

2.6 Educational Facilities

Construction spending on educational facilities is on the increase.

After more than a decade of decline, construction expenditures for schools and higher education facilities are rebounding. While the tremendous growth of the 1960's is not expected to recur, a steady increase in construction volume will continue through the 1990's as the offspring of the baby boomers work their way through the education system.

Canadian architects should focus on post-secondary institutions with a variety of service niches.

Scope for Canadian architects in the design and construction of primary and secondary schools will be limited since these facilities are usually designed by firms who are well known to, and have a credible track-record with, local school boards. However, this hometown criteria is unlikely to be of such importance to institutions of higher education. Their need is for design competence and experience in any one of a number of specialized niches. For example, firms specializing in the retrofit, renovation and rehabilitation of existing (often historic) buildings are in demand as are those which specialize in such areas as smart buildings, modular designs, and athletic or research complexes. The trend of institutions to encourage related commercial ventures on campus also is an opportunity for architects experienced in promoting and designing mixed-use developments.

The passage of the baby-boom generation through the system led to a downturn in the early 1980s.

2.6.1 The Recent Past

As the baby-boom passed through the education system and the economic recession of the 1970's took hold, there was a steady decline in education construction expenditures such that by 1984, its value had declined to \$6.6 billion. However, there has been a marked increase in construction activity since that time which by 1986 had reached \$8.5 billion (Fig. 14). This increase was fuelled in part by the increase in the number of births between 1976 and 1982, in part by the improved fiscal condition of state and local governments, and in part by the need for building which could accommodate the educational requirements of new technologies. The main 'beneficiary' of this growth has been the primary and secondary schools - during 1985, they accounted for 70 percent of the education construction expenditures. Colleges, universities and other institutions of higher education were not so fortunate.