



### **New Niagara Launch Centre to expand capacity for skilled trades training**

A unique educational partnership between Niagara College (NC), Niagara Catholic, and Notre Dame College School – with support from the Niagara Home Builders Association (NHBA) – will expand local capacity for skilled trades training to help meet the urgent need for trades workers in the region.

NC and partners at Niagara Catholic have teamed up at the Niagara Launch Centre, a campus of Notre Dame College School inside the Seaway Mall in Welland, to share space, tools, equipment and expertise to prepare students for lucrative careers in the trades.

“Niagara Catholic has been a leader in technology education for students in Niagara for many years,” said Niagara Catholic Director of Education Camillo Cipriano. “We are extremely fortunate to have so many outstanding partners in our community who take students from their high school years to post-secondary learning through college programs or apprenticeships. Niagara College has been one of our longest-standing partners. The partnership we are announcing today, sharing the Notre Dame College School Launch Centre space with Niagara College, is another way to ensure we continue to meet the needs of students and industry in Niagara.”

Andrew Boon, Principal of Notre Dame College School, is excited for the opportunities this offers his students.

“The Launch Centre is a place where technology students at Notre Dame College School receive hands-on education in different skilled trades,” said Mr. Boon. “The partnership with Niagara College will provide students with access to tools and technology at a level beyond what might normally be available in a high school. We look forward to sharing this space with Niagara College for many years to come.”

“As industry demand grows, Niagara College and our partner, Niagara Catholic, are committed to addressing the pressing need for skilled tradespeople through collaborative and innovative education strategies. Our partnership with the Niagara Launch Centre allows NC to increase our capacity for trades programming on-and-off-campus, and positions us to explore collaborative program offerings with Niagara Catholic,” said NC’s Fiona Allan, Vice-President, Academic.

The Niagara Launch Centre first opened in 2016 at the Seaway Mall (inside the former Target store), as a centralized, off-site technology centre for student learning. In 2021, the Launch Centre relocated to the new 12,000 square-foot space in the Seaway Mall (near the Winners). It has become a dedicated technology space for Notre Dame students. It also services students in Lakeshore Catholic's Transportation Technology classes.

The location at the Seaway Mall provides great exposure for pathways to high-demand trades to youth and those seeking career changes. The College has injected the space with new tools and instructional equipment (valued at \$15,000) to be used by secondary and post-secondary students alike.

On May 15, members of the partner organizations, industry employers, students, and alumni gathered at the Niagara Launch Centre to celebrate the new partnership and program possibilities.

This spring/summer, the partnership will extend capacity for the post-secondary [Construction Skills program](#), a joint venture between NC and the NHBA to close the skills gap. Through the 16-week program, students train for entry level careers in the residential construction industry. As demand for the program continues, 80 students in two cohorts (May and July 2024) will receive hands-on training in carpentry and framing at both NC's Welland Campus and the Niagara Launch Centre. The program culminates in an eight-week paid work placement.

"The need to fill the void of our aging trades gap is a vital issue with 700,000 of the four million Canadians who work in the trades retiring by the end of the decade.", commented NHBA CEO Chuck McShane. "Together, with our partners we will continue to grow our commitment to education and hands on learning which will help in shaping the skilled tradespeople of tomorrow."

In a statement read at the event, Education Minister Stephen Lecce credited all parties for the innovative partnership.

"At a time when there is growing demand for skilled trades labour, the launch of this new partnership is incredibly good news," he said, "and I am confident it will help our province to build the critical infrastructure we will need in the years ahead and assist many young people in the Niagara region to enter rewarding careers in the skilled trades.

"Our government strongly supports skilled trades education, which is why we have made it a requirement for students entering Grade 9 this coming school year to take a Grade 9 or Grade 10 Technological Education credit as part of their Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

"More recently, our government announced a new stream, called Focused Apprenticeship Skills Training (FAST) that will allow Grades 11 and 12 high school students to participate in more apprenticeship learning, through additional co-operative education credits, while completing high school. These actions build on our previous actions such as supporting Dual Credits courses (which have enjoyed a 189 per cent increase in demand since 2019- 20), enhancing the successful Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, returning shop classes to schools, and expanding the Specialist High Skills Major Program (SHSM)."

*Niagara College has a full-time enrolment of more than 11,000 students from over 95 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](http://niagaracollege.ca).*

*Niagara Catholic provides excellence in Catholic education to more than 22,000 students from Grimsby to Fort Erie. We are a Christ-centered Catholic faith community that celebrates diversity and fosters spiritual growth, inspiring all to reach their full potential in mind, body, and spirit, encountering souls and opening minds so that all students succeed. Register online anytime at [niagaracatholic.ca](http://niagaracatholic.ca).*

*Established in 1955, the Niagara Home Builders' Association is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 155 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](http://nhba.ca).*

-30-

**Media inquiries, please contact:**

Jessica Torok  
Communications Consultant  
Niagara College  
Cell: 905-932-1520  
[jtorok@niagaracollege.ca](mailto:jtorok@niagaracollege.ca)

Jennifer Pellegrini  
Communications Officer  
Niagara Catholic District School Board  
Cell: 905-651-3818  
[jennifer.pellegrini@ncdsb.com](mailto:jennifer.pellegrini@ncdsb.com)

Alicia Dimitrov-Lawrence  
Executive Officer  
Niagara Home Builders Association  
Cell: 905-646-6281  
[alicia@nhba.ca](mailto:alicia@nhba.ca)