

# tradetalk

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NO. 1

THE MAGAZINE OF THE BC BUILDING TRADES

WE BUILD BC™

## FOCUS ON LOCAL 1611 BIG BUILD IN NORTH VAN



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**Plus: Are we ready for the boom?  
Building trades' and contractors' PoV**



*In honour of the official opening of LiUNA Local 1611's new union building in Surrey on Jan. 28, 2014. (Painted by Joseph S. Mancinelli, LiUNA Vice President)*

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Local 1611**

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Construction and Specialized Workers' Union Local 1611 (affiliated with LiUNA) is committed to training around the province to ensure work opportunities for our members.

Every year, we train over 900 members in concrete placement, rigging, slinging, signaling, surveying, blueprint reading, grades and stakes, mason tending, forklift, bobcat, man-lift, zoom boom, traffic control/lane closure, confined space, gas testing, spark watch, fall protection, pipelaying, raker person, shotcrete, respirator, fit testing and rock related training.

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# tradetalk

 SPRING 2014

THE MAGAZINE OF THE BC BUILDING TRADES

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Cover: Lee Wettlaufer, a new member  
of LiUNA Local 1611, on the Low Level  
Road wall-construction crew.

Photo: Joshua Berson

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# Starting Point

## Diabetes and DADs Day A construction worker's perspective

By Merrill O'Donnell & Leslie Dyson

On June 14, DADs (Dads Against Diabetes) Day, many committed BC Building Trades volunteers will be in front of BC liquor stores throughout the province with buckets and cans collecting much-needed donations for diabetes research.

People in the construction trades are not immune from this disease and it poses its own set of problems for people clambering around construction sites and equipment.

Rob Crawford, a fourth-year sheet metal apprentice working for Apollo Sheet Metal, started noticing symptoms on New Years Day in 2012. "I had a dry mouth, I was drinking continuously, and I couldn't hold any fluids. I went a month like that. I kept working, but I was exhausted. And then my vision went blurry. I went to see my doctor and was then in hospital for five days. My levels were 28 plus." He was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes.

Diabetes for someone with an active job has its complications. "It's a little bit different," Crawford agreed. "I try to keep my sugars up a little because of the physical activity." He pokes a finger to check his sugar levels at every meal and injects insulin two or three times a day.

"I wanted to try the [insulin] pump, but my doctor said, 'You have to base it on your work.' In an office, it's no problem, but in a shop or when you're climbing in and out of small spaces, it can be."

Crawford also learned that working near spot welding can interfere with the pump's effectiveness. "So, I have no choice but to poke myself with my pen."

Since the diagnosis, he said, "The work has got a bit tougher. On days where there's a lot more physical activity, I do feel it and I have to snack more."

Crawford, who's 26 and married with two children (three and 13 months of age) said, "I asked my doctor, 'Is there any way to make sure my kids don't get diabetes?' He's looking into it." In the meantime, his family is on a healthy diet and getting lots of exercise.

Since 1998, building trades members have raised tens of thousands of dollars for DADs Day. Last year, after putting in their weeks at work, tradespeople rattled their cans and raised \$7,500.

The goal is to raise even more money this year.

Why are our members so committed to raising money for diabetes? There are many reasons. Diabetes is a catastrophe of global proportions with 347 million people around the world being diagnosed with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. The World Health Organization reported in 2004 that about 3.4 million people died from the disease and that it will be the seventh leading cause of death by 2030.

Another reason for our members' commitment to this cause is the major successes being achieved by the research funded by DADs Day dollars right here in B.C. In 2012, the Diabetic Research Group at UBC announced that it had successfully used human embryonic stem cell transplants to reverse Type 1 diabetes in mice. As the researchers had hoped, following the transplant, the stem cells matured into insulin-secreting, pancreatic beta cells which automatically sensed blood sugar levels and released the right amount of insulin—a big step for a little mouse and an even bigger step for diabetes research. With perseverance a cure will be found and the BC Building Trades are helping make it happen.

This DADs Day (June 14), we invite you to volunteer for a couple of hours to help us rid the planet of this deadly disease. Please call the BC Building Trades office (778-397-2220) or your local union if you want to take an active part in wiping out this disease.



## We welcome your comments...

The opinions expressed in Starting Point are not necessarily those of the BC Building Trades Council or its affiliates. Send letters (the shorter the better) to the editor at:

BC BUILDING TRADES, #209 88 10th St.  
New Westminster, B.C. V3M 6H8 or  
bcybtctc@bcbuildingtrades.org

Letters must include your name, address, phone number and, where relevant, union affiliation, trade or company.



With your help, someday a pen will just be for writing.

# Dollars Against Diabetes

Ask your local union  
how you can help on DADs Day  
Saturday June 14th.



F2F-CFU 2010



# We must avoid the Australian experience

**In 1989**, Hollywood produced the movie *Field of Dreams*. The most famous line from the movie was "If you build it, he will come." And, with that understanding, Ray Kinsella, played by Kevin Costner, built a baseball diamond in the middle of his Iowa cornfield.

In present-day British Columbia, there are a number of liquefied natural gas proponents who are keen to develop the B.C. LNG industry but it begs the question, "If they come, will we build it?"

There are 12 proponents considering LNG investment. The potential investment is multiple tens of billions of dollars. (Some are shown on Pg. 18.) Each project will require, at peak construction, thousands of our skilled members to bring their talents to the job.

While it is highly unlikely all projects will proceed, it is very likely that within a few years a few proponents will begin construction. And then, what will happen? If there is no plan to schedule the development of these and other mega-projects, there will be chaos throughout our industry.

When Australia developed its LNG industry, the various project proponents jumped in all at once which created a logistical nightmare for everyone involved. For Australian skilled tradespeople, the sudden explosion of work opportunities was, quite frankly, out of control. Foreign workers, brought in to bring some projects to completion, made up a staggering 50% of the total workforce. Fifty per cent! We cannot allow a similar situation to occur in British Columbia.

Whenever the final investment decisions are made and whatever projects proceed, there will be an increased demand for skilled trades. Along with thousands of construction jobs, there should be opportunities for young people to begin and complete their apprenticeship over the course of LNG development. But these opportunities for employment and apprenticeship completions must

benefit British Columbians first and foremost. After all, the resource belongs to British Columbians.

Those of us in construction understand that we belong to a mobile workforce. We move from job to job, throughout the province and the country. On occasion, we take our skills south of the border or overseas. That is the nature of our industry. We go to where the work is, especially when our local economy is not able to provide us with work to support our families.

When LNG developments get under way, our first source for skilled tradespeople should be British Columbians (making equally certain we are providing training and employment opportunities for First Nations people and British Columbians who reside in the project areas). Our second source should be the rest of Canada. If we are not able to fill the demand for skilled trades from across the country, we should

turn to our traditional source which is our fraternal union locals in the United States.

Some proponents, and indeed some politicians, are already planning to import some of the workforce from offshore. While there may come a time for that, we need to be very clear about when and how offshore workers are invited to come to B.C. projects—only when the supply of skilled British Columbian, Canadian and U.S. travellers has been exhausted and the how is answered by agreement that foreign workers work under the same terms and conditions that we enjoy. Contractors should not be able to exploit a foreign workforce to develop the LNG industry in British Columbia. (See article on Pg. 12.)

There are opportunities and there are challenges. We will continue to address the challenges so we can first maximize the opportunities for British Columbians.

## The Building Trades—Who we are

	Phone	Web address
B.C. Building and Construction Trades Council	778-397-2220	www.bcbuildingtrades.org

### Affiliated Unions

Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers Local 2	604-584-2021	www.bac2bc.org
Cement Masons & Plasterers Local 919	604-585-9198	www.opcmia919.org
Electrical Workers Local 213 (Vancouver)	604-571-6500	www.ibew213.org
Electrical Workers Local 230 (Victoria)	250-388-7374	www.ibew230.org
Electrical Workers Local 993 (Kamloops)	250-376-8755	www.ibew993.org
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Heat and Frost Insulators Local 118	604-877-0909	www.insulators118.org
IUPAT District Council 38	604-524-8334	www.dc38.ca
Ironworkers Local 97	604-879-4191	www.ironworkerslocal97.com
Laborers' International Union Local 1611	604-541-1611	www.cswu1611.org
Operating Engineers Local 115	604-291-8831	www.iuoe115.com
Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 324	250-382-0415	www.ualocal324.com
Refrigeration Workers Local 516	604-882-8212	www.ua516.org
Sheet Metal, Roofers and Production Workers Local 280 (Vancouver)	604-430-3388	www.smw280.org
Sheet Metal, Roofers and Production Workers Local 276 (Victoria)	250-727-3458	www.smwia276.ca
Teamsters Local 213	604-876-5213	www.teamsters213.org
UNITE HERE Local 40	604-291-8211	www.uniteherelocal40.org

# Labourers feature

*Darcy Kent, Ryan Wyper, Gord Vanderzwan, David Donaldson, and Bert Neef, Local 1611 members on the B&B crew.*



# 1611

**members  
help raise  
and  
reposition  
Low Level  
Road**

**By Leslie Dyson**

Photos by Joshua Berson



There are approximately 2,000 members of the Construction & Specialized Workers Local 1611 working on construction projects in Metro Vancouver.

Gary Palmiere, service representative for Local 1611, represents members working for numerous construction contractors between Powell River and Hope. "It's been very busy," he said. "Some of our contractors have secured large projects which have kept most of our members working and even provided opportunities to expand our membership."

Several hundred members are working for B&B Contracting Group, Southwest Contracting Ltd.,

PNR Railworks, A&B Rail, Bay Hill Contracting Ltd., Columbia Bitulithic Ltd. and Lafarge on the Low Level Road Project in North Vancouver.

The \$75 million project will see the current highly congested two-lane road raised as much as 13 metres and moved several metres north. It will also be widened to accommodate bike paths. All the power lines will be realigned as well.

Peter Mihalech, B&B's site superintendent, is studying construction management at night and on weekends but has held onto his membership in Local 1611. He said B&B is the prime contractor for the road

*continued on next page*

*Many tradespeople living on the south side of the Fraser River are unhappy about the Port Mann Bridge tolls. B&B Contracting purchased a bus that stops in Langley and Surrey to pick up its workers in the mornings and return them in the evenings.*



*continued from previous page*

and walls and is employing Local 1611 labourers, pipelayers, and surveyors. "We got some experience on the South Perimeter Road so that was nice."

Local 1611 members are working alongside members of Ironworkers Local 97, Teamsters Local 213 and Operating Engineers Local 115 to build the new road and retaining walls (including green sloping walls), upgrade and relocate storm pipes and electrical infrastructure, build a walking trail and a 55-metre pedestrian suspension bridge, and construct an overpass to the Neptune and Cargill terminals.

Ron Friedel, B&B's utilities superintendent and a member of Local 1611 since 1981, said, "The upgrade was needed because the road is unsafe and it's exposed to the tracks and a steep embankment...But the financial driver is that the users need to expand their facilities and need more rail access." The site supports Neptune Coal Terminals and Cargill and Richardson grain terminals. An overpass to the terminals will eliminate the need for railway crossings.

B&B discovered that many of its tradespeople live on the south side of the Fraser River and they were complaining about the recent increase in the Port Mann Bridge tolls. The company purchased a bus that stops in Langley and Surrey to pick up its workers in the mornings and return them in the evenings. Nick Remillard, a Local 1611 pipelayer, said it costs him over \$120/month in tolls alone to get to the jobsite.

"It's a huge tax," agreed Palmiere, "but the bus is also part of B&B's environmentally green approach. It's better to have one bus than 30 vehicles on the road. It lowers the carbon footprint."

The Low Level Road Project, which extends 2.1 km from Gladstone to St. George avenues, began in March of 2013. Mihalech said there have been engineering delays that have affected all stages of the work, but the plan is to have it completed this fall.



*Nick Remillard and Nathan Boon working on the watermain fittings. The pipelines are being replaced, expanded and upsized. "Some of the pipe is really old and too small," Boon said.*



*Members of Operating Engineers Local 115, Ironworkers Local 97, and Teamsters Local 213 are also working on the Low Level Road Project.*

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Joshua Berson photo

# New building reflects local union's energy and optimism

By **Lon Roberts**

For the first time in its 76-year history, Local 1611 of the Construction and Specialized Workers (affiliated with the Laborers' International Union of North America) has all services in one building. The new 20,000-square foot, two-storey building in south Surrey was built 100% union.

Bob Knutson, a member of Local 1611 since 1972, was the labour foreman for the general contractor Kingston Construction. "We treat all the jobs the same and the most important thing on any job is the client. But this was different because it was my own union."

He's happy with the results. "I think we did a good job and it's the nicest building in the neighbourhood, I would say. Maybe other people will get the idea that you don't have to build a simplistic building."

Business Manager Mark Olsen is delighted with the local's new home. "We are doing training in our building

for the first time ever." Natural light floods the classrooms and computer lab that feature glass walls and nine-foot high glass doors. "We used to hold our training in community halls in Surrey and Langley." Olsen said he likes the fact that now he can drop in on classes to talk to members for a few minutes about union activities.

Bob March, a four-year member of Local 1611 and the project's construction manager, said he was directed to start looking for property two years ago. The union eventually decided on the property at 19092 26th Ave. which was owned by Kingston, one of their signatory contractors. The purchase was made and Kingston was designated the general contractor. Several Local 1611 members were part of the construction crew.

March said the union wanted a building that would serve the interests of members for another 75 years. It houses the union offices and services, as well as two classrooms, a computer lab and a 2,000 square foot patio connected to the boardroom.

When members enter the two-storey foyer, they have a clear view of the perimeter offices, glass interior walls and union staff working on their behalf in the membership services, benefit plans, training, dispatch, retirees' council and head office departments.

"It's their union," Olsen said. "We wanted an open office. They will see us working for them."

March said, "We're very health conscious, so there's an exercise room with equipment and two showers, and in-slab heating to make it comfortable for staff. There's a good-size boardroom that's large enough to accommodate joint bargaining meetings with an AV system, video conferencing [capability] and a smart board. There are good-size server rooms for future applications and a built-in first aid room.

"We received accolades from the city," March added. "Kingston did a great job."

To preserve the view, the parking lot is in the rear of the building. Dry ponds have been incorporated into the landscaping. They will collect excess runoff, allowing rainwater to percolate back into the soil. All the exterior windows have highly energy efficient glazing.

"We did as many creative things as we could."

The difference between the old, poorly lit, low-ceilinged, cramped offices on Kingsway in Vancouver and the new building is dramatic. Olsen said, "I walked around the old building [after the big move] and I thought how the heck did we work here for over 30 years?"



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# Local 1611 moving towards Red Seal designation



Local 1611 members learning to use probes that can detect hazardous substances in confined spaces.

Joshua Berson photo

## By Lon Roberts

It's just a matter of time before Local 1611 of the Construction and Specialized Workers' Union is able to offer construction craft worker (CCW) as an apprenticeable trade. B.C. is the last province in the country to offer the Red Seal trade. Currently, members are either full-fledged journeymen or trainees.

Experienced members will be designated journeymen if they have 6,000 hours of experience verified by their employers and they successfully challenge the exam.

Dean Homewood, training plan administrator, said the construction industry supports the certification and other industry groups, such as road construction, ship building, municipal and utility works and other industrial sectors, might participate in the program later.

Homewood and Jeffery Anders (LiUNA special international representative) have been working with the Industry Training Authority and Construction Industry Training Organization and talking to educational institutions to bring this initiative to fruition.

Construction Craft Worker training would be offered in two levels and cover concrete placement and vibration, rigging, signaling and slinging, survey and layout, blueprint reading, demolition, asbestos/mould/lead awareness, utility pipelaying, asphalt rakerman, and confined space awareness.

Business Manager Mark Olsen said it could take two more years for the program to be offered because it requires government approval and the CCW classification would have to be included in the collective agreements.

"We do have a very skilled membership," Olsen said. "We are the most diversified in the construction trades. But without an apprenticeship system, we're not getting the membership growth, government funding or the status that our union should enjoy."

Local 1611 represents 5,500 members working in construction (site services, rock-related work, road building, paving and traffic control) as well as health care, security, parking lots, cemeteries, concrete plants, janitorial services, recycling, landscaping, railways, shipyards and mining.

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## The best and worst of the TFW Program

**Charles** Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* begins, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." These lines were meant to describe the situations faced by the characters of the novel in revolutionary France in the 1790s—an unusual and difficult time of great social upheaval amid tumultuous global events.

We don't have a Reign of Terror politically in Canada. No one has stormed the Bastille and it is unlikely that we are entering a time of Revolution. But, with apologies to another cultural icon, Bob Dylan, "The times, they are a-changing."

You cannot pick up a newspaper or news magazine without finding an article or two about shortages of skills, labour, or both. There have been a number of half-hearted attempts to deal with these issues locally but business as well as labour have often opted for another sort of fix—the importation of temporary foreign workers.

Together, with our contractors, we have relied on the idea that if we can't find skilled people locally we can get them from neighbouring provinces, across the country, within North America and finally from anywhere else, in that order. Safeguards are in place to protect the public, general safety and quality of work and fill the gaps that recruitment and training cannot handle on a short-term basis. We want to ensure that these workers meet the standards we expect from ourselves, are fairly compensated and dealt with in a respectful manner. When it comes to skilled labour, this situation has worked out. It's "the best of times."

To be sure, there have been glitches and inequities. HD Mining and RBC were cases in point and the actions of the BC Building Trades led

to regulatory changes in the way these workers are processed and deployed. New training requirements and policy regarding transition to a Canadian workforce, protection of Canadian jobs and the handling of labour market opinions are good. Wages for temporary workers must now be the same rate as those paid to Canadians and cheaters lose the ability to employ temporary foreign workers.

We supported these changes because they make sense. We also supported the changes to the immigration system which give a qualified tradesperson a number of ways to apply for landed immigrant status and eventually citizenship. We are, after all, a nation of immigrants.

We also support the Canadian government's TFW Program for skilled workers because most of the skilled tradespeople who have come to Canada have been our union brothers and sisters from the building trades unions in the United States. They come here to work, under our agreements, and have their benefits dealt with appropriately. When the work is done they go home to their local union.

The "worst of times" scenario has a lot of lower-skilled jobs also being filled by foreign workers but the safeguards aren't there. These people work very hard in places like fast food joints for meager wages for up to four years. They are vulnerable and easily manipulated. There is no one to protect them and no standards. The route to citizenship is very tenuous. This ought not to be a long-term solution, but it is.

The program, in these cases, is exploitive and potentially abusive.

We will continue to work to make the lot of temporary foreign workers better, both for those who are in the best of times and those who are, unfortunately, in the worst of times!



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# The Temporary Foreign Worker Program done right

By **Claudia Ferris**

Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program has been in the news because employers are using it to exploit foreign workers instead of using it to fill genuine and acute labour needs. The fast food, banking and mining industries have been using the program to bypass Canadian workers with lower-paid foreign workers. Union leaders and most Canadians strongly oppose this practice, which has led to increased public awareness, as well as new regulations that attempt to address this abuse.

The federal government heard from the many Canadians appalled by corporate misuse of the program. Canadians are outraged that, in a time of high unemployment, their own work opportunities are being limited by unscrupulous employers importing cheaper labour. When temporary foreign worker programs are used as intended, this does not happen.

However, there is a time and place for the TFW Program, according to Tom Sigurdson, from the BC Building Trades. "When we have a large construction project, we access workers from the local unions first, then (if we need more skilled labour) calls go out for qualified workers across Canada and then across the border to the United States." Sigurdson stressed that, "when a worker from a local

union here becomes available, the temporary worker goes home."

Unionized building trades belong to international unions, which means that members in Canada and the U.S. have similar qualifications and training. Union locals have reciprocal agreements in place, complete with pension plans and travel cards, that allow skilled members to travel and work in regions with hot economies.

When Vancouver hosted the 2010 Winter Olympics, timelines for completion of the BC Place roof were extremely tight. James Leland, business manager for the Ironworkers Local 97, described how his members successfully met the construction challenges they faced. "BC Place had to be open for the Olympics so we worked with the Ironworkers Local 86 out of Seattle, along with our contractors and all levels of government, to make sure we had the skilled labour to get the job done right and on time." Leland noted, "Local 86 members got paid the same as Local 97 members and then they all went home."

In his 38 years as an Ironworker, Leland has seen temporary workers enhance his local's ability to win big jobs. Leland's members have been busy for the past four years rebuilding Kitimat's massive aluminum plant. The Kitimat plant is the biggest industrial project his membership has seen in decades, employing 500 Iron-

workers, he said.

Local 97 has strategically supplied temporary foreign workers to build the aluminum plant. "We have had 70 American ironworkers coming and going throughout construction. Ironworkers are coming from California, Chicago, Texas and from all over the States. With our international connections, we have the skilled people power needed for the different stages of construction."

Another benefit of temporarily importing these ironworkers is that the union can bring in more apprentices. Leland said, "We need enough journeymen to mentor ironworker apprentices, which can be a challenge in areas without major construction projects. Accessing ironworkers from across the U.S. and Canada helps us do this."

Sigurdson said the BC Building Trades approach to temporary foreign workers is effective and protects local tradespeople and those arriving from outside the province. "Workers who come into a jurisdiction on a travel card from an international union don't require extra courses to bring them up to speed. We know our training is similar across borders and the right qualifications will be there. We have reciprocal international agreements in place and we keep records and hold pensions. This is not the underground economy where foreign workers disappear."



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# The Temporary Foreign Worker Program done wrong

By Lee Coldren

There are a couple of “cash corners” in downtown Vancouver, said Chris Feller, business manager of the Cement Masons Local 919—locations where workers with limited construction ability wait to be picked up to work as day labourers.

There’s only anecdotal evidence at this point, but some believe that up to 30% of the tradespeople on high rise construction sites in downtown Vancouver are undocumented. Lee Loftus, president of the BC Building Trades, said, “The conversation around the [executive board] table would lead us to believe the numbers may be that high.”

“If it’s anywhere near that high,” Feller said, “it makes it impossible for honest guys to compete. Years ago there were a lot more general contractors. Yes, wages are going up in the North, but in the Lower Mainland they are going down.”

WorkSafeBC recognizes the problem too. You can see the 1.5-minute WorkSafeBC Youtube videos dealing with “cash corners.”

The number of foreign workers in Canada is growing. Some are temporary foreign workers laid off from their jobs. Others are in Canada on student and visitor visas. Many of these workers are also employed in farming, service, high tech, and banking. They live in isolation and fear that they can be expelled for little or no reason. There are numerous stories of exploitation. Some have been forced to rent accommodations from their

employers or risk being fired.

Feller said, “It’s not as big a problem for all the trades, but for the trades that are less technical, it’s becoming a big issue. Our [unionized] contractors are having trouble securing work...and it’s hurting the standards that we fought for.”

When temporary foreign workers are invited to Canada they are tied to one employer, so if they’re laid off, they can’t look for work elsewhere or apply for employment insurance. For those coming from impoverished countries, the pay in Canada is so much greater than what they would earn in their home countries that many try to stay. So, their only alternative is to find work in the underground economy, getting paid under the table in cash, sometimes as little as \$15 an hour. There are stories of workers sleeping on construction sites because they have nowhere else to go.

Unscrupulous employers are using these people to undercut Canadian workers’ wages. The underground economy is also notorious for being an avenue for money laundering for the illegal drug trade.

Feller said the union has tried to organize these workers, but as every union in the BC Building Trades knows, that is not easy. “We knew a [cement masonry] general contractor had four or five times more guys than was needed. He would have been paying a lot of money even with reduced wage rates. The workers were low skilled and there were a lot of imperfections [in the concrete work].” There was no attempt to provide the employees with

the skills to become full-fledged cement masons. “It was an assembly line. One guy would bush hammer, one would grind, one would patch, and the fourth would sack it [apply the finish].”

The 10-day delay between signing cards and voting allowed the employer to “scare the daylight out of them,” Feller said. No one was surprised when the vote failed.

Enrique Llanes, here on a temporary visa from his native Spain, told the *Montreal Gazette* that the global economic crisis of 2008 and the terrible rates of unemployment in parts of Europe brought 350,000 migrant workers to Canada by 2011. “People are very afraid of their employers and many of those employers use threats and blackmail,” he said.

Last November, the Immigrant Workers’ Centre of Montreal launched the Temporary Foreign Workers’ Association to provide legal advice, information, and support and lobby on their behalf.

Noé Arteaga, a migrant justice advocate, said, in a news release, “Temporary migrant workers programs in Canada are a form of modern slavery. They are hyper-exploitive and treat workers as if they’re disposable. I’ve seen first-hand the exploitation inherent in these programs.”

He’d also like to see the federal government taking a more active role in dealing with the problem. “There should be hefty fines and jail sentences for these employers,” Feller said. “The federal government is supposed to represent citizens. Not just the special interest groups paying to get them elected.”

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# Are we ready for the boom?

*Union contractors and construction unions gathered on Jan. 17 at the Morris Wosk Centre for Dialogue in downtown Vancouver to talk about what they need to do collectively to prepare for the upcoming industrial boom that will sweep across the country.*

*Tom Sigurdson, with assistance from Brynn Bourke, facilitates the discussion about construction unions' priorities.*

## Learning from Alberta's mistakes

### Articles by Leslie Dyson

Under the title "You don't need to learn the hard way if you can watch other fools do it the hard way," Bob Blakely, former president of the Alberta Building Trades, talked about the ordeal of the Alberta construction unions and their contractors in the 1980s.

His co-presenter, Neil Tidsbury, president of the Alberta Construction Labour Relations Association, said, "We learned to be pretty good fighters, but the owners lost interest in us. They saw us as having food fights in their front rooms." The bitterness led to unlawful strikes, arbitration, lawsuits, and unsustainable settlements.

Blakely said there was an attitude in Alberta that "we were large and in charge." The thinking was, "They can't do it without us." When that was proven to be false, the thinking changed to "Just wait and it'll all come back." But that was wrong too.

In the rush to the big industrial projects, the Alberta Building Trades lost most of the commercial/institutional (CI) work and, along with it, the general contractors. Non-union contractors filled the vacuum.

Things became desperate and that forced the building trades and contractors to come up with an agreement. "Having a deal was more important.

So a couple of nickels were left on the table," Blakely said.

Tidsbury added, "We didn't set out to build relationships [with one another], they came with a renewed focus" on shared markets and increasing market shares.

Tidsbury and Blakely warned that the unionized sector in Alberta had to hit bottom before changes were made. Will that be the case for B.C. too? Coming to terms with that possibility was "the whole point" of the meeting, said Tom Sigurdson, executive director of the BC Building Trades (BCBT). "I think we have got pretty low and that's why we needed the forum."

Clyde Scollan, president of the Construction Labour Relations Association of BC (CLR), said "I don't think we have to [hit bottom] but, human nature what it is, I don't know that we won't.

"But the comments [after the forum] were consistent that people were pleased to be part of the dialogue and want to work together."

Sigurdson agreed. "The dialogue was important. From the contractor and the union sides, there is a desire to get negotiations completed in a timely way." In recent years, bargaining has dragged on for many years.

Scollan said, "The bargaining process is an issue for people on both sides of

the table. There is an issue with having three or four different organizations now in place, for various reasons, to represent the trades. That is an issue for getting things done."

Sigurdson said it would benefit both sides if a different model was in place. He favours an entity modeled after the Ontario Construction Secretariat. "It looks at all things outside of bargaining and promotes initiatives collectively that are mutually beneficial. It got rid of the adversarial roles that were being played on every issue. [And] we have to do a better job of branding and promoting the unionized sector to owner clients, governments and people interested in coming into the trades."

It was clear, by the end of the day, that B.C. employers and building trades' unions found a lot of common ground. They both want to hang on to the market share they have and grow it.

"I think things will move forward," said Sigurdson. "We are interdependent. We can't survive without the other. We have to find a pathway together."

The BCBT and CLR have struck a subcommittee to develop a plan for moving forward. *Tradetalk* will provide reports on the committee's work in upcoming editions.



ROSS WORKED IN COLD PLACES, BUT THIS WAS THE COLDEST

## The industrial juggernaut

The peak of industrial construction across the country is expected in 2017, said Bob Collins, an economist with BuildForce Canada. However, there is already a shortage of skilled tradespeople. BuildForce Canada is a management/labour construction industry organization committed to the development of a highly skilled workforce that will support the future needs of Canada's construction industry.

Key trades are expected to grow between 25 and 40% in just three years. The pressure is so intense that "even Alberta is looking over its shoulder," Collins said. Alberta-based projects are flying workers in

and out from the Maritimes.

Newfoundland, having lost much of its workforce to Alberta, is bringing in tradespeople from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia for its commercial and institutional (CI) construction work, he added. "People are going where the money is."

However, mobility will not be enough to meet the demand. Collins said the construction industry will have to:

- retain older workers
- attract and retain new workers
- create a welcoming environment for new workers
- train the next generation of skilled workers

## Key trades in the upcoming industrial construction boom

These are the trades that will be most in demand for the industrial work coming up, according to BuildForce Canada.

Boilermakers  
Bricklayers  
Camp hospitality workers  
Carpenters  
Concrete finishers  
Crane operators  
Electricians  
Gasfitters  
Heavy equipment operators  
Ironworkers  
Labourers  
Millwrights  
Sheet metal workers  
Steamfitters/pipefitters  
Truck drivers  
Trades helpers  
Welders (specialized)  
Supervisors and managers

Please note: This chart does not mention insulators, painters, drywallers and glaziers, trades that will also be under pressure because of the ongoing commercial and institutional work that will be underway at the same time.



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## What the international owners want

Tony Fanelli, from Bantrel Constructors, said, "Alberta is a key indicator for us. They didn't work together." He then pointed out that even the construction unions are divided. "You have the bargaining council, the BC Building Trades, the Coalition of BC Building Trades and the Allied Hydro Agreement" representing unionized tradespeople. "It is an issue gentlemen. It needs to be addressed. You are one industry. The owners don't even understand the dynamics in the different trades."

He drove home the point by noting that "there are resident, competitive entities biting at our backsides." He was referring to non-union general contractors like Peter Kiewit Sons Co., Leducor and JV Driver.

Hugh Tackaberry, from Fluor Constructors Canada Ltd., provided a bleak picture of what international owners are now demanding. In addition to best price and best value, they're requiring:

- far more stringent safety measures
- automatic drug and alcohol testing whenever there is an accident
- fitness testing to ensure (among other things) that there are no heart attacks or deaths on the job
- no work disruptions
- no "noise" (grievances or absences)
- zero tolerance regarding harassment (no Rat stickers or slurs of any kind)
- a positive legacy in the communities they're operating in so more local and Aboriginal hires




*Clyde Scollan facilitates the discussion about contractors' priorities.*

"And when they can't get this, they manage their own work," Tackaberry said, setting the conditions and doing their own hiring.

"It's a new world," he said. "They say 'Give us your best deal' but there are no guarantees on the scope of the work." Nonetheless, Tackaberry said, "Get with the program. Don't fight it."

Clyde Scollan (Construction Labour Relations Association) said, "I think he pretty accurately reflected the scenario. They want to manage risk...We have the systems for getting people to job sites making that as seamless as possible. But we are the suppliers. Contractors provide the design and management and we need the labour to do the work so we have common interests. We're pretty good at quality and safety, but productivity, we need to work on."

Tom Sigurdson (BC Building Trades) said, "What we heard was that clients want certain things. They will pay the rate providing they get what they want. If they don't, there are alternatives...I think we can demonstrate that we have a better safety record and skills that are significantly above the non-union sector."

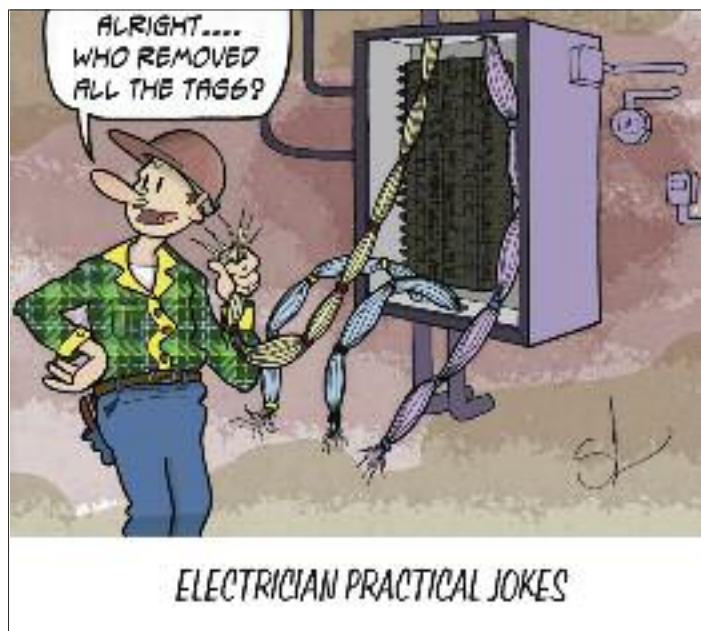


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Shawn Luke graphic

**ELECTRICIAN PRACTICAL JOKES**





Joshua Berson file photo

## Commercial and institutional sectors can't be forgotten

While every province has major industrial projects in the works, the number of commercial, institutional and residential projects “is expected to rise slowly, yet steadily” during the same period, said Bob Collins, an economist for BuildForce Canada. After 2017, “activity shifts out of the major projects work and back to commercial, institutional, highways and bridges work,” he said.

“Not to frighten the crap out of you, but you are going to have a challenge and you know this. That’s why you’re here.

“You want to be the first choice for getting the work and CI [commercial/institutional] is still growing and your mainstay.”

“Presenters made the case that it’s important for us not to lose focus on CI during an industrial boom,” said Tom Sigurdson, from the BC Building Trades. “If you do, you can lose it pretty easily.”

Clyde Scollan, president of the B.C. Construction Labour Relations Association, said, “There certainly was concern that people will be losing focus on CI because of the lure of big industrial work.” CI accounts for 65% of the association’s members’ work, he said. “The bubble, as welcome as it is, will be over at some time and we have to think about what it will look like at the other end.”

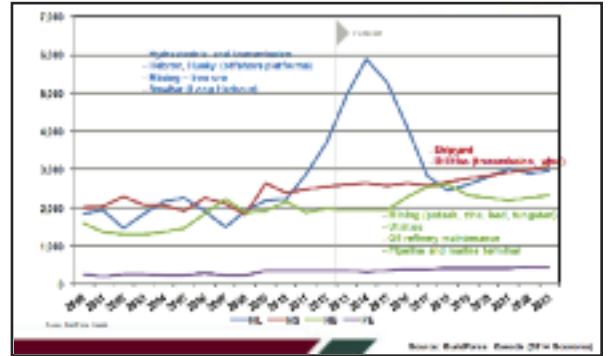
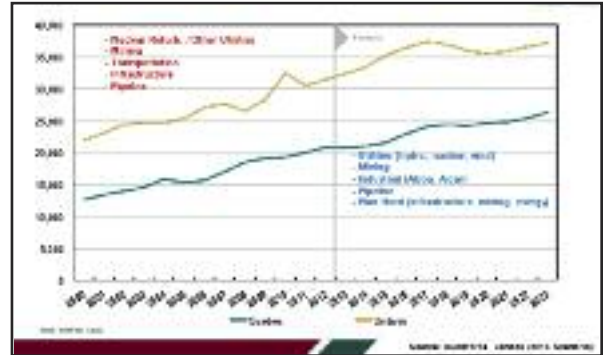
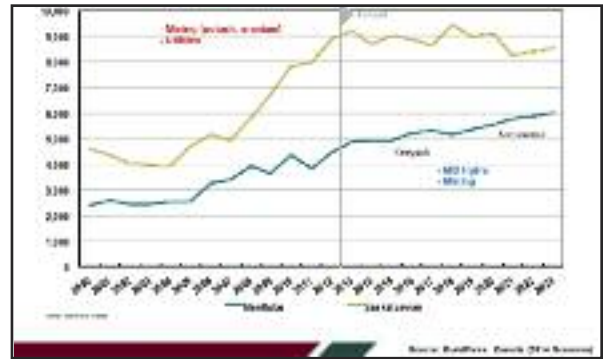
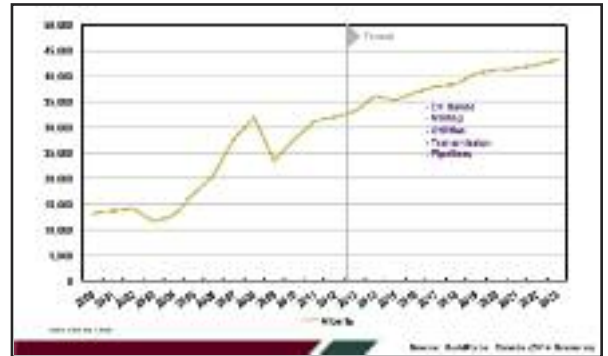
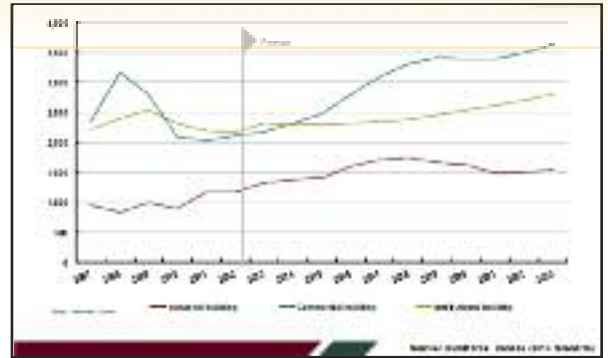
The comments from employers included, “Listen to your customers. Don’t throw CI under the bus,” and “Clients want to see collaboration.”

Patrick Byrne, from IUPAT District Council 38, stressed that 90% of his members’ work hours come from the CI sector.



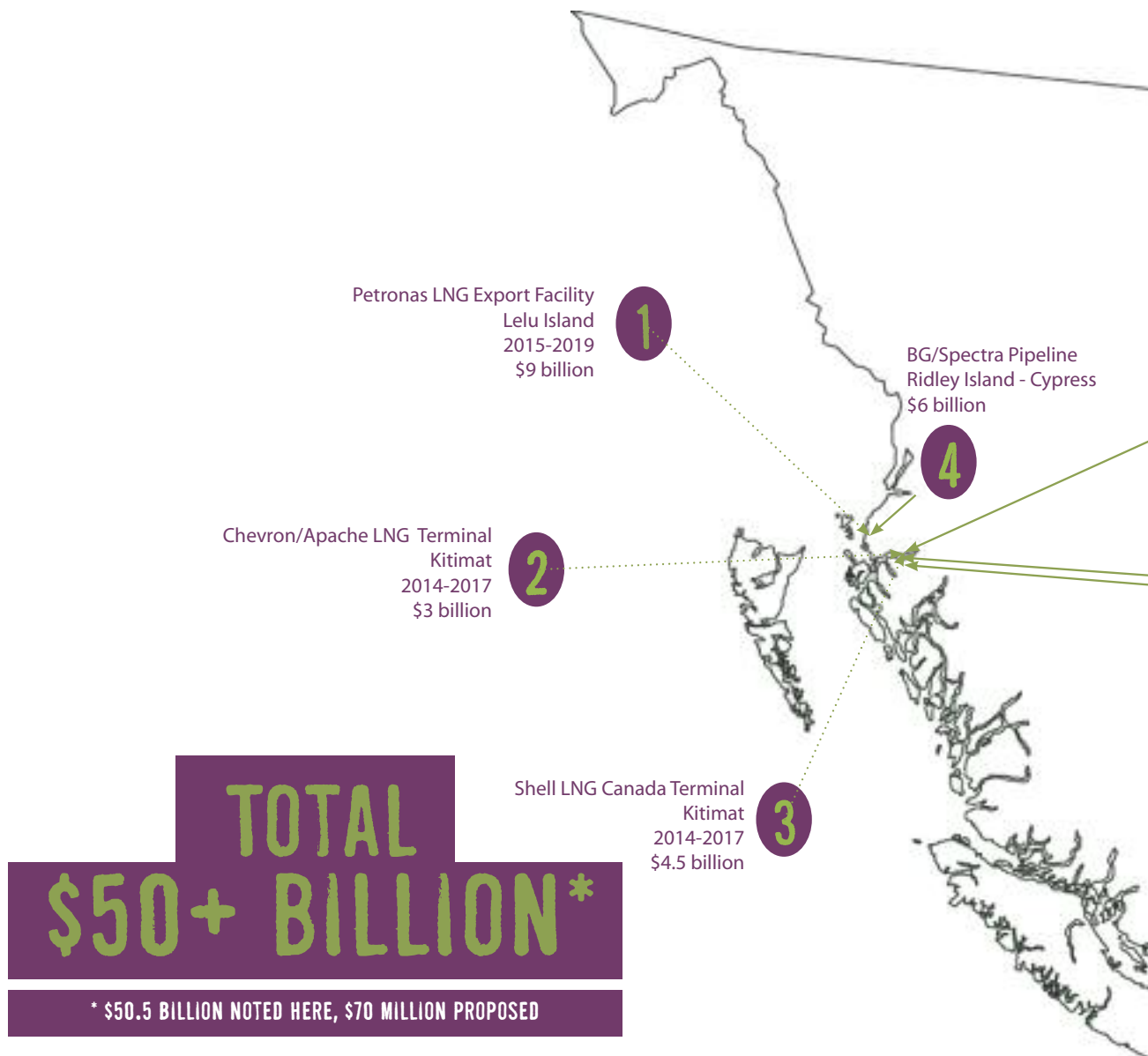
Shawn Luke graphic

## Graphs showing the pressures of industrial work across the country.

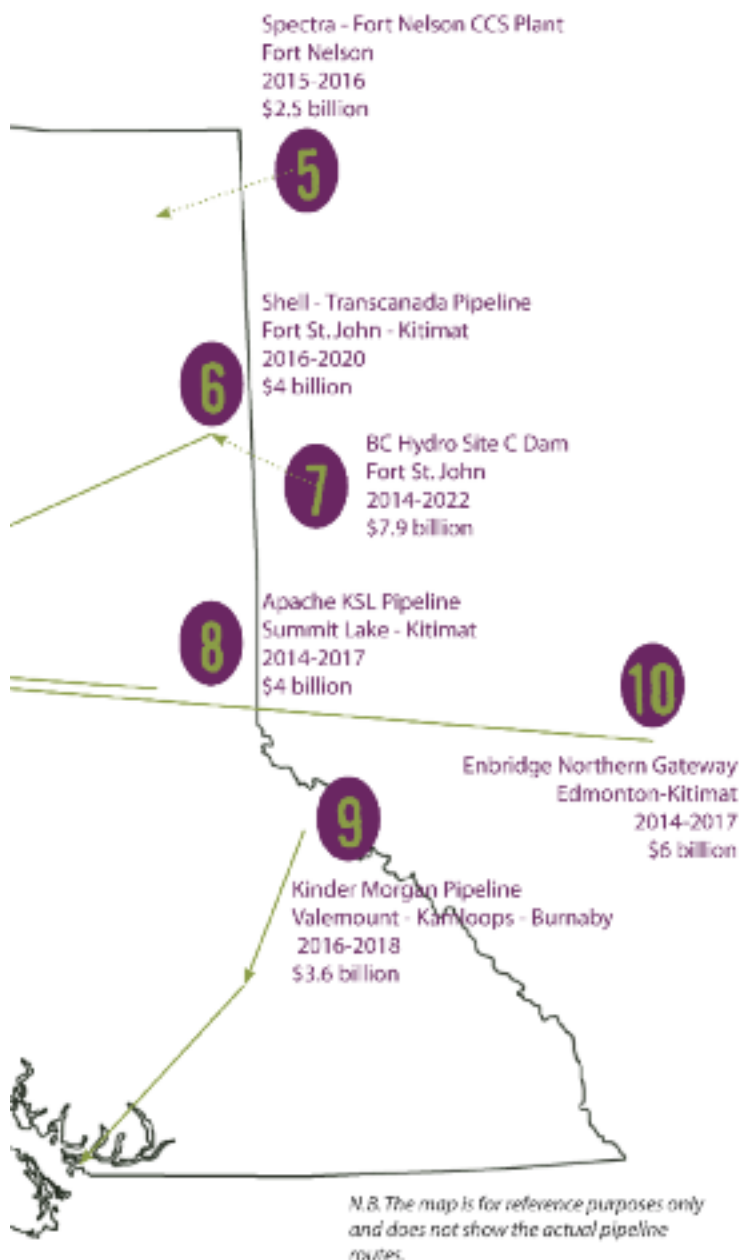


# GETTING READY FOR THE BOOM

## MAJOR PROJECTS



# TOP 10 ENERGY PROJECTS TO WATCH



- 1 A proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facility on Lelu Island with gas supplied by a new pipeline from northeast (No. 6).
- 2 Chevron/Apache Canada Ltd.'s LNG terminal at Bish Cove, 18 km south of Kitimat, includes facilities for marine offloading, LNG storage, natural gas liquids recovery, re-gasification, and send-out facilities to deliver natural gas into the Pacific Northern Gas (PNG) pipeline. A new 1.4 km pipeline would connect from the facilities to the PNG line with send-out capacity of 610 MMcf/day. Project has received approval under the BC Environmental Assessment Act. Federal approval has been received. Front-end engineering and design study is complete. The National Energy Board has approved a 20-year licence to export natural gas.
- 3 Proposed LNG terminal plan located on the former Methanex facility site. The project will include a gas liquification plant, storage and natural gas transport capacity of up to 1.8 billion cubic ft./day. Engineering and environmental studies are being conducted.
- 4 A proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facility on Ridley Island with gas supplied by a new pipeline from northeast (No. 6).
- 5 Spectra Energy's Carbon Capture & Storage Plant at an existing gas-processing plant would see construction of an acid gas/sour CO<sub>2</sub> (90% CO<sub>2</sub> and 10% H<sub>2</sub>S) re-injection system.
- 6 Proposed 700-km natural gas pipeline is in the pre-application phase under the Environmental Assessment Act.
- 7 The Site C Dam would provide up to 1,100 MW of capacity and 5,100 GWh/year. The project is currently in Stage 3 of the Environmental and Regulatory Review.
- 8 A new 470-km, 24-inch natural gas pipeline primarily along current pipeline right-of-ways with a new compressor station and upgrades to existing stations. The project has BC Environmental Assessment Certificate and Federal environmental approval.
- 9 Pipeline expansion planned in stages along the existing Trans Mountain Line from Edmonton to Burnaby that would loop the existing 60 cm pipeline with a new 76 cm pipeline. A total of 900 km of twinned pipeline would be part of the expansion project.
- 10 Proposed 30-in., 1,200 km bitumen pipeline delivering crude oil to the deep water port at Kitimat. The pipeline would deliver above 400,000 barrels/day to a tank farm for storage prior to shipping to California and the far east. Preliminary engineering and environmental overviews are completed. A second, parallel import pipeline will ship condensate to the oilsands.

—Source: BuildForce Canada

# Attack on unions causes rift between federal Conservatives

By David Hogben

The Conservative Party national convention in Calgary last fall was seething with anti-union sentiment.

Wounded Conservatives were on the attack after their failed attempt to bring in Bill C-377 and impose damaging measures on organized Canadian workers.

Six anti-labour resolutions reached the floor and all were passed while unionized workers protested outside at Stampede Park.

Conservative Senator Hugh Segal, increasingly known for his independence and pro-union views, said in a recent interview with Tradetalk, that attacking working Canadians isn't the Conservative way at all, at least not if one recalls the record of Canada's first prime minister.

"Sir John A Macdonald brought in the first bill legalizing trade unions in 1872," Segal said.

Even with the indications that the Harper Conservatives are shoring up core, right-wing support before the 2015 election, Segal doubts Canadians will see radical anti-union resolutions passed in Parliament.

"Government policies are set by the

cabinet and caucus, after due consideration of those debates and resolutions and other public interest priorities."

Segal said he will oppose anti-union legislation if it reaches the Senate, before his announced retirement in June.

Some Conservatives, however, welcomed and encouraged the anti-union wave of resolutions.

At the convention, Treasury Board President Tony Clement welcomed the anti-union wave of resolutions, especially one seeking to claw back public-sector workers' wages to "private-sector standards."

"This is not sustainable, it's not right, it's not conservative and it's not in the public interest," Clement said to the appreciative crowd.

Canadian Building Trades director Bob Blakely doesn't expect the most extreme anti-union resolutions will be adopted as government policy and become law. He said convention floors—for parties on the left and right—are often a forum for the more radical members of the party.

And Blakely agrees with Segal that, historically speaking, the Conservative party ideology has not been rabid anti-union, especially when one thinks about

the record of former Ontario premier Bill Davis and his labour act.

"If you talk to scholars, people who study the labour relations business, they will tell you it was probably the most balanced piece of legislation that was ever passed. It became the model for other acts," Blakely said.

That said, Blakely is not expecting the Stephen Harper Conservatives to leave labour completely alone, especially public sector workers who are negotiating key contracts.

"I don't see the beat-up-the-public-service stuff abating. I almost see it escalating as both sides of the equation stoke their fires," he said.

New Democratic Party labour critic Alexandre Boulerice likened the resolutions to red meat being tossed on the convention floor to satisfy militants. Boulerice doesn't think the Conservatives have the time to go after organized workers again before the next election. However, he said he also expects the Conservatives to take aim at public sector unions.

"The target before the next election will not be the labour movement in general, but public sector unions."

Non-public sector workers shouldn't be complacent though, Boulerice warned. "But if they [the Conservatives] win another majority government then it could be really, really serious for the labour movement in Canada."

## The Bill C-525 attack on federal public sector unions

Another recently introduced Conservative private member's bill, C-525, would allow union certification only if a majority of eligible voters agree, rather than the majority of those who turn out for the vote. Not voting is counted as a no vote.

Under these conditions and because voter turnout is so low, neither Prime Minister Stephen Harper nor any MP across the country would have been elected.

According to the CLC's website, Tim Hudak, leader of the Ontario

Conservatives, says that if he's elected as an MP, he will push for making union dues voluntary.

The ongoing Conservative assault on unions is galvanizing and reinvigorating the labour movement across the country.



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# Only one road to success... and we're not on it yet

As the president of the BC Building Trades, I can't afford to be swept up in an LNG pipedream.

We only benefit, and can guarantee a skilled labour force, if there is a clear construction schedule with commitments from the proponents and the government on start dates and contractor use. I'm cautious because I have seen what happens when major development goes wrong.

The Australian and the Fort McMurray experiences speak volumes about what you shouldn't do. Real estate prices went through the roof, temporary foreign workers were called in, hamburgers shot to \$20 a piece, and motels rented rooms out at \$300 a night. That type of inflation hurts communities and wastes the opportunities of development.

We have to do better.

The BC Building Trades has been meeting with LNG proponents for these pipelines regularly as part of a strategic working group. Last year, I took part in the premier's trade mission to Asia to speak with key foreign investors. We have also continued to lobby the premier and her ministers on this issue.

The message we bring is always the same, there is only one road to successful development of LNG in B.C. and we aren't on it yet.

We have told the stakeholders that they can control the skills shortages based on their schedules. If they all decide to build LNG plants at the same time, there will be an international shortage of workers and the price of construction costs will soar like they did in Australia and Fort McMurray.

However, if they can come to an agreement on a schedule that coordinates the timing of projects, everyone will benefit. That's a formula for success for the labour force, the contractors, the owners, and, very importantly, the communities hosting these developments.

Some of the proponents have said this is all about a race and who can get there first. If that's true, then we will not be prepared.

We need to know start dates and the workforce schedules and have access to the complete picture of how many projects will be underway.

A promise of work doesn't work. We need a strategic plan and roll out in order to guarantee supply. That's how our apprenticeship system works. We cannot train apprentices in advance of the work actually taking place. Apprentices receive 80% of their training on the job. If there are no jobs, we can't effectively train.

We also have to honour existing client obligations. We can't abandon our traditional workplaces and ignore the shut-downs, upgrades and new construction that have already been committed to. They're our bread and butter.

Many of us in the trades are already talking with our counterparts across North America about availability of skilled workers. Most of us are confident that we will be able to draw on these resources, augment those numbers with new apprentices and deliver the workforce that's needed as these projects move forward.

Careful planning and strategic decisions will have a positive effect on our communities. When that happens, that's when I'll get excited.



Joshua Berson photo

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# Trade mission joined to promote union labour

**By Stephen Smith**

The BC Building Trades joined the Premier's Trade Mission to Asia last November. Executive Director Tom Sigurdson and President Lee Loftus were among the delegation along with Brian Cochrane from Operating Engineers Local 115 and Glen Hilton from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 993.

The delegation travelled to China, South Korea and Japan to promote liquefied natural gas (LNG) development in British Columbia and strengthen ties with government and industry stakeholders. All three countries are dependent on LNG. Japan and South

Korea are the world's largest importers of LNG with demand in China rising rapidly.

The group included over 180 representatives from government, communities, industry, First Nations and labour.

Sigurdson participated in the trade mission to promote unionized labour on major projects. "There are six major LNG proponents seriously considering development in British Columbia," he said. "We are preparing for two to three to move to the construction phase and begin work before 2018. We're doing everything we can to ensure our members get the work if

these projects are built."

Sigurdson went on to add that he expects 3,000 to 3,500 construction workers will be needed to build each project during peak construction.

"We are taking steps to prepare unionized labour supply in B.C. and promoting the value of unionized labour directly to investors abroad."

Sigurdson made a presentation at the Canada-Korea Natural Gas Forum in Seoul. He talked about the success of project labour agreements in B.C., and the North American model for supplying skilled labour through our relationship with affiliates across Canada and the United States. This dispatch system connects the BC Building Trades with over 2.5 million journey-level building trades members across North America.

Loftus said he felt the mission was successful in raising awareness among



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investors about the value and quality of unionized building trades workers' skills.

"We were extremely pleased to raise proponents' and investors' awareness of skilled labour," said Loftus. "They had no idea about what we do and how we do it. They were happy to see that we understand the issue and have ideas about the solution."

Hilton added, "It was a great opportunity to sit down and be presented as the labour solution for these projects. It was a good way to show the industry that we didn't have horns and a tail and that we are committed to the projects."

Loftus also got an up-close and personal view of the environmental impact China's current energy practices produce. "I appreciate better today the importance of LNG development in reducing green house gas emissions in Asia. I don't have words to describe the pollution there, except to say it is astounding. They are counting on LNG to play a critical role in moving away from their current practices for domestic heating and electrical generation."

The BC Building Trades delegation agreed that this initial contact with investors was successful in opening a dialogue about the importance of having unionized construction workers in development talks.

Cochrane said, "We showed the value of having the building trades at the table to the owners, clients and government. We will be a critical part of bringing these mega LNG projects online...The premier acknowledged the Building Trades and the importance we play as stakeholders in developing these projects every time she spoke at the podium."

With a final investment decision by at least one LNG proponent expected in 2015, the council is working with project proponents to plan labour supply, apprenticeship training and project conditions, so that affiliated members are in the best position to get the work.



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# Columbia Basin Trust presented as a good model for Site C

Artist's rendering of the project



In the speculation about the Site C Dam comes the statement from the Peace River Regional District that a \$400-million trust should be set up to compensate the people of the area for the environmental damage, loss of agricultural land, and social disruption that will be caused if

the project goes ahead.

The trust would be modeled after the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) which provides funding for social, economic and environmental projects in the Kootenay region. The \$350-million trust was set up in 1995 after large areas were flooded in the construction

of a string of dams built in the 1960s on the Columbia River. The trust was intended to provide compensation for the long-term effects of those dams.

Tradetalk has carried many articles about the benefits of the CBT as well as the Allied Hydro Agreement, a project labour agreement brought in to cover the construction of the dams. It is still held up as an effective model for providing skilled labour on construction projects while giving priority to local hiring, supporting apprenticeship training and bringing more people into the trades.

According to a Jan. 23 report in the *Vancouver Sun*, BC Hydro is proposing to flood 83 kilometres of the Peace Valley, extending from Fort St. John to Hudson's Hope. About 5,550 hectares of land would be submerged, including the permanent loss of about 3,800 hectares of farmland along the Peace River.

The \$7.9 billion, 1,050-metre long Site C Dam would provide energy for the mining, oil and gas industries and heating for 450,000 homes.

Arthur Hadland, a director of the Peace River Regional District, told the joint review panel in December that the region is already feeling the effects of the rapid growth in the natural gas sector. He noted that, in addition to the environmental damage, there will be social disruption when a large workforce arrives in the community.

Hadland said a Columbia Basin-style trust would mitigate the impact on the local population, but the community also wants BC Hydro to relocate a solid waste site; pay the extra costs for policing, health and educational services; and fund a museum to preserve the history of Rocky Mountain Fort and Rocky Mountain Portage Fort, two sites that will be submerged.

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## Bentall Tower tragedy

# Film presentation makes the losses even more poignant



### By Brynn Bourke

On Jan. 7, over 100 members from the labour and business community joined with government representatives and family members at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver to remember four construction workers who plunged to their deaths when a fly form collapsed at the 36th floor of the Bentall Centre Tower IV building.

Gunther Couvreur (49), Donald W. Davis (34), Yrjo Mitrunen (46) and Brian Stevenson (21) lost their lives in that tragedy in 1981.

Shortly after, an inquiry into construction safety took place and the Construction Industry Advisory Council was formed. CIAC made 12 recommendations to reduce the likelihood of other construction tragedies happening again, including:

- 35% of WCB inspectors must have a background in the construction industry
- inspectors make visits to all construction sites at least once a month, and
- inspectors visit rural and outlying construction sites

Every year, the BC Building Trades holds a memorial on Jan. 7 to remember our coworkers. This year's ceremony was particularly poignant because it coincided with the first public screening of a short film on the tragedy created by the Labour Heritage Centre and WorkSafeBC.

The film put faces to the workers who died that day and contained moving interviews with victims' families and representatives active in the construction inquiry that followed the incident.

The Bentall Memorial has given the construction community a place to come together with victims' families and let them know they are not alone. It shows them that their co-workers will never forget these men and comes with a recommitment to improving safety for all construction workers in B.C.

Members of the B.C. Building Trades also lay roses for construction workers who died the previous year, red roses for those lost due to trauma and white roses for those who succumbed to toxic

exposure. At this year's ceremony, they laid 10 red roses and 23 white.

Since the Bentall tragedy, 870 construction workers have died from trauma and exposures in B.C. While the Jan. 7 ceremony is a time to remember Gunther, Donald, Yrjo and Brian, everyone at the ceremony carries with them the memory of a coworker or friend they have lost.

This year's ceremony featured speakers from WorkSafeBC, the BC Federation of Labour, the City of Vancouver, Province of British Columbia and Official Opposition.

The Bentall memorial continues to cross party lines because worker safety is an issue that affects everyone. Protecting construction workers and improving safety on construction sites will require action from all levels of government and regulatory boards, as well as employers and labour organizations. Each year, we make a pledge to honour the workers we have lost and work towards the day when we will not need to lay any roses at all.

## Day of Mourning in your community

The international Day of Mourning, recognizing workers who have been injured or killed while working, is April 28. Commemorative events are held in most communities in the province.

It is a worthwhile and often moving ceremony for all community members, including children, to attend. Call your municipal office to find out more. If you live in the Lower Mainland, leaders of the BC Building Trades will be assembling at noon at New Westminster Quay.

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# Compensation misconceptions

## Let's get past the fallacies



Joshua Berson photo

### By Merrill O'Donnell Workers' Advocate

Until recently, Grant McMillan was the president and spokesperson for the Council of Construction Associations. COCA, which represents 16 construction associations in B.C., lobbies the provincial government for the construction industry and tries to convince the public of its take on workers' compensation matters.

A few months back, McMillan wrote articles about the history of the Workers' Compensation Board in the Journal of Commerce. These articles were littered with factual errors, one-line statements that led

nowhere. But what irked me most was the illogical notion that employers are the creators of value and keep our society from falling into social and economic despair. For example, he said, "The complete cost of the system – compensation benefits, medical costs, administration and appeals, then and now – is borne by the employer." Such statements create a false picture of the WCB system.

True, employers pay the premiums/assessments for the WCB system, but where do they get the money to pay for these premiums? Who creates the profits that are used

to pay the assessments? That is the heart of the matter. The fact is, profits are only generated by labour. All value in society ultimately comes from labour. So the complete cost of the WCB system is borne...in the last analysis...by workers!

Where and how value in society arises has been a source of debate for centuries. You've probably heard that it's supply and demand that determines value. That's a popular theory coming from right-wing pundits, classical economists, governments, and some in the media. However, the theory that peoples' labour produces wealth began to take hold about 400 years ago when left-wing theorists argued that if workers did not provide their labour power, no commodity or service values could come into existence.

So, when Grant McMillan (or anybody else) claims that employers create wealth or the complete cost of the workers' compensation system is borne by the employer, I say, Balderdash!

Workers through their efforts in construction, service and production, create the profits employers use to pay WCB premiums. Even more importantly, building and construction workers generate these profits at the cost of their physical and sometimes mental health. And far too often – as remembered every year on Jan. 7 at the Bentall Centre Tragedy Memorial –workers generate profits at the cost of their lives.

The BC Building Trades welcomes COCA's new president Dave Baspaly and hopes that he will bring more sound analysis and thoughtful commentary to future challenges facing workers' compensation in this province.

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We are proud of working with many of the local unions and members of the BC Building Trades and look forward to many more years of working together.

For more information, please contact :  
Daryl Barnett  
Canadian Director of Labour Relations  
1-866-413-7648

A photograph of two construction workers in safety gear shaking hands. The worker on the left is a man wearing a red hard hat and an orange high-visibility vest over a yellow shirt. The worker on the right is a woman wearing a white hard hat and a blue and orange high-visibility vest. They are standing outdoors against a clear blue sky. A semi-transparent white box with rounded corners is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the main text.

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**WORK SAFE BC**

# A tragic reminder

DON SCHOUTEN

JOB SAFETY

**By Don Schouten  
Industry and Labour  
Services Manager for  
Construction, WorkSafeBC**

I recently attended the Bentall memorial event in downtown Vancouver to honour the lives of four construction workers who died during the construction of one of the Bentall towers. The workers plunged to their deaths on Jan. 7, 1981, when the fly form platform they were standing on — 36 floors above ground — collapsed beneath their feet.

This terrible tragedy is one I hope is never repeated, but the annual event gives us the opportunity to reflect on worker health and safety in this province and re-examine the safety on all of our job sites.

Workplace incidents like the Bentall tragedy have helped reshape the regulations that help keep everyone safe on site, but it's important to remember you all have rights and responsibilities to keep you — and those around you — safe.

You have the right to know what hazards there are associated with your job and the site you're working on, the right to be taught and

trained in safe work procedures, and the right to be equipped with the proper safety gear to do the job safely.

You also have the right to refuse any tasks you feel are unsafe. If you notice any unsafe practices or conditions don't ignore it, report it to your supervisor. It could just save someone's life.

Safety on the job is a collective effort that requires not just the workers, but also employers, supervisors, and contractors to work together and create a plan to ensure everyone is protected from workplace injuries. Planning for safety, like you plan for the job, will save time, and ensure that you and your colleagues go home safely at the end of the day.

Take the time to know what your rights and responsibilities are, and how to stay safe at work.

For more information on your rights and responsibilities, or if you have any questions about health and safety on the job, visit [worksafebc.com](http://worksafebc.com).

*Please let me know what you think of this or any construction safety issue. Call me at 604 214-6989 from the*

*Lower Mainland, toll-free elsewhere to 1-888-621-7233. Or email [don.schouten@worksafebc.com](mailto:don.schouten@worksafebc.com). I'd like to hear from you.*

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Workers who've been injured on the job, can call WorkSafeBC's Teleclaim Centre between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. to file a report. A representative will complete the injury report, explain the claims process and help direct the worker to other services if necessary. The worker's employer is then notified of the injury and both the worker and employer can follow the status of the claim online.

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# Table exemplifies building trades' solidarity



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