



ANGELA GISMONDI

JP Gladu, president and CEO, Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), was the keynote speaker at the luncheon on day one of the Ontario Road Builders' Association's 93rd annual convention in Toronto Feb. 3. Gladu spoke about the importance of businesses and governments championing aboriginal procurement.

## Initiative seeking greater federal support of aboriginal businesses

Continued from Pg. 1

The challenge, he said, has been influencing the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government to do the same. Now that CCAB has been able to back up the story line with data, the narrative is starting to change.

In 2017, of the more than \$16 billion of the federal government spend, only .32 per cent was spent on Indigenous businesses. That translated to \$60 to \$65 million, Gladu explained.

In October 2019, the CCAB's Supply Change Initiative to secure an increase in federal procurement from Aboriginal businesses to five per cent was recognized in the Liberal Party election platform.

"Whether you like this government or not, the Trudeau government has made Indigenous relationship a top priority for his government," Gladu said. "Canada is finally starting to wake up to the fact that there is a need, but no one wants to set themselves up for failure so that's where the data comes in. This is where we start to understand the real magnitude of Indigenous entrepreneurs in this country."

According to CCAB's research, aboriginal businesses can not only meet the five per cent target of government contracts but can hit a quarter, or over 24 per cent, of the federal government spend.

The Indigenous economy contributes \$31 billion to Canada's GDP, about \$12 billion of that comes from Indigenous entrepreneurs, Gladu noted. In addition, it is estimated there are over 50,000 aboriginal businesses looking for business opportunities.

"Aboriginal businesses are on the hunt, they are hungry for business just like you are and there is a real opportunity that I hope you see to partner together," said Gladu.

"There are opportunities within your own sectors to procure and build relationships with Indigenous people and businesses... This is the type of mindset that this country needs to start to develop. As partners we are much stronger advocates for development. We don't want to fight, we just want access to the opportunities that you have had access to for a very long time."

Follow the author on Twitter @DCN\_Angela.

DON WALL  
STAFF WRITER

It took half a year but the Building Union of Canada (BUC) has finally been certified by the Ontario Labour Relations Board as the bargaining representative of tile and terrazzo workers employed at four contractors in the north Toronto region.

The workers were formerly represented by Brick and Allied Craft Union of Canada (BACU) Local 31. BUC vice-president and secretary treasurer Stephen Bromell said his union received notice from the OLRB on Jan. 24 that the tile and terrazzo workers of the four companies had voted overwhelmingly to join BUC, with 87.8 per cent support.

"This is a big accomplishment for sure," said Bromell. "As much as it's a victory for BUC, I strongly believe it is a victory for the workers as well."

By legislation, raids in Ontario's unionized ICI sector are only permitted during an "open season" which ran last year from March 1 — when three-year collective agreements between the province's 25 ICI trades and their unionized employers expired — to April 30.

Votes at the four workplaces — The Belluz Group Ltd., York Marble Tile & Terrazzo Inc., Centa Construction Ltd. and Castlewall Marble & Tile — remained sealed since last spring when the OLRB told BUC and BACU organizers to work with an independent arbitrator to resolve a peripheral issue, to determine whether the BUC had signed

a binding no-raid pact.

After a handful of meetings throughout the fall, Bromell said, "The arbitrator saw it our way, we won the case and the board ordered the opening of the ballots, that is why it took so long."

Neither Bromell nor Tony DiMaria, BACU president, could say with certainty how many workers will be affected. Bromell thought the number might be 120 hourly workers, plus many more piece workers.

DiMaria said he had no hard feelings towards the raiding union, that BACU still has members with dozens of contractors in the region and that his members still have lots of work.

"They got it. We tried hard to keep it, and that's that," he said.

"We did our best, what can I tell you? Who knows what happens next year?"

DiMaria has only been in his present position for two years, he said, coming from a Hamilton local, and he felt the loss of members would probably prompt reflection about local BACU practices.

"We have all these members and you can't please them all, and it depends what someone else promises them," he said.

"Maybe we have to look at our side and do something different.

"We will do what we need to do."

Bromell estimated that BUC, founded eight years ago by former president of the Toronto Police Association Craig Bromell, his brother, now has about 1,000 members.

Bromell said the next step is to negotiate a contract for the new members. That process was expected to begin the week of Feb. 3.

BUC is a "wall to wall" union that represents construction workers across trades in specific workplaces. Bromell said with the addition of the tile and terrazzo workers from the north Toronto region, BUC now has almost all ICI construction trades represented.

BUC represents ICI labourers working for The Daniels Group Inc. and in the past two years it has added trades workers in Structrecrete Corporation and Morrison Mechanical Consultants & Technicians Inc. BUC represents varied trades workers at Morrison including electricians, plumbers, gasfitters, sheet metal workers, welders and refrigeration mechanics.

Bromell said its steady growth is due in part to the lower costs of membership — lower dues — which, with the good contracts it is able to negotiate, puts about three extra dollars per hour in the pockets of its members. As well, he said, the BUC provides good service to its members with frequent workplace visits.

"That is the magic word these days, complacency," said Bromell.

"I have been at this 20 years and the biggest concern is the workers don't see the reps much. We take an awful lot of pride in that and I think it is the single biggest reason we never get raided."

Follow the author on Twitter @DonWall\_DCN.

## Skills Ontario debunks old myths about working in skilled trades

IAN HOWCROFT  
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Outdated misconceptions about working in the skilled trades and technology fields are a significant obstacle Ontario must overcome to address a serious labour shortage that is projected to worsen over the next decade.

Jobs in the trades and technologies sector offer high pay, good benefits, flexibility, rewarding work, variety and unlimited opportunity.

We need to set the record straight about these positions so that they are viewed as a first option for those preparing to enter the workforce.

Over the past 30 years, Skills Ontario has developed a growing portfolio of programs and initiatives — such as hosting Canada's largest skilled trades and technologies competition — to help students of all ages and backgrounds understand that they can find fulfilling career paths in the skilled trades and technologies.

We also provide them, their parents, and their educators information on informative, skill-building programs and work-experience opportunities that can help them pursue these positions.

There continue to be misconceptions and inaccurate generalizations about working in the skilled trades and technologies in some circles.

Among them:

### MYTH 1

The skilled trades are primarily for people who can't make it into university or have limited education.

**Reality:** Careers in skilled trades and technology require critical thinking skills and a solid education. Most positions demand a combination of hands-on work and specialty training, which may include post-secondary education and learning on the job through apprenticeships.

### MYTH 2

Jobs in the trades are dirty and physically demanding.

**Reality:** It's true that many positions in the trades have some element of hands-on work, but technological innovations in recent years have radically transformed how many tasks are performed, making them cleaner and less physically intensive.

### MYTH 3

Once you take up a trade, you'll be stuck doing the same job the rest of your career.

**Reality:** There are abundant opportunities to move up the ladder in the skilled trades and technology fields. Apprenticeship training, additional certification courses and other professional development activities open the door to new respon-

sibilities and career options. Many decide to start their own business and hire other tradespeople.

### MYTH 4

These jobs aren't suited to women.

**Reality:** There are many opportunities for women in the skilled trades and technology fields, offering high pay, advancement and challenging opportunities. Skills Ontario and its partners have been encouraging more young women to explore these positions through initiatives such as Young Women's Career Exploration Events throughout the year, plus a Young Women's Conference every year at the Skills Ontario Competition. We need to do more to introduce these opportunities to girls and young women and facilitate them moving forward.

### MYTH 5

You can't earn a good living in the trades.

**Reality:** Skilled professionals in Ontario make highly competitive salaries, including opportunities to earn while learning through apprenticeships. Because there is a severe shortage of skilled trade and tech workers across the province, there are plenty of job opportunities in many sectors that pay very well!

Ian Howcroft is Skills Ontario's chief executive officer. Send comments and Industry Perspectives Op-ed ideas to editor@dailycommercialnews.com.