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PSPC further scales back construction projects, but work on Centre Block continues

70 per cent of sub-trade contractors denied work opportunities on \$1 billion Parliament Hill Centre Block renovation: Merit Ontario

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Ottawa Construction News staff writer

An association advocating for open shop businesses says about 70 per cent of contractors who would otherwise be able to bid on sub-trade work for the massive Parliament Hill Centre Block renovation are being denied access to the work because they are not signatories to collective agreements with the major construction trade unions.

A joint venture of PCL Constructors Canada Ltd. and EllisDon Corporation (PCL/ED) was the only



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bidder for the project valued at more than \$1 billion, following a request for qualifications initially released in 2015.

After years of planning and preparation – and work to complete the West Block renovation – the joint venture contractors began inviting bids from sub-trades earlier this year.

Walter Pamic, Merit Ontario's past board chairman, said after reviewing the bidding documents, he found his business, Power-Tek Electrical Services, along with dozens of other contractors that haven't signed with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) or others affiliated with the major construction trade unions, were shut out of the bidding opportunities.

Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) describes the project as its "largest and most complex heritage rehabilitation project ever" on its website.

The work includes restoring the building envelope, a seismic upgrade, excavation of the basement, new mechanical and electrical systems, new information technology, security upgrades, restoration of heritage spaces and adjustments to allow additional seating in the House of Commons and Senate chambers.

Both PCL and EllisDon are signatories to labour agreements with the trade unions, and are bound under provincial labour laws to observe their collective agreements. Generally this restricts them to using unionized subtrades on their projects.

"We are all in this together," Pamic said in a statement. "It is an extremely difficult time for workers and companies during the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore governments should not be creating an unfair system for local contractors and their workers," he said.

"If the companies they work for aren't even allowed to bid on construction projects that their tax dollars are paying for, how can their company compete and how can they stay employed. In a time of a global pandemic and limited government funds, we all have a responsibility to hardworking Canadian taxpayers to ensure that every dollar the government spends goes as far as possible. Closed tendering means lost opportunities and wasted tax dollars."

Pamic said Merit Ontario is "going to explore every option" to open up the project to all sub-trade contractors.

"If errors were made, purchasing protocols not followed, and on federal laws, can these provincial legislation rules not apply, we need to look into this," he said in an interview.

"Parliament Hill belongs to all Canadians and all Canadian workers and companies should have a shot at competing for this work," he said in the statement. "The federal government needs to ensure rules are followed to allow fair and open bidding on these projects.

In a 2016 email to PostMedia (publishers of The Ottawa Citizen and Sun), the department said it solicited construction industry feedback before developing the evaluation criteria in the Request for Qualifications.

"Despite these efforts, only one response was received," it said, adding that the PCL/EllisDon response was "fully assessed and determined to meet the mandatory requirements," Postmedia reported.

While PCL/EllisDon was the only bidder, the work will still be "reviewed and assessed against well known industry benchmarks to ensure best value for Canadian taxpayers," PWSGC said then.

As well, the work is only for construction management. The government said then that more than 90 per cent of the contract's value will be completed by subcontractors, whose work it said will be competitively tendered.

PCL had the construction management contract for the ongoing \$863 million West Block renovation.



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Publisher's viewpoint

Mark Buckshon
President, Construction News and Report Group of Companies



As we make our way through the pandemic, with some of the extra free time from reduced commuting and outside activities, I sometimes reflect on the past, both one year and 40 years ago.

A year ago, on May 1, we launched Ontario Construction News as the province's newest daily construction trade newspaper. Our goal: To create a digital newspaper with the look, feel and characteristics of a conventional tabloid newspaper, providing current news while complying with Ontario Construction Act and Legislation Act (2006) requirements for construction industry legal notice publications.

It was a somewhat scary experience – but I found the risk/anxiety quite manageable especially in light of my experiences four decades previously, when I was in the midst of living through the final year of the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe civil war as a journalist.

This time in 1980, I was on my way home from Africa; with a few last-minute adventures including a week in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) and another week in Liberia, a couple of weeks after a military coup that set the stage for a bloody civil war there. Crazy places for anyone to be – but I would celebrate my birthday (May 19) alone in Monrovia, looking over the Atlantic ocean and thinking how, if I could survive these experiences, I could survive anything.

The African experience taught me about fear, perception, and intelligent risk-taking. In the ideal circumstances, it is possible to apply knowledge and experience to make seemingly risky endeavours quite safe – but since they look daring, you get credit for being courageous.

These concepts applied when we launched Ontario Construction News last spring; designing the business to operate debt-free and to be sustainable even during the slow start-up months. We succeeded.

They also apply in the current circumstances. While I think we will have some very rough and challenging times ahead – all of the government stimulus money and emergency benefits cannot take away the really radical shift in the world's economy with forced social distancing – I know we can manage this period by appreciating the basics of good business management and risk planning.

One way to view the current situation is as an adventure. We are heading into somewhat unknown territory, but getting through the experience will make us stronger and more resilient.

So I look forward to this time next year, and many years into the future.

Mark Buckshon is president of the Construction News and Report Group of Companies. He can be reached by email at buckshon@cnrgrp.com.

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PSPC further scales back construction projects, but work on Centre Block continues

By Robin MacLennan
Ottawa Construction News staff writer

Covid-19 has halted about 85 projects in Ottawa's parliamentary district, including interior repairs to the East Block building.

Public Services and Procurement Canada has further scaled back ongoing construction work on a range of federal projects since Ontario announced its moratorium on construction in the province, but renovations to the historic Centre Block building continue to crawl ahead.

PSPC announced it would scale back operations after federal work-from-home orders were issued in mid-March, reducing work in occupied buildings to "emergency work only." Exterior work and renovations in unoccupied buildings, like Centre Block, continued with modifications, including: staggering breaks, increased cleaning of equipment and shared facilities, reduced size of construction teams on site, face covering protocols and new hand-washing facilities and hand sanitizer available on work sites.

Additional changes have been made, according to PSPC.

"Although federal projects do not fall under provincial authority, Public Services and Procurement Canada is reducing its construction activity across the province in the spirit of inter-jurisdictional co-operation and to demonstrate leadership in our collective efforts to flatten the curve in alignment with the advice of Canadian public health offices," explained a statement from the department.

Projects currently shut down are classified into three general categories, according to PSPC.

Interior fit-ups: work to offices carved out for parliamentary administration at 50 O'Connor St., where interim office space has been



Photo by Raymond Levell

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Construction safety

Continued from page 5

leased to accommodate people displaced by work. Including "retail and operational space fit-up" in the Wellington Building, where work was ongoing to retail space along Sparks Street on the building's ground floor.

Interior improvements: Drywall repairs and patchwork renovations inside the East Block building, which remains occupied by some 40 Senators and staff, have been paused, along with ceiling and radiator repairs in the Confederation Building.

Exterior repairs: Projects include window sealing work on the Justice Building, window replacement and repairs on the Confederation Building, and exterior renovations on the National Press Building at 150 Wellington St.

Work on the Centre Block and East Block will continue in unoccupied spaces along with "necessary repair and maintenance work required for the safe operations of parliamentary facilities."

Inside Centre Block work is focused on demolition and abatement of hazardous substances on floors four through six. Outside, excavation work is underway to prepare for the final phase of Parliament Hill's new underground Visitors' Welcome Centre.

More than \$770-million in contracts has been awarded related to the building's renovation and \$4.5-billion has been approved for the overall renovation.

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PCL/EllisDon Joint Venture supply chain donates more than \$200,000 for mental health urgent care clinic at The Royal in Ottawa

Special to Ottawa Construction News

In response to COVID-19 and an increased need to support those struggling with mental health issues, The Royal opened an urgent prompt care clinic. Many donors responded to the initial call for support despite the very challenging economic times. Amongst the donors were a group of leaders more than 40 companies and organizations within the construction sector working with the PCL/EllisDon Joint Venture. They banded together at a critical time to help propel the fundraising effort.

"The Royal has been the mental health pillar in our community," says Matthew Rinfret, PCL/ED project director for the Centre Block Rehabilitation project. "We understand the

strain that the pandemic situation is putting on The Royal and recognized supporting the creation of the special clinic was a way to help people - and we wanted to do our part."

"All of us who are able to continue to work on major projects during this time feel proud and privileged to be able to give. Despite a difficult business landscape, I found that our partners have been generous and I am immensely thankful," says Rinfret.

Located at The Royal, the C-PROMPT Clinic is made up of a multidisciplinary team of mental health nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers who are providing assessments, treatment and coordinating access to further care. The C-PROMPT Clinic

team is using a combination of in-person, virtual and mobile consultation to provide mental health services.

"In total, the PCL/ED supply chain raised in excess of \$200,000 for this important cause, all of this in about 72 hours. The electrical contractors working on the Centre Block project were central to this effort, between the three main contractors (Ziebarth Electrical, Wired Synergy and Toban Electric), the electrical contractors association (ECAO) and local union approximately \$100,000 of the total was raised," says Rinfret. "It was thanks to the leadership of these firms and associations, in addition to our supplier and union partners, that we were able to push ourselves further than we thought possible. The decision to give in this environment of uncertainty is not easy; we are blessed to have leaders throughout our industry."

"The generosity from the construction sector is nothing short of inspirational," says Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health president and CEO Mitchell Bellman. "With their support, our C-PROMPT will be able to help so many more people in our community who are struggling."

Over the past 10 years, the Ottawa Construction Association and its members have been very generous supporters of The Royal. They were leaders during The Royal's most recent campaign which saw the opening of the only Brain Imaging Centre in Canada focused on mental health research.

To learn more about The Royal's C-PROMPT Clinic, please visit <https://www.theroyal.ca/CPROMPT>

The Royal's marketing and communication department provided this story to Ontario Construction News.



A letter to GOHBA members: Responding to the COVID-19 crisis

Special to Ottawa Construction News



Roy Nandram, president of the Greater Ottawa Home Builders' Association (GOHBA) and president and project manager at residential and commercial contractor RND Construction, distributed this letter to GOHBA members in April.

When I assumed the (GOHBA) presidency 13 months ago, I would never have anticipated that the world, our country, our industry, and our businesses would be crippled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the last few weeks, I have been glued to the news channels and social media, following the developments around the world and here at home. The latest info from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer, is that the virus will be around for another 6 to 18 months, perhaps

in smaller and smaller waves, until a vaccine is developed.

So we likely still have a long road to go, but we will make that journey together. And that starts with your membership in the Association. It's times like these, the difficult times, where the value of the Association is most apparent.

Here at home GOHBA has been working with city staff to ensure that planning, permits and inspections stay open and available, while other cities and towns in Ontario have seen their building departments shut down. City staff have been responsive to our needs and should be recognized for doing all they are doing to accommodate our building process on all fronts – especially our CBO (Chief Building Official) Frank Bidin and his team.

OHBA (Ontario Home Builders' Association) has been working around the clock with the Premier's office, the Minister's office, and many more to ensure that our industry remains open. ICI have not had the success we have. And, thanks to the efforts of OHBA staff, the provincial governments continues to modify things in response to builder's concerns and find reasonable solutions to carry on as much of our business as possible.

CHBA (Canadian Home Builders' Association) has also been working diligently at the federal level to ensure that the wage supplement programs are more aligned with the realities of how the residential construction industry operates. And the federal government is likely to take a large role as we ease out of dealing exclusively with the pandemic and think about economic recovery.

We don't think about it often but an average of 500 to 600 families a month move into a new home in Ottawa. In addition, there are thousands of renovation projects across the city in various states of completion. All of these renovations improve and/or expand the livable space of someone's home. So there are a lot of people across the city who are relying on GOHBA members to deliver the housing they will use to shelter their families during this difficult time.

So with that said we should start now to prepare our businesses for survival during this crisis and after the crisis. As I said before, we're in this together. Please be respectful of your colleagues and their situation. Some have had to make the hard choice to shut down but expect to be back up running soon– please don't obstruct their business planning by soliciting their employees at this vulnerable time. Let's treat each other with professional respect and courtesy.

At the same time, it's important to do all you can for your laid off employees, as they are in a very difficult situation as well. This is what my company is doing for

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laid off employees - we are paying their benefits until they are recalled and we are also offering loans of up to \$2,000 per employee to supplement their EI payments. This will be reviewed again at the end of June. I am encouraging you to do the same if you can afford it. I'd also encourage you to communicate with your laid off employees on a regular basis on your latest plans and intentions. Make sure they understand that you see them as an essential part of business moving forward.

We've also been asked to provide lists of members that are still in operation, but have not for a few reasons. Based on this rapidly changing situation, it would be difficult to produce an accurate list. We are also sensitive to advertising only members that remain open. So instead I encourage you to use the membership directory if you need to make new contacts for your construction needs. Be a Member, Do Business with a Member is more vital than ever during these challenging times.

I believe that Quebec partially reopening its residential construction industry is a good sign for us here in Ontario. It gives credence to our provincial government's stance that the residential construction industry is an essential workplace that needs to continue to operate with the proper safety protocols. With that in mind let's make sure that we continue to keep our jobsites safe for everyone, not just because it'll help keep our businesses operating but because it's the right thing to do. And let's support each other publicly and on social media for the good job they are doing.

OHBA has also been hosting weekly calls for members to talk about what's happening at the provincial level I also know that OHBA is also working with the provincial government on the steps needed to kick start our economic recovery. The government knows that we spend more on renovations than on new homes, so I am confident that renovators will be a focus of not only the provincial govern-

ment, but of the federal government as well – energy efficient renovations, for example, have always been a very successful part of past stimulus packages.

GOHBA is committed to providing you with more information and resources during this time to ensure you're ready to kick things back up when the time comes. So in addition to the webinars we've had and the ones that are planned, I encourage you to continue to communicate with us, send in your requests and questions, and please reach out if you require assistance in operating while we're under these restrictions. The Association has been sending out frequent updates on all things COVID-19-related. We want to send these to as many people in your company as possible, so please provide us with your contacts to ensure your em-

ployees & co-workers are staying in the loop.

As you likely know we've had to cancel all our events through the Summer, but we do hope to hold our Fall Golf Tournament on Sept. 10 and hold a rescheduled Innovation Trade Show on October 1. Shortly we'll be launching submissions for the Housing Design Awards, and I hope it'll be a very important show that will signal that the industry is prospering. I encourage you to get your submissions in so that you can use being a finalist or a winner in your advertising.

So to wrap up I want to thank the GOHBA staff for all of their efforts during this difficult time, as well as all of the volunteers whose contributions improve our industry and our businesses.

Roy Nandram



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Ottawa developer plans three-highrise complex near Algonquin College

Ottawa Construction News staff writer

Richcraft Homes plans to build three highrises at 19 Centrepointe Dr. near Algonquin College in Ottawa.

The planned residential towers in the city's southwest area would contain 585 units (with studios, one and two-bedroom apartments), reaching 22, 24, and 26 stories. Fotenn Planning + Design says in documents filed with the city's planning department that "a significant portion" of the units would be rental apartments.

The proposed development would have 552 parking spaces for cars and 312 for bicycles. There would be a gym, party room and indoor pool as well as a cafe in 40,000 sq.



ft. of communal space – and an additional 20,000 sq. ft. of amenity areas/.

The development would need to go through approvals including

amendments to the city's Official Plan, as well as zoning bylaws. The project is denser than set out in current Official Plan limits, and zoning rules currently require 300 more parking spaces than Richcraft plans to allocate.

Ottawa Business Journal reports that, according to planning documents, Richcraft held a public consultation with the Centrepointe Community Association last November to discuss the plan, and residents expressed concerns about increased traffic and density and a lack of parking that could result in an overflow of cars on to nearby streets.

"Given the transit-oriented nature of the development and its proximity to the Baseline Transit Station and the planned LRT extension, an effort should be made to encourage transit ridership within the development and a reduced parking rate would help achieve this," the documents say. "An excess of bicycle parking is provided to offset some of the reduced private vehicle parking."

The builder had envisaged an earlier project at the site and in fact received approval in 2013 for three 15-storey condos. But it shelved the originally planned development because of "changing market demand for condominium units."

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