

CONSTRUCTION IN THE CLOUD

Canadian Construction Outlook

2025

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Canadian Construction Outlook 2025

Considering the Canadian construction industry's complexity and scope, experts envision both hope and worry heading further into 2025.

By / Robin Brunet

The primary factor affecting the way construction professionals in Canada approach the next 12 months is an economy that, on one hand, exhibits abating inflation and strong demand, but on the other is wracked with uncertainty due to impending American tariffs and other developments.

Tristan Bertram, director of industry affairs at the Thermal Insulation Association of Canada, summarizes the roller coaster of sentiment his colleagues are feeling.

"Perhaps most obviously, everyone is busy, thanks to huge infrastructure projects, the Kitimat LNG facility in British Columbia and Dow's Fort Saskatchewan Path2Zero project in Alberta being just two examples," he says. "Activity in Ontario

is equally strong, and the Maritimes is experiencing a lot of marine infrastructure work.

"But our biggest problem is we don't have enough skilled tradespeople to handle all these jobs," Bertram adds. "A lot of our insulators are nearing retirement, and our apprenticeship programs aren't closing the gap."

The Canadian construction sector, 91% of which is made up of small and medium enterprises, employs more than 1.6 million people and contributes 7.5% of Canada's Gross Domestic Product. This year, it is anticipated to recover from 2024's 3.1% output decline and grow at an annual average rate of 2.2%, thanks government investments in transport, renewable

energy, healthcare, and education, and a gradual recovery of the residential market.

Rodrigue Gilbert, president of the Canadian Construction Association, believes construction is on the cusp of transformative changes driven by advancements in technology, shifting demographics, and evolving regulatory landscapes.

As examples, he cites the Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) model, which encourages collaboration among contractors, architects, and owners and can significantly reduce delivery times. “If we are to be more efficient as an industry as well as fight climate change, all collaborative delivery models will have to be vigorously embraced,” he says. “Everybody we talk to is excited by IPD and wants to learn more about it, and it’s increasingly being used in many jurisdictions.”

Gilbert also notes that Ottawa is reviewing the National Building Code to improve energy efficiency, which may necessitate additional investments. “The good news is that this will mean great opportunities for contractors that are part of the solution in achieving stringent energy standards,” he says.

Gilbert also posits possible solutions to Canada’s most pressing social problems. “I think modular housing has great potential, and it’s being promoted by Canada’s National Housing Strategy,” he says. “We will be discussing the possibilities with different levels of government this year, as widespread adoption might require regulatory and supply chain changes.”

Sean Strickland, executive director of Canada’s Building Trades Union, is keen to address the labor issue. “For far too long we’ve heard the blanket statement that we face a labor shortage, which is simply not true,” he says. “Every year in Canada we take in 300,000 new apprentices, so it’s not like we’re not bringing in fresh talent.”

Strickland continues, “Our shortages are skills-specific and depend on the size and type of projects and their location, among other factors. So what we really need is forensic data in order to accurately understand where skilled tradespeople are located and where we need to deploy them.

To help achieve this, CBTU is increasingly conversing with larger project owners who can tell the organization what kinds of tradespeople they need, how many, and where and when they need them.

“As a result, for a recent major project in southern Ontario, for example, there were no labor shortages, because we were able to bring in workers from other provinces,” Strickland says. “For the record, more than 7,500 Canadian tradespeople have contributed nearly 5.7 million construction person-hours since the project’s groundbreaking in 2022.”

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— Sean Strickland, executive director of Canada’s Building Trades Union

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Gilbert agrees that more forensic data is required. “And quite frankly, I think this needs to be undertaken by the federal government,” he says. “However, I’m disturbed that over 30% of construction workers are nearing retirement age and the percentage will grow in a few years. Industry stakeholders and government agencies will need to work harder to promote careers in construction, and we also need to focus on the retention aspect of employment.”

When contacted for input in January, Strickland said his organization’s biggest concern was incoming United States president Donald Trump’s threat to impose 25% tariffs against Canada. “It’s a tremendous worry, and it could knock the wind out of what is otherwise a robust Canadian economy with lots of opportunities,” he says.

Ian Cunningham, president and COO at the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, agrees that tariff threats are troubling, along with uncertainties in electrification that have put several massive battery plant projects in jeopardy. He also cites a perceived lack of urgency on the part of local governments and various local agencies to streamline permitting. “But whenever I mention these elements I always preface my remarks with the comment ‘It depends,’ because it’s impossible to confidently predict what could happen to our industry, good or bad,” he says.

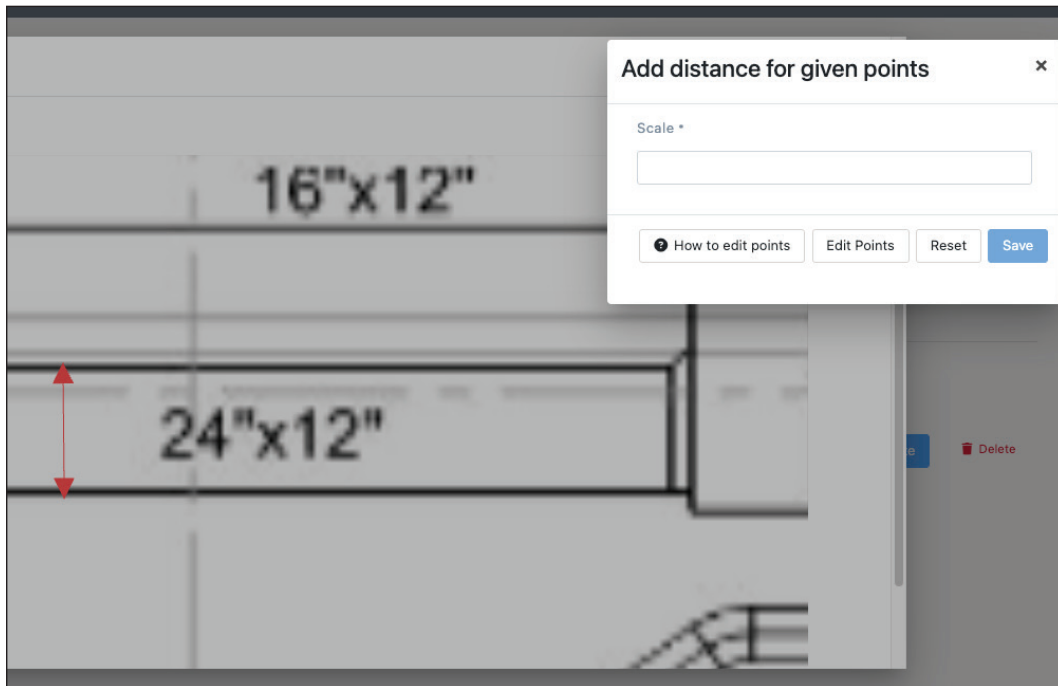
Cunningham prefers to focus on the positive. “As a whole, our industry has great lobbying power, and in my province, we’ve recently seen positive developments such as amendments to the Construction Act, which include broadened access to adjudication and Skilled Trades Ontario poised to take over apprentice registration responsibilities from government and simplify the process.”

Cunningham speaks for many in the construction sector when he says, “There are undeniably headwinds, but it’s within our capability to enact solutions, such as modular housing to rectify the country’s housing shortages and our continued adoption of AI to help alleviate cost pressures. I think we need to keep in mind that Canada will continue to see a strong demand for labor in the coming years, so let’s work together to improve efficiencies and make the most of it.” ■

Setting blueprint scale on touch devices

Setting the scale on blueprints for 3D takeoffs has always been an easy process on desktops and laptops. Over the last couple of months, BCX received feedback from customers using iPads and other touch devices to create blueprint takeoffs. Their main concern centered around the difficulty of getting the scale right on the touch-based device, since your finger covers the scale points when you touch the tablet.

After some investigation, the BCX team came up with a solution to offset the scale points when users touch the device. They also added an option for users to edit the scale points and another button to reset the scale entirely. Now, users can edit the points or reset the scales as many times as needed before saving. If you are having any issues using BCX on touch devices, please let us know. User feedback helps us build a better user experience for everyone. ■



Standardization and digitalization deliver efficiency and consistent results

BuildCentrix offers a comprehensive tool stack dedicated to helping HVAC professionals achieve greater standardization and efficiency in their daily operations from the shop to the floor. Through centralized workflows and digitalizing repetitive operations, BCX allows employees to maintain consistency with every project while minimizing errors by standardizing critical processes. This allows customers to correspond with industry standards while also creating more organized workspaces.

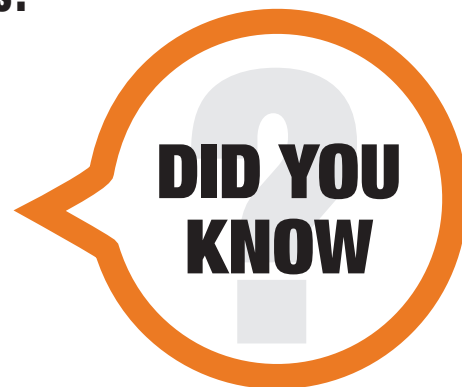
BCX encompasses many features that propel business operations away from traditional manual practices through automation and digitalization. Instead of relying on paper-based processes, HVAC professionals can manage their workload on a centralized platform. Seamless integrations, automated functionality, and real-time updates reduce the amount of time spent on administrative tasks.

Features such as BCX Shipping and Production Calendars enhance workplace standardization by providing clear and visual overviews of work order schedules and deadlines. HVAC teams can track production timelines, coordinate with suppliers, and ensure shipments align with project requirements—all from a single dashboard. This level of visibility minimizes the risk of miscommunication for all parties involved and helps prevent delays, allowing a seamless workflow from receiving an order to fabricating materials and shipping them to a project.

BCX ensures every step of the process is aligned and communicated appropriately with every individual involved in real-time to standardize daily operations. This further enhances collaboration for teams to meet deadlines and deliver consistent results. ■

Did you know you can now customize 3D takeoff printouts?

When users create and submit 3D takeoffs for fabrication, BCX used to generate three PDF printout views designed to fit on 8 1/2" x 11" paper. While these worked fine for small takeoffs, they were inadequate for larger projects. To solve the problem, BCX has created a new process that allows users to load a read-only version of the takeoff, customize the on-screen view, change the font size, and re-position the take-off before downloading it as a PNG image file. Users can also move the Order Data box, containing the job name and number, in the same fashion. This process can be used to create any type of printout for any submitted assembly, making it easier for fabricators to see what is needed for the takeoff. Of course, if the shop has screens on the shop floor fabricator printouts may not be needed as fabricators can simply use the 3D Viewer. ■



View/Print Takeoff (circled in red)

Work Order #229245
[trailing] trailing space test

Exports

Order Details	Statuses	Dates	Attachments (1)	Messages (0)
Order # 229245 Tag Tag Ordered By WD USER Non-Billed Ordered For WD USER Non-Billed Measured By WD USER Non-Billed Organization ADMIN Sheet Metal PO Number PO Number User Group HVAC	Overall Status Active Production Stat... Not started/Receiv... Shipping Status Not started	Ordered Jan 17, 2025 Requested Jan 23, 2025 Production Start Jan 17, 2025 Production End Jan 17, 2025 Shipping Jan 23, 2025	Name / Desc... autode...	No Messages Found Add Mess + Add

306b Settings View Modes Download As PNG

Settings

Order Number: #29245
Job Name: trailing space test
Job Number: #trailing

36.00 inch
A=18
B=36
#1
#2
C=55
C=55
110.00 inch
18.00 inch