

The Cutting Edge

Board of Directors Provide Update on Key Initiatives



June 2022 Board of Directors meeting in Toronto.

The Natural Stone Institute board of directors has been addressing many key strategic initiatives important to both the industry and the association. Here is a recap of what your board has been focused on this year.

Workforce Development and Labor Shortage: The lack of a qualified workforce has been well documented. The board met to discuss ways to address this challenge. While there is no easy solution, your board believes that employers and trade schools could benefit from the existing library of training resources in the Natural Stone University. We have assembled a task force to explore ways to partner with other trade associations addressing this issue. We will also consider developing an awareness campaign for promoting training resources and careers in the natural stone industry to career and technical schools.

NSI Materials Testing Laboratory: The board approved a business plan to expand the laboratory’s testing volume, industry research goals, and test procedure capabilities and offerings. Critical to this process was the hiring of Scott Scallorn to become the new lab manager. Scott brings fifteen years in an accredited lab environment to the association. He has already undertaken the important process of pursuing ISO accreditation for the NSI lab. We look forward to sharing a more detailed lab update in a future issue.

Natural Stone Pavilion at StonExpo: The board affirmed their support to grow the number of natural stone companies exhibiting in the Natural Stone Pavilion at StonExpo. Board president Buddy Ontra noted: “StonExpo has already received a large commitment from the tooling and equipment segment and now is the right time to grow the presence of natural stone to give the attendees a broader experience. Quite frankly, StonExpo is an opportunity to source both your equipment and natural stone needs.”

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2022 Natural Stone Institute President

Buddy Ontra

Ontra Stone Concepts

We had our midyear Board of Directors meeting in June. It was the first on-location midyear meeting since 2019 (Do I have to tell you why?). Thank you to Mike and Susy Picco for arranging a great agenda and activities for us! We visited several member companies and got to take in museums, a Blue Jays game, and some other cool things in and around Toronto. Those who were unable to make it to Toronto joined us remotely. This is part of the ongoing return to in-person events.

Speaking of live activities, we will be hosting our annual study tour September 11-15 in Bluestone country—western New York/eastern Pennsylvania.

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Member Spotlight: PICCO

1. Please tell us a bit about your company.

Mike Picco founded PICCO Engineering in 1992 as a sole proprietor in the Greater Toronto area and has grown the company to a staff of over 40 people. Having worked for a prominent installer/ fabricator early in his career, Mike gained invaluable knowledge in the stone industry and realized there was a gap in service on the consulting side. Since its inception, PICCO has been providing services to architects, installers, and contractors that include sourcing material, shop drawings, engineering, design assist, testing, and anything to do with natural stone.

2. What made you decide to get involved with the Natural Stone Institute?

Although PICCO became an NSI member (then MIA) in 2002, Mike's engagement started earlier by attending StonExpo and other industry events. During our attendance and interactions with people in the industry, Mike quickly learned how passionate and willing they were to share industry knowledge and information. His decision to join has proven invaluable and rewarding both personally and professionally.

3. What do you consider the biggest benefit of your membership?

We can speak about the many benefits that NSI offers, such as the technical support, safety learnings, and sustainability initiatives but without a doubt, the most significant benefit is collaborating with the diverse members who share the same passion for natural stone, in addition to the many friendships and relationships we have built throughout the years.



4. PICCO is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year—congratulations! What has been your biggest accomplishment of the past few years? What are you looking forward to in the years ahead?

PICCO is proud of our 30-year legacy for delivering quality services to our global customers and partners. We honor them by promising to continue our leadership in stone, structures, and residential engineering with new initiatives into 2022. We've been fortunate to work on many world-class projects over the years, exposed ourselves to various applications and unique challenges, and have grown to what I would classify as experts in the field. A couple more recent projects that stand out are the Apple Headquarters in Cupertino and the first permanent memorial, The Ark of Return, at the United Nations in NYC. Looking forward, we will focus on making the connection between education, people, and the impactful creative experiences that define our relationships with all of you. Continuing to grow our technology capabilities, sharing our communication excellence, and endeavoring to support sustainable businesses and practices—will fulfill our purpose for 'Shaping Progress' at PICCO.

5. Where can our readers meet you and learn more about your products and services?

Check us out on social media @PICCOgroup or our website piccogroup.com, where you can sign up for our monthly newsletter. We are always available for a phone call at 1-888-772-0773 or to meet with you in person at 200-8611 Jane Street, Concord, Ontario. 📍





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Ark of Return

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