

## Builder contract clauses for cost hikes, supply issues urged

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BY JOHN MINER  
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**Jeff MacIntyre: "I think it is really, really important right now that everyone has open and honest discussions on what this is going to cost and understand that we are all in this together"**

Stratford - Farm construction companies were advised here to move away from fixed price contracts in the face of the uncertainties caused by the trade dispute with the United States.

Jeff MacIntyre, president of the Grand Valley Construction Association, said the exact impact of tariffs on construction costs isn't known, but it's estimated a 25 per cent tariff

would add five or six per cent to the cost of a project.

"That is the best guess at this point and it is obviously dependent on the project,"

MacIntyre told the Canadian Farm Builders Association conference in Stratford. "There is going to be an impact, there is no question about that."

While steel and lumber is available in Canada there are other components, such as sensors and monitors that might only be sourced in the U.S.

He emphasized that the situation is volatile and no one can be certain what will happen.

Under the circumstances, MacIntyre said companies should have clauses added to their contracts to protect against cost increases and disruptions.

An important feature would be a "change in law" clause that would allow prices to

change. Tariffs would qualify as a change in law.

"It could impact your business and therefore having a clause could insulate you from that," he said.

Another clause to protect profitability would be a price escalation clause.

MacIntyre acknowledged that clause could be difficult to include if a company is dealing with someone who needs a fixed price in order to move ahead with a project.

He suggested signing agreements that include a number of opt out provisions.

"I think it is really, really important right now that everyone has open and honest discussions on what this is going to cost and understand that we are all in this together,"

he said.

Companies should also pay attention to project time lines in contracts.

There are always clauses and penalties associated with projects and it will be difficult to meet the requirements if obtaining materials becomes a problem, MacIntyre said.

"Make sure you have contract provisions that allow you to adjust accordingly. It will be important."

MacIntyre also recommended construction companies diversify their supply chains and locally source products as much as possible. Local means Canada, he said.

Construction associations will be lobbying heavily for better trade deals between provinces, he said.

## Construction sector needs plan for female workers

Part of the industry's problem is people have a "Hollywood" image of construction workers

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**Mandy Bujold: "If we want to attract and retain the best talent we have to tell a different story about this industry"**

Stratford - Mandy Bujold's father worked in construction his entire life, both her brothers were steelworkers, and her uncles were bricklayers.

She was surrounded by a family involved in the construction industry, but it was never presented to her as a career option.

Bujold told the Canadian Farm Builders Association 2025 conference that this is part of the problem facing the construction industry today.

"We are in the middle of what most people would consider a workforce crisis," she said. "There is a massive talent gap with a generation that is retiring and there are not enough people coming out to fill that gap."

Bujold, manager of industry and community partnerships

for the Grand Valley Construction Association, said the industry hasn't done enough when it comes to attracting women, young people and those from non-traditional backgrounds.

Companies need to make sure these groups understand that they also have a place within the industry.

"They are going to be the next generation that is going to step in to fill this gap. We need to kind of get on board and accept that. They are going to

bring skills, new ideas, leadership and innovation."

In Bujold's own case, instead of going into construction she became an amateur boxer, fighting in 190 matches, winning 11 national championships and representing Canada in two Olympic Games.

Coming from outside the industry has given her a vantage point on some of the barriers it faces in recruiting workers, she said.

Part of the industry's problem is people have a "Hollywood" image of construction workers.

When she asks young people

what they picture when they think of construction workers the answer is usually a guy standing on the corner with a shovel in his hand, hard hat on, probably dirty and with a cigarette in his hand.

In contrast, she suggested the industry could talk to young people about the pride that comes with building structures and the innovations in the sector.

"If we want to attract and retain the best talent we have to tell a different story about this industry," she said.

Construction should be introduced as a viable career

option at a much younger age within school and community programs.

The Grand Valley Construction Association recently sponsored an event with Conestoga College called Teens Try Trades Day. The idea was to invite young girls and their parents to a hands on workshop, giving girls an opportunity to try out carpentry and plumbing trades.

"I think those things sometimes might feel small at the time but I think those are the small pieces that are going to change this industry in the long run," Bujold said.

## Sugar beet acres down

Fewer sugar beets will be grown this year in Ontario as the American buyer finds farmers closer to home willing to grow them.

Matthew Noorloos, chairman of the Ontario Sugar Beet Growers Association, said 3,582 Canadian shares (acres) were sold back to the Michigan Sugar Co. voluntarily in December.

"The main reason is the company pays for 50 per cent of the freight . . . we are the farthest" from the processing plant, he said.

Since local farmers started growing sugar

beets in the early 2000s, Noorloos said yields in some fields have doubled to as high as 50 tons an acre.

"The [Michigan] plant has a fixed processing capacity, so they're always trying to optimize the acreage to process the right amount of tons, so you don't have spoilage from carrying over too many tons," he said.

After the redemption, Noorloos said Michigan Sugar still has about 7,500 cooperative sugar beet acres in Lambton County and Chatham-Kent.