

# SAFETY PREPARATION IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



*By Collin Pullar, President, Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association*

It is amazing to look at the phenomenal growth in the Saskatchewan economy in recent years. Even despite recent events in the resource sector, it is likely that activity, particularly in the construction industry, will still remain relatively high. Because of continued growth, employers in the construction industry are facing a sort of new reality where well-qualified, trained and experienced skilled labour is challenging to find, attract and retain. There are significant gaps in skills which have impact on the ability for employers to meet the needs and expectations of their customers. In our industry this means potential delays, inefficiencies, missed deadlines, or substandard product, none of which are good for business reputation or the bottom line.

Understanding this new reality means that an employer has to find more innovative ways to not just get the job done, but still get the edge over their competitors. It also means that an employer needs to find ways to keep their current work team healthy, strong and productive. The last thing an employer needs is to have a highly skilled worker on their team go down or lose some ability to be at their best. The impact is just too significant. As an astute employer manages that risk, they also need to find other workers who, with some investment, can be developed into highly skilled and productive team

members. In a competitive environment, much like in sports, the organization with the best and healthiest team will generally outpace its competitors in a marketplace.

In the past, injury prevention discussions have typically focused on employers and workers currently in the workforce to gain knowledge and develop strong practices and systems. This continues to be critically important; however, as we look to the next generation of workers in our industry, it becomes apparent that in their development, young workers are brought into the workforce with not only the skills of their particular trade, but also the skills to effectively recognize, assess, and take leadership in controlling risks, risks that could shorten careers or cause serious losses to business productivity, reputation and bottom line.

As we look to this new generation of workers to drive the industry forward, instilling the concepts of safety culture and equipping young people with the training, knowledge and tools to identify and manage risk will be critical. Developing partnerships with training and education institutions, business groups and safety focused organizations like your Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association will be key to advancing youth focused safety orientation programs to better prepare and secure a long-term workforce.

*Collin Pullar is the President of the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association, an industry driven and funded enterprise with nearly 9,000 homebuilding and commercial construction member companies in Saskatchewan. Its mission is to provide high-quality safety training and advice to construction employers and employees that will lead to reduced human and financial losses associated with injuries.* 

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