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Check out many PEI job openings in the construction sector

by Gloria Welton

Build a career and build a life through working in the construction industry on PEI. That is the message from a new initiative called Island Builder.

Islanderbuilder.ca is a recruitment initiative aimed at attracting skilled tradespeople to work in PEI's construction sector. Even in the dead of winter, presently about 100 job openings in a variety of trades on PEI are listed on the new website.

There is also information about programs to support the training and employment needs of potential employees and employers in the industry.

The Construction Association of PEI reports that with retirements and an aging population, over the next decade the industry will require 1,800 more workers. The new website reports there are approximately 5,000 Islanders presently employed in construction.

A wide variety of construction jobs are available in residential, industrial, commercial, institutional, government and highway settings. Jobs can involve new construction, renovations, or maintenance.

Trades include carpenters, electricians, heavy equipment operators and mechanics, ironworkers, plumbers, powerline and cable workers, trades helpers, truck drivers, and welders.

"In 2017, PEI led the country in year over year growth in the construction sector," says **Sam Sanderson**, General Manager, Construction Association of PEI.

"With that growth comes the added challenge of securing an adequate supply of skilled workers to meet the demand. Despite the positive signs of a strong year for 2018, our ability to grow and further enhance our economy will require more workers."

In partnership with the federal and provincial government, the Construction Association of PEI and other key stakeholders have launched initiatives aimed to address PEI's labour market requirements.

"In 2017, we launched Team Construction, a \$1.2 million initiative aimed at introducing 80 youth to the construction industry. This is in addition to the Youth in Trades program, which we have run for the last 20 years. Also, the Women's Network is running an innovative program called Trade HERizons to increase the number of women in the construction trades."

"A career in construction is a smart choice, and it is a field that is booming," says **Sonny Gallant**, Minister of Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning. "This career has a lot to offer, such as good wages, continued growth, and interesting jobs right here on PEI."

Steven Jackson is President/Estimator of Sperra Construction Group. "I am pleased with the government and the construction association initiatives to address the need for more workers.

"Companies in this industry are turning down work even in the winter because of a lack of employees. A big part of addressing this challenge is making Islanders aware of the skilled jobs that exist."

The head office of Sperra Construction Group is in Charlottetown, and they operate throughout Atlantic Canada.



From left, Steven Jackson, President/Estimator of Sperra Construction Group, with Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning Minister Sonny Gallant, and Sam Sanderson, General Manager, Construction Association of PEI. Photo by Brian Simpson.

There are about 30 staff working year-round, and that number increases in the summer months when students are hired on.

"There are a lot of issues in trying to find skilled workers right across the country. Every single position has openings, from labourers to carpenters, site superintendents, foremen, project managers, and estimators.

"Our company offers competitive wages, year-round work, a benefit package including pension, medical and dental plans, and training. The forecast is very exciting for 2018. Going forward through to 2020 is predicted to be even bigger."

Steven started his business from scratch. "After I graduated from high school, I moved to Alberta. I got into the carpenter trade, went through the Apprenticeship process, and earned my Red Seal. But there was a downturn in the economy and I found myself without work. I went back to school and took Construction Technology at Holland College. I started a construction company working evenings and weekends and paid my way through college so I would have no debt."

Steven says his experience goes to show that success can happen on PEI.

Allan Marshall entered the Youth in Trades program in Summerside in 2017. "I was 23 years old and I wanted to do something with my life. I wasn't sure what direction to take.

"After graduating high school, I was interested in the trades but I was worried about spending all that money on a college program and then not liking the work."

Allan joined the Youth in Trades program after his friend told him about it. "This was the only program I was aware of where youth can explore their options in construction and make solid career decisions."

During the program's work placement, Allan worked with Arsenault Brothers, and has been there ever since. "They helped me with transportation to the various worksites because I didn't have a car.

"When I joined Youth and Trades, I didn't have any money. The program offers a training allowance, which helped keep me going. I now have full-time employment, I am earning a good wage, and now I have my own car. If you looked at me a year ago, you would not recognize me today."

He has also registered with the Apprenticeship program and is working towards a Red Seal. He is working on getting his required hours of work before taking his first block release in September. "This method of earning while I learn suits me perfectly. I am gaining lots of experience in the trade and learning many skills."

Allan is now a member of the Atlantic Canada Regional Council of Carpenters, Millwrights and Allied Workers and now has a full benefit package.

Allan Marshall entered the Youth in Trades program in Summerside in 2017. "If it were not for the Youth in Trades program, I don't know what I would be doing today. I am extremely happy with the opportunity the program offered, with my employer, and with all the decisions I made to get to where I am today."



For more information about the **Construction Association of PEI**, call 902-368-3303. Visit www.capei.ca

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