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Bujold, Boxing
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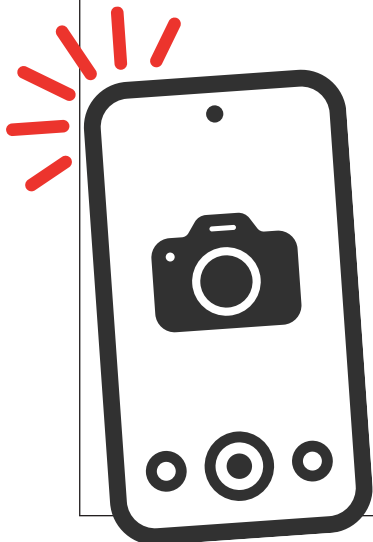
All across the country women are contributing to Canada's construction environment, lending their skills and expertise to projects big and small.

Sharing images of women at work in the construction industry is a fantastic way to show potential and new tradespeople that women DO belong and are DOING amazing work.

If you have photos of your tradespeople at work, **Women Building Canada** would like to share the snapshots with readers across Canada. This is a great way to recognize team members and their contribution to your companies and the entire industry.

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A STRONG AND EXPANDING VOICE FOR WOMEN

Welcome to the second edition of *Women Building Canada*, the official publication of the Canadian Association of Women in Construction (CAWIC). Our first edition, which was released earlier this year, was positively received and provided the association with a new platform to support and engage women.

As a strong industry voice for women in construction, we must continue to pave the way for transformative change across the sector. We need to understand the issues impacting women, and use our voices to advocate for skilled trades; champion diversity, equity, and inclusion; and reinforce the importance of women's representation in the industry at every level. In each edition of *Women Building Canada*, we look to examine the latest issues that are most important to women in the industry so we can understand the state of our sector and challenge the barriers impeding our progress.

In this edition of the magazine, we take a closer look at an issue that continues to be raised by women in the industry – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). In this article, we highlight the necessary evolution and innovation of PPE for women. While PPE plays an essential role in ensuring the protection and safety of construction workers, more work is needed to ensure PPE is inclusive and meets the needs of the broad construction industry. This article shares the latest trends in PPE and provides a real-life look at the latest innovations in the market that are supporting women working in construction.

Additionally, be sure to read about the extraordinary and inspiring journey of Mandy Bujold as she transitions from success in the boxing ring to a new career in construction. Hear directly from Mandy on why she's excited to use her voice to expand the reach and recognition of women in our industry. Mandy's story of a fight for fairness and equality is one that will resonate with all readers.

As we focus on attracting and retaining women in the construction industry, CAWIC recognizes that access to flexible childcare is an issue that must be addressed. In the article, *Flexible daycare for all*, CAWIC's President-Elect, Kristen Hallberg examines the need to find flexible, modern solutions for childcare that allow workers to balance the demands of life and work.

Thank you to the many companies and organizations that supported this latest edition of *Women Building Canada*. We couldn't have done it without you!

Enjoy the latest edition of *Women Building Canada*.

GET TO KNOW



CAWIC

Lisa Laronde

President

We need to understand the issues impacting women, and use our voices to advocate for skilled trades; champion diversity, equity, and inclusion; and reinforce the importance of women's representation in the industry at every level.



LET'S CHAT!

CAWIC is committed to creating a construction industry in Canada that is inclusive, welcoming, and a great place for everyone to build a lifelong career! If you share these goals, please reach out to any of the Board Members or staff listed on page 13. Better yet, if you're attending CAWIC's FIRST Annual National Conference in September, let's chat. We'd love to speak about the work we're doing, and we welcome your ideas and comments as well. We look forward to connecting with you!

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CAWIC: A CATALYST FOR SUCCESS

As the national not-for-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the success of women in the Canadian construction industry, CAWIC is committed to driving positive action and support for women in the sector. Through a united voice, CAWIC is focused on addressing the industry's critical issues, including job title and pay equity, representation in the workplace, childcare, and public awareness of women's role in construction.

This latest edition of *Women Building Canada* magazine is being launched at CAWIC's inaugural national conference. Both the magazine and our inaugural conference are examples of how we, as an association, are increasing our value, support, and engagement for women across the industry. As we approach our 20th anniversary in 2025, we are committed to expanding our reach and impact to become the go-to-organization for women in the industry.

As you have heard our President, Lisa Laronde, say, 2024 is a year of transformation and growth for CAWIC. We are introducing innovative initiatives and expanding our existing ones to better serve women in construction. Our commitment to thought leadership, professional development, networking opportunities, and advocacy for women in construction is stronger than ever for our growing association. As we partner with our members and industry stakeholders, we are making significant strides. Our membership continues to grow as organizations turn to CAWIC to create a unified voice, build a community for women, and develop new solutions and open conversations around the issues impacting women. Ultimately, it is the work and focus that we do together that will create an inclusive and equitable future for all.

Be sure to take a closer look on 40 at all the companies and organizations that are now members of CAWIC. If you are a member of CAWIC, thank you for your ongoing support and for being a leader in the construction industry – a leader who clearly demonstrates your commitment to women and a diverse, equitable, and inclusive industry.

If you are not yet a member, reach out to our team. We would be thrilled to meet with you to share more insights on the importance of being part of a strong industry voice and the benefits you can gain and provide to your teams!

*Together, we have a stronger voice, impact, and community. **W***

GET TO
KNOW



CAWIC

Kristen Hallberg
President Elect

As we approach our 20th anniversary in 2025, we are committed to expanding our reach and impact to become the go-to-organization for women in the industry.



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PREPARING FOR



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL P. HALL.

BY KAITLIN VITT, MAGAZINE STAFF WRITER

Mandy Bujold isn't afraid to break down barriers. And that's the exact same advice the 11-time Canadian boxing champion offers to any woman entering a traditionally male-dominated industry. "Sometimes at the beginning, you have to prove yourself, but once you get your foot in the door, it opens up a lot of opportunities," Bujold says. "If you feel competent, you need to go for it."

Bujold has recently taken on a role with the Grand Valley Construction Association (GVCA) as the Manager of Industry and Community Partnerships. In her position, she speaks with members to understand pain points within the construction industry and offers support to companies based on this feedback.

At first glance, Bujold's transition from boxing gloves to a hard hat might appear surprising, but she believes there are more similarities between sport and construction than you might think.

When she started boxing, there weren't many women in the gym – many gyms didn't have female changerooms, while other gyms didn't allow women at all.

A NEW FIGHT:

Mandy Bujold is no stranger to being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field. As an 11-time boxing champion, she's spent her career proving that she could spar with the best of them. Now she's using her skills to show women that there IS a place for them to build careers in sectors that are predominantly occupied by men, including construction.



"There were a lot of bumps along the road but nothing that ever deterred me from wanting to continue pursuing boxing," she says.

When starting out, at Bujold's gym, she looked up to another woman who went there too.

"I remember seeing her beating up the boys in the gym, and I remember thinking, 'I want to be that girl. That looks so cool.' It was that visual of seeing someone else in that position that was really important, and

there weren't a lot of other women in the gym at that time."

The same can be said about the construction industry – when young women who are considering entering the industry see others who have done the same before them, they know it's an option for them too; they know they also belong.

EMBRACING THE CHALLENGE

Bujold started boxing when she was 16 years old. One of her brothers was a boxer,

and she'd see him come home excited after being at the gym. She wanted to see what it was all about.

But it wasn't cool to bring your sister to the gym, so Bujold waited until her brother was busy with a full-time job before she tried it out for herself.

"I was not an athlete – I was far from it. I was that kid who opted out of gym class and didn't like to sweat," Bujold says. "The fact that I went from that to one of the most physically demanding sports was pretty interesting."

Starting out, she had a hard time even making it through a warm up. But she kept at it; she liked the idea of learning something new, like throwing punches, and she liked that there was always something to work on since you can never fully master the sport of boxing.

"It almost felt like a cleanse, like this feeling where you left it all out there," Bujold says. "I didn't think there was anything else I could do physically that would give me that same feeling."

Bujold also liked how structured the sport is. In boxing, everything you do is connected – one thing affects another. It's not just about your time in the gym; it's how you eat, how you sleep, how you recover, and so on.

"There were a lot of decisions early on in my life that I had to make, asking, 'Is this going to get me closer to my goal?' If it was, I did it, and if not, I was ok with saying no," Bujold says. "I became regimented, but it paid off."

She became hooked on boxing, and when she started competing, she never looked back.

"It slowly took over my life and became a full-time job for me," she says. "It changed my life."

Her boxing career has taken her to more than 45 countries. She's competed in the Olympics, Canadian National Championships, Pan American Games, and Commonwealth Games, to name a few.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

At the end of Bujold's maternity leave with her second child, she knew she was ready to retire from boxing, but she didn't know what to do next.

She was friends with GVCA President Jeff MacIntyre, and he signed up for a corporate charity boxing event Bujold was hosting. Bujold asked MacIntyre to meet after the event, and the two discussed building community and bringing people

together for a common cause, something Bujold had experience with and something MacIntyre was interested in further developing in the construction industry.

Soon enough, they ended up creating a role for Bujold with the association, with a focus on community building.

Being a part of the construction industry wasn't farfetched for Bujold; she has family members in the field. Bujold also says she's starting to see more connections between her interests and the industry.

"I'm a hands-on person, just like with sports. That's how I learn. I like to see things from point A to point B and how we're going to get there," Bujold says. "That's what happens in the construction world. I just never thought about it that way before."

SAFETY AND INCLUSION

Health and safety are big focuses right now in the construction industry, and Bujold draws from her experience in sport to speak on these topics.

"When I'm going in to talk to people about health and safety, I'm not trying to act like I know the job that they're doing. I share from my perspective as an athlete," she says. "It's really about protecting yourself, showing up for work, mentally and physically, every day. It's about looking at some of the small things you can do and preparing yourself to avoid some of those bigger accidents that might happen."

Recruitment and retention of women in the industry are also top of mind. She says when talking with companies, some people have told her that they could double their bottom line if only they could find workers for the open positions.

"Companies can't find the people they need to fill the roles that are available. Part of that may be people aren't thinking about construction as a first career option, which sometimes comes from within the school system," she says.

"Plus, people don't see construction. Oftentimes, if you think about some of the work that's done, there's a danger sign, or there's a road closure sign, and you don't really see the work that's happening behind. It can be hard to attract the younger

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At first glance, Bujold's transition from boxing gloves to a hard hat might appear surprising, but she believes there are more similarities between sport and construction than you might think.

generation into these fields because they don't necessarily know a lot about it."

Hosting events, visiting schools, and highlighting the diverse roles in the industry that require all kinds of talent are a few ways to increase awareness of the field.

"We don't need to start from scratch," Bujold says. "We need to figure out who's doing something well and how we can learn from that, and then try to bring that over to the construction industry."

Bujold also suggests companies include on job postings that they want to hire more women.

"I think that women look at some of these job postings and they don't necessarily feel like they can apply for it, because it's maybe an industry they're not exposed to," Bujold says.

Once companies recruit women, Bujold says it's important to focus on the

workplace culture to retain them. Part of this includes encouraging conversations among employees, including before bringing a woman onto the team, if she is going to be one of the only women there.

Bujold relates this to her experience in boxing when many of her training partners were men.

"I had to have those conversations to say, 'We probably can't go power for power because you're a man, and your power is

naturally going to be a lot more than mine, but there's a lot of other things we can work on. We can work on technical skill, speed, and accuracy.' I would show all the other things that we can do and that we can still both get a lot out of this training," Bujold says. "In any work relationship, I think it's important to put it on the table and to say, 'How do we want this to work?' Communication is key." **W**

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WOMEN NEED PROPERLY FITTING PPE TO STAY SAFE

LEFT: Helga Wear has 26 size options designed to fit and protect women.

MIDDLE: Mark's Commercial carries several lines of PPE that are designed specifically for women, including Covergalls products.

RIGHT: From flame-resistant and sustainable materials to high-visibility garments, Covergalls prioritizes the well-being of your employees.

*As more women choose careers in construction, companies **MUST** step up to ensure the protective equipment they're wearing isn't "just a men's size small." Safety requires properly fitting PPE and luckily, there are several companies in Canada that are making it their mission to provide gear that fits female bodies correctly AND meets industry standards.*



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DESIGN:

By Kaitlin Vitt, Magazine Staff Writer

Women in the construction industry are fed up with the “shrink it and pink it” approach when it comes to personal protective equipment (PPE), saying it’s long overdue for *all* tradespeople to have correctly fitting PPE, from shoes, to overalls, to everything in between.

“We are invited into the industry with open arms, but from the day we enter the industry, we are reminded that we don’t actually belong,” says Jodi Hüettner, President and CEO of Helga Wear. “We’ve been gate-kept out by design, whether it’s PPE, tools, equipment, or washrooms.”

Hüettner launched her women-aimed PPE company Helga Wear after her own experience. While working as a mechanical engineer, she kept coming up against the fact that there wasn’t workwear suitable for her.

“It really impacted me when I got into the field and realized that even our safety gear isn’t designed for our bodies,” Hüettner says.

“It’s not like designing for women is rocket science or innovative, but it’s not common practice.”

The lack of suitable PPE hindered her ability to advance. To qualify for professional designation status, she had to meet certain metrics, which she had a hard time doing because of her unsuitable PPE.

“Year over year, I had a hard time meeting my schedules and my budgets because of very, very practical barriers, like not having PPE that fits or lets me use the washroom like the men can.”

MINING FOR SOLUTIONS

Alicia Woods, founder of Covergalls, can relate to Hüettner. Previously working in the mining industry, Woods founded her company out of her own frustration of having to wear men’s workwear.

When Woods started in the industry, PPE didn’t exist for women – she just went and bought the smallest set of whatever she needed that she could find. She was rolling things up, tucking things in.

“PPE is meant to protect the person, yet we’re putting women in ill-fitting workwear every day, where it’s big and baggy,” she says.

"As women, we want to be recognized for the work we do. We want to feel like we belong there. We don't want to come across like we're complaining, so I think sometimes we make do with what we have, because we just want to do our job."

It wasn't until Woods went underground her first day of work and asked a male colleague where she could use the bathroom when she truly realized the impact of not having female-specific PPE.

"All the men started to laugh, and they pointed to the end of a very dark drift," Woods says. "I remember looking down at my coveralls, knowing I had little on underneath, and went, OK, this is not happening today. So, I avoided using the washroom until I got home."

When she looked online for female-fit coveralls, she could find only gardening coveralls, which weren't going to meet industrial standards.

FROM FRUSTRATION TO INNOVATION

For the next 10 years, she simply didn't drink anything before going underground because she refused to take everything off to go to the washroom. After working all day without drinking water, she'd get to the surface and feel nauseated, sometimes even getting a migraine from dehydration.

Eventually, there came a time she needed to use the bathroom. She was working in a dry, dusty potash mine and had to drink water all day. She went to go to the washroom at the surface, but the cage to take her up was down for maintenance for a few hours. She had to use a porta-potty without a door that day.

"I remember stepping in, turning off my light, and I'm trying to take my gear off, and I could hear things falling. After that experience, I said I will never wear men's coveralls again," she says. "That's where my inspiration came from, and that's how Coveralls was developed."

She worked with a seamstress to alter her work coveralls, adding a rear flap to make it easier to use the washroom. Other women in the field would notice her coveralls – and noticed her drinking water. They started to ask her if they could get a pair through her, and the interest continued to grow.

"Clothes empower a person. They provide confidence. It's a reflection of who you are, and that translates into so many other areas – being more productive, working safer, making you feel like you belong in that role and in that industry," Woods says.

Today, Coveralls has expanded to include more than just coveralls; the company has a growing line of workwear, including bibs, pants, shirts, and vests, getting feedback from women in the field throughout the entire production process.

Coveralls also has a maternity workwear line.

"When you think of creating inclusive work environments, that is a product that is needed," Woods says. "It is fairly niche; however, if we want to attract and retain a female workforce, it's certainly something



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When PPE doesn't fit, it doesn't protect. Photo courtesy of Coveralls.

that we need to make sure is available so that women feel safe in the roles in which they're working in their respective industries."

REDESIGNING SAFETY

Eighty-five per cent of women surveyed by the CSA Group for a 2022 report said they have been hindered at work because of their PPE. Of the nearly 3,000 women surveyed, 38% have modified their PPE, for example, by using rubber bands or duct tape; this is about the same percentage who said they had an injury or incident they believe was related to poor-fitting PPE; and

28% said they don't wear all the required PPE because it doesn't fit properly.

Hüettner of Helga Wear says she understands the historical context of this issue.

"When the Iron Age developed, and tools and machines were being made, the information to make and use them was so heavily guarded, and women were kept out. As things progressed, women were allowed to work on the assembly line, but we were not allowed to maintain the machines, let alone build the machines that ran the assembly lines," Hüettner says.

"Even today, while they say we're accepted in the trades, the very tools we hold in our hands to maintain the machines that run the world were developed for the average man's hand, grip, upper body strength, and so on. At this point, we need to consider designing inclusively to support women's experiences for many things, not just PPE."

Hüettner believes there should be ethical standards in place for inclusive designs. This would mean that for any product, male and female data would be used in development.

WOMEN AT WORK

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"If the product is intended for both sexes, then both sexes have to be considered in all design aspects," Hüttner says.

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Dianne Finnigan, founder of female-focused workwear company The Dirty Seahorse, and others from the construction industry spoke at Parliament Hill in May 2024 with members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, including MPs Michelle Ferreri, Rosemarie Falk, and Anna Roberts. Tania Johnson, CEO of the Mechanical Contractors Association of Canada (MCAC), was also there. Finnigan and the group discussed the current problems with PPE available to women and asked the government for a tax rebate for PPE. Finnigan said the members of Parliament the group spoke to were supportive, and now Finnigan is waiting to hear more on this.

Finnigan founded The Dirty Seahorse out of necessity. Her daughter was in masonry school, and when she went to purchase workwear, her daughter soon realized what was available didn't fit her. Finnigan created an innovative line of overalls, pants, and jackets with special features designed specifically for women.

"When you put your blue jeans on, they fit, so why does PPE not fit? PPE is critical. It's supposed to reduce injuries and save lives," Finnigan says. "It's easier for companies financially just to buy one size fits all, but they don't understand that they're paying for it one way or the other, like when a person gets injured on the job."

Finnigan was so frustrated, knowing it wasn't that difficult of a problem to fix, so she stepped up. She went back to school to learn block, pattern making, garment construction, and tech packs. After creating the ideal women's fit from her daughter's measurements, she hired a team of female designers based out of Toronto to help develop the line. The company did nine months of market research with women in skilled trades who chose the features, and The Dirty Seahorse translated this research into garments.

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"We wanted to make sure that women had a voice in our company," Finnigan says. "They were the building blocks, the foundation of our company. Creating workwear that is built by women for women, we are making it our mission to help solve this problem for future generations to come."

PARTNERS, PEERS, PEOPLE

To make the construction industry and PPE more inclusive, Cristina Barlow of Mark's Commercial encourages companies to keep in mind three things: partners, peers, and people.

"Consider your partners to be partners. We are experts in our field. We know what

the trends are. PPE is our core competency. We don't expect it to be yours. But ask us, because we have our ear to the ground, we know what's coming in the form of innovation," Barlow says.

"In regard to peers, talk to other companies, even if they're competitors within your industry, to find out what they need, because you might find there's a lot of overlap, and anything that can improve economies of scale is a good thing. And most importantly, talk to your people. Talk to the people on the ground. Do your site visits, gain the input, create the key products that are missing as you're conducting your gap analysis, do a proof of concept, and then launch."

Barlow says Mark's Commercial has noticed the increase of women on construction sites over the years and saw women modifying their clothing, which can create a safety hazard. This is why Mark's Commercial has focused on workwear specific to women. The company has a catalogue featuring PPE items for women from various brands, including Covergalls.

"The number of women is increasing in these roles, so companies now see the importance," says Covergalls founder, Woods. "It's not just fashion – it's about safety, it's about health, it's about inclusivity." **W**





ACCELERATE THE MOM

BY LISA LARONDE, PRESIDENT, CAWIC

To grasp the underrepresentation of women in construction, you don't need to dive into the latest statistics. Just look around your office or job site. Take note of who's working on the roadways during your commute, who's building the latest community developments, and whose names pop up when you search for contractors, plumbers, or electricians. These roles are predominantly filled and led by men, a tradition that has persisted for centuries. But there's a noticeable shift in that landscape as more women step into construction. This change is tied to a growing recognition of the benefits of diversity and inclusion.

Slowly but surely progress is underway, and it's crucial to build on this momentum. To do so effectively, we need to assess where we currently stand and recognize the abundant opportunities ahead. According to BuildForce statistics, the workforce will require over 350,000 new workers by 2033, constituting 21% of the current labour force, which already faces significant shortages.

Currently, women make up a minority of the construction workforce, with recent figures showing that over 86% of nearly 1.6 million construction workers are men. While there has been some improvement in increasing the number of women in the sector, substantial challenges persist. Addressing these challenges

ATING ENTUM

Good change is happening, including training for male allies, and federal and provincial programs that are investing in women in construction. How can industry build on this momentum to address the issues that remain, such as workplace harassment, a lack of correctly fitting PPE, and inadequate childcare?

head-on is important and will ensure that women not only enter the industry but also receive the necessary support to thrive in construction.

This isn't just about filling gaps; it's about bringing diverse perspectives and skills to the table that can spur innovation and growth. It is also about tapping into a vast talent pool, eager to make a significant impact if given the opportunity.

INVESTING IN WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

Immediate and effective action is crucial to attract women to the construction industry and pave the way for sustainable, successful careers. There are many ways to accomplish that, from training and networking opportunities to online resources, to creating initiatives that help women enter and advance in construction careers. We've witnessed substantial progress already, and this momentum will continue.

Recent initiatives illustrate how the landscape of the construction industry is evolving to better attract, support, and retain women:

- In Ontario, the government has invested in multiple projects aimed at preparing women and young people for careers in construction trades.
- Nova Scotia introduced a new bursary to support 320 students who are starting

their training in construction programs at the Nova Scotia Community College, as part of their plan to expand the skilled trades workforce.

- Saskatchewan partnered with Women Building Futures to launch the Journey to Trades pre-employment program, equipping women with essential skills for construction careers and apprenticeships.
- The federal government's Union Training and Innovation Program (UTIP) has received new funding to enhance participation of underrepresented groups, including women, in Red Seal trades.
- Furthermore, Ontario has implemented new requirements to ensure construction sites provide safe, clean, and supportive environments for women, aiming to further attract them to this dynamic and growing profession.

These actions mark significant progress, yet continued advocacy for further change and support remains essential.

POSITIVE ACTION AS ALLIES

Positive strides are also being made through the allyship of men within the industry. Men are actively challenging stigmas and starting discussions that create additional opportunities for growth, progress, and sponsorship.

For instance, the Manitoba Construction Sector Council developed the Shift Change

course for male supervisors, exemplifying efforts to cultivate strong allies who can amplify our collective voice and drive tangible change.

ELIMINATION OF HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Unfortunately, women working within the industry face significant challenges, including harassment, discrimination, and isolation. While there are concerted efforts to train women for these trades, the reality of being the only woman on a job site is often overlooked, leaving them unprepared for such environments.

This isolation can exacerbate feelings of alienation and make it difficult to address incidents of harassment and discrimination. In addition, access to childcare poses a significant barrier, as the construction industry's non-traditional hours make it challenging for women to balance work and family responsibilities (see article on page 30). These factors contribute to a hostile work environment that can deter women from entering or remaining in these fields.

STRONG SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

Research conducted by CAWIC with members of the Angus Reid Forum across Canada underscored the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the

construction industry. A significant majority, 69% of respondents, believe these factors are crucial for the industry's prosperity and growth. In addition, 73% of women surveyed agree that more must be done to attract and retain women in construction.

BUT HOW DO WE DO THIS?

Industry and government are doing a better job of attracting and helping women start careers in construction, but we also need to put an equal focus on retaining women in the sector. Issues like childcare,

pay, and job title equity, along with access to inclusive PPE, are a few of the many issues still plaguing our industry, and they will continue to cause women to leave the construction industry. We need a plan to address these issues and strengthen the industry for all.

Despite the significant challenges and barriers that remain, we are making strides forward. We must collaborate to implement positive changes and create workplaces that actively welcome and support women in our industry. **W**

Lisa Laronde, President of CAWIC, is President of RSG International, a global leader in road safety infrastructure, and a powerful advocate for women in leadership. Through her influential speaking engagements and podcasts, her aim is to inspire women in all industries, particularly construction. Lisa is passionate about building psychologically safe work environments, where diversity and inclusion are at the forefront of her organization.



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Workplace Safety - A Priority in Skilled Trades:

Workplace safety is a top priority in skilled trades, proper industrial workwear can help reduce these risks and keep workers safe and productive. New safety innovations have been designed specifically for workwear, including anti-slip features that prevent slips, trips, and falls, as well as IceFX technology which provides cold weather slip and fall protection, and VizLite reflective technology, which is challenging the industry standards for enhanced visibility in low light and no light conditions.

The Increasing Selection of Women's Industrial Workwear:

Traditionally, finding workwear that fits well has been a challenge for women in the skilled trades. However, the selection of women's workwear has evolved over time, with more options available that cater to their specific needs. Finding workwear that fits well has many benefits, including improved comfort, enhanced mobility, and increased protection. With an expanding selection of women's workwear, it is more accessible to find the perfect fit.

Commitment to Expand the Quality and Fit of Women's Workwear:

Mark's Commercial is committed to expanding the quality and fit of women's industrial workwear. We recognize the importance of offering women's workwear that performs as well as men's. To achieve this, Mark's Commercial has been investing in research and development to create innovative designs that are specifically tailored to the needs of women in the skilled trades. By continually improving the quality and fit of women's workwear, Mark's Commercial is helping to ensure that women have access to the best possible protective gear.

“Mark's Commercial is committed to expanding the quality and fit of women's industrial workwear”

Industrial workwear and safety innovations are essential for keeping all workers safe and productive in the skilled trades. Mark's Commercial is committed to offering a range of innovative safety features in workwear that cater to the unique needs of all individuals. As the selection of workwear continues to expand, workers are better able to find the perfect fit to enhance their comfort, mobility, and protection. With a commitment to future innovations in design, Mark's Commercial is helping to ensure that everyone has access to the best possible protective gear.





Flexi

Building a strong workforce across all industries requires Canada to address childcare needs. Doing this is one of the many ways to help attract and retain construction workers.

By Kristen Hallberg, President Elect, CAWIC

As a sector, we are facing increasing demands for a sustainable and expanded workforce, and that demand is expected to grow for the next decade. To help fill the widening need, we must attract new workers while ensuring that we have a diverse, inclusive, and responsive construction industry. A key success factor for the industry will be its ability to attract and retain women.

In our industry, approximately 5% of women represent workers on-site. As Lisa Laronde, President, CAWIC shares in her article, *Change is Underway: Accelerating*

the Momentum (page 26), the representation of women in the construction industry is increasing and that's great news. But there are still critical needs that must be addressed to successfully attract women to join and stay in the construction sector. One such issue is childcare.

ACCESS TO CHILDCARE IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

As the sector works to put an increased emphasis on supporting women, we need to look at the overall need to ensure a flexible childcare system that is available to all. Construction workers need to have access to childcare options, and for Canadian families this is an increasing challenge.

able DAYCARE for all

Childcare deserts are real, and they are impacting families from coast to coast. A report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives shows that “half of younger Canadian children (defined as not yet attending Kindergarten) live in a postal code that has more than three children for every licensed childcare space.” If families can’t access a childcare solution, it may directly impact women returning to work, starting a new career path, or joining the workforce. Additionally, the challenges facing construction workers can be compounded and even more difficult due to the nature of their work and childcare needs.

A report undertaken by Canada’s Building Trades Unions looked at this issue in 2021, and they found a variety of barriers to accessing childcare. This included limited daycare provider hours that don’t correspond with the shifts they work, long waitlists, long-term commitments to one childcare facility that don’t correspond with the cyclical nature of construction, and a lack of qualified childcare professionals/drop-in childcare options. For women in construction, especially those working on-site, they wouldn’t be surprised by these barriers. They face them every day.

On a positive note, there has been encouraging momentum on working towards making childcare more affordable. In fact, in 2023, Stats Canada found that the average

amount parents paid for their main full-time arrangement decreased to \$544 per month from \$649 in 2022. But financial savings are only helpful if families can access childcare.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

In 2024, the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) Global Alliance, which includes representation from Canada, surveyed women in construction to understand their needs and views on the issue of childcare. This research provided insight gathered from nearly 500 responses, including approximately 100 individuals from Canada.

Not surprising, it showed us that childcare is an issue that has impacted individuals’ careers. Nearly 70% of participants indicated that childcare had been a factor impacting their career.

What was even more concerning was that 71% were of the opinion that the construction industry was not supportive in providing resources or accommodations for childcare. Additionally, 52% of respondents indicated that they have felt hesitant to discuss or disclose childcare needs with their employer in the construction industry.

As an industry facing workforce shortages, we must understand the issues,





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create safe spaces to examine them, and create modern-day solutions that meet the needs of women and their families.

BUILDING FLEXIBLE SOLUTIONS

It isn't enough to attract women to the industry; if we don't support them in providing real solutions to issues like childcare, we will lose them. More than 88% of respondents agreed that there is a need for industry-wide policies or initiatives to better support individuals managing childcare responsibilities in the construction sector. For CAWIC, we are going to continue examining the issue of childcare to define learnings and solutions to further support women.

A career in construction is rewarding and provides many benefits, and childcare should not be a barrier to having a successful and sustainable career in construction. As leaders in our industry, we need to build real solutions that not only support workers, but also create a thriving construction industry for generations to come. **W**

Kristen Hallberg, CAWIC President Elect, is an Innovation Product & Solutions Manager for United Rentals, where she leads sales and marketing strategies, project management, and product development for specialty groups within North America. She strives to identify industry and economic trends that impact business, to create strategies for long-term value for her team, customers, organization, and associations.

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CAWIC MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

CAWIC is thankful for the support of industry, individuals, and the women who are proving that the construction sector IS a great place to build a career. Our organization would not be successful without the backing of organizations and people who believe in our mission.

CAWIC MEMBER: KOURTNEY ADAMSON



"There is this idea that women will get talked down to, or treated differently, but that hasn't been my experience and I don't think this is the case very often anymore. The change has happened!"

Kourtney Adamson has seen tremendous change in the construction industry over the course of her career, which spans 28 years. "All these years," she says, "and I just see more and more women progressing and taking the opportunities and building successful careers. We have come so far."

Adamson, who is Sales Manager for Yellowline Asphalt Products Ltd., admits she "lucked into it" when asked how she began her own journey. "I went to a temp agency out of college and took something I wasn't really into, but ended up falling in love with the atmosphere right away."

Since that day she has worked hard to immerse herself in the asphalt industry, ignoring those who at first said, "girls don't sell asphalt" and proving to the doubters how wrong they were. "I wanted to learn from the ground up; I wanted to be where the action was."

Adamson has worked for several large companies through her career, doing everything from selling asphalt, to becoming a sales manager, to marketing, to putting together quotes and tendering work, to helping with safety-related training. "I am officially a jack-of-all-trades," she jokes.

At a conference over 15 years ago, Adamson met Angela Wilson, a past CAWIC President; they were two of the only women in the room. "Angela told me about this organization she was involved with, CAWIC, and encouraged me to check it out. I thought 'what a great concept!' Meeting women across all aspects of construction, it was unbelievable, especially at a time when there were so few women. I was so impressed by the work they were doing, and I continue to be impressed with the progress being made."

As an industry veteran who has immensely enjoyed her career, Adamson enthusiastically believes that the perception of the construction industry is very different than the reality. "There is this idea that women will get talked down to, or treated differently, but that hasn't been my experience and I don't think this is the case very often anymore. The change has happened!"

She adds that she hopes industry leaders and decision makers will talk about this reality more in the future in order to attract more women to the trades. "We need to move beyond pink hard hats as a sector and say 'this is the work we've done, and this is NOW how a career in the construction industry will look for you.' We need to be proud of everything that has been accomplished." **W**

AON



Aon employees Victoria Hayes, Suzanne Watson, Debbie Khan, Amy Procter, and Indra Bhikram partake in Toronto's Annual Pride Celebration.

CAWIC CORPORATE MEMBER: AON

Aon is committed as one firm to their purpose, united through trust and integrity as one inclusive, diverse team and passionate about making the company's colleagues and clients successful. Everyone at the company is called upon to lead with Aon values and behaviours because

Continued on page 35.

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transformational change only occurs over time, through the consistent and cohesive efforts of many individuals. This is why Aon believes that it is imperative that the company reflects on the principles of inclusivity and diversity, and commits to infusing them into daily work.

Everyone at the company is called upon to lead with Aon values and behaviours because transformational change only occurs over time, through the consistent and cohesive efforts of many individuals.

Aon also recently created the Women's International Network (WIN). The WIN provides a global community for women at Aon to support personal and professional growth, help with career advancement at Aon, as well as benefit clients through knowledge sharing. This Business Resource Group helps Aon remain a destination of choice for high-quality professionals by enhancing its ability to attract, develop, and retain talent.

Aon has been a member of CAWIC for multiple years. The staff on the Construction and Infrastructure team have enjoyed networking and meeting like-minded women. Now too, since CAWIC has broadened their footprint, Aon's offices in Canada's west have gotten involved. What a great association – women supporting women!

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