

Ontario's largest virtual career expo for teens aims to make trades priority career

Nighttime networking events will connect students to tradespeople, pathways, employers (and DIY pizza kits)

(April 21, 2021 – Windsor, ON) Despite the strong demand for workers and the many associated benefits with skilled trades, students continue to leave journey person off their career list. Along with missed opportunities for students, Ontario's economy will suffer if jobs continue to go unfilled. Build a Dream is out to change that! Working with educators and industry to shift how students (and their parents) view the trades, the Canadian non-profit is hosting *Trades Week*, Ontario's largest virtual skilled trades expo for high school students.

"A lot of people might be working with incorrect information or they might not even get to see skilled trades in the world around them so that positive association is not always there," says Nour Hachem-Fawaz, President & Founder of Build a Dream.

Hachem-Fawaz knows firsthand what exposure to trades can mean: "It is often a single event that can change their entire outlook."

Feedback from previous Build a Dream expos frequently mention how attendees were not aware of the variety and benefits associated with skilled trades. From that one experience, many say that they are now inspired to seek out new courses as well as co-op and youth apprenticeship opportunities.

Build a Dream's Trades Week will take place May 17-21, 2021, with 2 evenings of interactive learning planned for the 19th and 20th. Students will hear from inspirational journey persons, find out different ways to connect their learning, get job-readiness advice, and will be able to interact with employers from different industries. The rest of the week, Build a Dream will use their blog, podcast, and social media channels to push the trades as a career of choice. The overall purpose of Trades Week is to assist families with career planning and help industry build a pipeline of talent needed for future openings.

Since going digital in 2020, Build a Dream has delivered career expos to 9,000 families across Canada and is using that success to deliver Trades Week.

Where does the free pizza come in? "For companies to recruit skilled trades professionals in the numbers they need, we need to engage with families, not just the students themselves. Parents are the number one career influencer so we want them at the table," says Hachem-Fawaz. Build a Dream will ship DIY pizza kits to 500 families across the province of Ontario and use something very familiar (pizza) to highlight the sometimes unfamiliar: valuable career opportunities are available in skilled trades. The goal, along with enjoying a delicious dinner, is to highlight the number of trades it takes to make a pizza from start to finish; it's the *Chef* making the dough, the *Machinist* making parts for an oven or pizza box cutting machine, the *Mechanic* who fixed the delivery car, or the *Construction Worker* who paved the roads.

There's been a continuous call from employers, educators, and the province to push the trades. Ontario's recent budget announcement included the investment of \$288.2 million in 2021–22 into the *Skilled Trades Strategy*. Build a Dream is listening.

Hachem-Fawaz: "It's time to give trades the time and attention it deserves and spread awareness about the amazing opportunities available."

Build a Dream's 'Trades Week', an Ontario-wide virtual skilled trades expo for high school students, will be held on May 19 and 20, 2021. The event is open to Ontario school board partners with free registration to all students in grades 9-12. Registration provides access to inspirational speakers, job-readiness advice, breakout rooms with industry and employers, career resources, contests and prizes, and DIY pizza kits for the first 500 families to register. Build a Dream will use May 17-21 to highlight skilled trades on social media as well as on their blog and podcast. Visit <https://www.webuildadream.com/tradesweek/> for more information.

Quick Facts

- Statistics show there is a shortage of skilled trade workers in Ontario. Data suggests that the need to replace retiring workers is greater for workers in the skilled trades than for other occupations. [\(Province of Ontario\)](#)
- In 2016, nearly one in three journeypersons were aged 55 years or older, with many retirements expected in the near future. [\(Province of Ontario\)](#)
- Ontario's talent and skills shortage could "rise to 364,000 by 2025 and to 564,000 by 2030". [\(Conference Board of Canada\)](#)
- Ontario's skills shortages cost the economy up to \$24.3 billion in forgone GDP and \$3.7 billion in provincial tax revenues annually. [\(The Conference Board of Canada\)](#)
- The construction industry alone "anticipates a shortfall of nearly 82,000 workers by 2029". [\(The Globe & Mail, BuildForce\)](#)
- An average apprentice takes 3 to 5 years to complete their training to become a journeyperson – or certified skilled tradesperson. [\(Province of Ontario\)](#)
- In Ontario, women make up only 7 per cent of employment in trades, transport and equipment operators, and related occupations. [\(Province of Ontario\)](#)
- Build a Dream has connected with 20,000 students and parents to explore careers where women are under-represented like skilled trades.

About Build a Dream

Build a Dream is an organization with a powerful initiative that attracts, encourages, and empowers all female students to explore careers in skilled trades, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math), emergency response, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Through specialized, data-driven programming, the organization works to connect industry, education, government, and families to amplify young women, highlight careers in fields under-represented by women, and spotlight strong role models. They are a catalyst for workforce development, driving to create diverse, inclusive, and equal opportunities for all girls and women.

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For more information about **Build a Dream**, please contact:

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WHERE WE ALL WIN.**