

Immigration society program helps fill power engineering void

Program trains workers

DAVID PARKER David Parker appears Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Read his columns online at calgary-herald.com/business. He can be reached at 403-830-4622 or by email at info@davidparker.ca

Graduates have been welcomed into the sector after having received training in both the technical and communications areas, making them highly prepared and valuable employees.

Last year the society's director of operations for the program, Bob Khan, was made aware of a shortage of building operators in Alberta and across Canada. In this province alone it is estimated that we face a shortage of more than 1,700 and we will require 100 to 150 new building operators per year for a number of years to come.

Khan set about organizing a new power engineering course to help solve the problem and to provide an opportunity for his clients to re-tool and re-train transferable skills and transition them into new careers. And he was able to succeed thanks to the supportive participation of industry partners who were

involved at each step of the fifth-class power engineering/ building operator program from the initial student selec-

tion right through to recruiting post-graduation.

Michele Veldhoen, who handles

business development and delivery at the society, joined the organization after 25 years of running a family business and understanding the obstacles faced by new Canadians as an English as a sec-



Bob Khan, director of operations for CCIS and Monika Bhandari, senior program co-ordinator, have seen high employment placement for their students.

ond language teacher to refugees in the early 1990s. She reached out to her network of relationships within the business community and with the support of the Building Operators Association and the generosity of five charter companies — Artis REIT, Cadillac Fairview, Colliers International, GWL Realty Advisors and Oxford — the initial course was launched earlier this year.

Almost 400 people applied to take the course, before it was shortlisted down to 51. Then with the help of the partners, who brought along their human resources people and engineers to conduct interviews, 20 students were selected.

The curriculum comprised of classroom training, hands-on training at the SAIT Polytechnic power lab, safety training and field trips. On-site employment placement was provided by commercial building owners and operators to support the program.

The success of the program can be measured by the smile on the face of Monika Bhandari, senior program coordinator with the society, who has been involved with the power engineering training initiative from the beginning.

She is proud of the difference it has made in the lives of new Canadians who



are contributing to the Alberta economy.

Of the students who took the course and became certified power engineers, 16 were offered a job within 30 days of graduating, two decided to opt for further fourth-class training, and one is being interviewed for a position.

And more companies have since shown interest in becoming partners to help develop the skills necessary to operate and maintain boilers and other mechanical equipment such as air conditioning units, turbines, air compressors, refrigeration equipment and generators.

Many of the students came to the society for help already in possession of degrees and diplomas and are now very happy to be employed in their new country and city of choice.

Didier Luneau has been transferred

from his position as general manager of the 525-room Westin Calgary hotel to the 1,053-room Sheraton San Diego. In the four short years he was here he made a big contribution to our hospitality industry but southern California presents him with a great opportunity.

We look forward to welcoming the new Calgary general manager early next month.

Few events are free but there is no admission charge to see the exciting and colourful ATB Financial Dragon Boat Race & Festival taking place this weekend at North Glenmore Park.

Eve Renaud will not be returning to 20 VIC Management as director of leasing at The Core after her maternity leave. She has opted to join Rencor Developments in the role of vice-president of the privately held real estate development company specializing in retail properties in major Western Canada markets.



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