atch Kevin Day away from his busy work world at Morrison Hershfield or the EIFS Council of Canada where he is president and you might find him driving around Toronto looking at construction sites. Learning how things are constructed is an infectious hobby of his. “I like to understand aspects of the construction process that I’m not directly involved in, such as foundations, excavations and that sort of thing.”

You could say his hobby has been pretty much a lifelong thing as he recalls his fascination with building technology going back to his tadpole days in suburban Toronto. “I remember climbing around open frame housing developments and marveling at the technology.”

Today, the 30-something Day is every bit as passionate about buildings and their makeup. And, in his first year of a second consecutive two-year term as president of the EIFS Council, he sees a bright and thriving future for the EIFS indus-

By Don Proctor
try in Canada. After going through frac-
tious times in the 1990s, the industry is
on a good path, supported by an associ-
ation with a vision and a practical agen-
da that he believes will help to “profes-
sionalize the industry”

On the short list of issues he’d like
addressed by the EIFS Council over the
next year is the development of a warranty
program. Manufacturers are good at pro-
moting their products, but the industry
as a whole could do a better job of sell-
ing itself he explains. “By having a war-
 ranty program in place, there becomes
something more tangible about us.”

The idea is still in its infancy though, and
Day and the Council’s board have their
work cut out for them. “It’s no small feat
getting something like this launched.
We’ve got legal issues and market pene-
tration issues to deal with. It can’t work
if only GTA (Greater Toronto Area)
members are in it. It has to be a national
program. We’re not going to be able to
certify every contractor right away; it’ll
take years.”

As he sees it, a warranty program would
discredit critics who claim it would con-
strain business activity, “I think it, for lack
of a better word, is the salvation of the
EIFS industry to deal with all the people
that are so dead set against it.”

Another plus, he says, is it would attract
new members across the country “Having
a warranty program is to a contractor’s or
manufacturer’s benefit because they know
the EIFS Council will back them up. It
provides a much greater sense of assurance
to all parties.”

While the framework has yet to be estab-
lished, the program would likely entail the
certification of contractors and EIFS
inspectors. A small percentage of the prof-
it of projects would go into a reserve fund
for potential claims cases.

Another of Day’s goals is to see through
the final revisions of The Best Practice
Guide for Exterior Insulation and Finish
Systems, a manual to be published by
Canada Mortgage & Housing Corpora-
tion. Geared to manufacturers, speci-
fiers and applicators, it will contain clear
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on the development of common standards for the performance of EIFS materials. In 1997 the EIFS Council retained Underwriters Laboratories of Canada to develop a standard document fix EIFS that qualifies performance through testing of materials that make up the system.

If all goes well with the various stages of approval, the standard could be completed in time to be written into the National Building Code in two years. “It would be a benefit to this industry because there would be something in the building code referencing how EIFS should be designed and tested,” Day explains.

A Day on the Job

Born in Montreal, Day was raised in suburban Toronto and graduated from the city’s Ryerson Polytechnic University with a degree in architectural science. He landed a job with Habitechnica, a company dealing with energy efficiency housing issues, before moving on to Dryvit Systems Canada Ltd., in the early 1990s. Serving in various technical capacities including the development of products and specifications at Dryvit, Day was given his initiation into the world of EIF systems. During his time at Dryvit his duties also included assisting contractors and designers in education.

Two years ago he moved on to Morrison Hershfield, a well-known multidiscipline engineering firm with offices in Canada and the United States. As a building science specialist at the firm his work is a “fit somewhere between an engineer and an architect.”

“Most of what I deal with is not the science itself I work within a set of known variables, unless I am doing contract R&D work (some of our clients need to use our lab in Ottawa for developmental testing efforts). That probably represents 10 percent of what we are doing,” he says.

To him building science is, for the most part, common sense. “The problem is that common sense isn’t all that common,” Day says.

Much of Day’s job involves securing contracts dealing with investigations into problems with building envelopes and not necessarily EIFS-related problems. No stranger to building envelope technology Day is a past president of the Ontario Building Envelope Council and has been
on its board of directors for the past four years.

In an investigative capacity at Morrison Hershfield, one of his most rewarding assignments called for an in-depth technical examination of documents prepared for a litigation case in the failure of a window-wall system in Vancouver. “Part of why I came to Morrison Hershfield was to get this kind of diversified exposure,” Day says.

His investigative work has included a number of failures related to EIF systems, which, he points out, aren’t usually caused by materials, but rather faulty installation and/or design. “Breakdowns can be because somebody was rushed in doing a detail or putting the product on,” he explains, “or there simply was no detail provided and the contractor improvised in the field.”

In one case in London, Ontario, the EIF system had to be removed from three sides of a commercial building. But the bigger problem facing the EIFS contractor was the “under-constructed” structure. Comments Day, “They had to rebuild the structural framing before reinstalling the EIF system.”

In another investigation of a seven-year-old EIF system, Day concluded that the cladding’s coating delaminated because it had been applied at temperatures colder than the specifications allowed. Problems like this one often stem from contractors pressuring EIFS installers to hurry the job, regardless of weather conditions. That is partly why he believes the industry’s emphasis should be not on training only installers on how to apply EIF systems, but also on drilling home that the proper method is the only method for applying EIFS.

Days sees building code standards in Canada tightening up as various gov-
ernment levels move to enforce stricter requirements on fire safety and building envelope performance. It will have an indirect impact on EIFS, but he’s confident that the EIFS materials manufactured today will meet the higher code Standards.

The booming construction economy, most notable in Toronto and Calgary, spells good times for an industry that went through many shaky years in the 1990s. But the surge in business is not without its downside. As new, inexperienced companies enter the EIFS arena, the potential for problems with installation increases. But just because a company has been in business a long time doesn’t mean it is doing a stellar job, Day says. “We need more contractors with solid reputations and the capabilities to perform at the proper level of workmanship.”

The EIFS Council was formed in the late 1980s out of a need to address myths and misconceptions about the cladding systems fire safety due to a building fire in Winnipeg.

A full-time staff for the EIFS Council is a worthy long-term goal, but for now it is largely up to Day and Mary Thorburn, secretary of the council, to keep things running smoothly. While Day spares time to answer phone calls concerning technical matters, Thorburn does the accounting and coordinates and provides support for all the EIFS Council activities.

To Day, one of the most revealing statistics about the EIFS industry comes out of the United States indicating the exterior system is gaining popularity despite lawsuits and bad press. Chalk up the growth, he says, to two things: Consumers like what they see in EIFS, and the building economy looks like it will remain strong for a number of years. “Unless we start running out of resins, sand and the things we use to put together these coatings, I think the opportunities for EIFS will continue to be strong,” Day predicts.

About the Author
Don Procter is a free-lance writer in Ontario, Canada.