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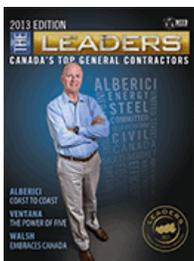


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March 10, 2014

**CAWIC funded to create action plan to attract women**



ANDRE WIDJAJA

Federal labour minister Kellie Leitch is joined by two apprentices to announce the federal government's funding of \$249,000 for the Canadian Association of Women in Construction. The association plans to use the funds to help develop an action plan geared to encourage and retain more women in construction.

ANDRE WIDJAJA  
DCN multimedia staff writer

Julie Fros, a single mother of four, is proud of the work she does.

"Just saying 'I've been a part of that,'" she said.

"I'd take my kids <math>0 \times 2026 >we're driving by my work the other day and said 'look, this is what mommy is building.'"

The third year apprentice at the Local Association of Journeyman and Apprentices of Welders, Steamfitters and Plumbers Local 67 (UA Local 67) made the transition to the skilled trades from a general labourer, a decision she made with no regrets.

"It has meant so much more than a job, for me it is a career and a certain future where I can provide for my children," Fros said.

"It is also the best job I never imagined I would have."

With a looming labour shortage of skilled tradespeople on the industry's mind, the federal government is trying to find ways to fill that gap, one of which is to attract more women into the industry.

The Canadian government recently announced \$249,000

JOCNewsWire

Posted 19 hours, 11 minutes ago

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in funding toward the Canadian Association of Women in Construction (CAWIC) at a conference hosted at the Ontario Sheet Metal Workers and Roofers training centre in Oakville, Ont.

The money will help fund CAWIC's 36-month project to develop an action plan that will encourage and retain more women in the industry.

"We're going to develop an action plan to not only ensure women are entering<0x2026>but we're going make sure that women stay in the industry, that they finish their apprenticeships and that they actually move up into leadership roles," said CAWIC president Tammy Evans.

"We have an untapped resource in women, we're going to make sure we put those two together with action."

Evans said the first year of the project will be dedicated to research by interviewing about 20 industry women in Ontario, Newfoundland and Alberta to get their perspectives on working in the skilled trades.

The information and data gathered will go toward building their action plan.

"The project will see women collaborate with industry, government and educational institutions to plan focused opportunities for retention and advancement of women in construction," said Minister of Labour and Minister for the Status of Women Kellie Leitch, at the announcement event.

She urged industry and government continue working together to tap into the pool of female workers.

Leitch noted that Canada's workforce is made up of 48 per cent women, but only 15 per cent of women are in the skilled workforce.

The funding toward CAWIC is part of a larger \$2.8-million investment announced earlier this year to 14 Ontario-based projects to boost "women in non-traditional occupations, increase economic options for women and improve prosperity for immigrant women."

Since 2007, the federal government has invested over \$57 million into skilled professional trades for women, said Leitch.

The funding announced was well-received by industry partners.

"It is with pride that we support CAWIC and its mandate to promote women into the industry," said Ontario Sheet Metal Workers and Roofers industry development representative Jay Peterson.

"We are committed to contributing to this project and ultimately assisting women into leadership roles."

"The announcement by the federal government and the initiatives of CAWIC will certainly promote and reinforce the contribution that women bring to the skilled trades.

We look forward to building our relationship with CAWIC and contributing to the success of the project," added Valerie Vanderwyk, Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee, UA Local 67, Hamilton-Niagara.

Fros, who's in her final year of trades school, still experiences instances of gender inequality working in a male-dominated industry.

But, she hopes continued funding and programs will create for a more level playing field.

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“With high quality training, we are able to build a workforce for tomorrow based on skills and ability and not gender, by identifying and removing the barriers that lead to inequality,” she said.

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