



British Columbia Construction Association Addresses Construction Skills Shortage Receives IEC-BC Leadership Recognition Award

VICTORIA, BC - Those in the construction industry have long known that BC would be hard-pressed to keep up with demand for skilled labour and the 2015 numbers released by BuildForce Canada, a national industry labour market body, reinforce the hard truth. Within the next 10 years, there will be 40,000 retirements across 34 trades in BC's construction industry and an additional expansion demand of 19,000 skilled workers.

BC Construction Association (BCCA) President Manley McLachlan says with much of the work in the province's north, employers are challenged in attracting people to the jobsites. With support from the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC), BCCA developed an online Hire Guide (www.hireguide.ca) to help construction employers connect with new Canadians. As well, through its Skilled Trades Employment Program (STEP), BCCA is helping workers, many of them new Canadians, to enhance their skills and connect with jobs.

BCCA was recognized for its best practices and innovative solutions to immigrant employment at the inaugural IEC-BC leadership awards on April 9. IEC-BC honoured the contributions of 13 individuals and organizations that are helping skilled new Canadians integrate into BC workplaces.

With \$280 billion in construction projects planned or underway in BC, McLachlan says there is a great demand for skilled workers. "New Canadians can be discouraged when they discover their credentials are not recognized in BC, but that doesn't mean there's not work for them" says McLachlan.

"Employers want skills and some evidence of experience," says McLachlan. "A good portion of STEP is dedicated to helping immigrants. We're helping people to unpack their resumes and break out their skills. We connect them to employers and provide them with supports. Our staff works with both the employer and the job seeker."

In building the online Hire Guide, McLachlan says BCCA called on the learning and best practices of STEP, achieved over that program's 10 years in operation. The guide focuses employers on the realities of a skills shortage in their industry and helps them through the process of hiring new Canadians.

McLachlan says not only large firms will feel the pinch of a skills shortage. Some 85 per cent of construction companies in BC employ 10 people or fewer. He says in parts of Europe trades training can start at age 15, "so you can get a 35-year old carpenter with huge experience under his belt. That can be a major asset to a small construction company and STEP is helping make those connections."



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Funded by the Government of Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Province of BC, IEC-BC is a provincial non-government organization that stimulates the integration of skilled immigrant talent into the province's workforce by fostering solutions, building connections and being a champion to help employers attract and retain skilled immigrant talent.

To learn more about the IEC-BC Leadership Recognition awards visit <http://iecbc.ca/2015-leadership-awards>