



SPECIAL FEATURE June 26, 2020

WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

www.dailycommercialnews.com

Daily Commercial News

by ConstructConnect®

Stats show strange drop in women working in construction



IAN HARVEY
CORRESPONDENT

After several years of gains, the number of women in trades dropped in 2019, according to a recent Statistics Canada's [Labour Force report](#).

In 2019 there were 182,000 women in the construction sector out of a total work construction sector workforce of 1.463 million. That's down from 2018 when there were 186,300 women out of 1.437 million.

While there were fewer women — albeit only 4,300 — the number of men working also grew by 26,000.

It also comes on four years of growth: In 2017 there were 174,800 women in trades out of a total 1.409 million workforces. In 2016 it was 162,400 out of 1.385 million, in 2015, 158,200 out of 1.371 million.

It can make for depressing reading for those working overtime to raise the profile and numbers of women in construction trades but the numbers, apparently, don't tell the full story.

Nina Hansen, Executive Director at the British Columbia Centre for Women in the Trades ([BCWITT](#)) responded: "We have definitely not hit a wall. There are a lot of women that really want to pursue these careers — just like there are a lot of men that really don't but may be stuck in them for various reasons. However, women continue to face unique barriers to entering, advancing and staying in the trades."

[Apprenticeships are rising steadily](#), she says, and regionally B.C. is performing strongly with large numbers of women in the trades though some areas like Alberta have experienced a construction slowdown.

"Further, some women leave the trade for trades' adjacent jobs, which is not at all a bad thing; management, union representatives, inspectors, trades instructors, etc.," she says. "Or, they take a short-term leave to go to school — foundation programs are about 10 months long) — or they have children."

Indeed, says Cheryl Paron International Representative, First District (Canada), [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers](#), in B.C. 27 per cent of the union's provincial membership are women.

"I also think those numbers don't show women in the trades on tools but perhaps working in construction related jobs," she says, echoing a concern among stakeholders that there simply isn't enough data on the long-term progress of women in construction.

Luana Buratynski, president of the Canadian Association of Women in Construction, says their organization strives to attract women from across all trades to get involved with an industry group, not just because of the networking and support but to act as mentors and role models for other women in construction — or those considering construction.

"We need more women leaders because there are gaps in management in all facets of the sector," she says. "In groups like ours we want to help women develop the soft skills they'll need to move up in construction management."

And that applies to construction office workers as much as tradeswomen on the tools, she says, because career paths to management on site require a variety of skills beyond swinging a hammer or wiring a panel.

Tradeswomen, like any other skilled trade, are constantly upgrading their skills and learning new technology and they should also look at upgrading their management skills through membership in women-focused groups, she adds.

Still, she also feels that there's not enough data tracking of women in construction to know where they go, why they leave the sector and what would keep them working in construction.

It is the data which is critical, says Karen Walsh, executive director and project consultant at the Office to Advance Women Apprentices based in Newfoundland.

She says after there are some inspirational success stories proving women are adopting and adapting to construction skills trades. About 13 years ago Newfoundland and Labrador was about to see an explosion of large-scale industrial projects such as Muskrat Falls and Vale nickel.

The issue was a shortage of skilled trades, especially with many of the homegrown trades people off out west in the energy patch during that boom time.

In response, the government of the day put on a push to attract more women into apprenticeships.

"Still, we found that often women who took the basic courses didn't go on further," she says. "And so, when we looked, we found the barriers to getting employment were the issue."

The women either didn't live near the large projects and may also have had childcare issues and that in many cases men were getting the nod ahead of them.

She arrived nearly 10 years ago and immediately set about creating a database of names, skills and most importantly postal code.

"We could then search the database and match a skilled trade, level of experience and where that person lived," she says.

They also started advising women interested in the trades to match their choice of skilled apprenticeship with the region they lived in.

"There's not much point in going in for sheet metal worker if there are no jobs or companies where you live," she says. "We also started offering wrap around support for those women who did get jobs to ensure they didn't feel isolated when there were no other women working with them."

Slowly things picked up and women started getting hired at small and medium sized companies operating regionally. There was the usual sexist skepticism at first, she says, but the women soon proved their worth.

When she started less than three per cent of women were in trade jobs, today 13 per cent of the skilled trades positions in Newfoundland Labrador, P.E.I. and New Brunswick are occupied by women and that share is growing.

Economic Snapshot

Is a V-shaped recovery in Quebec's future?



John Clinkard

While Quebec, the province hardest by COVID-19, has had to temper its plans in order to unlock its economy, several forward-looking indicators suggest the province's economic pulse is quickening as it moves into the second half of this year.

Stage I unlocking gave a major boost to housing starts and home sales

First, after locking down much of the province, including the construction industry on March 25 to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the province on April 20 initially allowed work to restart on residential construction projects with a July 31 occupancy date. Then on May 11, the government fully unlocked the industry.

As a result, [May housing starts spiked higher to their second-highest level since March of 2019](#). All types of dwellings posted gains, led by a +92% m/m jump in starts of semi-detached units, followed by starts of single-family units (+43% y/y), row units (+31%) and apartments (+15%).

[Sales of existing homes also rebounded sharply \(+107%\)](#) in May. Sellers also entered the market in increasing numbers pushing the volume of new listings up by +202% m/m. However, the fact that the average price of homes sold in the province rose by a country-leading +8% y/y is a clear indication that unlocking the economy has unleashed significant pent-up demand.

Hiring in construction, manufacturing and retail rebounds in May

The above-noted reopening of the economy in early May had a dramatic impact on the province's labour market. After dropping by 556,000 jobs in April, [total employment rebounded by 231,000 in May](#). This job gain, which was more than five times the 43k rise reported in British Columbia, the province which posted the second-largest increase in hiring, was driven in large part by the full opening of the construction industry.

Other industries making major contributions to the month's hiring gain included manufacturing (+56k), retail and wholesale trade (+54k) and education (+35k). Almost all jobs added in May were full time and in the private sector, which highlights a rebound in business confidence.

Employment gains and rising consumer confidence to fuel consumer spending and underpin residential construction

The government's plans to ease COVID-19 restrictions and the surge in mostly full-time hiring, noted above, had a marked positive impact on consumer confidence in May. The [Conference Board in Canada's index of consumer confidence](#) increased to 91, after hitting a record low of 77 in April. While the index is still well below pre-COVID-19 levels, and there are lingering concerns about a second wave of COVID-19, the improvement in consumer buying plans, stronger growth of wages, a slight improvement in personal financial health and the increase in May home sales collectively point to a rebound in consumer spending in general and to stronger

growth of spending on house-related consumer durables in the second half of this year.

After a COVID-19 pause, non-res construction should pick up steam heading into 2021

[Statistics Canada's survey of Non-residential Capital and Repair Expenditures](#) that was carried out ahead of COVID-19, in late 2019, indicated that planned capital spending in Quebec would increase by 7.3% in 2020, the second strongest year-over-year gain among provinces in the country. Following the unlocking of the construction industry in late April, the [government has announced](#) that it intends to fast forward infrastructure work in the province by bypassing some of the usual checks and balances on major projects. Projects which would likely benefit from this reduction in red tape include the [Quebec City Tramway Project](#), the [Quebec Port Authority Container Terminal](#), [extension of Montreal's Metro Blue Line](#) and construction of a third bridge linking Quebec City and Île d'Orléans, as well as the building of 48 long-term care homes.

The bottom line

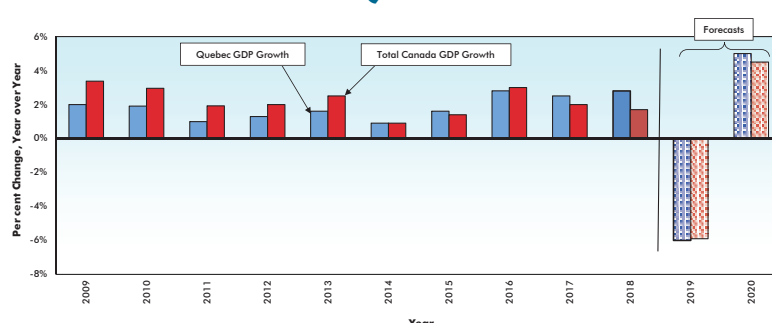
After posting growth in the range of +2.5% to +3.0 in 2019, there is little doubt the depressing impact of the lockdown on the economy to try and stop the spread COVID-19 in the first half of 2020, will cause the economy to contract in the range of -5.0% to -7.0% this year, to be followed by a rebound of +5.0% in 2021.

The strong forward-looking indicators noted above collectively suggest Quebec's economy is starting to recover and that it will expand at a faster pace during the remainder of 2020 and into 2021.

Regarding the letter of the alphabet which best describes the pattern of recovery, the evidence of strong pent-up demand, reinforced by the recent extension of CERB, suggest that for now a "V" is appropriate. However, given the fact the province's economic health is still very fragile, the effects of a second wave of COVID-19 could quickly change that "V" into a "W".

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.

Real* Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth — Quebec vs Canada



* "Real" is after adjustment for inflation.

Data Sources: Actuals — Statistics Canada; Forecasts — CanaData.
Chart: ConstructConnect — CanaData.

Outreach programs coupled with support and data prove successful

IAN HARVEY
CORRESPONDENT

Given the apparent drop in women in the trades reported by Statistic Canada is enough being done to attract women into the trades and keep them there?

"I'd hesitate to say yes," Lindsay Kearns, a Red Seal electrician and outreach co-ordinator for the BC Centre for Women in the Trades (BCCWITT) says.

"I meet women in their mid-30s like me who find out what I do and say, oh, I never thought I could go into a trade like that."

Reaching out to kids in high school and getting them into shop class — especially all girl classes — takes a lot of the stigma and embarrassment out of the picture, she says.

"We can always do more," she adds noting she was a late starter and many women also enter the trades at a later age.

"There's all kinds of discussion from PPE that fits, dealing with pregnancy on the job and childcare," Cheryl Paron International Representative, First District (Canada), International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, in B.C. says. "Sometimes it is just about having someone to talk to after a bad day."

The outreach programs have been working, she says, focusing on kids in Grade 9 and up is critical for both boys and girls in terms of flagging construction as a career path.

"One of the key things I think is to have more women in leadership positions in construction as role models," she says.

Lindsay Amundsen, Director of Workforce Development for Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU), says data is essential and we just don't have the right data.

"Our office received federal funding a year ago for a pilot project to gather and track data in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and

Nova Scotia," she says. "We need to be digging deeper."

The hope is that the pilot will show the merit and logistics around having a consistent set of compatible data from across Canada for analytics and to drive future recruiting and retention programs for women in the construction trades.

Beyond the data, however, she says, ensuring places in training programs and job sites is also a critical tool to drive numbers.

"We need to look at Community Benefit Agreements, which they have with First Nations communities, for example," she says. "By legislating a Community Benefit Agreement, we could ensure that vulnerable groups like women would get access to skills training and jobs on major projects."

Kearns says construction is a tough job to acclimatize to. It starts early in the morning, doesn't easily accommodate child care issues and isolation and loneliness are common issues faced by women, because there's no one to talk to about their unique challenges.

Even if there are other women, being chatty and distracted on the job will quickly draw the ire of the site supervisor.

"We started a weekly meeting for women three years ago on the first Wednesday of the month," she says. "It's not run by the union, it's run by us. You can bring your kids and it has been wildly successful."

Women are free to talk about challenges such as finding PPE that fit, toxic work cultures, social isolation and trying to find a peer mentor, she says.

Sometimes toxic worksites are manifested in a lack of basic human decency, like having a clean, sanitary washroom so a woman — or a man — isn't so repelled and disgusted they have to leave the site to find a suitable toilet, Kearns says.



Also, male or female, being an apprentice is hard. They tend to get assigned the dirtiest and most menial jobs and sometimes it feels like they're being singled out. Women especially begin to feel they might be getting the raw treatment simple as a way to force them out.

"You feel the supervisor is not treating you with respect," she says.

"You're given a broom and told to clean out the basement or organize the materials. My journey person used to have me clean up the van."

For a rookie, it's hard to know what's normal and talking to other women in the trade quickly clears up any misconception.

"They're like, oh, yeah, that's totally normal job for the apprentice and that's your job," she says.

One of the recent, biggest breakthroughs was the government decree that Com-

munity Benefit Agreements be included in project contracts ensuring skilled trade jobs went to women and other vulnerable groups, says Karen Walsh, executive director and project consultant at the Office to Advance Women Apprentices.

Collaborating with the trade unions also produced a united determination to get women into the trade, and more importantly, help them stay through.

"It's hard because your job is to finish the project and put yourself out of a job," she says. "Women were saying, I quit because I can't take working four months and then not working. It is a cycle and they have bills to pay."

It's the data which is so important she says and she's setting up pilot projects in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia to add to the established cluster. B.C. also has a good data collection scheme in place.

Duron Ontario Ltd. is Proud to Employ a Diverse Team of Women

Women at Duron hold roles such as Department Manager, Head of Sales and Marketing, Site Superintendent, Estimator and Project Coordinator.

This year, we are delighted to profile Elisa Gorniak, P.Eng., Department Manager of Waterproofing, Roofing and Mastic Department. As a former consulting engineer at WSP (formally Halsall Associates), Elisa was recruited to Duron and became the first woman to manage a department. Today, she oversees a department comprising three sections. Elisa leads Duron's high-profile commercial and residential projects. Two of her notable projects include the waterproofing and roofing of the Transit City complex in Vaughan and waterproofing one of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT stations. In Elisa's personal life, she is a busy mom of 3 young boys and a fitness enthusiast.

Q & A with Elisa Gorniak, P.Eng.

What advice would you give a woman interested in working in construction?

As with any industry there are many attributes to success including being confident in what you know and being open to learn and grow. When it comes to any male dominated field, my advice to all women is to be confident in your abilities and to 'sit at the table'.

What is the best part of your job?

I like the autonomy I have to manage the department including high profile projects. I also get to work with some great people.



Tel: 905 670 1998 • Fax: 905 670 4662
Email: info@duro.ca • www.duro.ca

Heavy equipment operation a family tradition for Roy

GRANT CAMERON
CORRESPONDENT

As a young girl, Renee Roy would visit her dad on construction sites and watch in wonderment as he went about his job operating heavy equipment. She knew back then that one day she'd follow in his footsteps.

Today, at 43, after working for years as a civil engineer and foreperson, she's finally living that dream. A few years back, she opted to pursue her passion, took the necessary training and became a heavy equipment operator.

"I just love the work and being outside, that's what it's all about for me," she says. "I just like being in an environment where I'm digging in dirt and constructing things. I always like creating something new."

She's worked on just about every type of job involving heavy equipment, from pushing dirt on building sites in downtown Toronto to building pipelines.

"I don't want to live in dirt, but I like digging in dirt," she says. "I just like a big sandbox to me."

In many ways, Roy was destined for the trade. While her dad, the late Emilien Roy, was an operator, two of her uncles also ran heavy equipment.

"I felt more at home, more at ease in that job. It was more of my calling than being a technician,"

Renee Roy
Heavy Equipment Operator

"It was always like a family thing and I always liked construction, just building things. I'd always rather be hands on. I was always fascinated by machinery and always wanted to run them."

She didn't get into the trade, though. Her mother was against it because she was a woman, says Roy.

Roy did work on small construction projects as a teenager in New Brunswick. While working at a campground, she built trails around the park. She used a farm tractor to do the work.

She went on to college and took civil



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Roy says she loves operating heavy equipment because she likes 'digging in dirt and constructing things.' Her late father Emilien Roy was an operator as were two of her uncles.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Renee Roy became a heavy equipment operator after years of work as a civil engineer and foreperson.

engineering technology, the next best thing to actually running equipment, and remained in that vocation for 10 years. Although it was an office job, she'd still go out on construction sites.

For a while, Roy worked on designing projects. She managed the build of a flea market. Later, she went to work as a foreperson at a diamond mine in Sudbury before moving to the U.S. for a few years.

subdivision. Roy has also worked with Crosslinx Transit Solutions on the Eglinton Cross-town light rail transit project, and with PCL. She's worked on foundations for high-rise buildings and a parking garage at Markham Mall.

Recently, she was working as a hoist operator on residential and commercial high-rise buildings. The last four and a half years have been spent working in and around Toronto.

Roy has now learned how to operate many types of heavy equipment. She prefers working on dozers and excavators.

Working in a male-dominated field isn't easy, she notes, and there are still issues on worksites.

"Over the years, I've just kept telling myself I'm stronger than that and I'm not going to let them direct my life. You've got to keep strong,"

Renee Roy
Heavy Equipment Operator

Roy later separated from her husband and returned to Canada. All she had was a duffle bag.

She went to her uncle's house and slept on his couch for a while. She concluded it was time to do something for herself.

Eventually she enrolled in a heavy equipment training program and began her second career — the one she'd wanted to pursue all along.

Roy was the only female in a class of 60. "When I saw that I had an opportunity to get into that field, I felt more at home, more at ease in that job. It was more of my calling than being a technician."

"I went right to the pipeline with Clarkson Construction in Hamilton and I was there for a couple of weeks before I got a phone call to work in Toronto," she recalls. "I was oiling on the pipeline and I did a little bit of operating because I was an apprentice when I was there."

She also worked as a rock truck driver with York Excavating in Hamilton, hauling material in rock trucks for building a new

Roy says she'd like to work underground in a mine or tunneling job on her next venture.

"I'd like to get into the mining field, to be honest, or back to the pipeline. I want to get back into digging."

Although she's worked on many jobs, Roy says she still has a lot to learn and wants to get more seat time on heavy equipment.

"I don't want to get into a spot where it's overwhelming and I don't know what to do. I just want to get more into it like digging and excavating."

Away from work, Roy enjoys spending time with her two grandchildren. She has a six-year-old granddaughter who'd originally expressed interest in being an operator but now wants to be an astronaut.

She still has hopes that her three-year-old grandson, though, might follow in her footsteps.

"My grandson has a little excavator at home for the yard and he just loves it. I keep telling my son, 'Maybe you'll lose your mechanic and he'll be an operator.'"

Manufacturer and Distributor

of hot forged bolts, specialty threaded products and fasteners
in accordance with the highest quality standards — **Niagara Fasteners.**




Our manufacturing range is from 1/2" to 2 1/2" diameter, and M16 to M36.

Larger diameter blanks and, all common grades are stocked and ready for threading to your specifications.

All Major Head Configurations

Hex; Heavy Hex; Square Carriage; Guard Rail; Specials.



SAE Grades 2,5,8; ASTM Grades A307-B; A193-B7-B8; A320-L7; A325; A354-BC or BD; A449; A490; Stainless.

Threading

Fully threaded rods and studs from 1/4" to 6" diameter UNC - UNF - ACME - Metric - British - Rope.

Custom to your specifications: straight; bent; re-bar; multi-unit.

Anchor Bolts



ISO 9001 Registered
TSSA QA 423
CSA Z299.3

Precision Machining

We have CNC lathes with live tooling and bar feeding capabilities, and a fully equipped machine shop with presses, benders, saws, drills and mills, welders and conventional lathes. With our in house capabilities and our standard off the shelf fasteners we are able to offer a complete line of structural bolting, on time and at a competitive price.



Niagara Fasteners
INC.

6095 Progress Street, P.O. Box 148, Niagara Falls, ON Canada L2E 6S8 905.356.6887
1.800.263.3602 fax 905.356.5747 nfsales@niagarafasteners.com www.niagarafasteners.com



Robin Priestly

Margaret Taylor

WHEN WOMEN SUPPORT EACH OTHER, WONDERFUL THINGS HAPPEN

The construction industry needs more women in leadership - and the industry deserves it. Women bring **intelligence, ability, and work ethic** to any workplace. The **Ontario Association of Demolition Contractors** is an advocate for Women in Construction, and we look forward to continuing to celebrate, hire, and train women in this field.

What's our secret to success? **HARD WORK.**

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF
DEMOLITION CONTRACTORS (OADC)



70 Leek Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1H1
TEL: 289-485-1017 FAX: 416-613-0227 www.oadc.ca

Women of Powerline Technicians opens lines to electrical careers

DAN O'REILLY
CORRESPONDENT

Employment in this country's electricity sector is no longer the exclusive domain of men, says the founder and executive director of Women of Powerline Technicians (Women of PLT).

Women are making strides in obtaining apprenticeships and securing employment. But they still have a long way to, says Lana Norton, the second female graduate from a powerline technician program in Ontario.

Canada's electricity sector contributes more than \$34 billion to the country's gross domestic product and approximately 89,000 Canadians are employed in the energy sector trade and technical roles.

"And yet women only constitute about seven per cent of that workforce and female powerline technicians nationally represent less than five per cent of the available trade positions."

Advancing the role and participation of women in the industry was the driving force for creating the non-profit organization in 2016, she says.

"I couldn't see anyone behind me," says Norton, a 2011 graduate of Cambrian College's powerline technician course.

By that she means there were no other women in successive courses and that realization help provide the spark for creating Women of PLT.

"Women want to be powerline technicians because they enjoy being outside, working from heights and the pride which comes with installing infrastructure with their hands."

Headquartered in Ottawa where Norton lives and works, the association is comprised of two chapters — one in that city and the second in Toronto where its far-flung members meet each year for an informal networking event which includes attending a baseball game at the Rogers Centre.

In the four years the association has been in existence it has grown to 100 members who represent utilities and contractors across Canada, some in the United States, and a handful overseas. They stay connected through an electronic newsletter, an Instagram platform, and a 24/7 online accessible peer group.

"Mostly word of mouth," says Norton, when asked how women in the industry learned about the association.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Lana Norton is the founder and executive director of Women of Powerline Technicians. She is the second ever female graduate from an Ontario powerline technician program.

But more than just networking is involved. In partnership with Utilities Kingston, it has established a \$1,000-bursary for students who are enrolled in a powerline technician program with a registered Ontario college.

It is open to both men and women, but to be considered a student must submit a 1,000-word maximum essay on the benefits of a diversified workforce in the electricity sector.

"We're so excited Utilities Kingston was our first establishing partner for the bursary," says Norton, explaining the bursary's purpose is to get students thinking about how diversity contributes to the services utilities provide.

And diversity means not just increasing employment opportunities for women, but also for racialized minorities, aboriginals, and other marginalized groups, she stresses.

Plans for a second bursary are underway and details will be released in the fall, she says.

Last year the association also signed on to Natural Resources Canada's Equal 30 which is designed to advance gender equality in the energy sector by 2030.

And earlier this year it also partnered with Skills Ontario and Kickass Careers to promote apprenticeships for youth in fields less high profile than easily identifiable ones such as

plumbers, welders, and electricians.

"This is where we see great careers such as meter technicians, substation electricians, powerline technicians, systems operators, and utility arborists."

A planned Skills Ontario educational fair in Toronto, which would have included a Women of PLT booth, had to be cancelled because of COVID-19. So, it was presented online and one of the highlights was a talk by a recent female powerline technician graduate, she says.

Asked about her own entry into the industry, Norton says: "electricity always made sense to me."

"I didn't have to see each closed or open switch to understand if the power was going to be on or off within a circuit. I knew I wanted to be in electrical and working from heights and outdoors appealed to me. Once I knew that, powerline was the only option."

There were other considerations as well. She became a mother at the age of 20 and entering an apprenticeship meant that she could earn an income, attend school and not take on debt.

That entry was not without challenges, although Norton downplays the struggles she had to overcome, notably failed attempts to land an apprenticeship.

"I kept getting rejection letter after rejection letter."

When one firm said it only hired powerline technician graduates as apprentices, Norton moved from her Ajax home to Sudbury to enroll in Cambrian's powerline technician course. At the time, it was the only college in Ontario offering such a program.

After graduating she obtained employment as an apprentice powerline technician with a distribution company in Ottawa. "I climbed poles and worked from heights to construct and repair overhead distribution lines."

Two years later she became a field operator, a position which required responding and investigating lost power occurrences and then restoring power. "I describe my time in that role as responding to everything that goes bump in the night."

From there she took on her current role as a field technician where she supports the identification, development and implementations of construction projects in the electricity sector and advises on technical issues to ensure those projects are completed safely, on time and on budget.

A partner you can trust

Managing the success of your construction business can be challenging in today's evolving marketplace.

When you partner with Aviva for your surety needs, you can count on us to provide you with:

- Expert advice and consultation for your specific project
- Our commitment to help you meet your business goals
- A stable partnership focused on the long-term

With more than 100 years of expertise behind us, you can trust Aviva as your valued business partner.

Contact your broker to learn more.



avivacanada.com    

Insurance – Home | Auto | Leisure & Lifestyle | Business | Surety

Aviva and the Aviva logo are trademarks used under license by the licensor.



20V^{MAX*}
LITHIUM ION

200+
PRODUCTS

OUR
FASTEST GROWING
SYSTEM



GET MORE DONE™** with **200+ PRODUCTS** in the DEWALT 20V MAX* line. All tools come with upgraded features, superior ergonomics and use Lithium-Ion batteries. For extreme performance, step up to the XR® series and get advanced electronics, extended runtime and faster application speeds.



Learn More at www.DEWALT.ca

GUARANTEED TOUGH.®

Copyright ©2019 DEWALT. The following are examples of trademarks for one or more DEWALT power tools and accessories: The yellow and black color scheme; the "D"-shaped air intake grill; the array of pyramids on the handgrip; the kit box configuration; and the array of lozenge-shaped humps on the surface of the tool. *With respect to the DEWALT 20V MAX*: Maximum initial battery voltage (measured without a workload) is 20 volts. Nominal voltage is 18 **DeWALT 20V MAX* vs. DeWALT 18V NiCad..

The joy of 'building and creating' helps O'Hearn achieve dream career

DAN O'REILLY
CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-one-year-old Kate O'Hearn has always tried "to walk my own path" and perhaps that is why she already holds a supervisory position in the construction industry.

Of course, she also acknowledges the considerable help, guidance, encouragement, and inspiration she has received along her career journey from family members, teachers, colleagues, and other women in the construction industry.

As a junior site supervisor for Burlington, Ont.-based GEN-PRO, a large-scale commercial renovator, she is responsible for operating job sites as safely and efficiently as possible, scheduling sub trades, working with project managers and clients and finishing projects on time and budget.

She was offered the position in the spring of 2019 even before graduating from Mohawk College's Construction Engineering Technician-Building Renovation program.

"I knew from a young age that sitting at a desk was not the life for me and that I felt empowered and joy in building and creating," says O'Hearn, on the initial start of her career path.

But that awareness became even more crystalized in high school where she studied woodworking, the one subject she wasn't bored with.

"I excelled at wood shop because I found joy in it and only wished that class lasted two periods not just one. We (her classmates) were on our feet, learning about big machines that could turn ordinary pieces of wood into amazing creations."

There were also several career introduction class trips to the college's Stoney Creek Campus for Skilled Trades including one which featured a women-in-trades seminar.

"I was truly inspired by the guest speakers who gave us young girls the truth, the hardships and rewards about being a woman in the trades."

Even before completing high school she had made the decision to enter the trades.

"My parents were very pleasantly surprised, but not too surprised as I was always building things as a child or trying to anyways. They were happy I was getting into trades and never doubted my ability to take on the industry."

At that point she wasn't sure exactly which sector of the industry she wanted to enter and that was the catalyst for conducting extensive research on Mohawk's various programs. Eventually she chose Construction Engineering Technician-Building Renovation.

"It (the program) was too good to pass up."

With a course content that encompasses entrepreneurship and business management studies, AutoCAD instruction, reading and drawing blueprints by hand, architectural history, and building theory, the program extends beyond just learning how to build and renovate homes, she points out.

"It provides students with the opportunity to explore the industry outside of just working on a site."

As well, CET-BR is very much a "base learning program" which empowers graduates with the skills and knowledge to



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Kate O'Hearn is a junior site supervisor for Burlington, Ont.-based GEN-PRO, a large-scale commercial renovator. She is responsible for operating job sites as safely and efficiently as possible, scheduling sub trades, working with project managers and clients and finishing projects on time and budget.

consider many different options.

"Most students come out of the program and start a carpentry apprenticeship right away, or they can go into management, or start a small business. I still have completing an apprenticeship in my sights, but the job I have now is more management and general construction."

At the beginning of her course there were three other women in the class, but two dropped out during the two-month teachers' strike, and the third chose a different career after finishing the program.

During her time at the college O'Hearn also matched her studies with a passion for humanitarian causes and volunteered in two college/Hamilton Housing-sponsored Habitat for Humanity projects in that city.

As well, she was a participant in a two-part college initiative to renovate a school in Jamaica. Measurements, plans, and other project details were scoped out by O'Hearn, a fellow CET-BR student, and a teacher in the fall of 2018. They had accompanied a group from the college's Fennell campus who taught computer skills to the Jamaican pupils.

Using those plans, a large group of CET-BR students and a handful of teachers completed the renovation the following February.

In recognition of those volunteer initiatives, O'Hearn was one of several Mohawk students who received the college's Celebration of Learning Award in 2019. The annual awards recognize students who maintain high academic performance while making significant commitment to the experiences of their peers, plus their community involvement.

"I now can see a future of combining my two loves of building and helping people who need it most to contribute to the world in an uplifting way."

For now, though, she is focused on her job as junior site supervisor—a job which has a lot of pressure and responsibility.

"But there is no shortage of people within my company and others that are willing to lend a hand whether it be teaching me a new skill or giving me advice on how to deal with tough situations."

Her success on the job is due to the management, estimating, plan reading and drawing, entrepreneurship and other skills she learned at Mohawk and the teachers who provided that training. Recalling her high school days when she attended the women-in-trades seminar, O'Hearn also says she continues to draw strength and inspiration from those female construction leaders who spoke about the truth, the hardships and rewards about being a woman in the trades.

Industry Perspectives Op-Ed

PCA's women members in construction are role models

DANNA O'BRIEN
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

They bend pipe. They move earth. They juggle site logistics. No, they aren't superheroes; they're women who've made construction their chosen field at member companies of the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada (PCA). And whether they realize it or not, they're role models; driving a change in attitude and culture and proving there is a place for women in construction.

There's no question that change has been slow. Of the more than one million tradespeople who make up Canada's construction workforce, only a fraction of them are women; about 4.7 per cent. But as Carol Anne DeNeve sees it, "this decade is the perfect storm, the stars are aligning and inroads are being made."

DeNeve is the office and human resources manager at McLean Taylor Construction Limited and Stone Town Construction Limited in St. Marys. As demographics shift and baby boomers retire in large numbers, DeNeve says there's a notable change in attitude.

"As the workforce becomes younger,

women are more widely accepted. Now, as more women come on board, it's all about where workers are needed. It makes no difference whether they're men or women."

Miranda Van Rooyen started out as a summer student at Van Rooyen Earthmoving Ltd. in Woodstock, Ont. Her dad is a foreman at the company and encouraged her to "give it a try and see how it goes." Now into her ninth season in construction, she's earned her way from driving a packer and rock truck, to becoming the company's first female bulldozer operator.

"It took me a long time to admit to myself that I actually like it," says the 24-year-old, who graduated from university with a degree in psychology and worked in the mental health industry, before realizing how much she missed construction and working outdoors.

"That's when I decided to stick with it," says Van Rooyen, who hopped on a bulldozer for the first-time last year. "It was a new challenge, it felt more hands on, and I discovered I like working with my hands."

Van Rooyen's goal is to learn to run every machine. Her advice to other women considering a career in construction is to be positive.

"I'm not tall or big, but I can drive a big

machine. It's not about brute strength. Everyone brings a different skill set. Just bring a good attitude."

Madeleine Becke, who graduated with a mechanical engineering degree, is a project co-ordinator at JMR Electric Limited in Exeter. Always "really big on organizing," she reviews shop drawings, organizes permits, equipment and sub-contractors before construction gets underway on public projects, like schools and hospitals.

"For as long as I can remember I wanted to be in an industry where I could prove myself," Becke explains. She grew up helping her dad with projects, from basement renovations to deck building.

"In construction or any other male-dominated industry, you have to be confident. If I had a different opinion, my father always encouraged me to speak my mind."

Becke and Van Rooyen both have dads who are strong role models. Adriana Brouwer, a first term plumbing apprentice who also works at JMR, was encouraged by a friend's grandmother who believed the skilled trades have a lot to offer women.

"She always emphasized how getting in the

trades would be an essential under your belt and something you could be proud of accomplishing," says the 21-year-old. "I remember that every day."

Brouwer, who started at JMR six months ago, worked for a while in retail and manufacturing before finding her calling in the construction trades, where she shapes metal as she builds and installs boilers in public buildings.

"I think if given the opportunity, a lot of women would enjoy construction. It makes you feel that you can stand with the rest of them."

Women are wanted and needed in construction to counter a massive wave of retirements. Also, the door will open even wider for women, as construction plays a crucial role in rebuilding the economy from COVID-19. For women graduating from high school or considering a career change, construction is the industry of opportunity, where their skills have never been more valued or in demand.

Danna O'Brien is the principal at O'Brien Communications and wrote this op-ed on behalf of the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada.