

GROW YOUR WORKFORCE

The economic calamities being experienced south of the border these days can't help but affect us up here in British Columbia. Financial institutions are tightening their belts, which mean hard times for developers looking to finance construction projects. While we all hope that this is a short term situation that will correct itself in the not too distant future, for now we can all expect to see some level of slow down in the sector. For some contractors this will simply mean they actually have a chance of managing all the work they have taken on, for others it might mean shifting more focus back to publicly funded projects. Those contractors who find them selves able to take a breath after several years of going full out, should consider this an excellent opportunity to take stock of their current workforce and invest some time and money into education and training so they are ready to go when things heat up again.

If the economy slows down one would expect that the issue of skill shortages would take a back burner to issues like fair procurement and tendering concerns. In the past that would have been true. These days, however, we are still facing the potential of a large exodus of workers from the construction trades due to retirements. The trade brain drain has begun and it is only going to increase over the next decade. The skills and expertise of these aging trades people need to be tapped in to now, in order to ensure that apprentices will get the training they need on the job to complete and obtain their trade qualification.

The trades training culture that has kept the apprenticeship system alive and well in British Columbia rests on the shoulders of the soon to be retiring trades people. Unless it is renewed in a younger generation, once they go, it goes with them, and without that "culture" of apprenticeship it doesn't much matter how many new ideas and programs the government

cooks up, the essence of what makes a good trades person will be gone.

Training in the construction trades is all about passing on, not only skills, but also pride in a job well done, and dedication to the trade itself. The apprentice who encounters and learns these things will go on to complete their apprenticeship and in the future they will have the desire to, in turn, pass their skills on to a younger worker. They will have joined into the culture of the trades.

The BC Labour Market Information Committee, of which BCCA is a member, recently issued a report on apprenticeship completions in BC. An in depth survey was conducted of current apprentices, non-completers, journeypersons and employers in the carpentry, electrical and finishing trades. While the study produced a number of interesting statistics, one of the most interesting (although probably not surprising) findings was that the most likely reason for a young worker to enter into a construction apprenticeship had to do with the nature of the work. Career opportunities and money certainly factor into it, but by far the most common reason for entering a trade was they were attracted by the type of work they would be doing. It seems that young people today are interested and ready to embrace the trades culture that can be handed down by the journeypersons. Those that completed their apprenticeship indicated that they had a very strong interest in the trade, believed strongly in the value of apprenticeship, and commonly cited a sense of pride or accomplishment in their job as a reason for completing. These are the skilled workers of the future that we will need to keep the economy going.

Another point of interest in the completions

Inside this Issue:

- Grow Your Workforce
- Six Storey Wood Frame Coming
- Toyota Truck

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survey was that 91% of those apprentices who completed their trades training remained employed in their trade many years later. They like what they do, and they stick around. They are gaining the experience they need to be able to pass it on to a future generation.

There has never been a more critical time in the industry to take on more apprentices and support the culture of appren-

ticeship training in the construction trades. Take the opportunity to grow the construction workforce not only for yourself and your company but for the good of the industry and ultimately the economy as a whole. It is definitely a win for everyone.

The Apprenticeship Completion Project report can be accessed on line at: www.bccassn.com/reports.html

SIX STOREY WOOD FRAME COMING

Minister Rich Coleman has announced that new Building Code requirements will be developed to increase the maximum building height for mid-rise wood-frame residential construction from four to six storeys. The new requirements will come into effect in January 2009 and will be developed in consultation with industry, local governments and the public. In the near future, the Province will announce details of an innovative demonstration project with the Canadian Wood Council that will provide additional insights into six-storey wood construction in British Columbia. The demonstration project will give builders, designers and local governments an opportunity to see how six-storey wood-frame construction can be used effectively in British Columbia.

Input from building industry stakeholders, local governments, and the general public will be an important part of this process. Opportunities to get information on the proposed changes and make comments will be provided through stakeholder meetings, industry advisory committees, regular website updates and an online public review this fall. Effective November 13th information on the public review process will be accessible on the BC Government website at: http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/building/wood_frame/index.htm

Contact Warren Perks at BCCA for more information: perks@bccassn.com

DON'T MISS OUT ON YOUR TOYOTA TRUCK !



Toolbox Meeting Guide where contest entrants can find the answer and learn about a construction safety-related topic, such as fall protection or overexertion. The contest is limited to B.C. construction and affiliated company workers, or members of the BCCA. You and your staff can enter every week, in fact if you haven't entered to date you can go back and complete the weekly quiz from the start of the contest.

The contest will close at midnight on December 12, 2008, and the winner will be announced in January.

If you haven't joined in so far, it isn't too late to toss your hardhat into the ring. For complete contest details, or to enter, please visit www.csabc.ca.



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The mission of the BCCA is to provide leadership and excellence in the representation of and service to British Columbia's construction industry