

Program training workers for construction trades

■ Hardhats could give new hope to those looking for work

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Weekend Edition staff

Some of the Capital Region's income assistance recipients will soon be donning hard-hats in preparation for employment in the construction industry.

B.C.'s Ministry of Human Resources is funding Hardhats, a provincewide initiative aimed at giving new employment options for welfare recipients and providing them with skills usable on construction jobs.

The job skills and placement program began Monday and is being delivered by Camosun College. It is a partnership between the Canadian Home Builders Association and Grant Thornton Job Placements.

Christine Stoneman, vice-president of Grant Thornton Job Placements, says the

10-week program includes training in a number of areas.

The first week has included training in areas such as resume-building and life skills. Participants will spend the remaining nine weeks learning various construction, first aid and safety skills at Camosun's Interurban campus, says Stoneman.

"Once they complete that, obviously we will place them with an employer and they'll get some experience," she says.

Stoneman says the on-the-job experience will help participants decide whether they want to pursue an apprenticeship in a construction trade.

"We're looking at long-term career goals for people," she says.

According to Ybo Plante, coordinator of the Hardhats program at Camosun College, after learning first aid and safety skills those taking part in the program will

learn electrical, mechanical, plumbing, sheet metal, welding and carpentry skills.

"It's a very broad spectrum. The idea is to give them some exposure to those areas and to introduce them to the types of work and environment they'll be entering into," she says.

Plante says the program is a great opportunity for people who don't have any contacts in the construction business to get their foot in the door of the industry.

Stoneman notes the construction industry was pushing for a job skills program that would attract more people to work with residential builders, who are currently experiencing a boom.

"They see a real need," she says. "They know that in a few years if they don't get some people attracted to the industry, they're going to have an extreme shortage."