



*Since 1943, the Canadian Home Builders' Association has been "the voice of Canada's residential construction industry" — one of the most vital and enterprising industries in Canada.*



**Canadian  
Home Builders'  
Association**

**SASKATCHEWAN**



An adequate supply of affordable market housing is critical to economic development, a fact well known to Alan Thomarat, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Home Builders' Association – Saskatchewan and the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association.

"A strong and sustainable home building industry is essential for attracting investment and fostering long range economic growth. Investors and industry sectors seeking regional expansion opportunities may offer thousands of jobs on the horizon. But communities without the necessary housing may see opportunities pass them by if they lack the capacity to plan and build new developments."

**"Unskilled workers are not in demand and will not find opportunity in this industry. We are competing with other sectors for the best and brightest talent in the province."**

Saskatchewan faced critical challenges during a labour supply shortage that peaked in 2005/2006. Expansion in industries such as mining, oil, and gas, put pressure on the residential construction sector to ensure housing was available for tens of thousands of workers migrating to these industries. In the midst of this, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate was at a record low. The demand for labour peaked as the pool of available workers was diminishing.

"Our industry requires a highly skilled workforce to provide quality housing for a growing population. We were in a strained labour market and continued to see the pressure increase. We were competing with other sectors for the best and brightest talent in the province."

The Canadian Home Builders' Association – Saskatchewan needed to attract workers from multiple sources. They developed programs to help marginalized and under-represented populations re-enter the labour market.

The Skill Build program, established in 2007, provides basic Essential Skills and pre-employment training. Another program, Bridges & Foundations Career Development Corporation, focuses on Essential Skills training and employment for First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan.

Skill Build provides training to individuals new to the home building industry and to apprentices and experienced workers looking to enhance their skills. Skill Build consists of a series of courses that may be completed separately or as a comprehensive program.

Skill Build participants begin by completing TOWES (Test of Workplace Essential Skills) to benchmark their current skills. TOWES results are used to create customized learning plans to address specific needs and goals. This approach offers learners the greatest opportunity for success and facilitates outcomes measurement upon program completion.



## **Skill Build**

Careers for Life

### **SASKATCHEWAN**

Lou Charlebois, Lead TOWES Administrator and Business and Industry Consultant at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), collaborated with the Canadian Home Builders' Association – Saskatchewan by providing expert Essential Skills knowledge and assistance with gathering Essential Skills training materials for the program development.

Industry members and employer groups were also instrumental in the development of the program. This collaborative model ensured all stakeholder needs were represented, not just those of employees or potential workers.

"We must advocate for Workplace Essential Skills development - they are the most critical entry-level skills required by builders and contractors in the residential construction industry" says Thomarar. "We've been able to demonstrate (to learners and industry) the relationship between Essential Skills and a long term sustainable career path."

**"As an industry it is important to have a human resource strategy and act decisively to achieve measurable results."**

Alan Thomarar  
Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Home Builders' Association - Saskatchewan

The Canadian Home Builders' Association – Saskatchewan's commitment to collaboration with relevant industry, government and educational partners is a key to the success of their programs. Thomarar explains "there has to be a more deliberate and a more thoughtful approach to labour force development. You can't wait for it to happen. As an industry it is important to have a human resources strategy and act decisively to achieve measurable results."

In addition to the Skill Build and Bridges & Foundations programs, Thomarar and his team have successfully lobbied the Saskatchewan government to improve the apprenticeship ratios of journey person to apprentice to 1:2 in many trades, thus creating opportunities for more apprentices that did not previously exist. The Association insists that these initiatives would not have been possible without the support of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration and the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

The Canadian Home Builders' Association – Saskatchewan offers a variety of services to maintain the industry's high standards. The dedication to Essential Skills training and corporate social responsibility positions the Canadian Home Builders' Association – Saskatchewan as a leader within the residential construction industry.