



John O'Connor

John O'Connor was only just getting started in his engineering career when the Deputy Minister of the day called him into his office and told him about a large healthcare project about to get started and that he was reassigning O'Connor to the project, starting his career on healthcare projects. "Given the large, complex project I was assigned, I had the privilege of working with many of the most experienced and competent people in the industry. That experience is invaluable and gave me a big start into the design and construction field, ultimately influencing my future in the industry," says O'Connor.

O'Connor started working in the construction industry during his summers while studying engineering, working in Alberta on building construction and in Nova Scotia on highway construction. Upon graduating in 1981 in Civil Engineering from the Technical University of Nova Scotia (now known as the Faculty of Engineering of Dalhousie University), his first job was project manager on building projects for the Province of Nova Scotia.

Starting on smaller building maintenance and alterations work, he then pivoted on to larger capital projects. From 1984 to 1996, O'Connor oversaw many hospital projects, including the Veterans Memorial Building at Camp Hill, the new Halifax Infirmary and Cape Breton Regional.

"During that period of my career, I spent the majority of my time working out of site offices, giving me opportunities to get to know many people and companies working in the construction industry," says O'Connor. "Fast forward to today and I've come full circle. As the VP of a new division with Nova Scotia Lands, I'm overseeing the redevelopment of the QEII and Cape Breton healthcare facilities, so a lot of memories are coming back that give me insight into bridging history between what we know then and what we know now in building today."

From 1996 to 2008, O'Connor worked as a Director of Engineering, Design and Construction with the Province of Nova Scotia and was responsible for Transportation and building projects delivery. This period provided him with many opportunities to work closely with industry associations, especially the Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS), connecting the way the Province and the industry do business, policy development, and procurement approaches.

From 2008 onwards, O'Connor worked as an executive director with the Province, with additional areas of responsibilities but remained the primary contact between the Province and CANS.

Recognizing that the world and the way we work in it is constantly changing, O'Connor thinks that the biggest challenges the industry faces is related to our working environment in the face of a global pandemic.

"There have always been increasing challenges around changing technologies, increased safety and regulatory demands, etc., but the impact from COVID-19 may be our biggest challenge yet," says O'Connor. "It is more important now than ever for industry to adapt in order to achieve future success in the industry."

Knowing that teamwork is the foundation of success, O'Connor has a deep understanding and appreciation for people working together to make projects and big things happen – something he's seen throughout his career. "There is a lot of value in people working together to create a healthy industry and build great projects," O'Connor shares. "For example, the Province needs the industry to build its projects, and the industry needs the Province for a significant share of the work. The industry thrives as a whole through a collaborative approach."

It is through this teamwork approach and putting in the time and effort to earn respect and recognition, that O'Connor chooses to lead. Something he often tells younger people, including his own children, is that hard work, dedication and perseverance pays off, even if it isn't obvious to you at the time. Says O'Connor, "I like to lead by example. I work hard, work fairly, treat people with respect, and create a positive work environment focused on results that we all can be proud of."

"Working in the construction industry is a very fulfilling career and I enjoy working with a lot of like-minded people that are well intended and proud of what they do," says O'Connor. "There is nothing more rewarding than driving around Nova Scotia and looking at the many infrastructure projects and thinking, 'I remember when we did that project' and thinking of the many companies and people that had a role in making it happen."

John O'Connor is the Vice President of the Healthcare Infrastructure Projects Division at Nova Scotia Lands. He served on CANS Board of Directors for many years and was and continues to be a strong voice and advocate for the construction industry. On behalf of CANS' Board of Directors, staff, members and volunteers, we celebrate John O'Connor as CANS 2020 Honourary Life Member.

Tim Jones



Tim Jones knew when he was 17 years old that sitting in a traditional classroom setting wasn't for him – a career in electrical construction seemed like the perfect fit. In 1979, Jones enrolled in the two-year electrical construction program at the Annapolis Regional Vocational School in Middleton (now known as the Nova Scotia Community College's Annapolis Valley Campus). After graduating from the program, Jones worked for two years in Western Canada and in 1984 returned to the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia to complete his apprenticeship.

Upon completion of his electrical construction apprenticeship, Jones moved to the Halifax area and continued to work in his trade until the Spring of 1990. This was a pivotal time in his career – Jones chose to decline an international offer to an exciting new course to pursue his own company.

"My wife and I wanted to call Nova Scotia home, even though her family lived in British Columbia. Our first son was two at the time and we went on to raise three children," says Jones. "I had a slow start building my own business that began at our kitchen table. After hard work and opportunities from my clients, we started to pursue a niche market in the energy sector." Over the next decade, Jones advanced his education to build his knowledge of the market and fuel his passion.

There have been many take-aways from owning his own business, but Jones says that "doing what you said you'd do, when you said you'd do it, and doing it well," is the best approach in any construction career or project. "I realized early on that it wasn't about if we could do the job cheaper than everyone else – it was about doing the job right." Continues Jones, "The company needs to make money to thrive but by using this approach, you're better able to attract not only the best clients, but also top employees."

It is through this approach that Jones chooses to lead his team. "Treat your employees as you would want to be treated – be clear, honest, caring and understanding." Continues Jones, "Each employee is unique and has different needs that take consideration and deserve attention and action."

"If I could give advice to those thinking of beginning a career in construction or already established in their field, I would say in order to succeed and be a great employee, you need to work hard for what you want and show up." Continues Jones, "With the right attitude, you will learn and thrive in what I still believe to be the most rewarding career ever."

Jones has always been involved in the communities around him. Over the last 30 years of his career, he's volunteered in many organizations. In the late 1980s, Jones volunteered with Search and Rescue in Waverly. He eventually moved into a position

as a volunteer firefighter in Lower Sackville and Fall River – something that would span a 14-year period. He rose through the firefighting ranks from a Class 1 Firefighter to Lieutenant and finally Captain. Jones also served as an operator and was involved with fire prevention and earned a level three fire investigation during this time.

In relation to his career in construction, Jones says he had the honour of sitting on many Board of Directors' within the industry. These include the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, the Nova Scotia Community College, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency / the Compliance and Enforcement Advisory Group, the Nova Scotia Electrical Contractors Association, ITCE working group, the Construction Association of Nova Scotia's electrical division (when it existed), and he served on the review committee for the Red Seal Occupational Standards. Jones was also a board member for Merit Nova Scotia for many years and served as their Board Chair from 2012-2013. In addition, Jones was on the board for the International Association of Electrical Inspectors – Nova Scotia chapter for several years and served as Board Chair for two years. Finally, and because of his commitment to bettering his community, he volunteered his electrical knowledge by wiring homes and donating company resources to Habitat for Humanity.

Jones was asked what he sees as the biggest challenge facing the construction industry. "Despite the ever-changing challenges facing construction including climate change, free trade, skilled labour, compliance, pandemics, and the economy, the best opportunities lie with energy and how we produce and use it with the help from future technologies. Wind, solar, hydroelectricity, plug in electric vehicles, to name a few, have come a long way but much more can and will be done." Jones concludes, "Most of these existing and new technologies will have some sort of a tie to construction. I believe the companies that stay and grow along with advancing technologies will thrive in the future."

Tim Jones is the Founder and Co-owner of TJ Electric, a full-service electrical company providing estimates, design, procurement, installation and service. On behalf of CANS' Board of Directors, staff, members and volunteers, we celebrate Tim Jones as CANS 2020 Honourary Life Member.