


AgTalk helps farmers

AgTalk, an on-line forum for farmers feeling stressed, is proving effective in addressing mental health crises, according to executive director Merle Massie of the parent operation DoMoreAg.

Farmers can access AgTalk without revealing their identity through a service called Togetherall.

The 2025 annual report showed that 73 per cent of people who joined AgTalk are not engaged in formal mental health support, meaning AgTalk is their only outside support. "Thirty-eight per cent of them report past thoughts of suicide or self-harm. These people are not feeling well," she said.

"Eighty per cent reported their mental health as poor or very poor, and 42 per cent said that they shared something on Togetherall that they've never shared with anyone else."




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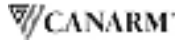



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Production

Ignoring notice requirements can be costly for contractors

Builders are advised to not perform any change in work without a change order or directive in place

BY JOHN MINER, *Ontario Farmer*

Stratford - One way contractors can end up on the losing end of a legal dispute is to make changes during construction without doing the required paperwork, the Canadian Barn Builders Association was told.

"If you really want to lose money or get into a lawsuit, one of the best ways to go is to do the work without a change order or change directive," lawyer Ted Dreyer told the association's recent annual conference.

Chair of the board of directors of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, Dreyer said he appreciates contractors work under time pressures and there is an assumption of good faith on the part of the owner. But he recommends that contractors not to perform any changes in their work without the change order or directive in place.

For a change directive, the parties describe the nature of the change and agree the contract price will be adjusted by the difference in costs between the original and the changed work. The difference in time to complete the work is also part of the directive.

One common mistake contractors and subcontractors make with change directives is that they don't keep adequate records to prove the cost of the additional work.

Dreyer said he has adjudicated cases where the series of time sheets to support a claim just say eight hours, eight hours, and eight hours. What is needed when work is done with a change directive is to set out the time spent on the aspect of the work affected by the change.

"Ideally you would have something other than eight hours because it's not very helpful unless all of that time relates to the work that was changed."

Dreyer said contractors also need to pay particular attention to the required notice periods. It is important to know that the courts interpret these clauses really strictly.

"If you don't give notice at all, if you give notice late, if your notice is unclear, if you give your notice to the wrong person, there's a good chance you're going to lose your claim for increased costs," he said.

In the case of concealed site conditions, such as an old underground storage tank or foundation, the contractor only has five business days pursuant to a standard form CCDC contract to give notice of the unforeseen site conditions to the owner. Missing the deadline means the contractor will likely lose a claim for increased costs arising from the unknown site condition.

For delays caused by mistakes by the owner, consultant or contractor, the required notice period for a claim pursuant to a CCDC 2 standard form general contract is within 10 working days of the onset of the delay. It is the same notice period for Force Majeure events that can include abnormally adverse weather, fires, strikes and lockouts.

What's important with either of these types of delay is that notice is given within 10 workdays of the onset of the delay.

"If you don't, you've got a problem," Dreyer said.

In situations where a contractor intends to claim an increase for a change in the cost of goods, the contract law requires written notice be given in a "timely fashion."

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Ted Dreyer: In the case of concealed site conditions, such as an old underground storage tank or foundation, the contractor only has five business days to give notice to the owner in accordance with a CCDC 2 standard form general contract

