

By Sandy McKellar



WOOD SOLUTIONS CONFERENCE

Vancouver Convention Centre East
November 5, 2019



The Vancouver Convention Centre was buzzing on Tuesday as 600+ architects, engineers, builders, contractors, building officials, technologists, planners/developers and students came together for the 2019 Wood Solutions Conference. An annual event hosted by Wood *WORKS!* BC, this is the place for wood producers to showcase their products to end users who are passionate about using wood.

"Spare time is something nobody has these days," said Wood *WORKS!* BC executive director Lynn Embury-Williams, who was quick to thank all those in attendance for taking the time to come out and learn more about building with wood. She also emphasized the importance of support from their funders, without which, the conference wouldn't be possible.

An event that has become a tradition in the province of BC, the Wood Solutions Conference provides delegates with two streams of learning. This year, in the expanded second floor ballroom of the convention centre, 36 booths filled a trade show where wood industry representatives displayed information and spoke with interested visitors. Exhibitors included a wide range of wood producers, from mass-timber suppliers and specialty wood product manufacturers to passive and eco-friendly building systems and even a display of wood nails!



Concurrent breakout sessions gave delegates a second opportunity to learn about integrating wood into their business.

Twenty workshops in four content streams featured speakers from near and far. Local wood champions such as Jordan Edmonds of Vancouver-based Urban Arts Architecture and Nick Bevilacqua from Fast + Epp shared their wood design and building experiences. International speakers also talked about their successes and challenges. Harbinder Birdi, Senior Partner with Hawkins/Brown Architects in London, England used his cunning sense of humour to keep his listeners laughing through a very engaging talk about the challenges of building with wood in light of recent fire events in his city. Also from London, and representing the firm who built the first-ever tall wood structure, Dave Lomax of Waugh Thistleton Architects shared the lessons his firm has learned since that first foray into tall wood.

Satisfying more technical and practical knowledge streams, speakers like Marc Alam from the Canadian Wood Council updated listeners about recent research aimed at increasing code acceptance for encapsulated mass timber in buildings up to 12-storeys. From the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Nadine Block showed her audience how SFI Certification offers a new pathway for green building professionals, and how a new LEED Alternative Compliance Path will have a positive impact on the construction sector.

Although the breakout rooms were jam-packed with delegates, it was the keynote luncheon that drove home just how big this event has become. When more than 600 people began flooding into the banquet room, it was clear that wood architecture and design has captured the interest and imagination of a significant portion of the BC building community. Greeting friends, nodding at colleagues and competitors, the room filled quickly with a hum of excitement in anticipation of the keynote presentation.

Early in 2017 the Tree Frog News started to see stories about the world's tallest wooden building emerging in Norway. To be constructed without a concrete core, the building was heralded as setting new standards for timber construction. Embury-Williams was delighted to introduce Øystein Elgsaas, an architect and partner at the firm Voll Arkitekter—the masterminds behind the world's tallest wood building—Mjøstårnet.



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