



## News From MTI

Hello Mass Timber Colleagues!

### TimberFever: David Moses on the annual design competition

*David Moses and MTI*

Every year, Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) hosts a wood design-build competition for architecture and engineering students. The event takes place over 3 days, now drawing students from across Canada and the United States to participate. The competition first took place at a local scale in 2015 and returned by popular demand.

It is founded by award-winning structural engineering firm Moses Structural Engineers. They bring a wealth of experience to the design of timber structures, having worked on projects such as the Art Gallery of Ontario Renovation and the Toronto Waterfront Wavedecks. MTI Editor Sanjana Patel spoke with David Moses, the firm principal, on the competition's impact and evolution.



*Entries from TimberFever 2022. Image Credit: Moses Structural Engineers*

Sanjana Patel (SP): Well I'm very excited. I actually participated in this competition a few years ago, so I'm curious to hear your perspective. What drove you to create this competition?

*David Moses (DM): When I visited the World Conference on Timber Engineering in Quebec, I was intrigued by their format because they had a competition tied in with the conference. Inspired by their competition, with their permission, we brought the design-build competition to students in Ontario. The first run of the competition was made for TMU to gauge interest. Then, it opened up to Canada and USA. The unique thing about TimberFever was getting the Carpenters Union Local 27 on board. They were very helpful in terms of providing tools and guidance to the students.*





*Members of the Toronto Carpenters Union Local 27 provide an equipment tutorial at TimberFever 2022. Image Credit: Moses Structural Engineers*

SP: Was it open to other materials in the beginning? Why was it important for this competition to focus on timber construction?

*DM: The focus was wood from the outset. We found that many students in schools were not introduced to wood in their curriculum. I also noticed that many students had never been on a jobsite before, so I wanted to give students the opportunity to work with tools, learn about wood, and introduce collaboration between engineers and architects.*

*We also conduct exit interviews with the students, and most of the reviews and feedback were positive. One comment I hear from the students reflects their new understanding of working with people outside their field of study, "Wow, they really think differently from us don't they?"*

SP: I noticed that too! We learned to collaborate where our processes of responding to the brief were different. Although, I found my teammates and I had the shared experience of not building at full scale too often, making design-build experiences such as this very valuable.

SP: Does the emerging mass timber industry create a part of the push for wood?

*DM: There is more push for sustainable building, and more people are aware of it because of the increase in use and exposure to mass timber. I think that now is an exciting time to be getting into the construction industry in terms of the methods and materials. I hear concern in the industry that there are not enough people in the trades and if there are more people excited about the trades, we will be in a better position moving forward.*

SP: The competition is also supported by judges and mentors. What sort of feedback do you hear from them?

*DM: We are very lucky for their enthusiasm. Many of them are repeat mentors and judges. We try to cycle their roles because they are so helpful as both judges and mentors.*



*Students work with mentors at TimberFever 2022. Image Credit: Moses Structural Engineers*

SP: This year marks the eighth time the competition has run. How has TimberFever evolved over the years?

*DM: I never thought it would evolve, but it has. Aside from the fact that there is a different theme every year, there is always a monumental task that emerges. Every year, the student body organizing team expands. The competition has expanded over the years to more international measure and it takes about one year to do the planning to get to the actual event.*

*At one point we wanted to simplify things, but when COVID hit, we needed to adapt to this as well. During the pandemic, the virtual version of the competition allowed us to push the boundaries of scale as we recreated a fragment of the city virtually for participants to build bridges on. Coming out of COVID, we had to re-learn coming back into meeting in person again.*

*Another example of change is the year it was partially held at U of T due to construction on the TMU campus. This took place in the newly opened architecture building, which came with its own logistics to coordinate as it was the first time the building had hosted an event. Teams from two universities came together.*

SP: Although it seems like a detour, I know this put the competition on the radar for many architecture students at U of T. This is how I found out about it as well. It's interesting to see each change came with an opportunity for a competition which – at the beginning – you didn't think would evolve at all.

*DM: There have been positive surprises along the way. We often look for a second life for the products of this competition. Although it is not the main goal, we are happy to see projects relocated to a variety of places, such as the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), the Interior Design Show (IDS), or to an events company. We are also seeing a great diversity in the competition participants.*

SP: What are some takeaways you would like for the participants of the competition to have?

*DM: I really want everyone involved to have a positive experience. Our company mission statement is "lasting impact" for the buildings we build, the communities they are in, and the events we hold. Hopefully, this event can help give students some more perspective about their education and their careers.*



For more videos and photos from TimberFever2022, check out the [newsletter bonus content](#) our website!

## News from the Institute

### 1. TimberCon Fall 2022

Thank you to all who participated in TimberCon September 2022! Special thanks to [the Architect's Newspaper](#) for co-hosting, Dionne Darling, VP of Brand Partnerships, and the Daniels Faculty's [Dean Juan Du](#) for kicking off the conference. Thank you also to our excellent lineup of speakers including representatives from academia and leading architecture, design, and engineering firms for making this a successful conference.

Case studies examined the changing timber industry in North America, embodied carbon, pathways for innovative construction in the context of the current building codes, new structural design approaches, and engaging local timber traditions. It was wonderful to hear detailed perspectives from across the industry.

We look forward to collaborating with The Architect's Newspaper on the next conference.

### 2. Current Projects Webpage

Want to see what we are up to? Check out our [current projects](#) page!

## Other Updates

- The University of Northern British Columbia will receive a \$132,000 grant to research the resilience of wood-steel hybrid buildings. [See the article](#).

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Mass Timber Institute Website



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