

CSC



Dimensions

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Owners take steps for better LMI

Speakers and panelists at the CSC's recent National Construction Owners' Forum stressed the need for owners, contractors, labour groups, educators, and governments to work together to address the construction industry's human resource needs.

"All key stakeholders need to be involved in finding solutions to labour market issues," said panelist David Galvin, Manager – Construction Labour Relations at Bruce Power.

The need for communication and collaboration was a key message coming out of the September 29th event in Ottawa, where some 50 owners and contractors were joined by labour representatives and government officials. They seized the opportunity to build on the process put in place by the CSC in developing its *Construction Looking Forward* forecast reports by recommending how to improve upon that process, and how to better use and act on the data.

The Federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, the Honourable Diane Finley – the keynote speaker – told the forum that "Labour Market Information draws attention to where the challenges really are. It provides detailed information to make important investment decisions and identifies whether there are enough workers to get the job done, and where they are."

After hearing from several speakers, forum participants identified 19 key issues during roundtable sessions, with varying levels of priority and involvement from the CSC, the federal and provincial governments, and the industry.

A better immigration process, national standards for training and apprenticeship, and more youth, women and Aboriginal recruitment, were among the priorities.

Hugh Tackaberry, Director, Labour Relations for Fluor Constructors Canada Ltd., said Labour Market Information (LMI) should drive increases and improvements to supervisory training and mentoring, and for more and better training for planning and scheduling. David Galvin also pointed to the need "for leaders to find meaningful work for apprentices and to consider mentoring."

Stephen Bygrave, Manager, General Engineering at Michelin North America (Canada) Inc. noted the exodus of workers from the Atlantic region and called on stakeholders to look at long-term solutions. Robert Blakely, the CSC's Labour Co-chair and Director of Canadian Affairs for the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO, reiterated that theme and called for better recruiting and training techniques.



Neil Tidsbury (CSC Board Member), CSC Executive Director George Gritziotis, Robert Blakely (CSC Co-chair) and the Honourable Minister Diane Finley following her presentation at the National Construction Owners' Forum.



Panelists David Galvin (Bruce Power), Hugh Tackaberry (Fluor Constructors), Robert Blakely (Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO) and Stephen Bygrave (Michelin North America Canada Inc.).

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Kids are the answer

By George Gritziotis, Executive Director



As we look at ways to get more Canadian youth into the construction industry, we could do worse than listen to what young people are saying and hearing.

“If you can’t do well academically, go into the trades.” It makes me bristle, but that’s still the line in schools. While IT and the so-called “new economy” have permeated the school system, the basics of building a house, or what cranes do on a construction site – stuff that fascinates kids – has gone the way of the Tonka truck by the time they hit Grade 1.

And we are letting it happen. We do a good job when it comes to talking to each other, but we do a lousy job when it comes to talking to the non-construction world.

While school curriculums are one symptom of a much broader problem – the construction industry does not communicate its human resources needs well to the outside world.

Through the industry’s effort the CSC last year released a comprehensive website that provides information on the what, how, when and where of careers in construction. www.careersinconstruction.ca allows local industry and school boards, and all stakeholders, to begin putting in place approaches and plans on how to best promote trades in their jurisdiction.

We need to go to the next step – we need to tell them where the jobs are, encourage employers to take on apprentices, and make parents, teachers and students aware that construction is not just a job – but a career.

But it’s clearly not enough and the industry is paying the price for it now. Here we are in a peak period and we’re in panic mode because there are not enough skilled workers.

There is a lot of effort being put, including by policy makers, into engaging the aboriginal community, foreign workers, and women. It’s all appropriate. But let’s make sure that the effort we’re putting into engaging Canadian youth is appropriate as well. Rather than scrambling to deal with labour supply issues in peak periods, we need to focus on the long-term solution – youth.

This is a terrific opportunity for the industry to start demonstrating the value of a career in construction. There is a boom in the industry and the jobs are out there. According to the CSC’s LMI, 150,000 workers will be needed in the industry within the next 10 years.

But even if there’s a downturn, we can’t let up. Kids are our future. It’s a cliché. But it’s never been more true for the construction industry than it is today.

We need a spotlight on the importance of construction as a career for our children.

Bringing Essential Skills to life



Customized Essential Skills products exist for three target audiences: Unions, Educators and Employers.

The CSC is bringing Essential Skills to life with practical questions and problems that people working in the construction industry could be required to solve on-the-job. The exercises are part of information provided on CD-Rom to employers, labour groups and educators to help everyone from front-line workers to executives to build on their Essential Skills.

Essential Skills are often defined as the skills needed for work, learning and life. The nine Essential Skills are reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills and computer use.

Materials are tailored specifically for groups who

deal with tradespeople who have different needs and are at different levels in terms of their Essential Skills. "That's why we say we're bringing these skills to life," says Rosemary Sparks, Director of Operations for the CSC. "We are providing practical tools designed for the end user. The material shows how Essential Skills are used and why they are important."

Brian Bickley, Chair of the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board and V.P. of the Alberta Workplace Essential Skills Committee: "Essential Skills are needed at every level of every organization," he says, "from the front lines to the executive offices. They're the tools that can take you from one to the other. But there has to be opportunities for people to develop those skills – or else the organization as a whole will suffer".

An inventory of all Essential Skills resources and ordering information will soon be available on the CSC website.

Action on foreign credential recognition

The CSC is following up on recommendations from its study of foreign credential recognition by:

- Working with the British Columbia Construction Association to deliver an immigrant-employment program. The pilot project will use job coaches and assessment tools to assess foreign-trained skills, stream individuals into additional training (such as language programs) and connect them to Canadian construction employment.
- Organizing a workshop in Toronto, Dec. 6–7, in partnership with the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) for construction industry, government and immigrant agency representatives. "It's a chance for everybody in the industry to get together and talk about what needs to be done to make the best use of this key labour source," says Brian Clewes, a member of the CCDA Board of Directors who works with the Industry Training Authority of B.C.

New in construction training

A trades training centre in New Brunswick is breaking new ground by working with high schools, labour groups, community development groups, and the provincial government to provide training and upgrading that feeds the New Brunswick construction industry and its economy.

Dimensions caught up with Melissa Hetherington, the Executive Director of the Carpenters Training Centre of New Brunswick between meetings and classes.



Q: *What's new at the Centre?*

A: "We are in the sixth year of offering a high school co-op program where students receive exposure to the building trades over an eight-week period, then they go on the job site to job shadow a tradesperson in the trade of their choice for six weeks. This has replaced the shop programs that were taken out of the schools in New Brunswick. Many of these students have gone on to work in the trades. At

our facility, they receive the same treatment as if they were actually a tradesperson and the job sites are very receptive to having them on site.

We also offer a 40 week pre-employment program for entry into the carpentry trade. We work with community development groups, such as Saint John Non-profit Housing, where we actually take the students to the job site for a period of 24-26 weeks of the program and they construct affordable living accommodations for future tenants and clients of Saint John Non-profit Housing. The labour for these projects is completely donated. This way our students have a real life job site training experience, no baby barns, and the community will benefit with enough savings to start other projects. We are on our third apartment complex.

Q: *How many students do you take for each session?*

A: In addition to the two programs mentioned we also continuously upgrade our current membership within the union. Last year alone we trained over 2,500 members in various training programs. We train for carpenters,

millwrights and welders. We meet with the industry, including contractors and owners, to verify upcoming work and the skill needs of the industry.

Q: *Are you using the CSC's LMI data at the Centre?*

A: Yes we are. The skills upgrading programs are partially funded through NB's Labour Market Agreement. We submit a funding proposal for our training needs every year. This year we included a copy of CSC's LMI data for Atlantic Canada and made several references to it. The department responsible in NB has agreed that this will be the document that will be used to determine funding.

Q: *Are your students mostly youth? How long does it take to graduate?*

A: The apprenticeship for carpentry is four years minimum, but that can vary. Our students differ in age, program, and qualifications. We offer a variety of programs ranging from the high school program for youth, to carpentry apprenticeship blocks, to skills upgrading.

Construction Looking Forward 2007-2015

Plans for the release of next year's labour requirements forecasts are well underway.

Provincial labour market information committees are now gathering data and scheduling meetings with a view to releasing the next round of *Construction Looking Forward* reports in the Spring of 2007. The CSC is planning to eventually have the data available through the web, and an advisory committee has been set up to oversee the development of the web-based delivery. The nine-year labour requirements projections, published annually, are a hit with industry leaders for their value as a planning tool.

"I applaud the Construction Sector Council and its partners in working together to provide a comprehensive report that not only offers foresight but is focused on recruitment and training," said Barry Rempel, President and CEO of Winnipeg Airport Authority Inc, when releasing Manitoba's report last July.

National and regional news coverage has led to more interest and involvement from key players in the construction industry. "The more stakeholders we have participating, the more accurate and reliable the data," says George Gritziotis, Executive Director of the CSC, who notes that "the reports are being improved and updated every year."

Other project updates:

EXPANDING E-LEARNING

Three complete on-line courses are now housed at the CSC's e-learning centre. The newest addition is Construction Project Management designed for project managers, superintendents and estimators. Construction Project Management covers business case development, procurement, contracting, risk management and project close-out. The other two available courses are Pipeline Construction Safety Training and Communication, Negotiation and Conflict Resolution. Registrants can access courses through the CSC's network of distributors, including construction safety associations, regional construction associations, labour groups, and others. The courses and distributor information can be accessed at <http://elearning.csc-ca.org>.

HEAT AND FROST INSULATORS

Heat and frost insulators are in hot demand and the CSC has developed a national campaign to promote the career to youth. Modeled on its boilermaker career awareness project, the CSC has developed marketing tools, including a national website, pamphlets, posters, and a Power Point presentation. The material is ready for distribution to education and training facilities. The campaign is driven by research that shows the aging workforce combined with construction booms in the industrial and institutional sectors is leading to a shortage of heat and frost insulators. Find out more at www.heatandfrostinsulators.ca.

ABORIGINAL IRONWORKERS

The first-ever career awareness program aimed at aboriginal youth has been so well accepted that the aboriginal community is keen to use it as a model for other trades! Visit the website to see how the CSC Aboriginal Ironworker Career Awareness project links aboriginal youth with the ironworker trade at www.aboriginalconstructioncareers.ca.

About us The Construction Sector Council (CSC) is a national organization committed to the development of a highly skilled workforce – one that will support the needs of the construction industry in Canada both now and well into the future. Created in April 2001, it is a partnership between labour and business. At the heart of CSC's mandate is the need to address human resource issues through partnerships within the construction industry.

FOR ADDITIONAL CSC REPORTS AND PRODUCTS,
VISIT US AT WWW.CSC-CA.ORG

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