



# PRO SPEC 2006 CONFERENCE REPORT

May 2006



53 Leary's Cove Road  
East Dover, NS B3Z 3W7  
902.852.2151 fax.902.852.3193  
[www.ahbrsc.com](http://www.ahbrsc.com)



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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Objectives

The PRO SPEC 2006 Conference provided an occasion for the home building and renovation industry in Nova Scotia to take a major step towards renewal and professionalization of the labour force. Following the mandate and directions set out at the PRO SPEC 2004 Conference, the Atlantic Home Building & Renovation Sector Council (AHB&RSC) presented to conference participants an Action Plan and a Business Plan to address the significant human resources challenges in the sector. Building on the work completed since 2004, the specific goals of the conference were:

- ▲ To review and add value to the Professionalization Action Plan and to the Business Plan for mandatory licensing of residential construction contractors; and
- ▲ To renew the mandate for the AHB&RSC to move forward with implementation of the professionalization strategy.

The objectives of this report are:

- ▲ To summarize the proceedings of the PRO SPEC 2006 Conference; and
- ▲ To set out the mandate provided by the conference for the implementation of the Professionalization Action Plan and the establishment of the Nova Scotia Residential Construction Commission.

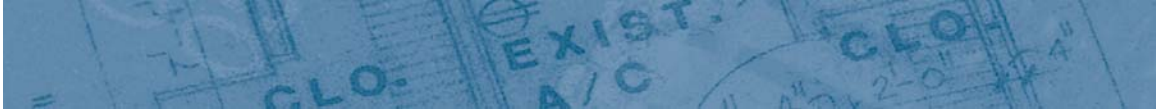
### 1.2 Conference Attendance

PRO SPEC 2006 was attended by over 100 individuals representing a broad range of stakeholders<sup>1</sup>:

- ▲ Industry representatives from across Nova Scotia;
- ▲ Industry representatives from other Atlantic provinces;

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I for list of Conference Participants.



- ▲ Nova Scotia Home Builder's Association;
- ▲ Students and Staff from the Nova Scotia Community College;
- ▲ Provincial Apprenticeship Board;
- ▲ Atlantic Home Warranty Program;
- ▲ Nova Scotia Construction Safety Association;
- ▲ ICI construction, Union and Carpenter's Guild of Nova Scotia representatives;
- ▲ Government and regulatory representatives; and
- ▲ Banking, insurance, and other sectors with a stakeholder involvement in residential construction.

Panellists and resource persons at the conference included:

- ▲ Canadian and Provincial Home Builder Associations: British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Nova Scotia;
- ▲ Homeowner Protection Office of British Columbia;
- ▲ Condominium Home Owners' Association of British Columbia;
- ▲ Provincial Apprenticeship representatives from British Columbia and Nova Scotia;
- ▲ Nova Scotia Real Estate Commission;
- ▲ PRAXIS Research & Consulting Inc;
- ▲ The Better Business Bureau – Maritime Provinces;
- ▲ Atlantic Home Warranty Program; and
- ▲ A Halifax housing consumer.

In addition, the CBC Marketplace documentary on renovation in Nova Scotia, "Hitting the Roof" was viewed during the Panel presentation on the second day.



### 1.3 Conference Agenda and Process

Presentations and panels during PRO SPEC 2006 addressed four major topics<sup>2</sup>:

1. The activities of the AHB&RSC in implementing its mandate from the 2004 conference;
2. The organizational model and Business Plan for the proposed Nova Scotia Residential Construction Commission;
3. The introduction of training and certification in trades specializations;
4. The protection of the consumer interest in residential construction.

Conference attendees provided input to the deliberations through their participation in Workshop Groups during the afternoon of the first day. The sessions were led by facilitators and resource persons and each Workshop Group was asked to generate two principal outputs for the conference as a whole:

- ▲ Suggestions for improvements or refinements in the implementation strategies and plans put forward by the AHB&RSC; and
- ▲ A recommendation for moving forward, or not moving forward, with the proposals.

Reports from the Workshops Groups were presented to the Plenary Session on the morning of the second day together with proposed action steps for the next phase in the implementation of professionalization. The conference facilitator led the consensus building in the final plenary session.

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<sup>2</sup> The detailed agenda for the PRO SPEC 2006 Conference is included in Appendix II.



## 2.0 PROGRESS TOWARDS PROFESSIONALIZATION

### 2.1 The 2004 Mandate

Mary Kenny, Executive Director of the AHB&RSC, reported to PRO SPEC 2006 on the activities and accomplishments of the Council since 2004.

The 2004 conference gave the Sector Council a “green light” to move ahead with the key components of the Professionalization initiative in terms of mandatory licensing of contractors and new training and certification options for the sector. It also called for ongoing planning and consultation on the details of implementation and on critical issues such as costs to builders and consumers. The 2004 conference gave specific directions on two key actions steps:

- ▲ Development of the business case for professionalization identifying potential costs and benefits for the different stakeholder groups.
- ▲ Development and implementation of a communications strategy centered on the message that professionalization of the home building and renovations sector will serve the broad public interest.

Participants in PRO SPEC 2004 agreed that ongoing direction and coordination for professionalization should be provided by a steering committee with strong industry leadership and representation of government, the training and apprenticeship systems, the building inspection system, the banks and insurance sectors and consumers.

### 2.2 Research & Consultations Since 2004

Since 2004, the AHB&RSC has carried out the following research and consultations activities:

- ▲ Analysis of the size and impacts of underground activity in the residential construction sector (2004);
- ▲ A survey of residential builders to measure levels of support for professionalization (Summer 2005);
- ▲ A survey of consumers (home owners) to measure support for professionalization (Summer 2005);



- ▲ Consultation workshops with residential builders in the Valley, the South Shore, HRM and Cape Breton, and separate meetings with representatives of unions in the industrial/commercial/institutional construction (ICI) sector, to get stakeholder input on the Professionalization Action Plan (Fall 2005);
- ▲ Consultations with industry associations including Local, Provincial and National levels of the Canadian Home Builders' Association, and the Atlantic Home Warranty Program;
- ▲ Consultations with senior decision-makers in the Nova Scotia Community College, the Nova Scotia Department of Education, the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour, and the Nova Scotia Union of Municipalities.

These activities together generated substantial evidence that business viability and human resources management in the sector are seriously constrained by two basic and inter-related factors: the underground economy and shortages of qualified trades workers. Underground activity holds down business margins and therefore wage levels, and limits the abilities of employers to offer stable, attractive jobs with opportunities for ongoing training and career advancement. An aging workforce and fewer young people coming into the trades means that employers will have increasing difficulty finding the skilled people they need to deal with strong market demand now and for the foreseeable future. The trades training system is not producing enough graduates to meet the growing demand for qualified professionals, and many industry leaders feel the training program needs to be updated and revised to address conditions and practices specific to the residential sector.

The research and consultations further confirmed the relevance of, and industry support for, two major change initiatives in the industry:

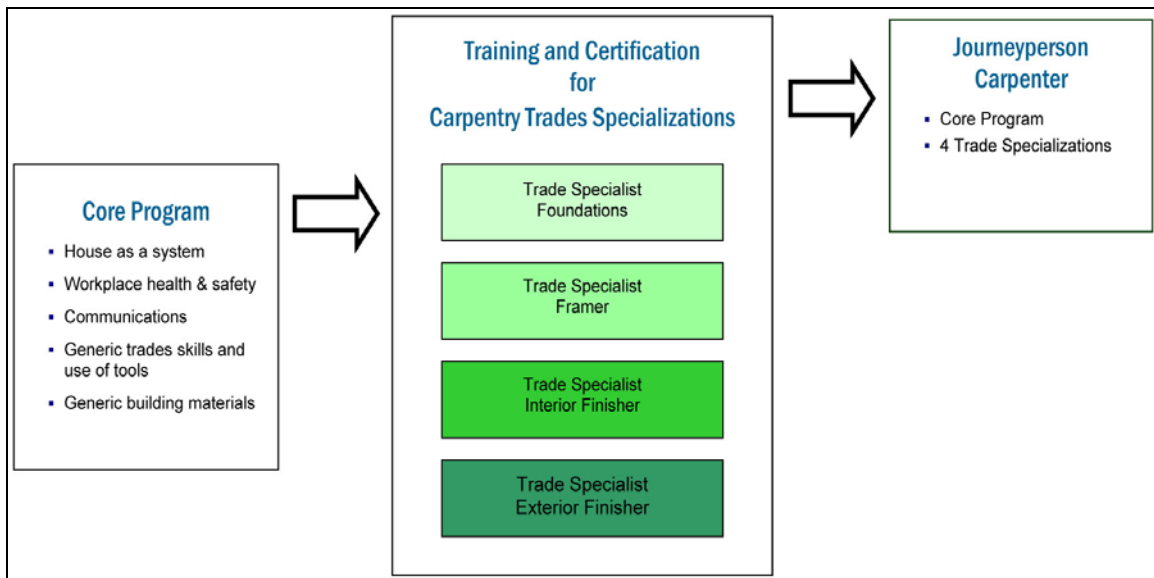
1. Introduction of mandatory licensing of residential construction contractors; and,
2. Implementation of new approaches to training and certification of trades workers to meet the specific needs of the residential sector.

In the fall of 2005, the AHB&RSC brought together the Residential Construction Professionalization Advisory Committee (RCPAC), with representation of industry, government, the training sector, banking and insurance interests, and other stakeholders. The Committee reviewed the outcomes of the research and consultations and discussed next steps. The



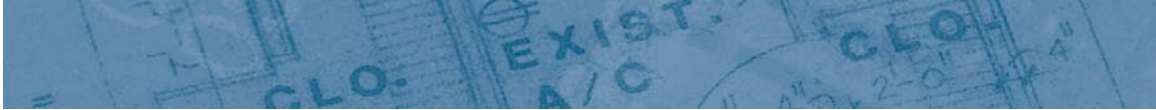
Committee endorsed the two core elements of the Professionalization Action Plan:

1. Using the Nova Scotia Real Estate Commission as a model, and with the cooperation of the Nova Scotia government, the establishment of the Nova Scotia Residential Construction Commission (NSRCC) as an independent, non-governmental agency with a legislated mandate to protect consumers through the introduction of mandatory licensing for residential construction of contractors.
2. Through cooperation with the Nova Scotia Community College and with the Apprenticeship Board, the development and implementation of training and certification for four residential trades specializations as described in the following diagram.



With this new approach all trainees would do a core introductory course and then have the option of completing one specialization and remaining in that particular field on a career basis, or going on to complete all four specializations and thereby qualifying as journeypersons.

While there is strong support in the industry and among consumers for the mandatory use of qualified journeyperson carpenters in new construction and renovation projects, the RCPAC decided not to move forward with this change until mandatory licensing of contractors is in place



and the new training and certification system is up and running. It was felt that these changes would create a stronger climate of support for mandatory certification of carpenters.

RCPAC further agreed that for any and all mandatory training requirements that are put in place as part of the professionalization program for the residential construction industry, individuals in the industry should have the opportunity to meet the standard through a prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) process at reasonable cost and at an accessible location and time.

The action steps outlined above are the core components of the Professionalization Action Plan endorsed by RCPAC. On this basis, the AHB&RSC has initiated formal discussions with the provincial government working towards the legislation in the fall of 2006. Consultations are also underway with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, the Nova Scotia Community College, and the Apprenticeship Training and Skills Development division of the Nova Scotia Department of Education.



## 3.0 Business Plan for Mandatory Licensing of Contractors

### 3.1 Mission & Governance

Rick Williams, conference facilitator and President of PRAXIS Research, presented the draft Business Plan for the establishment of the Nova Scotia Residential Construction Commission (NSRCC) and the introduction of mandatory licensing of contractors in the sector.<sup>3</sup>

The mandate and mission of the proposed NSRCC would be:

*To strengthen consumer protection and enhance industry stability in the new home construction and renovation sector in Nova Scotia by regulating residential construction contractors and thereby promoting high standards of professionalism, competence, and integrity.*

The draft Business Plan proposed that the Commission be set it up under a provincial statute to operate as an independent, non-governmental agency, responsible for the regulation of residential construction contractors. Under the legislation, it would have authority to establish and enforce by-laws to prescribe policies, procedures and licensing standards.

The NSRCC would have a board made up of 9 Commissioners plus the Registrar (or CEO): 3 Commissioners would be appointed jointly by the AHB&RSC and the Nova Scotia Home Builder's Association; 3 would be elected by licensees and 3 would be appointed by the Governor-in-Council. The latter group would include representatives of consumers and municipal government.

The staff of the NSRCC would be comprised of the Registrar and 3 additional positions: a licensing/communications officer, an enforcement/compliance officer and an office administrator.

### 3.2 Criteria for Mandatory Licensing

The draft Business Plan makes clear that standards for mandatory licensing of residential construction contractors will be set by the NSRCC once it is in place. For discussion purposes the Plan identifies the following as possible licensing standards:

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<sup>3</sup> Iona Worden of PRAXIS drafted the Business Plan.



- ▲ Payment of licensing fees;
- ▲ Proof of business number and/or HST number;
- ▲ Completion of appropriate training based on the current NSHBA voluntary certification program;
- ▲ Employment of qualified trade persons;
- ▲ Provision of third-party home warranty;
- ▲ Compliance with building code regulations and standards;
- ▲ Compliance with health and safety standards.

The Business Plan recognizes that, at present, no agencies provide warranty coverage for the renovation sector and that a workable approach will need to be developed.

### **3.3 Financial Plan**

The draft Business Plan sets out a financial model for the establishment and operation of the NSRCC. It estimates that start-up and first year operating costs will be approximately \$65,000 with additional front-end capital costs of \$70,000. The projected annual operating costs are \$450,000.

The draft Business Plan also estimates potential revenues based on the number of firms that are active in the industry (approximately 1,700) and the number of building permits for construction or renovation of single-family dwellings (approximately 3,400 per year). Revenues could be generated through a flat rate annual registration fee of from \$200 to \$600, or by means of a lower flat rate annual registration fee plus incremental fee of from \$15 to \$35 per building project undertaken during the year. Depending on the option chosen, total NSRCC revenues could range from \$300,000 to close to \$1 million. Again, depending on the method, costs to builders could range from \$200 per year for a small builder to \$1,300 for a larger company.

### **3.4 Costs and Benefits**

The draft Business Plan identifies potential benefits and drawbacks for the key stakeholder groups.



The benefits for contractors and for the sector could include a significant decrease in underground activity over time, resulting in a markedly improved business climate. Mandatory licensing would also encourage a more professional industry with defined career paths, making it easier to attract and retain new recruits. Potential drawbacks include the requirement to pay fees and to meet training standards, and adjustment to a new business environment as underground activity is reduced.

Consumers could benefit from warranty coverage on their new home or renovations, and professional managers would oversee all projects. The drawbacks might be a marginal increase in costs over time and less freedom to hire from the underground sector.

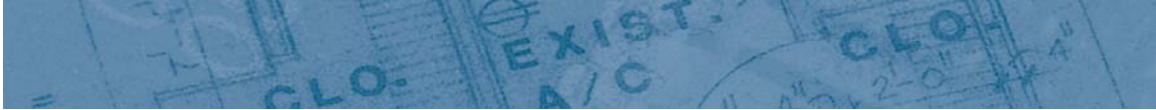
Residential construction trades workers would potentially benefit from improvements in wages and benefits, and expanded investment in worker training, as the overall business climate improved with less underground activity. There could be universal WCB coverage and improvements in safety training and workplace safety practices.

The potential benefits for government would include expanded industry participation in the training and apprenticeship systems, significant increases in tax and WCB revenues, and improved consumer protection and worker safety. Municipal governments could streamline their building inspection and assessment programs, and would have reduced liability for the activities of unqualified or underground operators. However, governments might face a potential political backlash from certain segments of the industry, particularly those who rely on one form or another of underground activity.

### **3.5 Panel Discussions & Comments from the Floor**

The presentation of the draft Business Plan was followed by a panel with presentations on the operations of the Homeowner's Protection Office of British Columbia and of the Nova Scotia real Estate Commission, and comments by a Nova Scotia Industry Representative (see attached PowerPoint presentations by panellists).

A participant asked from the floor whether the NSRCC might be legally and financially liable if a licensed contractor made serious mistakes on a building project and the homeowner sued. The



response from the AHB&RSC was that the legal ramifications of mandatory licensing are not yet fully identified, but the proposed budget does allocate resources for financial liability and errors and omissions insurance.



## **4.0 New Directions for Trades Training and Certification**

### **4.1 Panel Presentation**

This panel began by referencing the proposal for the introduction of training and certification in trades specializations in the AHB&RSC Professionalization Action Plan.

Panel presenters from British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Ontario described the new training systems being put in place, and their efforts to improve recruitment to the industry, in their provinces (see PowerPoint presentations attached). Mr Stuart Gourley, Senior Executive Director, Skills and Learning Branch, Nova Scotia Department of Education, underlined the challenges facing Nova Scotia in terms of shortages of skilled workers, and articulated his Department's commitment to working with industry to make trades training and the apprenticeship program relevant and accessible.



## **5.0 PROTECTING THE CONSUMER INTEREST IN RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION**

### **5.1 Panel Presentation**

This session began with the presentation of a CBC Marketplace documentary entitled “Hitting the Roof” that described the devastating impacts on customers when a Halifax firm failed to meet its contractual obligations for several home renovation projects. The film provided ample evidence of how the lack of professionalism of one builder could negatively affect the public perception of the whole industry, and highlighted the weaknesses of consumer protection regulations in the residential construction field in Nova Scotia.

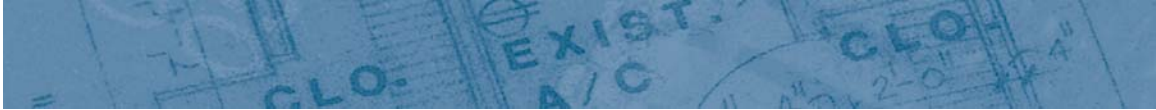
Panellist Ben Young of the Better Business Bureau pointed out that the residential construction sector is the most frequent source of inquiries and complaints received by the Bureau. He outlined the services provided by the Bureau and provided advice on moving forward with licensing.

Panellist Pat Mulcahy of the Atlantic Home Warranty Program provided highlights on the protection offered to consumers through their program. He cautioned that, unlike British Columbia and Ontario, home warranty is a voluntary program in Atlantic Canada, with no mandatory requirement for builders to offer consumer a new home warranty on their product.

Panellist Philip Girard, a law professor, told his story of purchasing a home that later had major envelope failure, and having to pursue legal action individually because of the lack of warranty coverage and regulatory protections. He concluded that many families would not have the resources to seek redress and could suffer serious health and safety risks as well as huge financial losses and disruption.

### **5.2 Discussion**

Comments from the floor focussed on the need to develop a warranty program for the renovation sector, and on having the Better Business Bureau work with the new NSRCC to ensure that there is appropriate consumer representation.



Another participant raised the issue of financial institutions providing mortgages and credit services for builders who do not provide warranties. In response, it was pointed out that the banks support mandatory licensing in principle but to date have not adjusted their policies and practices. It is a change that needs to happen across the financial sector so there is no competitive disadvantage.

A participant pointed out that a major challenge will be to inform owner-builders about the new system so that they understand that they will not be seriously hurt by it although it would mean higher standards and more effective regulation.

Another participant asked about enforcement of warranty requirements within the proposed licensing regime. The AHB&RSC view is that the enforcement will take place mainly through the building permit system: to get a permit from a municipal agency, builders will provide evidence that they are licensed and provide warranty coverage.



## 6.0 PLANNING FOR NEXT STEPS

### 6.1 Workshop Discussions

On the afternoon of the first day of PRO SPEC 2006, the participants chose which of four workshops to attend. The topics were:

- ▲ Trades specializations and licensing of carpenters;
- ▲ The proposal for a Nova Scotia Residential Construction Commission;
- ▲ Home warranty, liability protection and enforcement of licensing;
- ▲ Training standards and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).

Each workshop had a facilitator and at least one resource person, and each followed a pre-set agenda with discussion questions. The facilitators recorded the main points of agreement and disagreement. The following are summaries of the discussions in each workshop.

### 6.2 Workshop 1: Trade Specializations

There were a diversity of interests and perspectives represented in the group including builders and trades from the ICI, new home building and renovation sectors, as well as staff and students from the training institutions and Apprenticeship representatives. The group expressed strong support for the intention to move towards compulsory certification of carpenters and agreed on the need for new training approaches that are up-to-date and relevant to residential construction. Participants suggested that more detailed curriculum proposals should be brought forward, and emphasized the need for industry to work closely with the College to ensure that the new system works with their training programs and has realistic timelines. The group also agreed on the need to continue discussions with unions and employers in the ICI sector to ensure that the new residential construction programs fit with theirs as much as possible.

There were also areas of concern and differences of view within the group. Spokespersons from the College were concerned about alignment of the new approach with existing programs. Union members were concerned about watering down of training and certification standards. A spokesperson for the Apprenticeship program said that they will respond to industry direction but



it is important to have industry and the College come forward together with already agreed-upon proposals for change. Representatives for residential builders supported the trades specializations approach but also saw the need to qualify more journeypersons, particularly in the renovations sector.

The group identified the following steps to develop trade specializations:

- ▲ The College and industry should establish a working group to develop proposals for change that would then be taken forward to the Apprenticeship Board;
- ▲ The partners should do a pilot project to demonstrate the merits of trade specialization training and certification;
- ▲ More effort should be put into getting employers to take apprentices and to do a good job with on-the-job training;
- ▲ The working group should set out timelines for implementation;
- ▲ The National Occupational Classification (NOC) for carpenters needs to be updated;
- ▲ The working group should take steps to ensure that trade specialist credentials are portable;
- ▲ The working group should develop more detailed curriculum proposals for trades specializations and consult stakeholders on these proposals;
- ▲ The working group should involve apprenticeship employers early in the process to get their input and buy-in.

### **6.3 Workshop 2: The NSRCC Business Plan**

Members of the group expressed support for the overall approach set out in the draft Business Plan. They agreed on the need for a major effort to communicate with industry to get the message out and promote stakeholder awareness. It was agreed that the proponents should not wait for legislation to begin the communications effort, and should focus on consumer protection as the main selling point. The budget for setting up the NSRCC should include more resources for communications.



Members of the group felt that effective enforcement comes from:

- ▲ Educating builders to promote compliance;
- ▲ Closing loopholes for owner-builders;
- ▲ Getting other stakeholders to play their part - including the banks, insurance companies and municipal regulatory agencies.

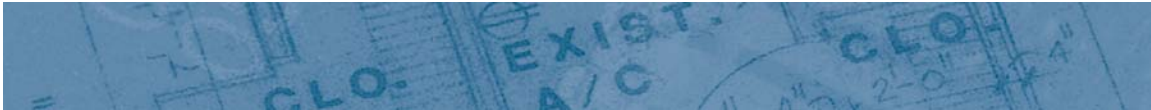
Participants felt there should be a clearer definition in the Business Plan of who is to be licensed.

With regard to revenues to run the Commission, participants favoured a flat fee plus incremental fees collected through the building permit system reflecting the amount of building activity of each firm. They suggested a \$400 to \$500 flat fee and \$15 to \$30 levy on building permits. They were generally in favour of having higher fees to generate more revenues for programs. All agreed on the need to demonstrate clearly the value-added to government, consumers and industry, and to communicate this message effectively.

## 6.4 Workshop 3: Warranty and Enforcement

Participants in this workshop agreed that warranty should be mandatory for homes build by professional builders. Immediate priorities are to develop a warranty system to work for renovators and to establish special requirements for owner-builders. In the latter case it will be necessary to define the family and the length of occupancy to distinguish between a true owner-builder and a speculator/self-builder. The participants look forward to seeing more detailed proposals for fee structures, bond coverage, insurance levels, training, etc. Participants also wanted to see answers on who will provide warranty coverage for self-contractor and contractor/project manager built homes.

It was pointed out that the proposed new warranty requirements would mean more providers beyond the current Atlantic Home Warranty Program. It might require more of an insurance system with various brokers and with new benchmarks for coverage. It could be a graduated fee scale based on training, track record, size of company, etc. It may require more posting of bonds for self-built homes and renovation projects. The requirements set out by NSRCC will determine



cost levels of coverage, and warranty providers may function as gatekeepers and enforcers of licensing requirements. The industry may need a system of plan approvals and site inspections. If there is proportional liability, there might have to be an industry body to determine proportions. This might also require an arbitration panel or mandatory mediation.

With regard to enforcement, the group supported the proposal to do it mainly through municipal agencies and the building permit process. There could be an exemption certificate for true owner-builders. There will have to be a system to confirm that the builder meets the standards for insurance, training, etc., and possibly a fee to cover administration costs.

Workshop participants called for a simple, direct system to check contractor credentials. There should also be a public education program to help consumers understand the warranty system -- what exists now, how the new system will work, and the need to improve public confidence in the qualifications and capabilities of contractors.

The communications program should also present a realistic picture of the costs to builders for warranty coverage, training, etc.

## **6.5 Workshop 4: Training and Prior Learning Assessment**

With regard to the overall Business Plan, the participants supported the proposed approach. They saw the need to keep the revenue collection mechanism simple. They preferred a flat fee together with a small fee or percentage levy on each building permit. They felt that builders should pay higher fees to generate extra revenues for programs to inform and educate industry and the general public. Participants suggested that the NSRCC board should have a proper balance of industry and consumer interests. It was also suggested that proof of financial viability be added as a licensing criterion because it is part of home warranty now and is important for consumer protection.

It was also suggested that the by-laws for the Commission establish an obligation for the Board of the NSRCC to consult stakeholders before making significant changes in policies and regulations. The question was raised whether there would be a formal membership of the Commission and whether overall policy should be made democratically at an annual general meeting. The group



favoured a membership structure and accountability of the Commission board to the membership.

There was agreement in the group on the need for more money in the start-up budget for communications activities to get stakeholders on-side with the new system.

The group then discussed the approach to setting training standards. It was agreed that the Commission should define areas of training and the content that is required but not prescribe particular courses. The proper role of the Commission will be to judge if particular courses meet the requirements for particular areas of training and content.

The workshop participants agreed on the following grid describing the subject areas where they felt training should be required, the existing courses that might meet the standard to be set by the NSRCC, and whether ways and means should be provided for experienced builders to meet the standard through a prior learning and assessment process (instead of doing courses to re-learn knowledge and skills they have already acquired on the job).

<b>TRAINING AREAS</b>	<b>EQUIVALENTS – EXISTING COURSES</b>	<b>PLAR</b>
Health & Safety	No equivalents currently exist	No PLAR
National Building Code Part 9	Existing Course on NBC	Challenge exam
Business skills	Atlantic Housing Professional Studies course	PLAR
House as system	The Better Built House course	PLAR
Moisture Control	Existing CMHC course	PLAR

Once the new training requirements are defined, the NSRCC should provide a window of two years for contractors to show evidence of being registered for courses. To be licensed, builders would have to submit a plan for how to meet the training requirements within the prescribed timeframe. Contractors could spread training across more than one person in the firm.

The NSRCC should promote training generally and do referrals for builders who need to upgrade their essential skills, English as a second language, or management skills.



## **7.0 MANDATE TO MOVE FORWARD**

In the concluding session of PRO SPEC 2006, the facilitator presented a draft action plan drawn together as a synthesis of the points raised in the workshop sessions. This was discussed in plenary and a mandate was proposed for the AHB&RSC and the Residential Construction Professionalization Advisory Committee (RCPAC) to move forward with implementation of the Action Plan.

### **7.1 Action Plan from Workshops**

#### **7.1.1 Legislative Process**

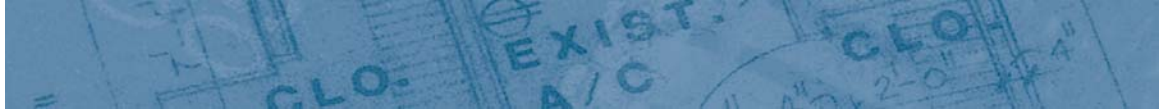
The AHB&RSC should proceed with its collaboration with the provincial government to develop and introduce legislation to establish the NSRCC. It should be understood that when the government brings forward the draft legislation and regulations, it will hold full public consultations that could include hearings around the province. There will be ample opportunity for stakeholders to make input to the consideration of the legal framework for mandatory licensing of contractors. Industry groups should prepare to participate actively in these consultations to ensure that their views are heard and their interests represented.

#### **7.1.2 Proposed Business Plan and Budget for the NSRCC**

There was broad support for enlarging the proposed annual NSRCC budget to generate funds for programs and activities. It was not felt necessary or wise to pursue a very low cost approach just to encourage industry acceptance. Rather, there must be an effective communication strategy to promote the professionalization program to industry and consumers, and this will require adequate resources.

#### **7.1.3 A Simple Revenue Collection System for the NSRCC**

Participants in PRO SPEC 2006 supported the use of a basic registration fee accompanied by a levy or fee on building permits.



#### 7.1.4 Warranty/Liability and Enforcement

The AHB&RSC should undertake a more detailed study of how the system will work and who will provide the coverage. The Council should establish a special working group to develop these plans for the renovation sector and all parts of the industry. There is also a need to budget for additional administrative costs.

The AHB&RSC should proceed with the plan to have enforcement of mandatory licensing happen primarily through the building permit system. There will also need to be more detailed planning and consultation to work out the enforcement and gatekeeper functions of the expanded warranty system. It will be important to take steps at the outset to avoid duplication.

#### 7.1.5 Training/PLAR

The participants of PRO SPEC 2006 support the establishment of meaningful training standards similar to the current requirements for Atlantic Home Warranty Program members and the NSHBA Certified Professional Builder program. There is also a need for a PLAR system tailored to the specific conditions and needs of the industry.

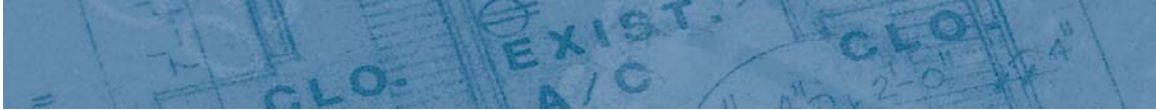
#### 7.1.6 Public Education and Communications

The participants in PRO SPEC 2006 agree on the high priority for getting the message out to industry to reduce resistance, and to consumers to get them on side. The AHB&RSC should work with stakeholder groups to create a general climate of acceptance for this major change in the residential construction industry.

### 7.2 Discussion

During the final Plenary Session, participants raised a number of important points.

- ▲ A number of speakers emphasized the importance of the public education campaign to support the proposed changes. The core message must centre on the consumer protection benefits.
- ▲ Speakers also pointed to the importance of addressing the owner-builder issue and



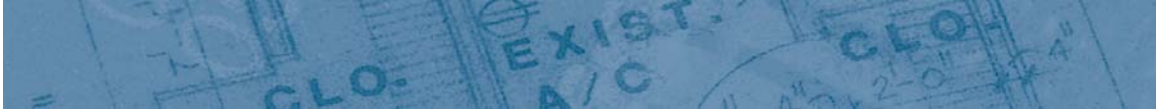
having a very clear message that mandatory licensing will not prohibit this practice.

- ▲ Builder representatives emphasized the need for the new training programs to reflect residential sector knowledge and skills, and called for industry to play an active role in planning the changes to training and apprenticeship.
- ▲ Concerns were raised about young people leaving the province to get high paying jobs in Western Canada. Participants questioned the point of training a lot more carpenters if they then leave, and pointed out that professionalization should make it possible over time for employers to offer more competitive pay rates to keep young workers in the province.
- ▲ Other participants voiced concerns that there are many builders in the province who have not heard about these ideas and they may react negatively when the changes are announced. In response, it was pointed out that the AHB&RSC has worked hard for three years to get the message out around the province and in the media, to hold meetings in every region and to conduct comprehensive surveys. On this basis, there are grounds for confidence that the majority of builders will support the proposals.

### 7.3 Mandate for Next Steps

Following the presentation and discussion of the overall approach described above, the following were identified as specific steps to be taken by the AHB&RSC and the RCPAC in implementing the professionalization program in the near future:

1. Move forward with work with the provincial government to draft and introduce legislation in the fall of 2006 to provide a legal mandate for the NSRCC.
2. Revise the NSRCC Business Plan in light of the advice received from PRO SPEC 2006 in terms of the revenue generation strategy, increased budgetary resources for communications and other programming, and accountability of the organization to the industry membership.
3. Move forward quickly with the development of the training standards and the PLAR program so that these are in place before the NSRCC begins to put mandatory licensing requirements in place.



4. Move forward with the development of training and certification of trades specializations by establishing a joint working group -- industry and the College -- to develop the program, to undertake and evaluate a demonstration project.
5. Make recommendations to Apprenticeship for residential trades specializations.
6. Develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy focussed on promoting support for mandatory licensing of contractors and the new training approach with the public and industry stakeholders in the ICI and residential sector.

The concluding plenary session of PRO SPEC 2006 affirmed this mandate for the AHB&RSC to proceed with implementation of the actions steps set out above.



## APPENDIX I : LIST OF REGISTERED CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Rhyon Abbott NSCC (Student) 96 Boxwood Crescent LOWER SACKVILLE NS B4C 3Y9	Tel Email	902 865 9911 rhyon-abbott@hotmail.com
Jackie Aiken Service Canada / HRSDC PO Box 1800 HALIFAX NS B3J 3V1	Tel Fax Email	902 426 6535 902 426 7690 jackie.aiken@servicecanada.gc.ca
Dale Anderson Birkshire Developments Inc 500 West Petpeswick Road MUSQUODOBOIT HBR NS B0J 2L0	Tel Fax Email	902 889 3395 902 889 3395 brikshire@ns.sympatico.ca
Michael Annis NSCC 5685 Leeds Street HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4	Tel Fax Email	902 491 4566 902 491 4535
Bill Arsenault Canada Revenue Agency 1557 Hollis Street HALIFAX NS B3J 2T5	Tel Fax Email	902 426 7191 902 426 5308
Terry Arsenault TPA Construction 44 Lakecrest Drive MOUNT UNIACKE NS B0N 1Z0	Tel Fax	902 441 5458 902 256 2009
Brandon Auger NSCC 30 Willowbend Court HALIFAX NS B3M 3L4	Tel	902 443 9442
Steve Barrett Carpenters Guild of Nova Scotia 3597 Dutch Village Road HALIFAX NS B3N 2T1	Tel Fax Email	902 454 5100 902 454 5001
Miles Barss Gemini Construction 6139 Quinpool Road PO Box 33040 HALIFAX NS B3L 4T6		



Tim Bell NSCC 4580 Highway #2 WELLINGTON NS	Tel	902 861 1745
Edmund Benoit Edmund's Contracting Ltd PO Box 127 NEW GLASGOW NS B2H 5E2	Tel Fax Email	902 752 7919 902 755 6626 ebenoit@ns.sympatico.ca
Peter Berry Arcadia Construction Box #1 ARCADIA NS B0W 1B0	Tel Fax	902 742 3167 902 742 1133
Suzanne Bona Scotian Homes Ltd 264 # 2 Highway ENFIELD NS B2T 1C9	Tel Fax Email	902 883 2266 902 883 2155 bonas@scotianhomes.com
Brian Boudreau BAB Construction 89 Rocky Bay Road RR#1 D'ESCOUSSE NS B0E 1K0	Tel Fax	902 226 1910 902 226 1910
Louise Boudreau Department of Education Province of Nova Scotia 2021 Brunswick Street HALIFAX NS B3J 2S9	Tel Fax Email	902 424 3968 902 424 0882 boudrelo@gov.ns.ca
Willard Boudreau West Arichat Contracting Ltd PO Box 65 WEST ARICHAT NS B0E 3J0	Tel Fax	902 226 2104 902 226 0612
Peter Briand Econo Renovations 192 Wyse Road Suite 5 Unit 5 DARTMOUTH NS B3A 1M9	Tel Fax Email	902 435 6586 902 435 3519 info@econorenovations.com
Peter Brown Bayside Builders 692 Aldous Road RICHMOND PE C0B 1Y0		902 888 7534 902 854 2435 peter@baysidegroup.ca



Jim Bungay, Jr  
J Bungay Construction Co Ltd  
1662 Cole Harbour Road  
DARTMOUTH NS B2Z 1C3

Tel 902 462 7526  
Fax 902 462 2144  
Email jwbungay@bungayhomes.ca

Jim Bungay, Sr  
J Bungay Construction Co Ltd  
1662 Cole Harbour Road  
DARTMOUTH NS B2Z 1C3

Tel 902 462 7526  
Fax 902 462 2144  
Email jebungay@bungayhomes.ca

Jon Burton  
NSCC  
2050 Robie Street  
HALIFAX NS B3K 4M3

Tel 902 420 9033

Frank Cheevers  
Frank Cheevers Electrical Services  
105 West Lawrencetown Road  
LAWRENCETOWN NS B2Z 1S4

Tel 902 476 0679

Nick Clarke  
NSCC (Student)  
57 Andover Street  
DARTMOUTH NS B2X 2M1

Tel 902 434 6570  
Cell 902 225 5141

Myliisa Cornelius  
NSCC  
44 Sugar Maple Drive  
TIMBERLEA NS B3T 1G4

Tel 902 876 0552  
Cell 902 489 7800

Scott Costain  
Scotcor Construction Ltd  
19 Gavin's Court  
SUMMERSIDE PE C1N 6C5

Tel 902 436 8271  
Fax 902 436 8270  
Email office@scotcor.com

Jason Craig  
NSCC  
66 John Stewart Street  
DARTMOUTH NS B2W 4J8

Tel 902 435 4201  
Cell 902 877 6233

Dale Crawford  
Manager, Apprenticeship Training  
Department of Education  
2021 Brunswick Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 2S9

Tel 902 424 4853  
Fax 902 428 0605  
Email crawfodx@gov.ns.ca



Steven Crowell Crowell Construction 55 Highbury School Road KENTVILLE NS B4N 4K1	Tel Fax Email	902 678 8752 902 678 8752 crowlcon@eastlink.ca
Rod Densmore Rod Densmore Construction Ltd RR#1 MAITLAND NS B0N 1T0	Tel Fax	902 899 5218 902 369 2222
Raymond Deveau Dynasty Development Group Ltd 19 Fleetview Drive HALIFAX NS B3M 4W1	Tel Fax	902 446 4000 902 446 4001
Peter DeWolfe DeWolfe's Construction & Trim RR#1 Sheet Harbour HALIFAX NS B0J 3B0	Tel Fax Email	908 885 2770 902 885 2222 sandra000@ns.sympatico.ca
Jim Dobrowolski NSCC 5685 Leeds Street HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4	Tel Fax Email	902 491 4566 902 491 4535 j_dobrowolski@hotmail.com
Brenda Dunphy NSCC – College Prep Strait Area Campus 226 Reeves Street PORT HAWKESBURY NS B9A 2A2	Tel Fax Email	902 625 4067 902 625 0193 brenda.dunphy@nsc.ca
Ron Farrell NSCC 5685 Leeds Street PO Box 1153 HALIFAX NS B3J 2X1	Tel Fax Email	902 491 2176 902 491 2178 ronald.farrell@nsc.ca
Gerald Ferguson Ferguson General Contracting 2428 Westmount Street HALIFAX NS B3L 3G6	Tel Fax Email	902 444 3431 902 454 5427 fergcont@navnet.net
Mike Flemming NSCC 5685 Leeds Street HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4	Tel Fax Email	902 491 4566 902 491 4535 mikeflemming711@hotmail.com



Kathryn Fraser Arnold Keddy Contracting Ltd PO Box 2428 WOLFVILLE NS B4P 2S3	Tel Email	902 542 2622 arnoldkeddy@ns.sympatico.ca
Andrew Giles NSCC 32 Celtic Drive DARTMOUTH NS B2Y 3G6	Tel Cell	902 469 8072 902 222 5416
Tony Gioventu CHOA of BC 202-624 Columbia Street NEW WESTMINSTER BC V3M 1A5	Tel Cell Fax Email	604 515 9683 604 323 6458 604 515 9643 tony@choa.bc.ca
Philip Girard Weldon Law Building Dalhousie University 6061 University Avenue HALIFAX NS	Tel Email	902 494 2814 Philip.Girard@dal.ca
Diane Gordon 29 Croucher's Point Road GLEN HAVEN NS B3Z 2V6	Tel Fax Email	902 823 1811 902 823 1811 dianegordon@ns.sympatico.ca
Stu Gourley Department of Education Province of Nova Scotia 2021 Brunswick Street HALIFAX NS B3J 2S9	Tel Fax Email	902 424 8880 902 424 0489 gourlems@gov.ns.ca
Sherry Grant NSHBA 15A Oland Crescent HALIFAX NS B3S 1C6	Tel Fax Email	902 450 5554 902 450 5448 sgrant@nshba.ns.ca
Peter Greenwood Clayton Developments Ltd Suite 100C 255 Lacewood Drive HALIFAX NS B3M 4G2	Tel Fax Email	902 445 2000 902 443 1611 pgreenwood@claytondev.com
Dwight Habermehl Habermehl Builders 4 Forest Hills Parkway PO Box 21027 DARTMOUTH NS B2W 5G0	Tel Fax Email	902 860 4900 902 860 3989 dwight@habermehlbuilders.com
Mike Hennigar's General Construction PO Box 452	Fax	902 637 2798



91 Butler's Road  
BARRINGTON PASSAGE NS B0W 1G0

Brad Ivany  
NSCC  
210 – 94 Highfield Park Drive  
DARTMOUTH NS B3A 4V9

Tel 902 463 5172

Whitney Josey  
NSCC  
111 4-Franklyn Court  
DARTMOUTH NS B3K 2K1

Tel 902 405 6717  
Cell 902 499 6921

Mike Kelly  
NSCSA  
35 MacDonald Avenue  
DARTMOUTH NS B3B 1C6

Tel 902 468 6696 ext 17  
Fax 902 468 8843  
Email mkelly@nscsa.org

Mary Kenny  
AHB&RSC  
53 Leary's Cove Road  
EAST DOVER NS B3Z 3W7

Tel 902 852 2151  
Toll 1 800 565 2151  
Free  
Fax 902 852 3193  
Email mkenny@ahbrsc.com

Mary Lawson  
Dalerose Country  
64 Broadway  
ORANGEVILLE ON L9W 1V9

Tel 519 938 8417  
Fax 519 938 8418  
Email dalerosecountry@bellnet.ca

Marion LeBlanc  
Regional Mortgage Manager  
NF and NS RBC Royal Bank

Email marion.leblanc@rbc.com

Richard Lind  
Everts-Lind Enterprises Ltd  
5722 Middle LaHave (Hwy 332)  
RR# 3 BRIDGEWATER NS B4V 2W2

Tel 902 766 4533  
Cell 902 527 6606  
Fax 902 766 4533  
Email rlind@tallships.ca

Greg Lockhart  
NSCC  
666 Old Sackville Road  
LOWER SACKVILLE NS B4C 2K3

Tel 902 865 7975  
Cell 902 223 7594

Steve Lockhart  
Denim Homes  
#432-9049 Commercial Street  
NEW MINAS NS B4N 5A4

Tel 902 698 0065  
Fax 902 678 7953  
Email lockhartms@hotmail.com



Allan MacDonald  
NSCC  
5685 Leeds Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4

Tel 902 491 4564  
Email allan.macdonald@nsc.ca

David MacDonald  
NSCC  
405 Beaver Bank Road  
LOWER SACKVILLE NS b4e 1k3

Tel 902 865 4353  
Cell 902 489 6474

Ron MacDonald  
Council of Carpenters Education Ctr Inc  
3597 Dutch Village Road  
HALIFAX NS B3N 2T1

Tel 902 454 5100  
Fax 902 454 5001  
Email

Don MacKinnon  
BBB Maritime Provinces  
Suite 805 1888 Brunswick Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3J8

Tel 902 425 8357  
Fax 902 429 6457  
Email dmackinnon@bbbmp.ca

Francis MacKinnon  
NSCC  
5685 Leeds Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4

Tel 902 491 4566  
Fax 902 491 4535  
Email francis.mackinnon@nsc.ca

Neil MacNeil  
NSCC  
5685 Leeds Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4

Tel 902 491 4564  
Fax 902 491 4535  
Email neil.macneil@nsc.ca

Mark Magee  
NSCC  
325 Greenhead Road  
SAINT JOHN NB E2M 4W4

Tel 902 431 4747  
Cell 902 240 3452

Margaret McEachern  
PEIRC Sector Council  
6 Queen Street Suite 2  
SUMMERSIDE PE C1N 4KS

Tel 902 724 3300  
Fax 902 724 3304  
Email margaretpeircsc@eastlink.ca

Dave McGrath  
NSCSA  
35 MacDonald Avenue  
DARTMOUTH NS B3B 1C6

Tel 902 468 6696 ext 36  
Fax 902 468 8843  
Email dmcgrath@nscsa.org



Richard Miller  
Clayton Developments Ltd  
Suite 100C  
255 Lacewood Drive  
HALIFAX NS B3M 4G2

Tel 902 445 2000  
Fax 902 443 1611  
Email miller@claytondev.com

Pat Mulcahy  
Atlantic Home Warranty Program  
15 Oland Crescent  
HALIFAX NS B3S 1C6

Tel 902 450 5064  
Fax 902 450 5454  
Email pmulcahy@ahwp.org

Jason Mullins  
NSCC  
18 Princess Margaret Blvd  
DARTMOUTH NS B3B 1A2

Tel 902 461 2010  
Cell 902 448 2010

Trudy Munroe  
NSCC  
304-3001 Olivet Street  
HALIFAX NS B3L 3Z9

Tel 902 463 4970

Sean Murray  
NSCC  
6259 Summit Street  
HALIFAX NS B3L 1R6

Tel 902 877 9206

Douglas Myers  
PLA Centre  
Tower 1 Suite 101  
7071 Mumford Road  
HALIFAX NS B3L 4N9

Tel 902 454 2804  
Fax 902 454 3603  
Email dmyers@placentre.ns.ca

Eric Nelson  
NSCC  
54 Winwood Drive  
LOWER SACKVILLE NS B4E 3A2

Tel 902 865 2448  
Email nelson347@hotmail.com

Bob Newcomb  
Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations  
Maritime Centre 8 South  
1505 Barrington Street  
HALIFAX NS B2X 2X1

Tel 902 4263216  
Fax 902 426 7734  
Email newcombb@gov.ns.ca

Jonathan Nichols  
Tantus Corp  
4 Mission Street  
AMHERST NS B4H 3Z5



Bob Norwood  
Added Spaces Ltd  
5 Roland Norwood Drive  
LAKE ECHO NS B3E 1C7

Tel 902 829 4040  
Fax 902 829 2457  
Email bob@addedspace.com

James Noseworthy  
NSCC  
5685 Leeds Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4

Tel 902 491 4566  
Fax 902 491 4535  
Email james.noseworthy@nsc.ca

Megan O'Keefe  
NSCC  
6 White Pine Ridge  
HUBLEY NS B3Z 1A4  
Ernie Parkes  
NSCC – College Prep  
372 Pleasant Street  
YARMOUTH NS B5A 2L2

Tel 902 444 4687  
Cell 902 222 8184

Tel 902 749 2422  
Fax 902 749 2402  
Email ernie.parkes@nsc.ca

Elizabeth Pearo  
Ferguson General Contracting  
2741 Connolly Street  
HALIFAX NS B3L 3M8

Tel 902 444 3431  
Fax 902 454 5427  
Email fergcont@navnet.net

John Ramsland  
NSCC  
RR#3  
BRIDGEWATER NS B4V 2W2

Tel 902 543 5022  
Fax 902 563 0511  
Email john.ramsland@nsc.ca

Alan Roach  
Austin Contracting Ltd  
PO Box 8266  
HALIFAX NS B3K 5L9

Tel 902 830 3036  
Fax 902 835 4526  
Email

Don Roscoe  
Nova Scotia Home Designers Association  
83 Old Scotts Road  
McGRATH'S COVE NS B3Z 3V2

Tel 902 852 3789  
Fax 902 852 3789  
Email solardon@chebucto.nsc.ca

Ted Ross  
Nova Scotia Environment & Labour

Tel 902 424 8046  
Toll 1 800 559 3473

Province of Nova Scotia  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor 5151 Terminal Road  
HALIFAX NS B3J 1A1

Free  
Fax 902 424 3239  
Email tross@gov.nsc.ca



Saeid Saberi Greater Homes Inc 380 Bedford Highway HALIFAX NS B3M 2L4	Tel 902 499 7400 Fax 902 484 5347 Email s.saberi@greaterhomes.ca
Jason Saunders NSCC 6019 Stairs HALIFAX NS B3K 2E4	Tel 902 431 4747
Leo Senz A & H Renovations 56 Celtic Drive DARTMOUTH NS B2Y 3G6	Tel 902 469 1032 Fax 902 465 1149 Email lsenz@ahrenovations.ca
Michael Senz A & H Renovations 56 Celtic Drive DARTMOUTH NS B2Y 3G6	Tel 902 469 1032 Cell 902 456 4013 Fax 902 465 1149 Email msenz@ahrenovations.ca
Eddie Sheppard NSCC 5685 Leeds Street HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4 Claudia Simmonds-Lipka CHBA-NB 403 Regent Street #207 FREDERICTON NB E3B 3X6	Tel 902 491 4566 Fax 902 491 4535 Email Edshep6@hotmail.com  Tel 506 459 7219 Fax 506 450 4924 Email nbhome@nbnet.nb.ca
Vernon Sklapsky State Homes Ltd 71 Maggie's Landing BOUTILIER'S POINT NS B3Z 4L3	Tel 902 456 1199 Fax 902 820 2451 Email roakus@eastlink.com
Reg Sly 84 Brenda Drive HAMMONDS PLAINS NS B4B 1K2	Tel 902 499 7047 Fax 902 835 7178 Email reg.sly@ns.sympatico.ca
Danny Surette NSCC – Burr ridge Campus 372 Pleasant Street YARMOUTH NS B5A 2L2	Tel 902 742 0665 Fax 902 742 0519 Email danny.surette@nsc.ca
Gregg Surette NSCC – Burr ridge Campus 372 Pleasant Street YARMOUTH NS B5A 2L2	Tel 902 742 5318 Fax 902 742 0519 Email gregory.surette@nsc.ca



Ed Thornhill  
HRM Planning & Development  
PO Box 1749  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3A5

Tel 902 490 4480  
Cell 904 476 9966  
Fax 902 490 4684  
Email thornhe@halifax.ca

Myles Tonner  
NSCC  
5685 Leeds Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4

Tel 902 491 4566  
Fax 902 491 4535

Heather Umlah  
NSCC  
5685 Leeds Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4

Tel 902 491 1619  
Fax 902 491 4525  
Email heather.umlh@nsc.ca

David Ward  
NSCC  
5685 Leeds Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4

Tel 902 491 4566  
Fax 902 491 4535  
Email dmjward@accesswave.ca

Gerald White  
NSCC  
5685 Leeds Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 3C4

Tel 902 491 4566  
Cell 902 491 4535  
Email gerald.white@nsc.ca

MJ Whitemarsh  
CHBA-BC  
BCIT Campus Building  
NW5 3700 Willingdon Avenue  
BURNABY BC V5G 3H2

Tel 604 432 7112  
Fax 604 432 9038  
Email mjwhitemarsh@chbab.org

Keagan Whittleton  
NSCC  
4 Stoneridge Court  
BEDFORD NS B4A 3N2

Tel 902 832 5916  
Fax 902 223 1849  
Email keagsta@hotmail.com

Rick Williams  
PRAXIS Research & Consulting Inc  
67 Otter Lake Court  
HALIFAX NS B3S 1M1

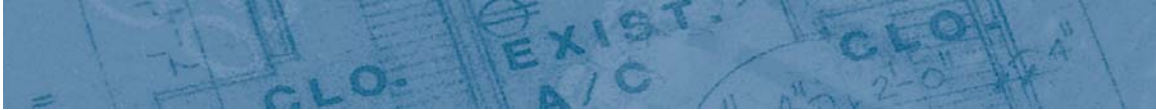
Tel 902 832 8996  
Fax 902 832 8090  
Email williams@praxisresearch.ns.ca

Rob Williams  
Interhabs Ltd  
1869 Upper Water Street  
HALIFAX NS B3J 1S9

Tel 902 422 2121  
Fax 902 425 2121  
Email rob.williams@ns.sympatico.ca



Matthew Woods NSCC 1380 Robie Street HALIFAX NS B3H 3E2	Tel	902 489 3165
Iona Worden PRAXIS Research & Consulting Inc 67 Otter Lake Court HALIFAX NS B3S 1M1	Tel Fax Email	902 832 8995 902 832 8090 iworden@praxisresearch.ns.ca
Michelle Wright NSHBA 15 Oland Crescent HALIFAX NS B3S 1C6	Tel Fax	902 450 5554 902 450 5448
Ben Young BBB Maritime Provinces Board Suite 805 1888 Brunswick Street HALIFAX NS B3J 3J8	Tel Fax	902 425 8357 902 429 6457
Mike Young Birkshire Developments Inc 500 West Petpeswick Road MUSQUODOBOIT HBR NS B0J 2L0	Tel Fax Email	902 889 3395 902 889 3395 brikshire@ns.sympatico.ca
Stephen Young NSCC 50 Sirius Crescent DARTMOUTH NS B2W 4L5	Tel Email	902 497 1449 tuffysteve@yahoo.com
Marshall Zwicker Meisner & Zwicker Construction Ltd RR# 2 BRIDGEWATER NS B4V 2W1	Tel Fax Email	902 543 3648 902 543 3105 builder@eastlink.com



## **APPENDIX II : CONFERENCE AGENDA**

See attached.