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## Helmets to Hardhats working to increase female representation in the skilled trades

It is an unfortunate reality that women are predominately underrepresented in careers throughout the skilled trades. However, with the demand at an all-time high for skilled tradespeople, Helmets to Hardhats (H2H) is committed to increasing awareness, reducing barriers and ensuring military-affiliated women and members of the LGBTQ2S+ community can find meaningful careers in the unionized construction industry. Helmets to Hardhats in undertaking this work with the support of the Office to Advance Women Apprentices (OAWA).

Today, on International Women's Day, we recognize and celebrate the contributions of tradeswomen throughout Canada while aiming to empower the next generation of tradeswomen to enter the workforce. In recognition of this important day, H2H reaffirms their commitment and vital partnership to assist women in service in their search to find rewarding second careers in the skilled trades.

Through the Veterans and Family Well-Being Fund, administered by Veterans Affairs Canada, Helmets to Hardhats recruits and retrains marginalized groups, including women and members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, as apprentices within Canada's 14 Building Trades Unions. This initiative has been ongoing since 2022 and has successfully registered 145 individuals from these marginalized communities. Helmets to Hardhats expects to surpass their goal of 150 diverse registrants by the end of March 2024.

As Canada is up against a tight timeline to counteract the aging demographic of the workforce, the construction industry needs to recruit 309,000 new workers over the next decade. Helmets to Hardhats knows that the military-affiliated community is an underutilized demographic crucial to filling these labour shortages. Employers will attest to the skills that the military community brings to the workforce, including leadership, time management and work ethic.

While Helmets to Hardhats fills career vacancies with trained, skilled, and reliable employees, they also aid in the successful transition, financial stability, and increased visibility of underrepresented groups within the skilled trades.

H2H strongly believes that the construction industry has a significant role to play in breaking down barriers and biases to ensure that all women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals have the chance to find success in the skilled trades. Our work today will pave the way for future generations of skilled tradespeople.

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## Quotes:

*The unionized construction industry has diverse career opportunities requiring a diverse workforce. Helmets to Hardhats is committed to supporting marginalized groups – Veterans, women, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, and Indigenous peoples access the training they need to start and excel in a career in the skilled trades. Helmets to Hardhats will continue to advocate for the value added by all Veterans into the unionized construction industry.*

- **James Hogarth, Executive Director of Helmets to Hardhats**

*I want to help others get started in a career that can support themselves and their families. Change is coming, and change is scary, but change is ok, and for me, change is welcome. There is a place for everyone to succeed and I want to be the change I would like to see in the world.*

- **Emma Pollard, Project Director for the Office to Advance Women Apprentices Alberta**

*During my time in the military, I was unaware of the vast opportunities in the civilian world that would have been available to me after my service. At Helmets to Hardhats, I can promote and connect other Veterans to incredible and versatile careers in the skilled trades. Providing the military community with the knowledge they need to start a second successful career ensures all Veterans feel supported and empowered to enter their next chapter.*

- **Cora Saunders, Veteran and Women and LGBTQ2S+ Outreach Specialist, Helmets to Hardhats**