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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Student empowerment organization applauds Ontario's commitment to experiential learning**

Build a Dream emphasizes need to highlight skilled trades as desirable career pathway

(Windsor, ON) Build a Dream was extremely pleased with last week's 2021 *Budget* announcement from the Government of Ontario which includes a multi-layered Skilled Trades Strategy to support initiatives of success like the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP).

Since 2014, Build a Dream has delivered programs to inspire young women and empower them to explore all career opportunities available. Through special programming (like experiential learning events), the organization proudly partners with education and OYAP coordinators across the province to recruit for in-demand careers and offer new perspectives on how we plan for the future of work.

The province's \$288.2 million investment for 2021-22 demonstrates the government's ongoing commitment to supporting the economy and building the future workforce which includes filling vital positions in skilled trades and technologies.

"Careers in skilled trades offer financial stability with growth opportunities and should not be overlooked. We must prioritize trades as a career of choice and not a fall-back option," says Nour Hachem-Fawaz, President and Founder of Build a Dream.

Hachem-Fawaz says that we need to move away from old myths surrounding trades. For example, tradespeople utilize more than hands-on skills...their jobs often require math, complex problem-solving, and the utilization of technology.

"For programs to be successful, we need to engage families and brand the trades in new and exciting ways," she says. That's why Build a Dream's programs like their popular career discovery expos focus on fun, engagement, and experiential learning. The organization finds that often a single introduction to the unknown parts of a career in this manner can spark enough interest to explore a wider variety of opportunities. Parent and student continue to provide feedback that reflects this:

- "I got to listen to what a typical day was like for professionals and imagine myself doing similar jobs."
- "I didn't realize that I could get paid for an apprenticeship. I'm going to look into youth apprenticeship now."
- "What I thought about the trades has been completely changed through this experience."
- "I thought that heading for a medical program would be my only choice, but I'm so glad that I was able to discover skilled trades today!"

The Skilled Trades Strategy in *Ontario's Action Plan* is another positive step in preparing students for the future and supporting their skills development at an important time. Build a Dream is eager to see the initiatives rollout and encourage more participation in the trades from students who have overlooked those careers in the past.

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:

Nour Hachem-Fawaz, *President & Founder*, Build a Dream

Mobile: 519-560-7877

nour@webuildadream.com

www.webuildadream.com

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WHERE WE ALL WIN.**