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|---|------------------|---|----------------------|
| 1 | Reception        | 5 | Collaborative Lounge |
| 2 | Meeting          | 6 | Closed Office        |
| 3 | Open Office Area | 7 | Copy Print Centre    |
| 4 | Staff Café       | 8 | Forensic Lab         |

# RJ Bartlett Engineering Ltd.

Opens a new  
Fredericton  
office with a **fresh**  
approach...



When the design of a business space is synchronized with the culture of that business, something special happens ...ideas that reinforce that culture flourish.

Getting at the core of an organization's culture comes from not just what the client tells you but from what you perceive, learn and witness says Colleen O'Donnell, Principal and Design Director at Optimized Planning & Interiors Inc. (OP&I). It's about understanding what makes the individuals tick and the whole of the business flourish.

RJ Bartlett Engineering Ltd. (RJB) needed both new business space and their internal workgroups realigned to foster greater collaboration and efficiency. OP&I and RJB already enjoyed a working relationship stemming from building code collaboration. It helped that we already knew the RJB team relates Colleen, they always seemed to be internally challenging themselves and

participating as a company – physically with competitive runs and outdoor activities. Even the ever-present cribbage board attests to this – a healthy minds and bodies approach. It is an interesting and beneficial culture for a business. The challenges promote achieving excellence, a characteristic at the heart of the company. Part of their space requirements was for a staff shower area in support of physical activity. Keeping minds sharp is also part of the culture. On your visit to the staff café you can check out your cognitive ability at the custom-designed sudoku & word game board. The RJB firm really does support its mission's statement on enabling people to enjoy rewarding and balanced careers and personal lives.

Their quest for a paper-reduced work world lead them to specialized software for managing their projects, which in turn lead to a much reduced need for paper-based files and file storage. It is rare that we see a real reduction in storage needs



says Colleen – we actually took file cabinets out of the project. This in turn meant that the space created could be allocated for supporting people and an increased capacity to handle the international work of the company in fire protection engineering, forensic engineering, code consulting, alternative compliance analyses.

The new office is an agile interior designed to accommodate evolving business. Its modularity will support lots of flexibility internally without reconstruction. Technology is changing the way we all do business and this business is on the leading edge of that driver.

The furniture solutions were selected and customized to support the physical work specifically. Drawing reference credenzas allow for the “layering” of projects as they vie for priority and allow for quick switching of projects. Adjustable height work tables allow for user-preference of standing or seating work activity.

The space is flooded with natural light, maximized with the placement of any closed rooms to the interior of the space. Everyone gets the benefit of the light and views to the great outdoors – something important to the organization’s culture and an element that triggered a surprise design feature says Colleen.

We had a concrete column in a most awkward location, so we decided to turn the proverbial sow’s ear into a silk purse.

I was thinking about that column when visiting Vancouver and happened to visit Granville Island. There I spied a wooden totem pole. [SEE PHOTO A.](#) That led the OP&I team to turn the RJB column into a sculpture feature that would appeal to their affinity for nature and outdoor activities including New Brunswick’s coveted fly-fishing.

We played with the concept and then contacted Karen Bach and Tim Isaacs, local craftspeople who do fantastic racku fish caricatures. Our totem pole became an artistic impression of trophy fish making their way upstream. To strengthen the concept, we selected a luxury vinyl flooring that resembles a reflective water pool at the base of the column. And, we applied a “casting/wave” design in applied film to the entrance and glazed partitions of the boardroom and offices. It has been a great spark for conversation and unique identity for the firm. [SEE PHOTO B.](#)

The space includes a collaborative lounge that is convertible into a learning centre that can accommodate the entire staff. [SEE PLAN, AREA 5.](#)

The project drivers of keeping it clean and green merged. Cluttered work spaces have the psychological effect of reminding us of unfinished business and that can increase stress says Colleen, so we worked to design strategies to “keep it clean”. A large solar-fabric shade pulls down in front of the plotter area when that part of the space is in a Learning Lab mode for example. Custom lockers keep personal belonging tidy. Aggressive walk-off flooring is integrated into the modular carpet tiled flooring (sustainable, reusable, low VOC). Keeping the dirt out of the workspace means less cleaning and cleaning product for cleaner air. The paint is also low VOC and window blinds are PVC-free. Existing kitchen cabinetry was salvaged and augmented to suit the new café space and reduce landfill debris.

The lighting is predominately ambient and has a calming effect on the mainly open space. You are visually connected to everyone in the space even if they are in an office or meeting room, made possible with the introduction of glass to the fronts of all these spaces. The visual connection extends virtually to the RJB Halifax office through video conferencing technology in the board rooms and is supported by furniture that is flexible for user-defined set-up. The boardroom comes complete with a full writable glass wall that conceals a refreshment node designed to be there when needed and out of sight when not in use.

Despite moving in while construction was still underway, the RJB team has constantly told us how much they appreciate their new “digs” says Lynn Fullarton, Manager of Projects’ Development, and that is the best compliment any design firm can hope for.

#### Project Participants

Client & Sprinkler Design:

RJ Bartlett Engineering Ltd’s capabilities include design of fire protection systems, building and fire code consulting, fire hazard analysis, fire safety planning, commissioning and investigative engineering. [www.rjbartlett.com](http://www.rjbartlett.com)

Mechanical and Electrical Design:  
exp Services Inc., Fredericton

Flooring:  
InterfaceFLOR, Centiva,  
Mannington Commercial,  
Olympiatile

Construction:  
Simpson Contractors, Fredericton

Lighting:  
Lightolier, CFI, Forecast

Furniture:  
Covey Basics/  
Global Contract



Interior Design:

Optimized Planning & Interiors Inc. is full-service Interior Design and Facility Planning firm specializing in balancing both practical and aesthetic design solutions to create great business, hospitality, retail, healthcare and living spaces in Atlantic Canada. [www.opiinc.ca](http://www.opiinc.ca)