

CLIENT-FOCUSED SERVICE

BY CHERYL MAH

The new St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver



Roger Steers has been practicing structural engineering in B.C. for almost three decades, and is a well recognized expert in the evaluation, restoration and repair of structures.

Recently appointed as executive principal of RJC Engineers, Steers has been involved in restoring many parking structures in Western Canada.

"There was the old Woodward's Cordova Street parkade, work for the City of Vancouver and lots of parking structure work for mall owners including Oakridge, Metrotown and Pacific Centre," he says.

Steers has watched the firm grow its services from structural and parking restoration, post tensioning and through the leaky condo crisis to building envelope restoration, roofing inspection and more recently energy modeling and air tightness testing.

He says the firm's client-focused approach has been key to success.



“I like to think we’re known for client relationships and the work we do... being trusted advisors with our clients and their projects,” says Steers, who began his career at RJC as a summer student.

After he obtained his degree in structural engineering at the University of Alberta, he joined RJC’s Edmonton office full time. He worked there for five years and earned his Masters in Engineering in 1994.

Then he moved to Vancouver, joining the building sciences and restoration group. He became an associate in 1999 and then principal in 2003. He continued to move up the organization until he was appointed to his current position in 2022.

“When I arrived in Vancouver, we had two offices in B.C. and probably 150-200 people in total. We now have teams that are larger than RJC was 20 years ago and our largest office is Toronto,” says Steers.

Since the company was founded by John Read in 1948, the employee owned engineering firm has diversified and grown to 14 offices and more than 650 people across Canada. There are five offices in B.C. with almost 200 in the Vancouver region.

RJC underwent a governance restructuring in 2021 with Steers assuming the role of executive principal along with Mike Moffatt (Toronto) and Joette Decore (Edmonton) earlier this year.

“We made a profound shift to our governance structure in 2021 — separating our board of



Cordova Street Parkade

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Top: St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church (restoration and upgrade) Bottom: Parkade restoration work



RJC celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2023, a significant milestone that will be recognized throughout the offices.

directors from the executive groups,” explains Steers, who provides strategic and operational leadership for the firm and oversees all of RJC’s technical services. “This new structure allows us to critically look at our strategic plan, and we’re excited about it.”

The new governance structure will focus the firm’s resources, priorities, and programs to deliver on its five year strategic plan called Blueprint 2027.

While Steers is no longer directly involved with projects, his years of experience are relied on for client relationships, front end meetings as well as business development. “I still contribute to various projects that I have history with. I’ve been in and out of almost every building in Vancouver and still have connections across the country.”

As one of Canada’s largest consulting engineering firms, RJC’s portfolio includes many notable projects including the Vancouver Central Library, Canada Place, Vancouver Centre, TD tower and the restoration and upgrading of St. Andrew’s-Wesley United Church.

Current projects for the firm include the new St. Paul’s Hospital, the largest hospital redevelopment project in B.C.’s history; the Oakridge Centre redevelopment and Vancouver Centre II. In Toronto, RJC is working on The One — 1 Bloor Street West, which will be Canada’s tallest building when complete.

“We have a good amount of work with energy modelling and air tightness testing. Our building science and restoration now form 50 per cent of what we do,” says Steers.

During the pandemic, RJC had to pivot like everyone else to ensure the safety and health of staff. With construction deemed an essential service, projects were able to continue.

“A few sites were shut down but in some cases, we saw acceleration of work. With the restrictions and buildings empty, it was an opportunity for some, like schools and offices, to undertake work earlier than planned,” says Steers. “In general, we saw strong performance through the pandemic with existing and new building projects.”

He feels the outlook for the industry is positive despite a still volatile market. “There is a lot of work. The focus on sustainability through the B.C. Energy Step Code here and the importance of carbon reduction across the country is only going to grow and will fuel the need for services like ours.”

Steers also plays an active role in the industry and community, serving on boards and associations. He was chair of the BC Children’s Hospital Foundation Real Estate and Development Committee for almost six years. He chairs the sponsorship committee of BOMA BC, and sits on the board of directors, Surrey Board of Trade. In 2020 he was named Surrey’s Business Person of the Year.

Most notably, he is champion of RJC’s Ride teams, which have raised more than \$2 million for cancer foundations. For more than a decade Team RJC has rode in various cancer rides across Canada.

“I rode in my 18th Tour de Cure this year, known previously as the Ride to Conquer Cancer,” says Steers. “And it’s not only our staff — we have clients, contractors and other industry people who want to participate in this important cause and be part of what we do.”

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“Our new governance structure is generating a whole new excitement as we look into where we’re at 75 years and beyond,” says Steers. “We’ve accomplished a lot and we want to continue building our strong relationships with clients and staff.” **CB**