points to 43.

Looking at the three-month moving averages for regional HMI scores, the Northeast fell seven points in April to 47, the Midwest moved one point lower to 41, the South dropped three points to 39 and the West posted a two-point decline to 35.

Lumber

Lumber futures stabilized around \$570 per thousand board feet, nearing their lowest point since early February, and marking a sharp drop from late March when prices briefly spiked to \$685, the highest in two and a half years. The threat of additional trade tariffs continues to weigh on the construction sector, dampening demand and slowing housing starts. The US produces only 35 billion board feet of lumber annually, far short of the 50 billion board feet it consumes, making it heavily reliant on imports. While steep duties on Canadian softwood lumber have long been in place, these tariffs are set to more than double by September, further driving up material costs for builders. Additionally, concerns are rising that Washington could impose tariffs on European wood, which would directly impact Swedish exporters if trade tensions escalate.



[Costs, chaos rising as metal tariffs pile up](#)

Duties on Softwood Lumber

Somewhat lost in the latest tariff talk is the lumber industry.

The U.S. Department of Commerce is set to more than double the existing anti-dumping and countervailing duties on Canadian softwood lumber. These duties are planned to increase from the current average of 14.4% to 34.45% this fall as part of an annual review process.

These are separate from the other tariffs and reflect a long-standing dispute that predates President Trump.

This is a lose-lose proposition. It reduces demand for Canada's forest products (Canadian softwood exports to the U.S. totalled \$7.7 billion last year*), but it also hurts Americans by increasing home prices. Alberta is the third largest producer of softwood lumber in Canada after B.C. and Quebec. Its share of Canadian production has increased over the last decade from 14.9% in 2014 to 18.7% last year, largely reflecting declines in B.C.

The U.S. needs Canada's lumber. The National Homebuilders Association notes that the U.S. uses 50 billion board feet each year, but only produces 35 billion board feet. Most lumber imports come from Canada, which are considered high-quality for construction (tighter grains and high stability).

[Canadian softwood lumber could be hit by new tariffs](#)

[US tariffs soar on Canadian softwood lumber-FP](#)

[Sweeping Reforms to Protect National Forests and Boost Domestic Timber Production](#)

[North American Wood Products Sector Will See Few Direct Effects](#)

[why homebuilders are absorbing tariff price hikes](#)

Quality Control

The Truss Stacker- One of the Most Important People in Your Quality Control Management System

Who is the most important person in your truss operation? The designer who creates the projects? The guy who signs the check? Without sales there is no business, so is it sales? Let's make an argument for someone you might take for granted. There is a person who

looks at every job – every truss – who is in a position to effectively ensure the product meets general requirements. It's the truss stacker!

The truss stacker fulfills a vital role in your operation, yet often this position is filled by the newest, greenest, employee with little or no training. For those who choose to put the new person here, what can be done to maximize the effectiveness of this position?

Job Description

The truss stacker, in addition to stacking, should be familiar with QC requirements. They don't need to be as skilled as the in-house QC manager, but they do need to be able to understand basic elements of TPIC Appendix G requirements related to the construction of a truss. They should understand the following:

- Member to member gap
- General orientation of the connector plate
- Rotation of the connector
- Missing plates
- Broken lumber
- Embedment of the connector.



The stacker needs to be trained to stack trusses uniformly as to reveal problems and issues. Important points to remember include the following:

- Tight banded packs create laminated packages that strengthen the pack.
- A carefully placed nail near the overhang or jiggling as each truss is stacked can aid in alignment.
- Blocking is absolutely necessary in order to prevent lateral stress on truss members.
- Like trusses should be banded together if at all possible.
- The longer the span, the more bands required.
- Truss labels that are readable in the stack are preferred to help loading verification and make truss identification by the erection contractor quick and simple.
- Neat, tight packaging with trusses aligned give the jobsite delivery a great first impression.



Note that the set of trusses is done

Trusses labeled properly

Consider providing an opportunity for the stacker to do an occasional in-house inspection. That way, your truss stacker will be able to see why and how all of the small details matter. This experience will benefit the fabricator too by positively impacting quality throughout the plant.

Why not provide an incentive for the stacker to find problems? Then, instead of thinking they're causing more problems when identifying mistakes in the plant, they will understand that they are supposed to do just that! Rewarding their efforts to keep their eye on quality will improve their attentiveness and greatly benefit your overall QC.

Create a pathway for problems identified by the stacker to be resolved. It is essential to have feedback loops in manufacturing plants. If departments are working in isolation and information is not being shared among them, then your quality will suffer. Only with communication will you be able to actually fix the problems!

The truss stacker will never be the highest paid or most educated person in your plant, but they just might be the most important person when it comes to ensuring that your production is running properly. Ignoring truss stacker required skillsets could be a missed opportunity to improve your product and to help prevent delivering problems to your customer.

Health and Safety Toolbox

Updated OHS Code mandatory as of March 31, 2025

A number of provisions in the OHS Code were updated on December 4, 2024. The changes included updates to Part 27 (Violence and harassment), Part 33

(Explosives), Part 37 (Oil, gas and geothermal energy) and miscellaneous amendments across the OHS Code.

Although the December 4 updates came into effect immediately, the Alberta government provided a transitional period during which work site parties could comply with either the updated or the previous provisions. This transitional period ended on March 30, 2025. As of March 31, 2025, work site parties must now comply with the updated OHS Code.

To view the OHS Code, visit alberta.ca/occupational-health-and-safety-code. If you have questions about the December 2024 OHS Code updates, email OHSreview@gov.ab.ca. Resources containing highlights of the legislation changes can be found in the [2024 OHS Code change highlights](#) category on the OHS Resource Portal.

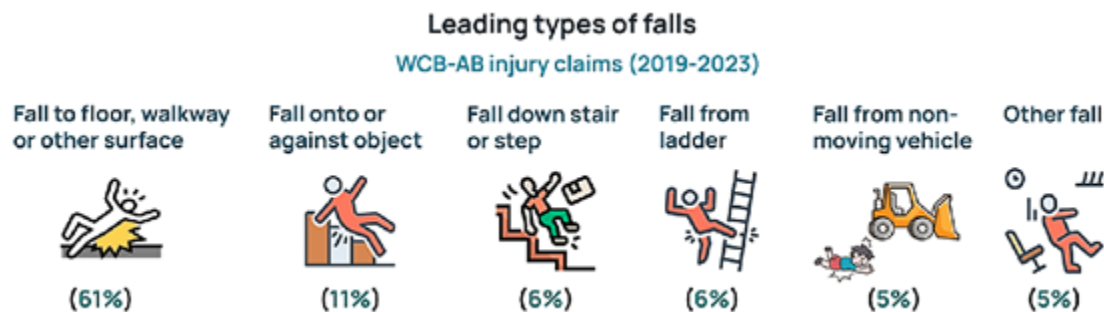
Free webinar for small and medium business employers

Small- and medium business employers are invited to attend an upcoming information session. Representatives from Alberta OHS, Employment Standards, Partnerships in Injury Reduction and Regional Employer Supports will provide information and resources related to occupational health and safety and other topics of interest. The information sessions will take place on April 8 from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. To register or get more details about the topics that will be presented, [click here](#)

OHS: Beyond the numbers

In “OHS: Beyond the numbers,” we showcase data and information to help start health and safety conversations in your workplace. This month, we’ll be looking at WCB injury claims involving falls.

Falls continue to be a leading cause of workplace injuries. Between 2019 and 2023, there were a total of 38,653 fall-related injury claims – an average of more than 7,700 injury claims per year. Falls represented 15 per cent of all WCB injury claims over the five-year period.



As shown in the images above, falls in the workplace don't just involve falling from heights – they can happen in other ways too, even when on the ground. Nearly two-thirds of fall-related claims were from falling to a floor, walkway or other surface. Eleven per cent of falls were onto or against an object. Falls from ladders and falls down stairs or steps accounted for six per cent of total fall claims each, while falls from non-moving vehicles or other types of falls each accounted for five per cent of claims.

Although falls occur throughout all work sectors, certain industries reported higher percentages of claims. Between 2019 and 2023, the general truck services industry had the most fall injury claims (seven per cent of all fall claims), followed by health care services (six per cent) and then food and convenience stores (four per cent). These industries span a variety of work environments, from roadways to care facilities to retail spaces – meaning falls can and do happen almost anywhere.

Preventing falls isn't just about ensuring safety on ladders or scaffolds; it's also about doing things such as ensuring there are safe walking surfaces and clear pathways on a workshop floor. You can find several resources on fall prevention in the [slips trips and falls](#) category on the OHS Resource Portal.

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 WWTA Alberta held our conference and Annual General Meeting April 3 in Calgary.

There were 83 registered attendees. The highlight was having a home builder panel discussion with 3 prominent Calgary home builders that was very well received. We also had presentations from Axix insurance and the Calgary Police Service on cyber crime prevention.



Builder Panel

*Chris Richer
Brookfield
Residential*

*Mike Cole
Sterling Homes*

*Ryan Erickson
Excel Homes*

The panel gave some good insights into what builders are facing, the economic environment, where governments fit in, and how relationships between builders and suppliers are going to be based on creating partnerships in the future in order to ensure their success.

The membership elected the following to serve as Directors of the Board.

Derek Foss
Paul Foreman
Brent Feyter
David Klassen, P.Eng
Laura Barber
Darrell Curtis
Kent Drescher

Kurt Gibson
Dave Codrington
Sam Wentzel
Jesse Van Duffelen
Nick Ruttan
Mandeep Singh

The membership also elected Derek Foss to remain as President of the WWTAA Alberta.

A motion was also passed that if a director misses 3 consecutive meetings that they would be removed from the Board of Directors.

It was approved that the associate membership fee and the fixed portion of the members fee remain unchanged, and that the members plate levy be increased by 2% in order to remain in line with inflation.

Thanks to everyone that was in attendance for their support in order to make another successful event.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Matt Kratzmann from Igloo Building Supplies Group Ltd. For winning General Member Sales Person/Liaison at the recent BILD Edmonton Awards.

Igloo Building Supplies also won the Supplies And Installs a Tangible Product category.



STANDATA Update

As reported in the March newsletter there are effectively 2 STANDATA's currently in place. It was confirmed that 23-BCB-02 will be withdrawn and there will 6 months notice given. At that time 23-BCI-015 will be fully in effect. This will allow for manufacturers, suppliers and builders to gear up for the application of STANDATA 23-BCI-015.

As of writing this there is already a revision to 23-BCB-015 in the works, but it has not been published. It is expected that any references to the system will be removed, and the focus will be on authentication of the truss profiles.

Although the requirements for authentication were generally accepted there appears to be further push back from the home builders on the requirements. Municipal Affairs has stated that they are still willing to work on refining the requirements.

Stakeholders that have questions or feedback about this topic should direct them to safety.services@gov.ab.ca

It appears that Municipal Affairs is starting work on the Engineered Wood Products STANDATA but there has been no news as of this date.

Upperbound AI Conference

If you are looking excited about AI-Powered Productivity and the Business of AI you may want to check out the Upperbound Conference May 20-23 in Edmonton.

[Upperbound](#)

AVAWPP

It has not been publicly announced yet, but it appears that there will be an additional round of funding for the Alberta Value Added Wood Products Program from the Provincial Government.

Wood Products manufacturers including the WWTA lobbied the Minister Todd Lowen for the 3rd round of funding.

If you are interested in the previous funding recipients go to www.avapp.com

More information should be available soon.

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?

A Mark Carney-led government plans to create Build Canada Homes (BCH) to get the federal government back into the business of building homes. I guess everyone in Canada will be guaranteed a home and a job just like in some of the worst countries in the world.

Milton Friedman famously argued that "the government solution to a problem is usually as bad as the problem and very often makes the problem worse". He also stated, "Nothing is so permanent as a temporary government program".