

BUSINESS NOTES

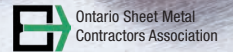
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CROSSFLOW

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ONTARIO SHEET METAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION



Skilled Trades Ontario

New Crown Agency focused on being the authority for apprenticeship training and education

Skilled Trades Ontario (STO) has taken huge strides over the past year, and momentum is growing as the organization works diligently to modernize an apprenticeship system that

has been on pause in the province since 2018. Under the auspices of Chief Executive Officer, Melissa Young, and an 11 member Board of Directors, the Crown agency is forging a clear path forward

and is keeping industry stakeholders in the mix as it develops its strategic plan.

“STO will be the one-stop shop and overall authority for apprenticeship, edu-

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Crossflow is the official marketing publication of the Ontario Sheet Metal Contractors Association. Circulated four times per year, the e-newsletter is designed to provide association news and program updates, government affairs information, educational opportunities, as well as updates on current industry trends.

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Skilled Trades Ontario

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cation and training in Ontario," Young said. "It's been very confusing over the years, so getting rid of all the nuances is going to take some time, but we are working on it and we will get there."

STO came into force on January 1, 2022, under the *Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021*. Replacing the Ontario College of Trades (OCoT), STO has a mission of simplifying and transforming the skilled trades and apprenticeship system across the province.

"Our key priorities are obviously to simplify access to services for skilled trades, promoting the skilled trades as a career of choice and addressing the labour shortage that many are facing today," Young says. "That's the most important piece for us."

And the organization certainly has its work cut out for them.

With its website up and running, and receiving "thousands" of visitors each week to view the most current information, the face of the organization has been established.

Meeting with industry stakeholders has been a priority mission with the organization. Over the past year, Young and her team have met with numerous building trades training directors and organizations, and solid relationships with the various groups have been established. According to Young, these relationships are especially important to STO as it attempts to shift the industry mind-set from the days of OCoT to the true focus of STO as an apprenticeship training and education resource, and not a body driven by political or economical agendas.

"We're staying out of that political side, the weeds. That's really no place

for us," she says. "It's our job to make sure that the right information is being provided to our clients, but most importantly to our apprentices so they can be successful in completing their trades."

Industry stakeholders play a key role in the initiatives STO intends on rolling out over the next three- to five-years, specifically in the area of apprenticeship training and education.

As many industry training and curriculum standards have become antiquated, including those in the sheet metal trade, STO has leaned heavily on stakeholders for input. According to Young, it's the instructors from various Training Delivery Agents (TDAs) and the trade organizations who are the true "subject matter experts" when it comes to that training and curriculum piece.

"We are very fortunate that our stakeholders have been overwhelmingly supportive in providing us with numerous resources," she says. "Whether it's employers, the unions, colleges, even the union training centres, whatever the case may be, those are the individuals who are our SME's to make sure that we're getting things right at the first kick at the can."

Recently, STO announced new standards now in place for trades such as horticulture technician, arborist and utility arborist, with others currently in the final stages of approval – including three heavy operator equipment trades (namely, tractor loader backhoe, excavator and dozer). Sheet metal is also on the STO docket. Since national harmonization occurred within the trade in 2018, Young is confident that it won't take too long for STO to catch-up, collaborate with

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TDA's and develop new curriculum to be rolled-out in the near future.

When it comes to training delivery standards, STO also anticipates having a larger role in ensuring harmonization of standards. Out of the 80+ TDAs in Ontario, Young said that most are doing "a really great job" when it comes to curriculum. However, what STO is seeing is a lack of consistency across all regions. For example, if an apprentice is attending college in Windsor or Guelph, and they end up in Sudbury and need to pick-up where they left off, "that's where the system has failed," she said.

"The sequencing is just not the same, the way it's taught is not the same," Young explained. "There are many intricate differences from TDA to TDA, so we are working with the Minister's Office on some of those challenges."

Another ongoing issue within the sheet metal industry has been inconsistency when it comes to apprentice grading. The Ontario Sheet Metal Training Centre standard requires an apprentice to obtain a minimum of 70 per cent in each course in order to pass, while other TDAs require an average of 65 per cent. Under the new *Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act*, STO does have authority to set parameters for apprenticeship programs, including such things as minimum passing grades. However, STO does not want to "do sweeping changes overnight."

"Nobody in Ontario does the assessments the same," Young said. "Same trades, different training procedures. We

see standardization in other jurisdictions in Canada, and hopefully, someday we'll get there in Ontario, but it's going to take a process. Ideally, having standardized assessments for each level of training and having it mirror processes such as that of the Red Seal program, will allow apprentices to be better prepared for future success."

The ongoing labour crisis is also a key initiative driven by STO. With many trades turning towards immigration as a possible remedy to the issue, Young said, STO does have a trade equivalency assessment process currently in place. In fact, over the last year, the organization processed over 3800 individuals through the system and out into the field. However, there are other issues at play when it comes to immigrant workers, including the provincial housing crisis. Although STO is doing its part of process eligible workers, the organization does intend on enhancing the process and working with national bodies to establish viable solutions.

"In an ideal world, the optimal process would be going to other countries, recruiting people in their homeland, and completing their assessments so when they land in Canada, they've got their papers and they're ready to go," Young says. "For the skilled trades, it isn't a far-fetched idea, but we're just not there yet. The assessment process is equally critical for supporting refugees and individuals from war-torn countries."

In recent years, OSM has seen a steady

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BUSINESS NOTES

Prompt Payment & Adjudication Fact Sheets

Prompt Payment and Adjudication rules took effect on Oct. 1, 2019, and apply to all construction projects, with few exceptions. The Council of Ontario Construction Associations (COCA) has developed resources for its members to share. A comprehensive social media and marketing campaign to promote Prompt Payment and Adjudication is being developed and will also be shared with COCA members.

The toolkit consists of a webpage and eight fact sheets. The Prompt Payment and Adjudication website can be found on the [COCA website](https://www.coca.ca) or at getpaidontime.ca.

All of the fact sheets and links to Ontario Dispute Adjudication for Construction Contracts ("ODACC"), and other related information can be found on the website.

The fact sheets developed by COCA include the following:

1. **Prompt Payment and Adjudication for OWNERS** – On-

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WELCOME New Members

The Ontario Sheet Metal Contractors Association (OSM) welcomes the following new members:

Aim Industrial Inc.

Cambridge, ON

<https://www.aimindustrial.ca/>

Message from the Executive Director



Calling all members. We need you to grab an oar and row. In the President's Message included in the 2021 OSM Annual Report, Cathy Godin eloquently addressed the importance of volunteering, and giving back to the industry and our communities. If you haven't had the chance to read Cathy's message, I encourage you to do so. Cathy has been a great volunteer in her community and in our industry. Indeed, so have the other Board Directors of OSM and of the local associations. That said, some of these directors are reaching retirement. It is invaluable to have these Board veterans pass on their knowledge and experience to the newer directors before they retire. That means succession planning starting at the local association level.

It is important for member authorized representatives to be engaged in both the local association and OSM. It is also important, as a member company, to encourage junior level management staff to get involved in the local association. That, sometimes, requires a nudge... and sometimes maybe even a shove. After all, these people are the future volunteers for the industry. They need to be given the opportunity to contribute to shaping the future and, at the same time, benefit from the corporate knowledge gained from interaction with association veterans.

Please get engaged in your local association by attending association meetings, events, and volunteering for committees. If not, it rests on the shoulders of just a couple people and well, that's not truly an association, is it? That's just an old couple making critical decisions that impact your business.

Now back to rowing. Ah who am I kidding. I'm that annoying guy sitting at the bow beating the drum and shouting.

— Darryl Stewart, OSM Executive Director

OSM To Host In-Person Regional Meetings in 2023

The Ontario Sheet Metal Contractors Association will host in-person regional meetings across the province in 2023. Planned meetings include the following:

- Kingston – April.
- Toronto – September.
- Waterloo/Wellington – November.

For more information, contact the OSM Office at (905) 441-6757.

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Prompt Payment & Adjudication Fact Sheets

tario's Prompt Payment rules are part of your legal obligations under the Construction Act. With few exceptions they apply to construction contracts entered into on or after Oct. 1, 2019. The Prompt Payment requirement is triggered when the owner receives a "proper invoice" from the contractor or consultant.

2. Prompt Payment for Contractors – Ontario's Construction Act now includes timelines and rules to ensure that contractors and subcontractors are paid on time. Prompt payment applies to construction contracts entered into on or after Oct. 1, 2019, with few exceptions. It applies to invoices you give to owners and invoices you receive from subcontractors.

3. Prompt Payment for Sub-contractors – Ontario's Construction Act now includes timelines and rules to ensure that contractors and subcontractors are paid on time. Prompt Payment applies to construction contracts entered into on or after Oct. 1, 2019, with few exceptions. It applies to invoices you give to contractors, and invoices you receive from sub-contractors and suppliers.

4. Prompt Payment and Adjudication 101 – There are rules and processes designed to speed up payment, resolve disputes quickly and keep projects moving. They are part of the Ontario Construction Act, and came into effect on Oct. 1, 2019, for most contracts.

5. Prompt Payment for Holdbacks – It has long been the case that each "payor" on a construction contract is required to hold back 10 per cent of the price of services or materials that are actually supplied under the contract. This is in effect

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INDUSTRY EVENT



Stockholm: Björn Again

By **STEPHEN COOK**, Chief Inspiration Officer – President, Lorandus

In the record summer heat of 1976, I was a young student Euro Railing across Europe. It may not surprise you; I met many others doing the same. One of those was a Swedish girl from the province of Småland, the home of IKEA, a name that – in my lifetime – could have easily been translated into English for starting your life over. The frugal and sensible-minded founders named their company IKEA, after the initials of the founder Ingvar Kamprad; Elmtaryd, the farm on which he grew up; and Agunnaryd, the nearby village. As I now reflect, I posture that this is where my love affair with Sweden began. Not with the young girl and not with IKEA, but with the country itself.

Sweden may have topographical similarities to parts of Canada. It may even feel familiar with its social order and societal safety net policies. However, for a country of just under 10 million, it proj-

ects diversity and innovation, unlike any other European country I have visited. They practically own vehicular safety with the introduction of the Volvo in 1927. For all their practicalities of standing to the right on escalators and their extreme politeness, Swedes are a lover of life and the outdoors. Nowhere is this more evident than in its capital city of Stockholm.

Stockholm, colloquially known as the Venice of the North with its 800-island archipelago, stands at 59° N accounting for its long summer days. Consider Toronto at just a smidge over 43° N and our sun setting just after 9 p.m. on the longest day of the year, June 21.

Stockholm derives its name from the old Swedish word “Stokker,” which means log or pole, and “Holm,” meaning “island or islet.” Stockholm is spread across 14 different islands with its historical centre being Gamla Stan (Old Town).

Gamla Stan is a thriving inner-city community with a beehive of meandering streets (gata), curious shops, pubs and

restaurants. Gamla Stan is the home to its own version of Buckingham Palace, The Royal Palace. One of my musts when in Stockholm is the Royal Guards Ceremony at the Royal Palace of Stockholm each day at 12:15 p.m., lasting just over 40 minutes.

Stockholm can be explored in so many ways. Walking is easy and the city is very navigable. There are more bike paths than you would think. Parks are plentiful, shops are handy, and bars and restaurants are literally around every corner. If your feet cannot support your explorational whims, then one of the many authentic steamboats can transport you into the wonderland of islands just minutes from Stockholm’s Nybroviken.

When it comes to places to stay in Stockholm and leading hotels of the world, Grand Hôtel Stockholm is its crown jewel. Fittingly, it sits in the best waterfront location imaginable, directly across from the Royal Palace and Gamla Stan. The Grand Hôtel in Stockholm

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Skilled Trades Ontario

rise in some apprentices challenging the Certificate of Qualification with little to no Ministry intervention. According to Young, there are many possible reasons for this including learning disabilities or developmental challenges on the part of the apprentice, as well as no monitoring on the part of the old system.

"I have seen apprentices who have been working in a trade for seven or eight years. They've got the hours; they've got the experience; they just can't get the schooling, so they challenge," she says. "I've also worked employers who have apprentices who simply aren't ready to become journeypersons. There are so many possible factors at play."

STO is invested in finding solutions for this phenomenon that support apprentices, yet also provide employers – and the industry as a whole – with assurance that apprentices are qualified to be in their given trade. It's a process that will take time, but with Young's solid background as a skilled trades and apprenticeship expert, and her sheer determination, a win-win remedy will be developed.

"We need to implement strategies that help apprentices with learning difficulties," Young says. "That's something I'd like to see more of in Ontario."

She added, "When I was working in New Brunswick, we started to do interventions with apprentices who had learning disabilities, and we saw the pass rate increase from 42 to 78 per cent. I want to see the same thing implemented here in Ontario. We have some phenomenal tradespeople who absolutely struggle with the theory side of the business. But when you put them on the job, they are the

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Stockholm can be explored in so many ways. Walking is easy and the city is very navigable.

Stockholm: Björn Again

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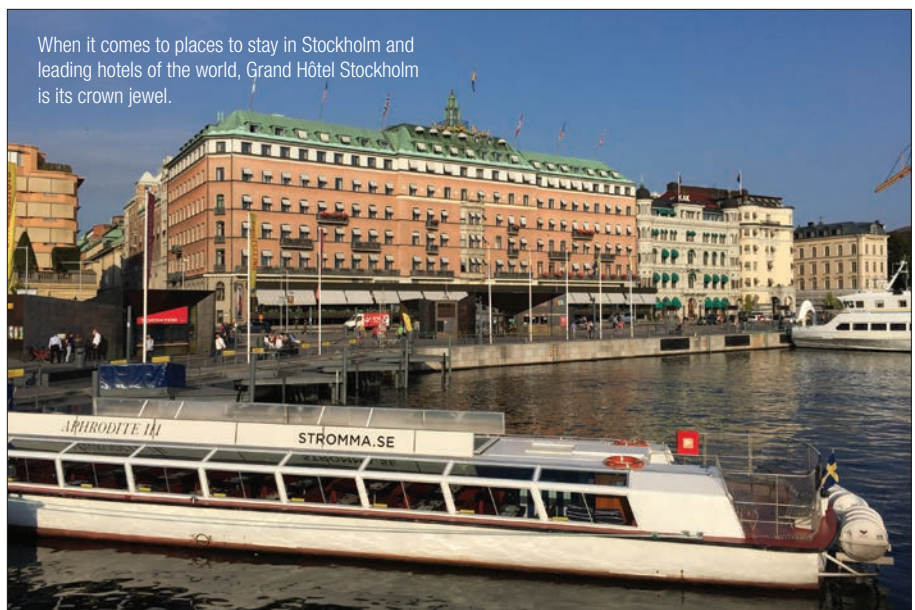
has been home to celebrities and world-class events since 1874. The Cadier Bar – named after the founder Regis Cadier – was voted as one of the top bars in Europe. The Veranda restaurant, which offers a traditional smorgasbord breakfast, is a memory-maker when you combine their Swedish breakfast specialties with the outstanding views of the water. In fact, the view from the Verandah restaurant is still to this day, the screen saver on my laptop!

If you want to channel your inner ABBA, the ABBA museum will not disappoint you. Nor will the incredible Wasa Museum, which displays the only almost

fully intact 17th Century ship that has ever been salvaged – the 64-gun warship Vasa that sank on her maiden voyage in 1628.

If history and exploring are not your thing, then retail therapy along Drottninggatan (Queen Street) or NK (Nordiska Kompaniet) will satisfy both shopping urges and splurges. You surely will want to rest at some point and take a Fika – a Swedish coffee break – at any one of the plethora of classic coffee and pastry shops. One of my favourites is Vette Katten, which was founded in 1928 by a driven woman named Ester Nordhammar. At that time, few companies were

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When it comes to places to stay in Stockholm and leading hotels of the world, Grand Hôtel Stockholm is its crown jewel.

TREND ALERT



Small Businesses are Hiring Their First HR Professional Far Sooner Than Before

By **RON GUEST**, Senior Partner,
TwoGreySuits

I thought it appropriate to share with you a trend I am seeing, which is gaining momentum – and smart smaller companies are already seeing the benefits.

For 18 years now, TwoGreySuits – in addition to providing full unlimited downloads from our state-of-the-art, do-it-yourself informative HR website and 24/7 HR Hotline – is being asked more and more by member companies to help them hire their very first HR professional.

We do this by guiding companies through the proper hiring procedures, which are all on the twogreysuits.com website. In most cases, after initial discussion, we are increasingly being asked to do the hiring ourselves. In fact, in 2022, we had great success in hiring these HR professionals for small businesses.

Managing the people aspect of business does not come easy for most managers, in my experience. There are exceptions but these are rare, indeed.

In fact, the number one reason – by a wide margin according to literally all surveys – of why people leave their company is because of a poor direct relationship with their manager. In most cases,

this translates to the manager not knowing how to manage people very well. Of course you won't hear this in exit interviews. People want to protect their reputation, and don't want to rock the boat by slamming their manager or leaving on bad terms. They may want to call on this manager for a future employment reference.

So where does an HR professional fit into the picture here? Let's start with the premise that in most businesses people are considered your most competitive strategic advantage. In other words, if you have engaged, competent staff who always go the extra mile to help customers, other employees, even vendors, this sets you apart/above from those companies who see employees as simply tools of production. This unfortunately is still alive and well in 2023.

Let's look at a typical example of a 20-30 person operation without an HR professional on staff. Hiring is usually done by a manager who needs staff 'urgently.' These managers, in 99 per cent of the cases, have never had any training or education on best practices to hire the best people, period, fact.

The new hire then comes onboard and this same manager uses what they think are good people management prac-

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best at their trade. They only require a support system."

It may have only been a year since STO's inception, but in that time the organization has made major strides, with many more initiatives yet to be unrolled. STO may still be in its infancy, but through strategic planning and industry consultation, the organization is determined to build relationships, and shift old mind-sets to a new and improved approach that supports both apprentices and industry, and sheds new light on the skilled trades.

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Stockholm: Björn Again



run by women and even fewer pastry shops. Her idea was to start a simple patisserie where everyone was welcome with pastries, bread and buns of the highest quality.

Regardless of what your 'jam' is, Stockholm will delight and surprise you. It certainly has to me with over 20 visits since that summer of 1976.

Who knows, possibly I was a Viking in a past life?

Likely not, I am not much for rowing long distances.

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Prompt Payment & Adjudication Fact Sheets

until all liens that may be claimed against the holdback have expired, been vacated, or discharged.

6. How does the Basic Hold-back Work? – Section 22 of the Construction Act requires each “payor” on a construction contract to hold back 10 per cent of the price of the services or materials as they are actually supplied under the contract until all liens that may be claimed against the hold-back have expired. We call this the basic holdback.

7. What is a Proper Invoice? – Under the rules for Prompt Payment in Ontario, the clock starts ticking when the prime contractor delivers a “proper invoice” to the project owner. The owner is legally required to either pay a proper invoice within 28 calendar days or deliver a notice of non-payment for some or all of the amount within 14 days. To get the benefit of Prompt Payment, a contractor must ensure that its invoices meet the legal requirements of a proper invoice.

8. Adjudication Basics – Adjudication is a new method of dispute resolution contained in the Ontario Construction Act. It allows parties to a construction contract to enforce a right of payment without going to court.

To download the Fact Sheets, please visit the [COCA website](#).

– Special thanks to Ted Dreyer for leading this project on behalf of COCA and its members.

Small Businesses are Hiring Their First HR Professional Far Sooner Than Before

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tices because, once again, they have never been trained on how to properly manage people. Often this is a double whammy. The best person is not hired and then they are also not properly managed.

The employment relationship is strained from day one. Productivity suffers, morale is affected, and other higher performing employees see this and become demotivated themselves. Ok, what about when a new manager is hired under these same circumstances with people management responsibilities, the problem is now 10-fold. See the picture?

Trained, certified HR professionals can spot these problems immediately. More importantly, they can intervene immediately. HR professionals can take over the hiring process while, at the same time, training managers on things such as where to be looking for people in the first place, behavioral interviewing skills, properly evaluating candidates, professional reference checks, helping the company develop their employee value proposition, ensuring competitive pay, helping managers properly manage new staff, having a proper orientation plan and setting the new employees up for success as opposed to letting them totally fend for themselves.

Looking at the larger picture, this initial value-add is only a fraction of the value a small company will realize from hiring an HR professional. Other things include higher engaged employees, lower turnover, significant savings in recruitment fees, becoming legally compliant, treating employment situations professionally in terms of performance management issues, harassment investigations, improving health and safety, ensuring your pay and benefits are competitive, training managers on all aspects of hiring and managing people. The list goes on and on. The important thing is to let this professional into your company, advise you on what needs to be done and then letting them do it versus the company wanting to tell them what to do.

As another example of value-add; HR professionals now are the savviest when it comes to remote, hybrid and contract work arrangements in terms of job or



employee eligibility. This helps managers to manage remote and hybrid workers, and understand actions required to retain employee cohesion, trust and teamwork.

The bottom line here is that adding an HR professional in a small company makes sense at every possible level. It saves money (a lot of it), provides significantly better quality hires, less management time on employee issues, professionalizes how people are treated and managed, and results in higher engaged employees (which research has definitively shown now improves profitability)

What size company should consider hiring an HR professional? Around 20 employees is when the absence of an HR professional can start becoming a problem. Poor hires affecting other good employees, managers continuing in antiquated ways with larger staffs compounding the problems, and managers and owners spending considerable amounts of valuable time on people issues and not knowing how to deal with them in many cases. If you’re managing a small company or own one, it’s time to start thinking about your first HR professional.

The TGS System (*included in your OSM membership*) is a one-of-a-kind product that includes:

The HR Power Centre for implementing professional people management practices, and helping you deal with the day-to-day people management issues that inevitably arise

24/7 HR Hot Line answered within 24 hours (but usually within one hour).

TwoGreySuits is a leading-edge provider of on-line human resource management information, processes, tools and forms servicing the global market. We have integrated the HR practices associated with the key drivers of employee engagement within the well-organized information on the [website](#).