



Doing it the Hard Way

Story and Photos by Evan Campbell

Looking at a trade person's cracked, bruised, cut and callused hands, you can tell the work they do is tough.

Belleville is a booming location for people in the trades, from new subdivisions for construction workers and trucks coming off the 401 to be fixed in the garage, to the local plumbers installing new houses with plumbing and fixing the old. The industry is one that can only thrive in today's world.

The trade industry has taken a rise in the last decade. As more and more students are going to school to study the trades, and more jobs are being created, the industry has been on the rise since the late '90s.

In 1992, the trades employed only 900,00 workers. In 2007, they employed over 1.2 million, according to Statistics Canada.

Although the industry is on the incline, it is not for everyone. The industry demands hard work and long hours to get the job done. In 2007, one in six masons and those in other construction trades worked 50 or more hours per week, said Stats Can.

In the non-trade industry, men and women are close to 50/50 in the workplace, but in the trades, men are the majority with a massive 97 percent in 2007. Most Ontario high schools and Colleges are pushing for women to join the trades and get into the industry. The Women in Skilled Trades and Information Technology (WIST/IT) program, funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate, gives low-income women an easier way to learn a skilled trade.

With the industry moving at such a fast pace, the worry of the older workers

retiring and not having enough younger workers to replace them is an issue.

The average age of workers in the trades in 2007 was 40. This poses a problem to younger generations coming into the business, because they need the older generations to help them progress in the field.

For a student looking to get into the trades, Ontario high schools and colleges offer apprenticeships for students to get field experience. For example, Alberta offers an electrician apprenticeship that requires students to take a 1,500-hour on the job apprenticeship in their first three years and 1,350 in their fourth year. As well as the field work, they must finish eight weeks per year in class in their first three years and 13 weeks in their fourth year to get their diploma.



Top, From left to right: Jeremiah Marvin has been in the trades for over 15 years working on framing houses and general construction. Mitchell Smit of Belleville Ont, has been a plumber for 10 years and studied at St Lawrence College. **Center:** Gene Sherman from Belleville has been a mechanic "forever" and has been in his own garage for 35 years. **Bottom left:** Greg Roffel of Belleville is a young electrician right out of high school who has been doing electrical work for three years. **Bottom right:** Scott Bell has been in the heating and cooling business for 15 years and is qualified in sheet metal, gas and works for Service Experts Heating and A/C.