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ASSOCIATIONS

BCRAO continues to thrive since its inception in 1985

Dan O'Reilly April 3, 2018



Formed in 1985 by a handful of contractors and engineers as a forum for contractors, material suppliers, consultants and engineering firms with expertise in the field of building and concrete repair, the Building and Concrete Restoration Association of Ontario (BCRAO) has not just survived, it's thrived.

Originally the Concrete and Restoration Association of Ontario, it broadened its appeal and scope when the term "building" was added 10 years later, says Greg Dolenc, a member of the association's 12-member board and the area manager with Sika Canada Inc.

Now consisting of more than 100 member firms, the BCRAO takes an active interest in issues that affect its members and the construction industry in general and sponsors several educational and networking seminars with topics ranging from new products and technologies, to provincial legislation, to health and safety.

“The health and safety seminars are particularly well attended,” says Dolenc, noting an emphasis on safety is at the heart of its core values.

To be considered for membership, companies must have a health and safety program and submit its program manual, along with five project references, he points out.

“It’s not just a case of handing over a cheque. Entry is not automatically guaranteed and we have turned away some companies,” he adds.

Policy Concepts, a management and lobby consulting firm, manages the association’s day-to-day business operations. But its leadership is provided through its board of directors which represent the three distinct categories the association serves: contractors, manufacturer/suppliers and engineers/consultants, says Dolenc.

Each director brings their specialization, perspective and knowledge to the association, he says.

The board meets eight times a year.

Despite the fact they are volunteers with pressing workplace commitments, the association hasn’t been forced to go looking for recruits as is often the case with non-profit groups.

“We have had elections for our last three AGM’S with candidates vying for positions and making speeches,” says Dolenc, who believes competition has contributed to the association’s longevity and success.

At the same time, the board has an alternating rotation system designed to inject new ideas and energy while maintaining consistency. Each director serves for two years, but each year six new members join and six sitting ones step down.

“The association played a key role in the introduction of the suspended access equipment document last summer”

— David Cousins

Davroc Consulting Engineers

“That keeps us from going stale,” he says.

Concern about rent controls on building maintenance and the need for industry networking were the key factors which led to the creation of the association, says president Mark Lecce, whose father Adamo was one of the founders.

“Those issues are still important and relevant today,” says Lecce, who is also the president of Can Mar Contracting Limited.

However, the association’s mandate has greatly expanded since its formative years. A prime example is its advocacy role in advancing the interests of public safety and worker protection in its dealings with provincial decision-makers.

It regularly participates in consultations and provides advice on several important topics such as working at heights training, marijuana legalization and new suspended access equipment regulations, says Lecce.

Referring to the Christmas Eve 2009 swing stage incident in Toronto that killed four construction workers, he notes that: “none of our members were connected with the accident, but it gave the construction industry a black eye.”

In the wake of that tragedy the association “reacted quite quickly” and its activism played a key role in the introduction of the suspended access equipment document last summer, says Davroc Consulting Engineers president David Cousins, one of the engineering representatives on the board.

Following the 2012 Algo Centre Mall rooftop collapse in Elliot Lake, Ont. which killed two women, the association “led the charge” on proposing a mandatory inspection and maintenance program for all buildings — public and private — to be covered under a section of the Ontario Building Code which is administered by the Building and Development Branch of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

“For some reason the ministry only wanted it to apply to public buildings, which was ridiculous. In the interest of public safety, we (the association) said no,” says Cousins.

Last year legislation enabling those regulations to move forward was passed, he says.

Other association initiatives include its George Brown College Endowment Fund and Gift Program which provides annual scholarships to distinguished students in full time programs at the Angelo DelZotto School of Construction Management, says Dolenc.

Looking ahead to the provincial election, Dolenc says the association welcomes discussions and debates by the competing parties on occupational health and safety. And like the issue which led to the birth of the association more than 30 years ago, it still has concerns about the impact of rental controls on landlords’ ability to carry out building maintenance, he says.

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