

NEWHOMEGUIDE

INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

THE FOUNDATION FOR A SOLID FUTURE

By Hugh Heron

Even after 40 years in new-home building, I'm still amazed at what a fascinating and diverse industry this is. And I don't just mean the fact that people from a multitude of different ethnicities, cultures, religions and backgrounds work side by side to build homes and communities; diversity also exists in the variety of careers available. Even as the economy goes up and down, new home building in Ontario always needs good workers. A career in the trades or any of the other jobs that come along with constructing new homes and condominiums can form the foundation for a solid future.

It sure did for me. When I was 15 years old, I got a job in shipbuilding in Scotland, and I realized right away how satisfying it can be to work on a team that creates something beautiful and lasting. Many men and women love working with their hands. The Building Industry and Land Association (BILD) website (bildgta.ca) has a page called Careers in Construction, where you can link to education and training sites. BILD has also partnered with the Canadian Association of Women in Construction (cawic.ca). About 15 years ago, I had a crew that included the first female framing carpenter in the GTA, and I'm thrilled to see the number of female trades people increasing. There is also a website for students and others who are considering careers in the home-building industry: homebuildingcareers.com. So if you want to get started, you can find a lot of help out there.

High School co-op programs involve builders working with students, trades and government to expose youths to opportunities. Even a lot of university graduates are attending college to help them get a job. Some of them who enjoy working with their hands are taking up a trade so they can enter the industry with education and hands-on experience. Ontario colleges offer courses in everything from heating, ventilation and air conditioning techniques to carpentry, welding, electrical, construction, architectural studies, construction management and trades, mechanical engineering, cabinet making, landscaping and environmental technology. Several colleges offer apprenticeship and certification programs.

With the realization that qualifications for the trades require intelligence as well as physical effort, at long last the North American attitude toward these careers is changing.



In Europe, going into the trades as a career has always been celebrated. Here, university is the post-secondary route most parents prefer for their bright children. Jobs in the trades pay well, and with so many baby boomers poised for retirement, these well-paying jobs are just waiting for someone to step in and take over. Plus, there's a tremendous potential for advancement; many builders start as handymen or site clerks and work their way up. I started as a small builder in Scarborough in 1970, and today I am the president of Heathwood Homes. It was passion that carried me through paperwork, excavation and just about everything else that came along with turning land into a new-home community. I have enjoyed it all, and I love working with terrific people in our Heathwood communities.

If you prefer a computer to a jackhammer, there are many ways you could fit into the new-home building industry. Our teams require surveyors, appraisers, lawyers, engineers, architects, suppliers, marketers, writers, designers, decorators and finance professionals, among others. This need for different skills and talents provides enormous variety for anyone seeking work in a dynamic industry that contributes greatly to our economy.

Whatever you choose, I hope you enter your field with passion. Whatever role you play, you contribute to the rich diversity that makes what we do as enjoyable as it is important.



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