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HOPE AND FEAR

Organized by the Glass Association of North America, the Building Envelope Contractors Conference returned to the Paris Las Vegas Hotel and Casino this past March with speakers and sessions designed specifically for contract glaziers. In addition to educational and professional development opportunities offered, the conference included a meeting of the BEC Technical Committee as well as the very popular networking receptions and table top exhibits.

BEC division chair, Henry Taylor, who is the architectural services team manager for Kawneer, kicked off the event by telling the audience that the purpose of BEC is about sharing ideas. "BEC is about encouraging dialogue and conversation," he said.

One of the highlights of the conference was the highly anticipated keynote presentation from Oldcastle Building-Envelope CEO Ted Hathaway, who described how technology is changing the glass



BEC speakers say no one is too big to fail.

business. "We need to think about the impact that the buildings we construct today have on the environment," said Hathaway. "As an industry, how can we use new technology to build smarter building envelopes? Considering that in the United States, buildings consume over 49 per cent of the nation's total energy, we need to re-examine past practices as the envelopes can no longer be passive or stupid. In fact, 50 per cent of the 8,603 buildings owned by the United States government were constructed between 1950 and 1995, and all of them are in need of upgrading."

According to Hathaway, buildings currently account for 75 per cent of the carbon emissions on the planet, "So if we are serious about reducing greenhouse effects, we need to take a very

serious look at how we construct buildings in the future and how we retrofit the existing stock of buildings to achieve improved energy performance."

Hathaway told the attendees that technology and collaboration are the two crucial elements that will make for smarter building envelopes. "The technology that is coming out of the manufacturing and software industries is what is driving the new design-build process," he said. "Three dimensional modeling with BIM, Revit, Rhino, Grasshopper, Navisworks, Nitya, horizontal software and iPhone apps are revolutionizing the ways buildings are designed and creating an opportunity for tremendous collaboration in all stages of the design-build process."

Above: Oldcastle BuildingEnvelope CEO Ted Hathaway addresses the conference. Hathaway sees opportunity in North America's aging institutional infrastructure. Half of the U.S. government's buildings were built between 1950 and 1995.

Hathaway stated that energy efficiency, sustainability and environmental stewardship are guiding the technology and, by default, building designs. “The idea is for the building to exist in its environment in the most efficient manner. All of these technologies facilitate the creation of smart building envelopes.”

Reinforcing the energy efficiency theme, Chris Dolan, director of commercial glass products for global glass manufacturer and BEC co-sponsor Guardian Industries introduced Guardian’s new SunGuard photovoltaic glass units which are being produced in partnership with San Mateo, Calif.-based Pythagoras. The companies announced that Guardian SunGuard PVGU is a BIPV solution that replaces standard vision and spandrel glass or skylights with a glass product that converts direct sunlight into energy.

According to Dolan, a recent report from industry analyst firm NanoMarkets estimates that the total market for BIPV glass will reach US\$6.4 billion in revenues in 2016 compared to \$1.5 billion in 2012. “SunGuard PVGU will help architects and building owners who are looking for solutions to achieve net-zero buildings,” said Dolan. “The product lets in diffused light, increases energy efficiency and generates electricity from the building facade, helping projects meet the new green energy codes. Additionally, BIPV projects may be eligible to earn substantial federal tax credits.”

Victor E. Corniellier, CEO of TSI/Exterior Wall Systems, provided a sobering yet inspirational seminar entitled “Leadership in your Contract Glazing Firm.” “I have a passion for this industry,” said Corniellier. “I have been in it my whole life. Today our industry is very, very pained. Take a look around. We see businesses that are collapsing and closing their doors while others are reorganizing. You can say, ‘Well, that’s one more competitor that I don’t have to worry about,’ but if you have that attitude, it is wrong. Because what is happening to our industry is the net result. We have all used this phrase: ‘How the hell did they do the job for that price?’ You hear it all over the country.”

Corniellier presented a slide listing the names of ten well-known glass and aluminum companies that have recently gone out of business. “It is over for Trainor Glass, a pillar in the industry. Moving into the future, we want to be sure that we are not adding more company names to that list. If you talk to surety underwriters, they will tell you that contract glazing is one of the highest risk industries in the building trades nationwide.

There are national and regional companies in the glass industry that are not going to be here this time next year. My point of this doom and gloom, and I’m not a doom and gloom guy, is that you have to be a realist. We have to figure out how we’re going to get through this. We’re dealing with downward banking pressure on small business the likes of which we have never seen before.”

Corniellier provided several takeaways to help leaders better navigate the current environment, including recognizing the difference between process failure and people failure, emphasizing the importance of leading through tough times with relationships, improving internal and external communication and using basic tools such as mission statements and SWOT analysis. “Culture is not something that is simply written, it must be engrained in individuals,” he added. “Strategy must

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