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# Church Building Project Checklist

A comprehensive guide to every stage of your church construction project

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Building or renovating a church facility is one of the most significant undertakings a congregation will face. This checklist has been developed by Hawkey Church Management Inc. based on decades of experience guiding Ontario churches through the construction process. Use it as a roadmap to keep your project organized, on schedule, and on budget. Check off each item as it is completed, and consult with your HCMI construction manager at every stage.

## PHASE 1: VISION & PLANNING

*Establish the foundation for a successful project before any design work begins.*

- Form a Building Committee with representation from key ministry areas (worship, children, youth, administration, accessibility)
- Define a clear project vision statement approved by the congregation or governing board
- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment (current space deficiencies, projected growth, ministry requirements)
- Engage congregation input through surveys, town halls, or small group discussions
- Review existing property records, surveys, zoning, and title documents
- Establish a preliminary budget range based on comparable church projects in Ontario
- Identify potential funding sources (building fund, capital campaign, denominational grants, bridge financing)
- Engage a construction manager (CM) early to provide pre-construction guidance and cost planning
- Establish a communication plan to keep the congregation informed throughout the project
- Define decision-making authority and approval thresholds for the Building Committee
- Create a preliminary project timeline with key milestones
- Engage legal counsel to review property and zoning matters if needed
- Assess environmental considerations (Phase I Environmental Site Assessment if required)
- Confirm property boundaries and obtain an up-to-date land survey

### **HCMI Tip: Getting Started Right**

- The most successful church projects begin with a clear vision and realistic budget expectations.
- Engaging a construction manager before selecting an architect saves time and money.
- Budget a 10–15% contingency from day one — unforeseen conditions are common in Ontario construction.

## PHASE 2: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

*Transform your vision into detailed construction-ready documents.*

- Develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) for architectural services with CM input
- Interview and evaluate a minimum of three qualified architects with church project experience

- Check architect references from previous church clients
- Negotiate and execute an architectural services agreement
- Complete schematic design (floor plans, elevations, site plan) and review with Building Committee
- Conduct a design review with the full congregation for feedback
- Approve schematic design and authorize design development phase
- Develop detailed design drawings including structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems
- Coordinate acoustic design for the worship space (critical for churches)
- Integrate audio/visual and lighting design into architectural plans
- Review accessibility requirements (AODA compliance) in all design elements
- Complete a detailed cost estimate at the design development stage with CM
- Reconcile cost estimate with budget and make value engineering adjustments if needed
- Approve design development documents and authorize construction document preparation
- Finalize construction documents (full working drawings and specifications)
- CM reviews construction documents for constructability, cost efficiency, and completeness
- Obtain final cost estimate based on completed construction documents
- Secure final Building Committee and board approval of design and budget

**HCFI Tip: Design Phase**

- Church acoustics require specialized expertise — a poor acoustic environment undermines the worship experience.
- Value engineering is most effective during design development, not after tender.
- Ensure the architect includes phasing options if the project may be built in stages.

## PHASE 3: MUNICIPAL APPROVALS

*Navigate the regulatory landscape with confidence. Ontario municipalities each have unique requirements.*

- Schedule a pre-consultation meeting with the municipal planning department
- Confirm zoning compliance or determine if a zoning amendment or minor variance is required
- Prepare and submit site plan application with all required supporting studies
- Commission required technical studies (traffic impact, stormwater management, environmental impact, geotechnical)
- Respond to municipal and agency comments on site plan submission
- Obtain site plan approval with all conditions
- Satisfy site plan conditions (financial securities, agreements, easements)
- Prepare and submit building permit application with complete construction documents
- Address building permit review comments and resubmit as needed
- Obtain building permit prior to any construction activity
- Calculate and budget for Development Charges (can be significant for new church buildings)
- Apply for any applicable Development Charge exemptions or deferrals for places of worship
- Obtain all other required permits (sewer connection, water, road occupancy, tree removal)
- Confirm Conservation Authority requirements if near regulated features
- Register the project with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

### **HCMI Tip: Municipal Process**

- The municipal approval process in Ontario can take 6–18 months — plan accordingly.
- Some Ontario municipalities exempt places of worship from certain Development Charges.
- Pre-consultation meetings save significant time and reduce the risk of costly resubmissions.

## PHASE 4: PRE-CONSTRUCTION

*Prepare thoroughly before breaking ground to ensure a smooth construction phase.*

- CM prepares tender packages organized by trade (typically 15–25 trade packages)
- Pre-qualify subcontractors based on experience, financial stability, and safety record
- Issue tender packages to pre-qualified subcontractors
- Conduct site visits for tenderers to review existing conditions
- Receive, evaluate, and compare tender submissions with CM
- Select subcontractors and negotiate final contract terms
- Execute subcontractor agreements with appropriate terms and conditions
- Obtain Builders Risk insurance and confirm all required coverage is in place
- Establish a project-specific safety plan compliant with Ontario Regulation 213/91
- Confirm construction financing is in place and draw schedule is established
- Hold a pre-construction meeting with all key stakeholders (owner, CM, architect, key trades)
- Establish a detailed construction schedule (Gantt chart with milestones)
- Set up project documentation and communication protocols (progress reports, meeting minutes)
- Coordinate interim facility arrangements if the congregation must relocate during construction
- Arrange for utility locates and disconnections/connections as required
- Confirm site access, staging areas, and temporary facilities (trailer, washrooms, fencing)

## PHASE 5: CONSTRUCTION

*Execute the work with diligent oversight, quality control, and proactive communication.*

### Site Mobilization & Earthwork

- Install construction fencing, signage, and erosion/sediment controls
- Complete demolition or site clearing as required
- Perform excavation and confirm soil conditions match geotechnical report
- Install underground services (storm, sanitary, water, electrical, gas)
- Complete grading and compaction to engineered specifications

### Foundation & Structure

- Pour footings and foundation walls with required inspections
- Complete waterproofing and foundation drainage systems
- Backfill foundation and compact
- Pour slab on grade with vapour barrier and insulation
- Erect structural steel or wood framing per engineered drawings
- Install roof structure and decking
- Pass all required structural inspections

### Building Envelope

- Install roofing system (membrane, shingles, or metal as specified)
- Install exterior wall systems (masonry, cladding, curtain wall)
- Install windows and exterior doors
- Complete building envelope air/vapour barrier and insulation
- Ensure continuous thermal and moisture barrier with no gaps

### Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing (MEP)

- Rough-in HVAC ductwork and equipment
- Rough-in plumbing supply and drainage systems
- Rough-in electrical wiring, panels, and conduit
- Install fire sprinkler system and fire alarm
- Install data/communication cabling infrastructure
- Complete MEP inspections before closing walls
- Install HVAC equipment (rooftop units, boilers, heat pumps)
- Install plumbing fixtures
- Install electrical fixtures, devices, and panels
- Install audio/visual systems for worship space

### Interior Finishes

- Install drywall and complete taping/mudding/sanding
- Prime and paint all interior surfaces
- Install flooring (carpet, tile, hardwood, polished concrete)
- Install millwork, cabinetry, and built-in furnishings
- Install ceiling systems (acoustic tile, drywall, exposed structure)

- Install interior doors, frames, and hardware
- Install washroom accessories and fixtures
- Install signage and wayfinding systems
- Install window treatments if specified

### Site Work & Exterior

- Complete parking lot grading, base, and paving
- Install curbs, sidewalks, and accessible pathways
- Install site lighting and electrical
- Complete landscaping, seeding, and planting
- Install exterior signage
- Install site furnishings (benches, bike racks, garbage enclosure)

#### HCMI Tip: During Construction

- Attend regular site meetings and review progress reports — engaged owners get better results.
- Document changes with formal Change Orders before work proceeds.
- Maintain a photo log of concealed conditions before they are covered up.

## PHASE 6: COMPLETION & OCCUPANCY

*Bring the project to a successful close and prepare for your first service in the new facility.*

- Complete commissioning of all mechanical and electrical systems
- Conduct air balancing and verify HVAC performance
- Test fire alarm and sprinkler systems and obtain verification reports
- Complete all required municipal inspections (building, plumbing, electrical, fire)
- Obtain Occupancy Permit from the municipality
- Conduct a thorough walk-through and develop a deficiency (punch) list
- Contractor completes all punch list items to satisfaction
- Obtain all warranties, operation manuals, and maintenance guides from trades
- Conduct training sessions for facility staff on building systems (HVAC, fire alarm, AV, security)
- Obtain final lien clearances and statutory declarations from all subcontractors
- Process final payment to CM upon satisfactory completion
- Establish a preventive maintenance schedule for all building systems
- Confirm that all as-built drawings are received and filed
- Plan and execute the move-in and set up of furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E;)
- Schedule a dedication or grand opening celebration
- Conduct a post-occupancy review at 3, 6, and 12 months to identify any issues
- Hold one-year warranty walk-through with CM and address any warranty items

#### HCMI Tip: Project Closeout

- Do not rush occupancy — incomplete commissioning leads to ongoing problems.
- Keep 10% holdback as required under the Ontario Construction Act until the lien period expires.
- A structured post-occupancy review process catches issues before warranties expire.

Need guidance? Hawkey Church Management Inc. has helped churches across Ontario navigate every phase of the building process. Contact us at 519-509-6363 or visit [www.churchbuilder.ca](http://www.churchbuilder.ca) to discuss your project.