



Champion of Women in Trades Receives WOMEN OF LABOUR AWARD

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The prospect of good jobs for young women in trades like carpentry is better than ever today because of women like Phyllis Gallimore. She understands what it takes to succeed, and what supports are required, in careers that have traditionally been geared to men.

Gallimore is the founder of a group called 'Sisters in the Trades' - set up to provide a forum for women working in electrical, plumbing, carpentry and other skilled trades to address issues that they face in such professions. She also plays a leading role in attracting women into carpentry apprenticeship programs and providing the mentorship they need to excel.

On February 19th, Gallimore was presented with the annual Women of Labour Award by the Toronto and York Region Labour Council and its Women's Committee.

"I became an apprentice at age 43 as a second career after being laid off as a computer operator," says Gallimore, who is originally from Jamaica. "I had never used a hammer but was attracted to carpentry. I sewed well and knew I had talent, so I went from manipulating fabric to manipulating wood." After six years on the job, Gallimore became a Representative of the Carpenters Union, Central Ontario Council, the first woman to do so, in 2000.

She made her mark by helping organize the first North American women's conference for the United Brotherhood of Carpenters (UBC) called "Sisters in the Brotherhood".

Gallimore speaks to youth about the benefits of the carpenters' apprentice program at high schools and career fairs. "This program allows you to earn as you learn. We emphasize the need to complete high school, and point out that carpentry is often the route to a variety of careers in the construction industry."

Her job is also to ensure that women who come into specific trades have the supports needed to stick with their profession. "Sisters in the Trade has been formed to grapple with issues like having washroom and change rooms at job sites as well as day care, which is complex when you're moving from site to site," says Gallimore.

“Trades like carpentry offer the flexibility to work when you want, and they also pay well,” Gallimore adds. “My only wish is to have started earlier. It’s offered me a good life and I want young women to be able to share that experience.”

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