

Construction owners come together to keep Canada building

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OTTAWA – Some of Canada’s largest construction owners have developed a national strategy to address the critical need for a skilled workforce that is capable of building and maintaining the country’s roads, bridges, electrical power plants and other large-scale industrial projects.

Their consensus plan will help keep Canada’s economic recovery on track, keep its workers working, and create new opportunities for youth and those who are underrepresented in the construction industry, including women and aboriginals.

“We saw in that period up to 2008 how a shortage of skilled labour could negatively impact our work, delay projects, and increase costs. And, we saw how little any one company or organization could do about it,” said Steve Williams, chief operating officer of Suncor Energy Inc.

With Canada’s Construction Sector Council forecasting a need for more than 300,000 new workers – approximately 25 per cent of the industry’s current workforce – by 2019, the time to act is now.

“As construction owners, we decided to band together and commit to work with contractors, labour groups, government, educators and trainers to address these workforce challenges,” said Williams.

Part of that effort entails training for unemployed Canadians, retention strategies for older workers, and the importance of Temporary Foreign Workers in the short-term.

Construction and maintenance workers in Canada build, install, maintain, repair and renovate more than \$220 billion of infrastructure annually. The construction industry employs 1.2 million workers, accounts for six per cent of total Canadian employment, and generates more than 12 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product.

“So, the opportunity for work is there,” continued Williams. “And, when you consider Canada’s aging workforce, an increasing investment in new infrastructure, and a greater need to maintain that which we already have, the need will only grow.”

As part of the solution, Ed Martin, CEO, Nalcor Energy said, “We are committed to focusing on educating youth about potential career paths within the skilled trades, and the potential career paths within the industry. This requires a commitment by owners, contractors and governments to support apprentices during upswings as well as

downturns in the economy. For Nalcor, the investment in our workers is the best investment we can make for the future.”

Suncor COO Williams added, “The plan will also help to attract more aboriginals and women, and facilitate the integration of recent immigrants into the industry. Ensuring our workplaces afford opportunity for all is critical to our success.”

David Podmore, Chairman and CEO of Concert Properties – a developer of residential, commercial and industrial properties supports the coordinated effort. “This plan recognizes that many stakeholders have a role to play but we must move forward as quickly as possible and avoid duplication of effort.”

Construction owners contributing to the strategy included B.C. Hydro, Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Irving Oil, Nalcor Energy, Nexen Inc., Ontario Power Generation, Shell Canada, Suncor Energy, and Syncrude Canada Limited.

Their work has been published as “[Meeting Construction and Maintenance Workforce Challenges: Construction Owners Strategy, 2011 to 2016](#),” which includes a summary of actions and an implementation plan. The strategy and implementation plan is available for download at www.constructionforecasts.ca.

On behalf of the owners, the Construction Sector Council will facilitate media enquiries. For more information contact:

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