

Five forces drive why barndominiums here to stay

Choosing barndominiums over conventional buildings solves a problem that a conventional home never could

BY JOHN MINER, *Ontario Farmer*

Stratford - The single biggest growth opportunity in the rural construction market right now are barndominiums, builders attending the Canadian Farm Builders Association were told.

“If we don’t pay close attention to this market we are leaving work and money on the table,” said Steve Schouten, CEO and founder of Remuda Building and Supplies.

Headquartered in Rocky View County, Alberta, Schouten’s company has been building post-frame buildings in Western Canada since 2014.

The construction method is ideal for meeting the growing demand for barndominiums, he said.

Schouten defined barndominiums as a multi-use building that has living space, shop space or storage and workshop under one roof, essentially a shop with a home, or a home with a shop attached.

People that are choosing barndominiums over conventional buildings are selecting it because it solves a problem that a conventional home never could, he said.

“They need to park gear, outdoor equipment, they need workspace, they need storage for the things that come with a rural and acreage life, and they want all that connected, functional, secure under one roof with a real home attached to it.”

“Barndominiums did not emerge because someone thought they would be trendy, they emerged because people on acreages needed space for life, work and equipment under one roof.”

There are five forces driving the demand for barndominiums, Schouten said.

One is rural migration and acreage living. Many people are leaving cities for acreages and rural properties.

“They want the space, the rural space.”

Remote work is another.

When your office is your home you want your home to have more than a spare bedroom, you want a work space that actually works - shop, studio, real office with storage.

“People who move to acreages, and increasingly waterfront and recreational properties, move because they have equipment, animals, and gear that comes with an outdoor life. They need serious storage, not a double garage.” Their outdoor lifestyles come with snowmobiles, ATVs, RVs, boats, and horses.

Barndominiums are also the answer for home-based businesses such as contractors, welders, mechanics, and fabricators. People running trades from their property need a shop and office all in one space.

Intergenerational living is a fifth driver of barndominiums.

It is becoming very common to have parents on one side, adult children on the other and shared space in the middle. One property, one tax bill, families living on one property being close, but having separation, sharing the costs and efforts of maintaining an acreage.

Schouten said the customer for that exists right across Canada and the United States. He recently served as a judge for the NFBA — the National Frame Building Association — for their annual Building of the Year Awards.

“When you sit down and evaluate that many buildings at that level, you start to see just how far post frame has come. We’re not talking about basic ag storage anymore — although those entries were impressive in their own right. We’re talking about stunning barndominiums, high-end commercial retail spaces, professional equestrian facilities, custom residential builds. The range and the quality across those 30 categories genuinely impressed me.”

Demographics is working in favour of barndominiums. Rural migration is not reversing, and remote work is not going away.

“Lifestyle acreages are a growing segment of the real estate market in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan. I can only assume it is the same here in Ontario.”



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In building barndominiums, Schouten said his company starts with a lifestyle conversation, not a floor plan.

“Before we talk dimensions we ask how you work, what do you store, where do you park your vehicles, how do you want your shop to connect to your living space, what might you need in 10 years. The conversation shapes everything.”

Schouten said every barndominium his company builds is engineered for a specific site, soil conditions, snow load and wind exposure. The living portion meets residential code.

“If we don’t design it right the customer regrets it and when the customer regrets our buildings the whole industry pays for it.”

One challenge for barndominiums with post-frame construction can be financing as banks classify them as non-standard. Schouten said what has been working for them is financing by credit unions, which tend to be more flexible.

For projects with an agricultural component, Farm Credit Canada could also be a financing option.

“The underlying issue isn’t the building, it is the familiarity. Lenders who haven’t seen a properly engineered post-frame project perceive more risk than actually exists.”

For Schouten, the barndominium opportunity is bigger than any one company — it’s a signal the entire post-frame industry should heed. “Barndominiums aren’t where post frame is going,” he told the CFBA audience. “They’re where post frame already is. The question is whether our industry is ready to meet it professionally.”

Planting early has its limits

BY IAN CUMMING, *Ontario Farmer*

There is a balance to planting corn early enough to reap the benefits, versus being too early where frost combined with flooding can have devastating results if the plant is just above ground.

Allen Wilder from the Miner Institute wrote an April report which cautioned farmers that, “corn can survive a hard freeze reasonably well while the growing point is still underground, but it won’t survive more than a few days underwater if a wet weather pattern sets in.”

The Miner Institute is situated in north east New York, near the Quebec and Vermont border.

Farmers are justifiably pushing for an early as possible planting time, since yields will increase if everything falls into place weather wise, wrote Wilder.

“Early planted corn can benefit significantly from greater day length early on, greater moisture availability during critical growth stages, and a longer total growing season,” he wrote.

If a farmer decides to “mud it” in order to get corn planted early, the corn, “can’t outgrow the sidewall compaction that occurs,” warned Wilder.

“The best practice is to wait until the field is dry enough and the soil temp is expected to be around 50 degrees (F) for a day or two.”

“This reduces the risk of imbibitional chilling injury, where cold water moving onto the seed membranes,” he wrote.

Hybrids vary significantly in their ability to tolerate cold stress conditions, wrote Wilder. Farmers need to be aware of how their particular hybrid rates on a cold / stress germination test, if they plant to plant early.

Wilder also noted that farmers can’t be too early in having the corn planter tuned up and ready to go, when the planting window opens.



Andria Fromanger transplants tomato plants at St Jacob County Gardens & Landscape Nursery (PHOTO BY SHARON GROSE)