



## **Skills Canada competition brings more attention to careers in health and safety**

*Don Nelson,  
Industry Services Manager, Construction  
Workers' Compensation Board*

Skills Canada is a national, not-for-profit organization that works with employers, educators, labour groups and governments to reposition trade and technical careers as a first choice career option for Canadian youth. Their mandate is to look for ways to guide students toward the professional opportunities available in the skilled trades and technology. In partnership with business labour and government, they are helping to secure Canada's future skilled labour needs.

Through regional, provincial and national skills competitions, Skills Canada helps make these occupations more visible and tangible for teachers, students and parents. The competitions are an incredible display of hands-on expertise, talent and determination which helps showcase the many promising futures to be found in trades and technology.

The skills competitions not only showcase the talent of the competitors but also allow for an invaluable exchange of ideas between competitors, industry representatives and educators. Each contest is designed, run and maintained by an industry/education partnership. This ensures that modern industrial quality standards are met and that students are learning the skills they will need to secure employment once their formal education is complete

In May, both the provincial and national competitions for Skills Canada were held in Vancouver. The Worker's Compensation Board of B.C. sponsored the provincial competition judging and awarding health and safety awards in a variety of categories. WCB staff also assisted in judging the national competition for worksite safety. A special thanks to PCL Constructors Canada Inc. who generously provided construction equipment that was used in the setup of the mock inspection area.

As little as five years ago, there wasn't a career in health and safety, but as this field grows, the need for skilled occupational health and safety professionals becomes more important. Working with Skills Canada, WCB hopes to bring a higher profile to this important profession and hopefully lead more secondary school students into careers as safety professionals. The worksite safety competition is only in its second year, but the number of competitors this year more than doubled over last year.

Competitors in the provincial worksite safety category had to identify, assess and rate hazards then recommend corrective actions. Many of these hazards were construction-related, such as identifying damaged tools, housekeeping hazards on the floor, makeshift workbenches, or unlabeled containers.

Skills Canada competitions also have other construction-related categories. I encourage you to get involved with them to help promote careers in trades. Down the road, we'll see more young people entering into careers in skilled trades, and you'll have more experienced staff who are knowledgeable about health and safety matters. For more information, please consult the Skills Canada BC website at <http://www.skillscanada.bc.ca>.

For more information on preventing injuries in construction, visit our Construction Health and Safety Centre at <http://construction.healthandsafetycentre.org>.

SEND US YOUR IDEAS AND QUESTIONS

*I would like to include your ideas and questions in future columns. Send your ideas for future columns to me at [dnelson@wcb.bc.ca](mailto:dnelson@wcb.bc.ca) or call me at (604) 231-8631 or toll free in B.C. at 1 888 621-7233.*