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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

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Education

New immigrants vulnerable to workplace accidents



PATRICK GARR

These two immigrant workers participate in a bricklayers pre-apprenticeship program specifically designed for newcomers to Canada in Fredericton, N.B.

IAN HARVEY
CORRESPONDENT

New arrivals in Canada face additional vulnerabilities on the job, according to studies by Institute for Work and Health (IWH) in Toronto.

Agnieszka Kosny, a of the social and behavioural sciences department at IWH says many immigrants face challenges because they don't speak English to start with and because the experience and certification they earned in their homelands aren't recognized in Canada.

"They end up taking precarious work in often hazardous workplaces," she says and it adds up to increased risk for injury on the job.

"Also, they don't know they can refuse dangerous work," she says.

"And often they don't want to refuse because they may have got the job by a referral from someone in their community. Refusing work or complaining would then reflect badly on that person who may also be an elder in the community. It wasn't just that they feared losing the job."

As part of a study released last fall, the research team interviewed 110 recent immigrants and refugees for up to an hour in Ontario and held focus groups with those who had been in Canada less than three years.

Some did get WHMIS training, she says, but most of the training they reported getting was around clients and customer safety and safe food handling but not workplace occupational safety training.

There's a distinct lack of occupational health and safety (OH&S) awareness from the point of arrival to Canada, she says, with most of the brochures and orientation focused on day-to-day challenges in adapting to life in Canada.

cent from South Asia and 11 per cent from South America and the Caribbean.

They had held much more diverse and high level jobs in their home countries including engineering, education, skilled trades, business and health.

Their first jobs were generally classed as poor quality employment and more for survival than career path. Most had found those jobs through family or community connections.

Some reported being reprimanded after getting injured on the job and many reported lack of protective equipment and long hours which impacted attention span. Others reported being required to "volunteer" at jobs to gain experience with the hopes of getting hired.

The latter is an issue, the IWH reports, because volunteers aren't usually covered under OHSA (Occupational Health and Safety Act) or WSIA (Workplace Safety and Insurance Act).

Generally, the study found, OH&S training was low level and most of the workers were not aware of Ontario regulations and laws around employment standards.

Economic Snapshot

Update on Ontario — after a strong handoff from 2017, expect a solid 2018

This update on the Ontario economy consists of two parts. First, we focus on the province's current and near-term economic health as reflected by recent labour force data, consumer confidence, retail sales and business investment. The second part briefly highlights some of the risks facing the province as it moves into the next decade.

Regarding Ontario's current economic health, over the past year employers in the province have been on a hiring spree, adding a total of 176,300 jobs (a fifteen-year high).

Moreover, the vast majority of these jobs are full-time (158,000) and most (115,300) are in the private sector. Despite strong growth of the province's labour force due in part to an unprecedented net inflow of 184,000 migrants from outside the province (over the four quarters through Q3/2017), the unemployment rate in Ontario fell to 5.5% in December, its lowest value since July of 2000.

Fuelled by the combination of low interest rates and strong growth of hiring in the province, retail sales were the major driver of domestic demand in 2017.

Two indicators suggest consumers will continue to underpin growth in the short term. First, the job market in the province is still quite strong. According to Statistics Canada's Q3/2017 *Job Vacancy report*, the job vacancy rate in the province remained at 3%, its highest level since the second quarter of 2015. Second, consumer confidence, reflected by the Conference Board in Canada's *Index of Consumer Confidence*, jumped sharply in December to its highest level since March of 2015, due to increased optimism regarding job prospects and future finances.

Following a very strong first quarter in 2017, housing demand (reflected by sales of existing homes) dropped sharply after the April 20th introduction of the provincial government's "Fair Housing Plan", which imposed a 15% foreign buyer tax on properties within the Greater Golden Horseshoe and extended rent controls to all private rental units in the province built after 1991.

However, despite this slowdown in home sales, housing starts in the second half of 2017 were up by 5.8% y/y. As noted in Snapshot #1, we expect that the impact of the Superintendent of Financial Institution's stricter lending criteria, which took effect on January 1, will depress both existing home sales and housing starts in the first half of 2018. This prospect is reinforced by the 13% y/y-drop in residential building permits in the second half of 2017 vis-à-vis the comparable period in 2016. After posting a gain of 80.1k in 2017, we expect housing starts in the province to total in the range of 65k to 70k units this year and 70k to 75k in 2019.

The total value of non-residential building approvals rose by 18% in the second half of 2017 after posting virtually no change in 2016. This strengthening in ICI investment plans heading into 2018 appears to be driven primarily by govern-



John Clinkard

ment-financed spending on infrastructure projects such as the West Park Health Centre in Toronto. While the outlook for business investment for the country as a whole indicated by the Bank of Canada's *Winter 2017-18 Business Outlook Survey* is quite upbeat, the prospects for business non-residential construction in Ontario are less sanguine. According to the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC)'s *Outlook for 2018*, businesses are planning to scale back their investment plans in the province somewhat following a slight (1%) estimated increase in 2017.

Given that we expect infrastructure investment to outweigh business spending, it appears that non-residential investment will make a slight positive contribution to provincial growth over the next 12 to 18 months.

Even though the United States (the market for 82% of Ontario's exports) grew by an estimated 2.3% in 2017 and sales of motor vehicles in the U.S. topped 17 million for the second consecutive year, the total value of Ontario's U.S. bound exports shrank by 4.2% year to date in November.

Moreover, this drop in the province's foreign sales was almost totally the result of an 8.7% year-to-date drop in exports of motor vehicles and parts. Looking forward, slower growth of US auto sales will likely depress motor vehicle manufacturing in the province and cause a further deterioration in the province's total exports.

Given the above-noted slowdown in foreign sales and despite the recent pattern of strong full-time jobs growth, positive consumer confidence and improving business investment, we expect the Ontario economy to grow in the range of 1.7% to 2.3% in 2018 and by 1.5% to 2.0% in 2019, following an estimated gain of 2.9% in 2017.

As always, the Ontario economy is facing a number of risks both in the short term and over the longer time. These include the prospect that export growth will be further limited by the sharp escalation of labour costs stemming from the recently announced 33% increase in the province's minimum wage between July of 2014 and January of 2019.

Also, the province's competitive situation both within Canada and internationally will continue to be eroded by high energy costs, among the highest on the continent, and also by a cap-and-trade tax that weighs heavily on the province's manufacturing sector.

Finally, the status of Canada's Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. and Mexico is uncertain. While we do not expect that it will be completely abrogated, it could pose a threat to already challenged investor confidence and business investment in the province in the near term.

John Clinkard has over 35 years' experience as an economist in international, national and regional research and analysis with leading financial institutions and media outlets in Canada.

"Immigrant men are twice as likely to have a work related injury requiring medical attention than Canadian men,"

Agnieszka Kosny
Institute for Work and Health

That is perhaps understandable, say experts, given that new arrivals face an overwhelming barrage of change, from language to culture, to getting work, to finding health care, food shopping, money, housing and navigating transportation.

While the survey and ongoing research doesn't look specifically at construction jobs the findings are applicable to almost any workplace where manual labour is involved.

Generally, new immigrant workers are much more likely to do sustain a workplace related injury in the first month, and in temporary work placements were even more likely to get hurt.

"We found immigrant men are twice as likely to have a work related injury requiring medical attention than Canadian men," she says and some of the other findings were unsettling.

The study group was comprised of 55 per cent women with 54 per cent from the Middle East, 15 per

They also knew nothing of their employers' responsibilities to ensure they were trained on any equipment, briefed on any potentially hazardous materials or what they should do if asked to do something unsafe or in the event of an injury.

Kosny says the challenge now is to inform new arrivals in Canada about their rights in the workplace and about basic OH&S requirements.

However, finding out where and when and how to educate them remains the hurdle.

"The social agencies doing orientation don't have the budget or expertise in OH&S," she says. "So we have to find some funding for this."

Sending people to websites or pushing brochures into their hands isn't an acceptable strategy, the IWH report notes and while there are good employers who take safety seriously there are too many who don't.



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Raising Awareness

Sexual harassment, harassment and bullying: Can it be prevented?

PETER CAULFIELD
CORRESPONDENT

Growing media attention to, and increasing public interest in, workplace bullying, harassment and sexual harassment has raised awareness of the issue everywhere, including in the construction industry.

“There is bullying, harassment and discrimination in all occupations, not just construction, but contract construction presents a unique set of challenges,” said Jamie McMillan, a journeyman iron worker in Hamilton, Ont. and an apprentice boilermaker in Alberta.

“We have no HR (human resources) department or seniority and we often rely on a dispatch system to execute the hire-list,” McMillan said.

“Because the systems in some unions lack transparency, it opens the door to bullying, discrimination and inequality in many forms.”

In contract construction, McMillan says, employers can hire and lay off workers whenever they want.

“They do not need an excuse for laying off a worker,” she said. “They can just say the job is complete, and that the workers aren’t needed any more.”

McMillan says workplace bullying is difficult to monitor because it often goes unreported.

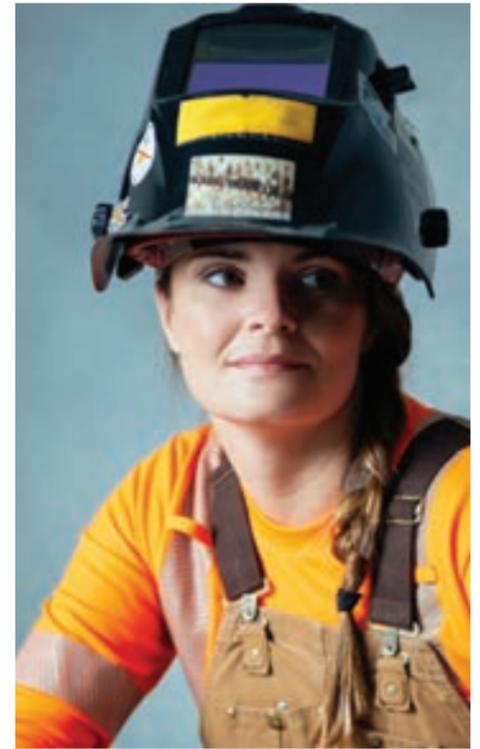
“To minimize bullying, employers and employees need to be proactive in documenting, reporting and disciplining bad behaviour,” she said.

“Many employers talk about a zero tolerance policy. But if a problem is reported, it is often dismissed. And those people who report the problem are either laid off or their



FILE PHOTOS

Jamie McMillan (above and at right) is a journeyman iron worker from Hamilton, Ont. and an apprentice boilermaker in Alberta. She explains that construction has a unique set of challenges when it comes to addressing bullying, discrimination and inequality.



work hours are reduced until they quit.”

McMillan says that although workplace codes of conduct should be followed, “everyone has a different tolerance for what they consider inappropriate.”

Is a workplace comment or action appropriate or not?

Vanessa Werden, a Vancouver lawyer and vice-president of Canadian Construction Women, suggests a method to decide: “Would you do it in front of your boss or significant other?”

WorkSafeBC, for its part, defines bullying and harassment as a single term, which

includes any inappropriate conduct or comment by a person towards another that the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause other person to be humiliated or intimidated.

“People aren’t mind readers. If you notice that someone is being picked on, speak up,”

Zoe Younger
Registered Clinical Counselor

Examples of behaviours or comments that might constitute bullying and harassment include verbal aggression or insults, calling someone derogatory names, harmful hazing or initiation practices, vandalizing personal belongings and spreading rumours.

“Sexual harassment includes the same types of behaviours or comments, but with a sexual undertone, often making the person on the receiving end of the conduct feel objectified or uncomfortable,” Werden said.

“Sexual harassment may include inappropriate jokes, comments on a person’s appear-

ance, inappropriate gifts, and unwanted advances and touching.”

Werden says most incidents are unreported and many people who have been humiliated or intimidated simply leave the industry.

“This is particularly true for women working in construction,” she said.

Vancouver-based registered clinical counselor Zoe Younger says bullying and harassment in the workplace, like many day-to-day problems in life, stem from conflicts in relationships with others.

To get along better with others requires learning and practicing simple interpersonal skills, plus “the sincere desire not to get even, or to be right, but to be happy.”

Younger has some practical tips for employers to promote good behavior in the workplace:

Be engaged. Talk to your employees one-on-one. Be aware of their relationships with their peers and ask about them.

Watch for changes in work performance, attitude, or unexplained illness or absences from work. Be curious and make no assumptions.

“These can often be a clue that there may be a problem at work,” said Younger.

Lead by example. Treat all employees similarly.

Younger’s tips for employees: Keep all relationships in the workplace professional and respectful, and try to be consistent with coworkers.

“It’s OK to be friends with some coworkers and not others after hours, but it’s also important that those coworker friendships don’t negatively influence how you treat people at work,” Younger said.

“Bullying isn’t just about being explicitly mean. It can also be about excluding people from camaraderie, leaving them feeling like they don’t belong.”

“Don’t bite your tongue,” said Younger. “People aren’t mind readers. If you notice that someone is being picked on, speak up. If you don’t feel like you can say something directly, tell your supervisor. And say something to the victim. Let them know that you noticed and ask them how you can help.”

Encourage your co-workers. “Notice something positive about at least one coworker every day, and tell them why you appreciate them,” said Younger.

“Although you might not prevent someone from being bullied, you can contribute to everyone feeling like they count. And, as a bonus, people tend to like others who notice the positive things around them.”



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Tackling workplace bullying and harassment requires learning and practicing simple interpersonal skills, says Zoe Younger.

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Innovation

Covergalls have women covered with safety gear designed for them

PETER KENTER
CORRESPONDENT

It's no secret to women working in the construction sector that some of the safety gear they're wearing doesn't quite fit. That's because it was designed for men. As CEO and creator of Sudbury-based Covergalls Inc. Alicia Woods is focusing on uniforms and equipment designed for women first.

Woods' background involves working for a supply and service business serving the mining sector.

"Covergalls was born out of my own frustration at having to use workwear designed for men," she says.

"From coveralls to hardhats to safety glasses there was nothing designed for women. I would wear my brother's coverall or just get the smallest of men's sizes and wear that. They didn't fit me properly which is a big safety concern. And for 10 years going underground I wouldn't drink anything before going underground. I would have to take everything off just to use the bathroom."

Woods started by modifying her own coveralls, working with a seamstress to improve the fit.

"We also incorporated a trap door for bathroom breaks, like you find in old school long johns," says Woods.

"Women started approaching me and asking me where I got them and asked me if I could make a pair for them."

She struck a deal with Vale Canada Ltd. to produce half a dozen coveralls incorporating the new design for a trial run with female mine workers.

"Vale collected feedback and helped me to modify the design to

meet all of their health and safety requirements," says Woods.

"Once their PPE committee approved the design, we started getting ready to go to market. We secured our first order with Vale in 2011."

Woods publicly launched Covergalls with a pitch on CBC's Dragons' Den.

"It was a terrifying experience, but extremely rewarding," she says. "It's intimidating to pitch your product to five very successful dragons."

Three dragons made an offer to buy 30 per cent of the company, although Woods ultimately chose to retain 100 per cent ownership.

Market demand soon spurred additional products: bib overalls, cargo pants, hoodies, toques and parkas. The material choices have also expanded to include flame-resistant garments and colours specific to each industry served.

"We're offering some of the clothing in camo, but that was just for fun," says Woods. "Women were asking us to produce some of our product line in camo for their personal use while they're ice fishing or hunting."

Covergalls has also teamed up with work glove manufacturer Mechanix Wear to produce a line of all-purpose safety gloves designed to fit women's hands.

"We're now getting orders from all over the world, in mining, construction, oil and gas, forestry and farming," says Woods.

"A lot of companies are using our products as an incentive to attract and retain women who are interested in employment in non-traditional sectors. We recently outfitted female workers at uranium mining



COVERGALLS

Covergalls work clothing for women focuses on uniforms and equipment designed for women. The success of the Sudbury, Ont.-based clothing line resulted in a Coverguys line being launched as well.

company Cameco because their surveys among female employees told them that PPE was an area they needed to work on."

Covergalls' commitment to expanding opportunities for girls and women in non-traditional industries now includes support of organizations such as the Canadian Association of Women in Construction and Women Building Futures.

About 70 per cent of the company's products are made in Canada, although a few higher-volume products are made at factories in India,

While the product line was initially offered online, the company has since secured distribution deals with companies including Acklands-Grainger, Cintas, Levitt-Safety and the commercial division of Mark's Work Wearhouse.

The success of the company subsequently spurred Woods to launch Coverguys, a male counterpart line, to create a one-stop shop for companies ordering Covergalls safety products.

"The Coverguys coverall also features the rear flap," says Woods. "Even guys find themselves in a position where they have to take off a lot of clothes when nature calls."

Safety professionals seek to secure more control

IAN HARVEY
CORRESPONDENT

It's time to set Canada's safety experts up as self-regulating professionals, says Paul Andre president of the Canadian Registered Safety Professionals (CRSP) and acting president and CEO of Workplace Safety North.

Pointing to home inspectors who were recently granted that right, paramedics and human resources professionals who are regulated and that dental hygienists and diagnostic sonographers are on the cusp of the same, he says OH&S (occupational health and safety) professionals should be next.

"The association found that an average of 672 workers were injured every day on the job in Canada in 2012,"

Paul Andre
Canadian Registered Safety Professionals

The CRSP is a non-profit entity which grants certification to qualified applicants and since inception in 1976 has done so for more than 6,000 people.

"However, because of the lack of regulation of OH&S professionals in Canada, there are many people claiming to be OH&S professionals without any formal education or professional training," he says. "It poses a public safety danger to Canadian workers. Regulating OH&S professionals as other countries have done would be a significant step forward in making Canada's workplaces safer and healthier."

Andre kicked off the campaign in mainstream media by writing a column calling for self-regulation last fall, noting it's in the public interest to uphold the highest standards when it comes to OH&S.

"In 2015, according to the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada, there were 852 workplace-related fatalities in Canada," he wrote. "Workplace injuries are even more common. The association found that an average of 672 workers were injured every day on the job in Canada in 2012 and those numbers only cover workplaces where workers can receive provincial compensation benefits."

The good news is that since OH&S regulations and training of OH&S professionals were beefed up, "the frequency of work-related injuries and deaths has fallen drastically since the 1980s."

Still, he says, that trend has flat lined and it's time to kick it up a notch with self-regulation.

The problem, as he says, is people claim to be OH&S professionals but really have nothing to back it up.

"Some have no formal education or professional training," Andre argues, "It poses a public safety danger to Canadian workers. Regulating OH&S professionals as other countries have done would be a significant step forward in making Canada's workplaces safer and healthier."

In many ways it is already happening, but it's not consistent, he says.

"In high risk areas like mining or oil and gas it is common for the OH&S functions to be managed by professionals," he says. "It's not always that way in smaller or mid-sized, family businesses who have to seek professional advice and guidance."

Knowing there has been standardized training and that

the professional has been certified in specific sector expertise is a benefit not just for workplace safety but for the business itself which can be confident it exercised due diligence in retaining or hiring a safety professional.

While overtures have been made both to the Ontario and Alberta governments about the concept and the feedback has been positive, implementation will have to be in a graduated and phased process he says.

"We have to walk before we run here," Andre says noting that setting up a registry may be the first logical step, followed by setting minimum standards for educational and experiential qualifications.

Alberta's NDP government is looking at overhauling their labour regulations so there's likely an opportunity there to advance the conversation, he says.

Ontario is heading into an election so the agenda is limited and further conversations beyond the civil service level will have to wait until after the new government is formed.

In some ways, he says, the next step is already in place. The certification requirements and process for the Canadian Registered Safety Professional designation are changing July 1, 2018.

It will require a combination of education, professional development and experience to qualify. Some applicants may get an exemption from some criteria based on their level of education.

Applicants will need a either a four-year Bachelor's degree in any field or a two-year diploma (or certificate) with a minimum of 900 hours or 60 credits in OH&S or a closely related field from a recognized academic institution.

They'll also need at least four years' experience in a field where OH&S is at least 50 per cent of their job descriptions at a preventative, professional level.

Training

Site supervisor role pivotal to workplace safety

DON PROCTER
CORRESPONDENT

Last summer Ontario's Ministry of Labour conducted a safety inspection blitz across Ontario's construction industry, evaluating the work of site supervisors.

It was for good reason. There has been an influx of young workers in the industry and a few "tragic incidents" have resulted in 2017, says Mark Elias, media relations and communications, Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (IHSA).

Over June and July, the MOL inspectors visited about 1,500 workplaces and issued close to 4,000 orders for violations, 292 of those were stop work orders.

"The role of a supervisor is clearly a huge piece of the success of health and safety in a workplace," says Enzo Garritano, president and CEO, IHSA.

He says the supervisor blitz makes sense because supervisors set the health and safety tone in the workplace.

"With competent supervisors, employers will have the oversight and control over health and safety in the workplace they need to ensure everyone returns home safely after a day's work and will help establish their due diligence in regards to workplace health and safety."

"Without their leadership, enforcement and commitment you leave it up to the workers," says Garritano, adding that the increase in young, inexperienced workers raised the potential for accidents.

"Without supervisors, you don't have the control you need as an employer and then your responsibility — your due diligence — is out the window."

The IHSA offers a two-day supervisory training course, which covers a supervi-

sor's responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). Training is specific to meet regulations in each industry sector. The six-module program covers: elements of supervising, legal responsibilities, communication and motivation, health and safety programs, and site emergencies and incident investigation.

"The primary goal is for IHSA to equip supervisors with what they need to prevent incidents, but it also serves to equip them with the knowledge to handle an incident without the need of outside help from the MOL," says Elias.

In 2016, 3,800 workers attended the basics in supervising course at the IHSA.

Garritano suggests that on almost any construction site there will be a chance for an inspector to find an infraction — an opportunity to write an order. No site is perfect and construction (unlike a warehouse where a worksite can be controlled and constant) is a changing environment every day.

He says among small contractors it is difficult to track which ones have trained supervisors partly because supervisors there might wear different hats.

"A worker might be a supervisor one week and be back on the tools the next, or move from one employer to another as demand for resources changes."

Garritano says small businesses employ 45 to 50 per cent of workers in Ontario's construction industry.

Many larger contractors have health and safety programs that include supervisor training.

Elias says a long-term goal is to see workplaces become self-reliant in health and safety. The role of the supervisor includes "a competent knowledge and understanding of the legis-



IHSA

The Infrastructure Health & Safety Association holds two-day supervisor training courses. The association believes the role of the supervisor is integral for a successful health and safety program on a work site.

lation — a fact and role/responsibility that not many supervisors realize."

"A construction company that is self-sufficient in health and safety practices and procedures can effectively prevent LTI's and reduce incidents altogether to remain more productive overall," says Elias.

Garritano says that there is a "heightened awareness" in the industry with respect to the role and importance of a supervisor on the oversight health and safety.

Under the OHSA, a supervisor is required by any contractor with more than five workers — an obligation some small employers aren't aware of, he says, noting the IHSA is doing outreach to clarify contractor responsibilities.

Over a span of several years, many small contractors don't have lost-time injuries, which can lull these employers into a false sense of security and prevent them from developing health and safety initiatives.

"They have to realize the risks still exist and that they may just have been lucky so far," says Garritano.

The IHSA teams up with unions and construction associations to conduct various training initiatives. The MOL runs various safety inspection blitzes annually in the industry based on consultation with the industry.

"These blitzes aren't done randomly," says Garritano, noting consultations are currently under way for the 2018-19 season.

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Safety Leader

Kenaidan's award-winning OH&S culture a prime company focus



KENAIDAN

Kenaidan won Silver in last year's Canada's Safest Employers Award competition. The company sees health and safety as a "continuous improvement" process. Pictured here is Katelyn Stack of Kenaidan.

DAN O'REILLY
CORRESPONDENT

Occupational health and safety is a prime mission for Kenaidan Contracting Ltd. which was one of two firms to receive Silver in last year's Canada's Safest Employers Award competition.

Sponsored by Thomson Reuters, the awards recognize companies from across Canada in 10 different industry categories for outstanding accomplishments in promoting the health and safety of their workers.

For Mississauga, Ont.-based Kenaidan a commitment to health and safety is a "continuous improvement" process which is evaluated by on a regular basis by a committee comprised of managers and employees from every department level.

It's a commitment which isn't restricted to the job site, says health and safety manager Patricia Pereira.

Under its Care Enough to

Act (CETA) set of corporate values, the company takes a broad based approach to how it interacts with its employees, subcontractors, and the community at large.

That includes promoting employees safety at home, raising money for charities, and spearheading a number of pro bono building projects for non-profit charity organizations, she says.

"I was afraid it might be the flavour of the month," says Pereira, recalling how CEO and co-founder Aidan Flatley proposed the CETA philosophy after attending a presidents and CEO conference several years ago at Bruce Power where the concept originated.

"But Aidan explained that it (CETA) would be defining what we were already doing and Bruce Power had no objection to us using the name."

Now in existence for more than a decade the

CETA program gives Kenaidan workers the freedom and discipline to observe and evaluate their co-workers behaviors and to encourage them to modify unsafe or potentially unsafe conditions by using a "peer-to-peer feedback process."

A CETA Rewards program allows them to nominate a fellow employee for caring enough to go out of their way to help someone else, to avoid safety violations and potential harm resulting from the hazards that they may not be aware of, or have not controlled in their work area, she explains.

That policy extends to subcontractors. If a project manager or superintendent believes a subcontractor is not in compliance with safety practices they have the right to raise that issue with the subcontractor.

"It's not about shaming them (the subcontractor).

It's about showing we care."

And subcontractors who demonstrate exceptional safety practices are recognized at Kenaidan's Volunteer Week celebrations which coincide with North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, says Pereira.

Promoting wellness and nutrition is also a major component of the program and the company also recently implemented CETA At Home to underscore the point its workers shouldn't forget about safety when they leave work at the end of the day.

Messages and advice on how to live safely at home are delivered through a combination of web and Facebook pages, and an internal newsletter.

"It's easy to get complacent (about safety) at home."

Noting how stressful it is to see co-worker injured on the job, she says employees should think about that trauma their spouses or children will experience: "if you're hurt in front them."

It is perhaps the community outreach/engagement component of CETA which differentiates it from other company health and safety programs. Employees are encouraged to give back to the communities they live and work in by volunteering their time and skills for building projects intended to help families with special needs, she says.

Those projects have ranged from erecting a wheelchair accessible ramp for a retired employee, to the 2010 retrofit of a 700-square-foot bungalow in Hamilton, Ont. to the 2016 restoration of the new home of Lighthouse,

an Oakville, Ont. facility which provides counselling services for children who have lost a parent, or a special friend.

A former church, the building required considerable renovation to transform it into a functional space for the approximately 250 children, youths and adults which are supported annually, as well as being able to accommodate future growth, she says.

"We take on these projects at no cost, with all the material and labour provided by Kenaidan and our subcontractors."

Usually, the projects are

undertaken on the recommendations of employees and sometimes the work is done on their own time. Some have also been approved after the company has received an external application, she says.

In response to a question about other initiatives, Pereira says: "we're aiming for Gold."

That is a reference to the 2018 Canada's Safest Employers competition. To be considered applicants have to submit detailed technical reports in approximately 15 different categories. Deadline for those submissions is June 1.



KENAIDAN

Kenaidan has a set of corporate values called Care Enough to Act which guides interaction between all levels of the company and the community. Pictured here is Mike Van Myl of Kenaidan.

Dress for success to win the war against the elements

PETER KENTER
CORRESPONDENT

Recent weather patterns that brought record low temperatures to parts of Canada were a stern reminder of the effects of cold on the human body, particularly for construction workers who spend time outdoors. If there's anyone who understands how to beat the cold, it's professor Gordon Giesbrecht, a physiologist who operates the Laboratory for Exercise and Environmental Medicine at the University of Manitoba.

Dubbed "Professor Popsicle" Giesbrecht has been known to test the effects of extreme environments on the human body by submerging himself in frigid water.

"We think of cold as something that we all know how to deal with," says Giesbrecht. "But new construction workers may need advice on working in cold temperatures, while there are seasoned construction workers who may not be dealing with the cold as efficiently as they should, just because they haven't gotten frostbite up until now."

Giesbrecht's basic message for construction workers is to remember the triad: cold bad, wetness worse, wind even worse. Every important strategy for beating cold weather stems from that.

"The best way to dress for the cold is layering," he says. "A few good layers can provide good insulation but also allow

you to layer up if you get too cold, or to layer down as you work and get hot and sweaty. If you're comfortable when you get to work, chances are you'll be uncomfortably warm after you work for a while. You don't want to come to work in a big snowmobile suit that has only two options—on or off."

Managing moisture is the next big strategy for beating the cold. Once we're nice and warm we begin to perspire. That moisture needs to go somewhere and where that moisture goes is critical.

"No system is going to be perfect, but what we want to do is to dress in clothing made of fibres that allow water or water vapour to travel through it to the outside," says Giesbrecht. "We want to minimize liquid on the skin, or next to the skin because that liquid sucks heat away from your body. A lot of clothing is made of cotton, but that's the death fibre. It sops up water, then holds it like a sponge and it's very difficult to dry out."

Many synthetic fibres are designed to insulate, while encouraging the movement of moisture away from the body. Giesbrecht also recommends Merino wool as a natural material with the same qualities.

Workers exposed to strong winds face additional challenges. "If you're working on top of a hydro pole or transmission tower, your outer layer needs to be wind resistant or wind-proof," says Giesbrecht.

"You don't want that wind blowing through your clothing and robbing you of heat. But you still need to get that water vapour out of your work clothes, or it will be like dressing in a garbage bag. It will be just like it's raining inside your clothes and the moisture is condensing next to your skin or freezing inside the outer layer. Look for outer clothing that's both waterproof and vapour permeable."

The metal in steel-toed boots also sucks heat away from the body. Giesbrecht recommends sizing a pair of boots for winter wear using several layers of socks — none of them cotton. The fit shouldn't be too tight, or it will restrict blood flow to the feet.

"Mitts are better than gloves, because they typically offer thicker insulation and keep your fingers together," he says. "If you need to do work that requires you to wear gloves, place a secondary pair of mitts over the gloves whenever you can."

Giesbrecht advises construction workers that they should never accept numbness of any kind when they're working in the cold.

"Numbness is a sign that the nerve receptors are so cold that they can't function properly," he says.

"Frostbite could be next. If you feel numb, you need to change something. Switch to mitts instead of gloves, jump around, fling your arms or get into a warm place. If you do nothing, numbness can lead to something worse."