



Construction careers too often overlooked, ignored

By Holli Moncrieff
For the Free Press

Very few careers let you see the fruits of your labor like the construction industry. This booming business sector offers many opportunities to build a great future.

"One of the most satisfying things about this job is seeing what you built," Chris Lorenc, president of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, says.

"There's a sense of accomplishment that you don't have with all jobs," Mr. Lorenc says. "There's a lot of pride in our industry."

Construction workers are really getting an office with a view, he adds.

"You can be outdoors a lot enjoying the elements - not cooped up in the office," Mr. Lorenc says.

"But it doesn't matter if you prefer an indoor office or you're a more rugged individual who prefers the great outdoors.

"There's something for everyone in this business, and you're limited only by your own initiative."

One of the biggest advantages in pursuing a construction career is that you are almost guaranteed a job.

"The average age of a person in our industry is over 50, and they're all going to be retiring soon," explains Ryan Dalgleish, business manager of BPC Building Professionals.

Many different careers

"There are no people coming in to replace them, and we need to fill the gap coming up when people leave the industry because of old age," Mr. Dalgleish says.

"We're short of actual skilled laborers that contractors can rely on to do the job right."

Many different careers are available today in the province's construction industry. The business needs credit managers, inventory control people, truck drivers, foremen, electronic superintendents, surveyors, estimators and skilled journeymen in apprenticeship trades like welding, plumbing, drywall, painting and electronics.

Also needed are heavy equipment operators - people to run the bulldozers, backhoes, graders and front-line loaders.

"The new equipment is quiet,

comfortable and air-conditioned - it's really fun to operate," Mr. Lorenc says. "Technology in this industry is increasing quite rapidly."

This constantly evolving technology means that working in the construction industry is a continual learning process, says Gervin Greasley, executive vice-president of the Winnipeg Construction Association.

"But you don't have to put out thousands of dollars in education before you get your first job. You learn as you go, so you're getting paid while you learn," Mr. Greasley says.

"No one mentions construction to students as a possible career,

so there's a lot of opportunities in the industry that young people don't think about."

The construction industry still suffers from a bad reputation, Mr. Dalgleish adds.

"The trades have always been something people go into when they think there's nothing else - they associate it with an image of the scummy contractor - it has a bad perception," he says.

But the potential wherever you go is unlimited, and not everyone is suited for an office job," Mr. Dalgleish says.

"Some people like working with their hands and seeing what

they've accomplished at the end of the day."

There are other advantages to working in the industry, Mr. Dalgleish says.

"There's lots of secure, full-time jobs that pay better than a lot of office jobs, and you can move up the ladder quicker than in other industries.

Highly mobile job

"There's no limit to it but how hard you're willing to work. Some people like having a job where they're doing something different every day - being outside, doing something with their hands, seeing what they accom-

plish." Construction workers must be willing to travel constantly, Mr. Greasley stresses.

"This is a highly mobile industry because you have to go where the work is, but you're able to travel places where tourists don't get to go."

One of the biggest changes in the industry over the past decade is the growing number of women involved.

"There's equal opportunity in this industry for women as well as men," Mr. Greasley says.

"A lot of women are running big construction sites now - there's no limit to how far you can go."



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