

# CANS 2022 HONOURARY LIFE MEMBER



## Royce Williston

Higgins Construction, Division of Lindsay Construction  
CANS 2022 Honourary Life Member

Royce Williston's decades-long career in industry began in 1984 after graduating from the civil engineering program at TUNS (now known as Dal Tech). From there, Williston went west for a few years returning to work for Higgins Construction in Trenton, N.S. When the opportunity arose, Williston purchased Higgins Construction, and owned and operated the general contracting company for 25 years. In 2016, Higgins Construction became a member of the Lindsay Construction family, where Williston continued to lead by example, looking after the infrastructure sector in P.E.I, New Brunswick and throughout Nova Scotia. After a successful and rewarding career, Williston is retiring this year.

In his personal life, Williston's generosity and dedication to community and recreation is significant.

He has volunteered with many organizations, serving as chair of Alpine Ski Nova Scotia (ASNS), on the Board of

Freestyle Ski Canada, and volunteering with the 2011 Canada Games hosted in Nova Scotia. Williston has spent significant time volunteering with his community, serving as president of the Little Harbour Community Centre and sat on the Aberdeen Hospital Foundation.

In relation to his career in construction, Williston says he learned a lot by serving on many committees and board of directors, including a term at the Canadian Construction Association as regional vice-president and as past chair of the Construction Association of Nova Scotia's Board of Directors in 2007. He has served on various committees, including standard practices and contracts.

Recognizing that the world and the way we work in it is constantly changing, Williston thinks that one of the biggest opportunities for industry is related to our provinces' growing population.

"It's a part of the industry you don't see driving down the street. Drive around Burnside and you can see lots of stuff being built, or you can drive through Elmsdale and see lots of apartment buildings going up." Williston continues, "The work I did, you rarely saw because it was behind it. It was behind a fence somewhere. That's kind of how we used to describe my sector of the work — projects behind the chain link fence."

Knowing that education is the foundation of success, Williston has a deep appreciation for the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and attributes that to the future of the province. Williston says, "The construction industry is in good shape. I see a lot of really good talent coming out of the Community College. And that's why Nova Scotia has been able to take on the current workload of construction in the province." Williston continues, "A lot of that work is being delivered by Nova Scotians and I think it's a result of the education within those programs."

Acting as a steward for construction, Williston has given back by supporting the Higgins Construction Award for many years, helping to launch the careers of many tradespeople in our industry. This bursary is designated for northeastern Nova Scotian students who are enrolled in the technology or construction management programs at NSCC.

The CANS Building Futures program was established during Williston's tenure on the CANS board. "I used to say, if we don't get these very smart individuals into our industry, some other industry is going to get them." Williston continues, "And if they don't become technologists, carpenters, or masons, they're going to go into a different industry. The Building Futures for Youth program is a terrific opportunity to find that talent early and to direct them into the construction industry."

There have been many take-aways from owning his own business, but Williston says that some of the best advice he's received came from his mentor, Scott Weeks. "He had taught me to not hire a labourer to be a labourer. Hire a labourer to be a foreman. And that was always the way he worked. He taught me to hire people and give them responsibility and if they could perform that responsibility, grow them to grow the company. Grow people and always give them the opportunity for advancement."

It is through this approach that Williston chose to lead his team.

**" I loved to hire people that I knew had the capability to learn. And then I would spend time teaching more so than managing. "**

Williston says, "I gave people responsibilities and jobs and let them go and do their role. I always had said if you have any questions, come back and I can certainly teach you and educate you. I had a lot of fun training people to see them perform at their best, to see people advance."

"If I could give advice to those thinking of beginning a career in construction or already established in their field, I would say, certainly go for it. Work in the industry, but a piece of advice – get educated and get involved."

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