

NEWHOMES

To a great Day of Discovery



RICHARD LYALL
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If you look at organizations in the GTA involved in creating opportunities for youth in construction, BOLT is the gold star that should be placed at the top of the tree.

The program (Building Opportunities for Life Today) was launched in 2009 by builder/developer Tridel Corp. to assist under-resourced youth to connect to education and careers in construction. They have presented 345 financial awards adding up to \$1.1 million. That success can be directly attributed to Tridel's vision and commitment at the top level, including Leo DelZotto and Sandra DelZotto, and BOLT executive director Joanne Bin.

The highlight of the year for BOLT is the Day of Discovery, a full-day event co-hosted by Tridel and George Brown College in which youth interested in learning more about construction meet with industry professionals to gauge their interest in the skilled trades, construction management and other related fields. This is a day of industry education that is second to none.

This year, 40 youth attended the event held on George Brown's Casa Loma campus as well as at Tridel's Avani site in Scarborough to observe a construction site in action. They were referred by BOLT's partner agencies such as Toronto Community Housing Corp., Building Up, Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute and the City of Toronto.

But what was unique at this year's recent Discovery was that the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development Monte McNaughton attended the event on his first day handling the training and skills development file, mingling with the participants during a carpentry workshop in which they were mak-



Posing at the Day of Discovery hosted at George Brown College's Casa Loma campus are (from left): Dr. Adrienne Galway, special adviser to GBC president; Justin Van Dette, Tridel Corp.'s government and community relations director; Dr. Adel Esayed, dean of Centre for Construction and Engineering Technologies at GBC; BOLT's Joanne Bin; Minister McNaughton; and Denise Devlin-Li, chair of School of Apprenticeship and Skilled Trades at GBC.



Minister Monte McNaughton, second from left, chats with BOLT executive director Joanne Bin at the 2019 Day of Discovery as students participate in a workshop at George Brown College.

ing picture frames.

"I loved seeing all the young people who were interested in the trades at the Day of Discovery," the minister said. "It's so important that we show young people and their parents that a career in the trades is exciting, fulfilling and profitable. These are well paying jobs.

"Ontario is facing a looming problem: a shortage of skilled workers," he added. "Our government knows we can't afford to be complacent. That's why we're promoting the skilled trades and taking urgent action to make Ontario a leading destination for investment and job creation."

We were all grateful for his participation. More importantly, we must get the minister's message out to

more youth and their parents, guardians or influencers. Earlier this year, BuildForce Canada — an arm's-length federally funded agency that tracks statistics for Canadian construction — predicted that Ontario will need to recruit 103,900 new construction workers over the coming decade to keep pace with retirements and additional demand.

The jobs will be there. But we have to help lead youth towards them by explaining that these jobs are not only well paid but highly satisfying.

To test the waters, BOLT offers two weeks of job shadowing on Tridel construction sites with the trades, construction management and the safety team. There, they'll learn how to get into construction, by going directly into the skilled trades or pursuing post-secondary education, like the RESCON-sponsored construction management program at George Brown. There are pre-apprenticeship programs like Hammerheads for those looking for a new career, and if they're still in high school, Toronto residents can look into the TDSB's STEP to Construction program.

Learn more about BOLT and the Day of Discovery at boltonline.org. To see two-minute video profiles of construction jobs, visit jobtalksconstruction.ca. I'm excited to tell you more. Drop me a line!

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A revitalized downtown core is a huge part of Barrie's growth story and at its epicentre is an event called Noëlla, showing the city's rich history — including a 36-year-old tree lighting tradition.

The fifth Noëlla a shining star for Barrie

Annual Christmas festival reflects growing sense of community in downtown core

DIANNE DANIEL

Special to Postmedia Network

'Tis the season for warm cocoa, bright lights, festive displays and cozy fires — and you'll find it all in downtown Barrie. The city's annual Noëlla Festival runs until December 16, serving up all of the ingredients for good old holiday cheer.

Like a scene from a Hallmark Christmas movie, the new Meridian Place and Memorial Square — which celebrated their grand opening just over a year ago — are proving to be the ideal backdrop for a community to come together.

"The whole area became the heart of downtown," said Kristen Eatch, Creative Communications, Downtown Barrie Business Association (BIA). "Noëlla was always a big event, but now it's even bigger."

For the second year, the city celebrated its Santa Claus parade and 35-foot Christmas tree lighting at Meridian Place, kicking off the four-week-long Noëlla Festival as thousands lined the streets. Though she didn't think it was possible, Eatch estimates the crowd doubled in size.

"People we're really excited to

come down this year and see the new streetscape," she said. "While we've got the eyes on us, we really want to celebrate and point out all of the positive change."

With massive growth expected in Barrie over the next two decades, city officials expect the population to reach 210,000 by 2031. A revitalized downtown core will be the city's event epicentre and Noëlla shows how rich history — like the 36-year-old tree lighting tradition — can take a modern spin in revamped surroundings to build a sense of community among long-time residents and newcomers alike. As part of Noëlla, volunteers from the BIA run a Christmas tree and wreath lot on Saturdays, with proceeds going towards Hospice Simcoe. Local artisans are featured in the square and children can sit on Santa's lap.

Festival goers are encouraged to browse downtown shops and businesses, taking in the gorgeous window displays. This year's theme was 'Christmas in the Movies' with Grenville Smart Copy earning first place for its "fully decked out Nightmare Before Christmas," said Eatch.

Many local businesses also join the BIA's Holly Days draw, a chance for consumers to win more than \$3,500 in gift certificates and prizes when they make a purchase at a participating business. At a time of year for reminiscing, the community festival is the perfect place to make new memories too, she added.

Before joining the BIA, Eatch visited the Noëlla tree lot herself, aiming to support the hospice. Coincidentally, she met and struck up a conversation with BIA managing director Craig Stevens, a turn of events that inspired her to seek employment there.

"I love supporting local businesses and residents ... so it's funny that now I'm the one running the tree lot on Saturdays," she said. "We want people to come down and experience Noëlla ... and realize that this is a community place, not a one-time visit." Visit noellafestival.ca.

