

Members' Day Industry Panel – A discussion on the Past, Present & Future of our Industry

This year's Industry Forum was focused on the "Past, Present & Future" of our industry.

As always, the quality of the panelists was extraordinary and included:

Roland Nicholls – President, Milne & Nicholls Ltd.

Frank Decaria – President & CEO, Eastern Construction

Marcus Gillam – President, Gillam Group Inc.

Markku Allison – Director of Engagement and Innovation, Chandos Construction, President, IPDA

The construction industry has come a long way over the years and change is constantly occurring due to ongoing development of new technologies, techniques and innovative building materials.

Each of our panelists shared their personal stories and gave those in attendance remarkable insight in to just how much our industry has changed.

Roland Nicholls started working in the construction industry in 1948, part of his remarks included how we, the Toronto Construction Association, came to be. Roland mentioned that in 1850's our association was in fact called the General Builder's Society, which was made up of about fifty members. In 1952 the name was formally changed to the Toronto Builder's Exchange before it was finally voted by members to be called the Toronto Construction Association (TCA), years later.

Elaborating on his personal experience, Roland mentioned that training onsite staff was super important that included the bricklayers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians. "We use to build a building with plumb bobs. We laid out buildings with steel squares. You couldn't build a building without steel squares and a slide rule. We had a computer, it was a six sided ruler and that's what we used and believe me it worked."

Frank Decaria started in the construction industry in 1978, he spoke about seeing people get smarter over the span of his career, "Currently we are pushing the limits, technology is great but it's what's between our ears and how we use our intellectual intelligence or property to really solve challenges in a collaborative process. It comes down to really applying ourselves and challenging ourselves." He went on to say "These young folks are doing virtual construction and it's amazing what they can do but what's lacking is the day-to-day experience of actually building and dealing with the challenges that we have dealt with and continue to deal with every day."

Marcus Gillam's discussed as part of his remarks, the importance of being able to change and adapt to how the world is changing "In a world of change, to stay relevant we have to change ourselves. If you want a successful business over the long term, then you cannot ignore factors and challenges we are facing today, you need a company culture that supports innovation. I don't think it's ever been this difficult to do what we're doing. So I think in order to survive you've got to think outside the box."

Finally Markku Allison whose discussion was largely focused on the future of our industry commented that it was likely that most companies have already "engaged in things like prefabrication but the future is where prefab is the rule, not the exception, where huge portions of our buildings will be built in controlled environments and then erected onsite." He went to say that "mechanization, such as robotics and drone technology, and new materials, such as flexible concrete, self-healing concrete and transparent aluminum, are also expected to become more prevalent."

A special thank you to all of our panelists for making our Members Day Industry Panel Discussion an extraordinary event!