NEWSLETTER

**EVENT RECAP** 

## Eye on the Industrial Sector: The OCS 15th Annual State of the Industry and Outlook Conference

n March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 the OCS hosted its 15<sup>th</sup> annual State of the Industry and Outlook Conference in Toronto. As a marquee event in the OCS calendar, it generally draws a large number of industry stakeholders from across the province and this year was no exception as 250 people attended including representatives from owner, contractor, government and labour groups. This year's event provided attendees with an opportunity to hear expert analysis and predictions for Ontario's economy as well as get unique insight into the manufacturing sector.

The Honourable Kevin Flynn – Ontario's Minister of Labour – kicked off the event by bringing greetings from the provincial government. He was followed by Craig Wright, Chief Economist of RBC and keynote speaker for the event.

Craig gave a comprehensive analysis of economic trends, starting with the global economy, moving to Canada and the U.S. and finishing with his expectations for Ontario. He explained that growth in both Canada and the U.S. would accelerate this year and would remain relatively lofty in 2016. Improved labour market conditions would help solidify the U.S. economy, which would in turn bring Canada along for the ride. Meanwhile, sturdy growth in emerging markets coupled with a pickup in the U.S. would



2015 OCS State of the Industry and Outlook Conference - Hilton Toronto Hote

**JULY 2014** 

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2015 STATE OF THE INDUSTRY & OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

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help oil prices recover from their recent slide. The Canadian dollar was forecast to trend higher into 2016, in tandem with higher oil prices while interest rates would likely creep higher as well.

Notably, Craig expected Ontario's growth to outpace that of Canada both this year and next with above-average growth rates forecasted in each year. Stronger U.S. growth would be particularly beneficial for Ontario, as would immigration. Meanwhile, the province's manufacturers and consumers would receive a nice boost from lower oil prices while the housing market would remain healthy, with no crash in sight.

Continued on Page 2







Katherine Jacobs – OCS Director of Research and Operations – was next on the docket to deliver the 2015 outlook for the industrial, commercial and institutional construction markets as captured by the 2015 *Survey of Ontario's ICI Construction In-dustry*. The 500 contractors polled for the survey felt that 2015 would be a good year for the industry, led by the high-rise residential and commercial markets, with firms in the GTA being the most likely to expect more work. Contractors expressed concerns about labour supply and the underground economy and expected lower input costs on account of falling oil prices. Katherine's own expectations were that industrial and institutional investment would trend higher in 2015, while commercial investment would have a tougher time increasing.

The presentations concluded with a panel examining Ontario's manufacturing sector. Antony Lorius, Vice President of Real Estate for Deloitte, and widely-respective automotive industry analyst Dennis DesRosiers talked about manufacturing in the province. Antony anticipated that there would be improved opportunities for manufacturers through increased exports,

particularly to high-growth emerging markets. Meanwhile, Dennis noted that Canadian automotive sales would trend higher through 2018 – though not markedly so – thanks to replacement demand and pent-up demand from the recession. This would benefit Canadian auto producers, who would see higher levels of output through 2018 as well as parts suppliers.







However, he felt that higher production and sales wouldn't necessarily translate into increased capital investments because of intense foreign competition, particularly from Mexico. Growth in Mexican automotive production is likely to far outstrip that of Canada, going forward.

Overall, the conference was a resounding success, with delegates finding it to be insightful and filled with timely content. Next year's conference will be held on March 8<sup>th</sup>,2016.





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(L to R) Sean Strickland (OCS Chief Executive Officer), MPP Kevin Flynn, and Craig Wright (Senior Vice President & Chief Economist of RBC)

Photography courtesy of Janis Rees / Kaleidoscope Photography for 2015 State of the Industry & Outlook Conference

#### Future Building 2015 - Toronto, Ontario

## Eye on the Future: Future Building 2015



he OCS held its very popular *Future Building* career exposition on April 14-16<sup>th</sup> at Exhibition Place in Toronto. Through hands-on, interactive exhibits hosted by industry stakeholders, the event provided an engaging way to learn about the construction trades. Attendees, for example, laid some brick or even cut some wood under the supervision of unionized skilled tradespeople. About 10,000 participants - mostly students - registered for the unique three-day event.

Overall, 27 different exhibitors participated, including representatives from the owner, contractor, and labour communities. Notably, exhibitors from the Women of the Building Trades organization as well as the Canadian Association of Women in Construction participated in the event in order to show that a career in construction can be just as interesting and rewarding for women as it can be for men.

Seminars were held by various exhibitors to provide an in-depth look at a trade and to answer questions about apprenticeship and training.

*Future Building 2015* also attracted significant political and media attention. Liz Sandals, Minister of Education, Reza Moridi, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and Kevin Flynn, Minster of Labour, were all on-hand to deliver opening remarks and try out some of the interactive booths. On the media front, the show generated 5.14 million media impressions (i.e. the number of people reached directly or indirectly) with hits on



TV, radio, print and online. Especially notable was the TV spot on CTV News' Canada AM national broadcast and the print coverage in the Globe and Mail's business section.

Overall, *Future Building* was very informative and stimulating for all attendees, with one educator noting that her "students loved the interactive displays. All [her] students experienced a real eye-opener as to what their future may hold".





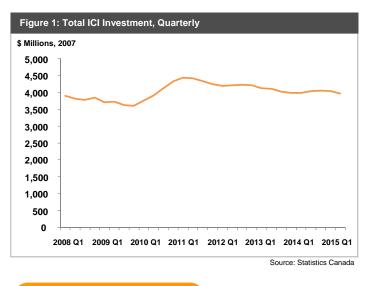
Photography courtesy of Janis Rees / Kaleidoscope Photography, Ryan Isojima / OCS, and Melissa Matheson / The Idealab for Future Building 2015

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# **CURRENT ANALYSIS AND NEAR TERM OUTLOOK:** TRENDS IN INVESTMENT AND BUILDING PERMITS

## **Total ICI Market**

ver Jan-March 2015, seasonally adjusted, constant dollar ICI investment dropped 1.8% versus the prior quarter, weighed on by commercial investment. As expected, both industrial and institutional investment crept higher in the first quarter. The level of investment came in a hair below \$4 billion in Q1 – its lowest level since 2010. Longer-term, the trend since 2011 has been negative, as the ICI market was first burdened by declining institutional investment, but now commercial investment has started to cool.



## **Industrial Market**

## **Current Trends**

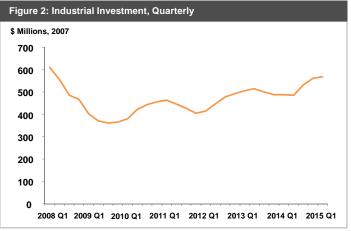
Despite the colder-than-normal weather that prevailed during Q1, industrial investment managed a 1% gain versus the prior quarter and came in at \$570 million – the highest level since the beginning of 2008. This was despite both manufacturing sales and exports – strong correlates of industrial investment – slumping in the first quarter.

The first-quarter gain is consistent with upward trending industrial capacity utilization and higher building permit issuance in the latter part of 2014. On a year-over-year basis, industrial investment was up a meaty 17% - the strongest such gain in over 2 years. Regionally, the quarterly increase was fairly broad-based with 9 of 15 CMAs (Census Metropolitan Areas) higher in Q1, led by Toronto, Ottawa and Sudbury. In Toronto, analysts have noted that there is currently 5.3 million square feet of industrial and logistics space currently under construction, most of which is in the western part of the city. Despite a solid first-quarter gain in Ottawa, the level of investment has been range-bound since 2011 and it's worth noting that the industrial market is a small piece of the ICI pie. Meanwhile in Sudbury, the quarterly value of industrial building expenditures was at its highest level since 1999 in a continuation of an upward trend in place since the middle of 2014.

On the other end of the spectrum, industrial investment was weighed on the most by London, St. Catharines-Niagara and Peterborough. London experienced its slowest quarter for industrial investment since 2001. In St. Catharines-Niagara and Peterborough, investment declined in the first quarter from the one prior though the level of expenditures in both CMAs remained well-above their year-ago figures.

## **Future View**

Building permits – which are a leading indicator of construction – are portending continued growth in industrial investment in coming quarters as their value advanced 45% year-over-year in the first three months of 2015. Building intentions were sharply higher for transportation and utilities buildings, but also increased for factories and mining and agricultural buildings. As permits increased for all major industrial building types, any potential future increase in industrial investment may be broadbased.



#### **Commercial Market**

#### **Current Trends**

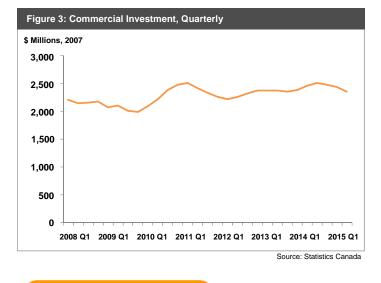
Over Jan-March 2015, commercial investment dropped 3.7% (q/q) to \$2.3 billion, with revised data showing a third straight quarterly decline (prior information had pegged investment as falling in only one quarter last year). While no-one would claim that commercial capital spending is in free-fall (see Figure 3) it's worth noting that it was below both its year-ago level and its 3 and 5-year averages. This suggests that the market is easing and with a lengthy positive run, upward trending vacancy rates and lower permit issuance in 2014, this is perhaps not a surprise.

Ottawa, Toronto and Kitchener contributed most to the quarterly decline, consistent with either increasing (in the case of Ottawa and Toronto), or elevated (Kitchener) office vacancy rates. It's important to note that the level of investment remained above-average in Toronto and Ottawa, despite the drop. Such wasn't the case in Kitchener however as investment in the CMA sunk to its lowest quarterly level since 2000 in the first three months of the year.

In terms of other markets, investment was higher quarter-overquarter but below average in Brantford, Hamilton, London, Kingston and Windsor. It was lower in Sudbury, Guelph, Peterborough and Thunder Bay.

#### **Future View**

Building permits are pointing to further moderation, but not collapse, in the commercial market in coming quarters. The value of building intentions dropped 22% year-over-year in the first quarter to \$1.2 billion – a touch on the low side but nothing that would signal high alert. Permit values were lower for recreation buildings and hotels and restaurants but were higher for office buildings and warehouses. They also fell for retail buildings, though there has been some positive news coming out of the retail sector as the Loblaws supermarket chain has announced a \$1.2 billion investment in its stores across the country while Walmart has announced it will spend \$350 million on an expansion project, which involves gobbling up existing space left by Target's exit from Canada. Lowe's and Canadian Tire have also bought pieces of what was formerly Target's retail space.



#### **Institutional Market**

#### **Current Analysis**

In the first quarter of 2015, institutional investment advanced 1% to just over \$1 billion. While not terribly strong, the quarterly gain was actually the largest since the stimulus program ended. Meanwhile, the level of investment was a touch higher than its year ago level for the first time in over three years. These trends suggest that the institutional market has bottomed out and is now on the upswing.

The first quarter gain in institutional investment was narrowlybased, with only 6 of 15 CMAs higher. Notable increases occurred in Toronto (St. Michael's Hospital), Ottawa (University of Ottawa Heart Institute), Kingston (Providence Care Hospital) and Kitchener (Cambridge Memorial Hospital). Since mid-2014 - when institutional investment ceased its decline in earnest – it's really been the latter two CMAs which have propped it up.

On the flip side, the largest negative contributions belonged to Windsor, St. Catharines-Niagara, Thunder Bay, and Oshawa as there was a well below average level of investment in each.

#### **Future View**

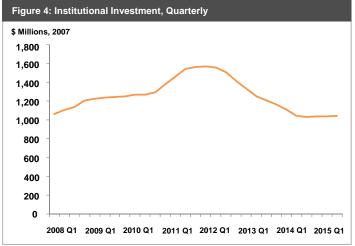
Building permits are a particularly strong predictor of upcoming institutional investment trends and unfortunately they started the year on a very slow footing, falling 50% year-over-year in

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the first quarter to a modest \$330 million. The decline was broad-based across building types, with permitting for schools, hospitals, long-term care facilities and religious buildings all lower. Conversely, issuance was higher for government buildings.

It's important to note that current-year permits are a better predictor of investment trends in the upcoming year. This means that if the weakness in institutional permit issuance were to persist, the consequences would likely show up in 2016. Investment activity in 2015 is still likely to increase, given strong permitting last year.



#### Source: Statistics Canada

#### **Bottom Line**

To start 2015, total ICI investment was lower, weighed on by declining commercial investment as the market appears to be easing somewhat. As anticipated, industrial and institutional investment trended higher with Toronto and Ottawa doing the heavy lifting in the former and Kitchener and Kingston boosting the latter. Building permit trends point to continued growth in the industrial market and further moderation in the commercial sector. Weak institutional building intentions raises the risk that investment could be subdued in 2016, though it looks like it may grind higher this year.

Table 1: Ontario ICI Building Investment, First Quarter Summary Table				
Sector	Jan-Mar Value	versus fourth quarter of 2014	versus first quarter of 2014	Comments
Industrial	\$570 million	1% higher	17% higher	highest level since beginning of 2008
Commercial	\$2.4 billion	4% lower	4% lower	Lower level than 3 and 5 year averages
Institutional	\$1.0 billion	1% higher	<1% higher	Largest quarterly increase since stimulus years
Total ICI	\$4.0 billion	2% lower	<1% lower	Lowest quarterly level since 2010



# **ONTARIO REGIONAL PERMITS UPDATE**



## **NORTHERN** ONTARIO

In the first quarter of 2015, industrial permit issuance trended higher than its year-ago level. At \$20 million, the value of permits was above the "typical" first quarter amount.

Northeastern Ontario (which counts Sudbury as its largest city) was entirely responsible for increase, suggesting that industrial investment could trend higher in the next few quarters. Notably, investment in Sudbury has moved higher for the past nine months.

Although lower year-over-year, the level of first quarter commercial permit issuance was about average for the region. Falling permit activity in Northeastern Ontario was partially countered by an increase in Northwestern Ontario, which received a lift from commercial alteration work. Longer-term, commercial permits have had a fairly healthy upward trend, reflective of a growing market.

Permit Values - January to March - 2015			
Sector	Value (in 000s)	% Change	
Industrial	\$19,570	105.2%	
Commercial	\$28,176	-15.2%	
Institutional	\$14,044	-71.1%	
Total ICI	\$61,790	-32.4%	
		Source: StatsCan	

Over Jan-Mar, institutional building intentions slumped to their second lowest Q1 level in 15 years, thereby furthering the downward trend in-place since 2014. Northwestern Ontario was the chief reason for the modest level of investment as there was less than \$1 million worth of permits issued. This suggests that institutional investment will be extremely modest in Northwestern Ontario.



## **EASTERN** ONTARIO

In the first quarter, a mere \$9.8 million worth of industrial permits were issued in Eastern Ontario, the lowest since 2002. Over Jan-Mar, permits sagged 50% below their year-

ago levels in both Ottawa and Kingston-Pembroke. Although permit issuance is subdued, the Napanee Generating Station (slated to begin this year) and the Confederation Line LRT (underway) are painting a brighter picture of market activity.

Permit Values - January to March - 2015 Sector Value (in 000s) % Change -53.7% Industrial \$9,812 Commercial \$135,368 -38.3% Institutional \$76.398 -80.1% Total ICI \$221,578 -64.5% OstateC

Commercial permit values dropped to their lowest first-quarter level since 2005, suggesting that commercial investment may be lower in the next few quarters. Issuance was lower in Kingston-Pembroke and Ottawa, with the latter being consistent with upward trending office vacancy rates.

Although institutional permit issuance was lower year-over-year in the first quarter of 2015, the drop represented an unwind from the massive 2014 level related to the Providence Care Hospital. The value of institutional permits through March of this year is actually fairly healthy for the region and portends a solid level of investment. Major institutional projects underway include the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, the aforementioned Providence Care Hospital in Kingston and the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital.



## **GTA** ONTARIO

First quarter industrial permit issuance increased year-overyear to sit at \$170 million – an above-average level. This is consistent with upward trending capacity utilization and sug-

gests that industrial building construction may remain solid over the next few quarters. Notably, industrial investment was up 30% year-over-year in the first quarter in the Toronto region. Longer-term, analysts expect construction of industrial space to occur outside of the core, particularly in York Region.

Commercial building intentions eased in the first quarter of 2015 from their record year-ago level but remained solid at \$818 million. Such is consistent with low, but upward trending office vacancy rates. Commercial investment has also begun to cool, having dipped slightly for two-straight quarters. Taken

Permit Values - January to March - 2015 Sector Value (in 000s) % Change Industrial \$171,473 37.6% Commercial \$817,757 -18.9% Institutional \$105,379 -6.4% Total ICI \$1,094,609 -12.2% Source: StatsCa

together, these indicators describe a market which is still healthy, but may have hit a near-term peak.

Institutional permit issuance dropped to its lowest first-quarter level since 1999 through March of this year. Combined with the low amount of building intentions in 2014, this suggests that the level of investment may be subdued, at least in the near-term. Indeed, first quarter investment, though higher, was well-below the historical average.

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# ONTARIO REGIONAL PERMITS UPDATE

Permit Values - January to March - 2015			
Sector	Value (in 000s)	% Change	
Industrial	\$112,120	94.2%	
Commercial	\$199,290	-19.8%	
Institutional	\$66,606	-24.3%	
Total ICI	\$378,016	-4.1%	
		Source: StatsCan	

## **CENTRAL** ONTARIO

In Q1, the value of **industrial** building permits jumped 94% year-over-year to their highest level since 2011. The primary driver of the gain was the Hamilton-Niagara region, partly thanks to permitting for a Metrolinx storage facility in Hamilton.

Increases also occurred in both Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie (KWB) and Muskoka -Kawarthas (MK). The increase in permitting in KWB builds on last year's gain and is encouraging as the market had been dropping for 2 years prior.

Over Jan-Mar, the value of commercial permits issued was the lowest since 2007. Building intentions were primarily weighed on by Hamilton-Niagara as the region is unwinding from the boost received from Pan-Am related construction (recreational buildings are recorded as commercial by Statistics Canada).

Issuance was muted in KWB, particularly Waterloo Region. Permit values were also low in MK.

Institutional building intentions started the year off on a slow footing, coming in at just \$67 million. KWB weighed on permit issuance the most as it continued to unwind from the boost provided by the Cambridge Memorial Hospital project, which is underway. In Hamilton-Niagara, permit values were low, signalling that institutional investment could remain modest going forward. Issuance was low in MK as well.

Permit Values - January to March - 2015			
Sector	Value (in 000s)	% Change	
Industrial	\$79,871	37.9%	
Commercial	\$68,805	-32.4%	
Institutional	\$65,119	31.1%	
Total ICI	\$213,795	2.1%	
		Source: StatsCan	

## **SOUTHWESTERN** ONTARIO

In the first quarter, the value of industrial permits was 40% higher than its year ago level, coming in at an aboveaverage \$80 million. The big driver of the gain was Windsor -Sarnia, thanks to work at the Windsor Airport and construc-

tion related to the \$2 billion Chrysler plant retool. In London, the value of building intentions was below-average, raising the risk of subdued construction going forward. Permit issuance was lower year-over-year in Stratford-Bruce.

Commercial permit issuance trended lower year-over-year to sit at a modest \$69 million in the first quarter. Permits were weighed down by Windsor-Sarnia and Stratford-Bruce but increased in London. Low permit issuance, modest the market is soft

investment and elevated commercial vacancy rates all indicate that the market is soft.

The value of institutional permits climbed higher year-over-year in the first quarter, though were still low at \$65 million. Permits were higher year-over-year in London and Stratford Bruce, but lower in Windsor-Sarnia. Going forward, major projects in the pipeline include work at Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital and at St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital.

TOP CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS STARTED - JANUARY TO MARCH 2015			
PROJECT	CITY	VALUE	
Chrysler Plant Retool	Windsor	\$2B	
Napanee Generating Station (site preparation)	Napanee	\$1.2B	
St. Michael's Hospital	Toronto	\$301M	
Grand Bend Windfarm	Grand Bend	\$220M	
Cedar Point Phase 2 Windfarm	Forest	\$210M	
Yellow Falls Hydroelectric Project	Cochrane District	\$64M	
Brasun Plaza	Brampton	\$62M	
Ottawa Art Court Complex - Phase 1	Ottawa	\$57M	
New Post Creek Generating Station	Cochrane District	\$50M	
Freight-Rail Ugrade / Rehabilitation Program	Vaughan	\$48M	

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Source: CMD Group, Industrial Info Resources

# **OCS RESEARCH UPDATE:** EXAMINING APPRENTICESHIP AND SAFETY



## My Trades Journey: Who Registers, Who Completes, Who Quits, and Why

pprenticeship completions have been a thorny issue for quite some time. Indeed, the latest provincial budget highlighted the fact that while apprenticeship registrations have increased handily over time, completions have lagged. Completions are important because they result in better labour market outcomes for apprentices, like higher wage rates and increased work opportunities.

OCS is cognizant of this issue and is working hard to understand it. In 2013 OCS released a study documenting the commitment that the unionized industry has made to apprenticeship training. We have partnered with Employment Ontario, Carleton University, and IPSOS-REID to follow a large cohort of apprentices over the next 7 years in order to:

- develop a detailed and reliable measure of completion rates by trade
- develop a broader understanding of apprentices' experience and behaviours with their apprenticeship in order to identify triggers to completing or non-completing
- provide actionable recommendations that aim to improve apprenticeship programs and increase completion rates in Ontario.

When completed, this one-of-a-kind study will provide a wealth of apprenticeship information for analysts, industry stakeholders, training centres, and policy-makers. However, to complete it, OCS needs the assistance of those in the industry. We need our stakeholders to strongly encourage their apprentices to participate in the study. This can be done a variety of ways including:

- Directing apprentices to the study's website: www.mytradesjourney.ca
- Posting the link on industry websites or social media accounts
- Talking about the website and study at various meetings to raise awareness

"This one-of-a-kind study will provide a wealth of apprenticeship information for analysts, industry stakeholders, training centres, and policy-makers"

Apprentices are encouraged to participate in the survey by the opportunity to win some great prizes. All they have to do is log onto the website, create an account and answer some questions. Should you have any questions or wish to participate in the study, please don't hesitate to contact Katherine Jacobs – OCS Director of Research and Operations. We look forward to working with you on this important initiative.

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# Are Union or Non-union Firms Safer?

t goes without saying that ensuring the construction workplace is as safe as possible is one of the most important responsibilities facing the industry. Indeed, making sure that employees return home safe and sound after a hard day's work should be top of mind for owners, government officials, contractors and labour. For its part, Ontario is doing a good job in safeguarding its construction workplaces. The Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada reports that there were 4,752 accepted lost-time-injuries (ALTI) in Ontario's construction industry in 2013. Using data from Statistics Canada, that works out to 0.01 ALTI's per worker, which is below the comparable Canadian figure. However, we can always do better.

> "The unionized ICI industry invests over \$40 million each year in health, skills upgrading, safety and apprenticeship training"

There are good reasons to assume that unionized contractors and workers are safer than their non-union counterparts, including the fact that the unionized ICI industry invests over \$40 million each year in health, skills upgrading, safety and apprenticeship training. However, there has been limited high-quality, objective, scientific research and analysis on this topic – leaving it open to discussion and debate.

To close this gap and answer the question of whether there is a union safety effect, OCS has partnered with the Institute for Work and Health (IWH) on a ground-breaking study examining union and non-union safety outcomes. The study utilizes scientific, objective techniques with WSIB data to arrive at the answer. For reference, the IWH is an independent, not-for-profit research organization which has been described as one of the top five occupational health and safety research centres in the world.

Phase 1 of the research contrasted union and non-union contractors' safety outcomes and the results are in. According to the research, unionized contractors are safer across a variety of realms. For example:

- Union contractors have 14% fewer lost-time-injuries than non-union firms
- Musculoskeletal claim rates are lower by 8%
- Claim rates for critical injuries are 29% lower

These results are controlled for firm size and incorporates data from over 40,000 firms across all trade groups, meaning that sample issues don't bias the results. A full report describing this exciting research will be available in the coming months.

Now that we know that unionized firms are safer, the question becomes "why"? Phase 2 of the study involves digging into the industry to understand why unionized companies have a significantly better safety track record. To answer this question, OCS will continue to work with the IWH who will survey ICI construction firms to better understand why their policies and procedures lead to such positive safety outcomes.

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND OTHER UPCOMING CONFERENCES & INDUSTY EVENTS: www.iciconstruction.com

# **MARK THESE IMPORTANT DATES IN YOUR CALENDAR FOR 2015**



OCS AGM 2015 will take place at the Tripartite Conference - Sept 23

FOR MORE INFO ON THESE EVENTS, PLEASE EMAIL US AT: INFO@ICICONSTRUCTION.COM

For any inquiries related to the EYE on ICI NEWSLETTER or to inquire about content submissions, please contact Rishi Sondhi at: rishis@iciconstruction.com





180 Attwell Dr., Suite 360, Toronto, ON, M9W 6A9 T 416.620.5210 | F 416.620.5310 | TOLL FREE 1.888.878.8868 QUESTIONS/INQUIRIES, PLEASE EMAIL: info@iciconstruction.com

## www.iciconstruction.com

