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First class of Skilled Development Fund grads a boon for local builders

WELLAND, ON - On April 19, 2022 the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, Monte McNaughton, visited Niagara College's Welland Campus to announce a \$1.2 million Skills Development Fund (SDF) grant for a partnership between the Niagara Home Builders' Association (NHBA) and Niagara College (NC) to help meet the demand for skilled trades workers in the residential construction industry.

Fast forward almost one year later, where 80 students, their family and friends filled the auditorium at Niagara College's Welland Campus to celebrate earning their Skills Development Fund (SDF) program certificate in either Roofing Fundamentals or Drywall Installer Fundamentals.

Representatives from both Niagara College and The Niagara Home Builders' Association were in attendance to hand out the graduates' certificates, as well as additional awards for outstanding academic achievement and awards of distinction to selected students.

"Everyone in this room has a different story to tell. Stories of success, failure, frustration, happiness or fear. However, there is one chapter in this book of life that connects you all, and that is your perseverance and determination to grow and become victorious on your path towards your future career in the trades". Inspiring words spoken by NHBA CEO Chuck McShane as he addressed the crowd on Wednesday evening.

With Ontario projected to build 1.5 million homes in the next 10 years, the NHBA and NC have been working together over the past year to help close the skills gap in the construction industry and the trades. The provincial SDF funding supported the delivery of a customized Construction Skills training program – hands-on instruction through NC's School of Trades followed by an eight-week paid work

placement – to individuals who have been unable to pursue a career in the trades due to financial or other barriers.

"Niagara College is proud to see this first cohort of students accept their hard-earned certificates which represent the in-demand skills they've earned," said Jeff Murrell, Associate Dean of the School of Trades. "This program was enabled by an investment from the provincial government in support of our work with industry partners to meet the current and future needs of employers."

"Studies show that as many as one-in-five jobs within the province of Ontario will be in the skilled trades by the year 2025," said Richard Lawrence, President of the NHBA. "This program has allowed the NHBA and Niagara College to develop and train students with the skills they need in order to be job site ready to work their way into building a stable career, while filling the void of the 100,000 workers our industry needs over the next decade."

Welland resident Samuel Oloyede was among the first graduates, specializing in drywall installation. Oloyede is now employed with Stolk Construction where he is growing his skills in the construction trade.

"The program was very instrumental and has prepared me for job sites and the benefits and challenges that come with the construction trade which has been fascinating so far," said Oloyede. "The program has helped me take advantage of every task assigned to me at the job site, showcasing previous knowledge and learning something new every day."

The Construction Skills Certificate of Completion program has been deemed an overall success story, with 80 participants completing the course between June 2022 and March 2023. Many graduates have already secured long-term employment or are starting their own businesses. Others are returning to Niagara College for the [Carpentry and Renovation Technician Co-op program](#) or are pursuing NC's [Pre-Apprenticeship programs](#).

Niagara College has a full-time enrolment of more than 9,500 students from over 80 countries, who study in 130 diploma, certificate and bachelor degree programs at specialized campuses in Welland and Niagara-on-the-Lake. Niagara College is also involved in educational projects and partnerships around the world and is consistently ranked among Canada's top 10 colleges for research funding. Learn more at niagaracollege.ca.

Established in 1955, the Niagara Home Builders' Association is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 140 member companies including: Builders, Developers, Renovators, Suppliers, Supplier/Trade Contractors, Manufacturers, and Allied Professionals. They continue to advocate on behalf of the residential building community, with a focus on promoting the skilled trades. For more information, visit: nhba.ca

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