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CANADIAN FOREST SERVICE

# SPOTLIGHT

FEBRUARY 2013

## Increasing the Use of Wood in North American Non-Residential and Mid-Rise Construction

Compared to other building materials, wood has traditionally not been widely used in the North American non-residential and mid-rise construction segments. This is because of various factors ranging from a lack of awareness and training of architects and builders, to building code restrictions that limit the use of wood in taller wood structures. Nevertheless, these two segments provide interesting market opportunities for Canada's wood products sector.

The Canadian Wood Council estimates that the use of wood in the North American non-residential and mid-rise construction segments has a market potential of up to \$20 billion and that half of this potential can realistically be captured.

The federal government is committed to helping Canada's wood products sector take advantage of market opportunities in these North American segments and to increasing overall demand of Canadian wood products.

Between 2007 and 2012, the government invested \$30 million to support industry efforts to increase the use of wood in Canada and the United States in both the non-residential (e.g. schools, shopping centres, hospitals, universities, warehouses, and retirement homes) and mid-rise (e.g. apartment buildings up to 6 storeys) construction segments.

The 2012 federal budget provided an additional investment of \$105 million, over two years, to support the Canadian forest sector's innovation and market development efforts. From this investment, approximately \$7.8 million in funding will be provided, over two years, to support the North American activities of a new Expanding Market Opportunities program.

These activities are delivered by the Canadian Wood Council and the US-based Wood Products Council, in partnership with the provinces, universities, North American wood product associations, and technical institutes. These organizations deliver comprehensive programming aimed at increasing the use of wood in non-residential and mid-rise construction. They feature

technical training activities for architects, engineers, code officials, and students; direct technical assistance to industry practitioners to assist them in incorporating wood in their projects; and support the development of technical publications and tools that help these practitioners design with wood.

The activities build on the Wood *WORKS!* brand, a program by the Canadian Wood Council and the Wood Products Council which promotes the use of wood and wood products in construction projects. In Quebec, this program is known as Cecobois.

With the help of federal investments, almost 1,200 non-residential and mid-rise buildings in Canada and the United States have been built with wood instead of other building materials since 2007. This has resulted in direct and indirect sales of Canadian wood products of more than \$1 billion. The new atrium at Thunder Bay's Confederation College, the north wing of the Earth Sciences Building at the University of British Columbia, and the expansion of TeraXion's headquarters in Quebec City are recent examples of non-residential projects built with wood.

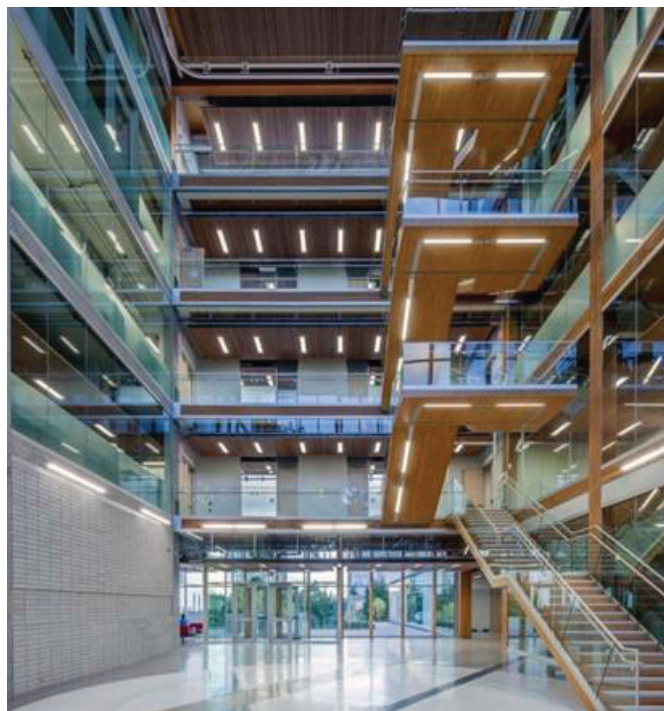


New atrium at Confederation College. Photo courtesy of Canadian Wood Council

These and other non-residential construction projects allowed Canada's wood products sector to diversify into new market segments at a time when US demand for Canadian wood products was softening due to a collapsing residential housing market in the United States.

To further increase demand for Canadian wood products, the federal government, along with the Canadian Wood Council, is also currently working with regulatory agencies to revise code changes in the National Building Code of Canada (NBCC) that currently restrict mid-rise wood frame construction. These revisions will make it easier for Canadian architects, engineers, and builders to design and build taller wood structures (up to 6 storeys) intended for various uses (i.e. residential, mixed use, etc.) These code changes are expected to be reflected in the 2015 edition of the NBCC.

Revising the NBCC to foster greater use of wood in mid-rise construction and increasing the use of Canadian wood products in North American non-residential and mid-rise construction are examples of how federal investments are helping to improve the competitiveness of Canada's forest sector. Over the long-term, these efforts will reposition the sector for growth and enable it to achieve a more prosperous future.



Earth Sciences Building at UBC. Photo courtesy of Equilibrium Consulting Inc.