

WORLD SKILLS

A LOOK BACK AT WORLD SKILLS CALGARY 2009, SEPTEMBER 1-7

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'A Golden Event'



Canadian restaurant service competitor Pierre-Luc Cote celebrates after winning gold at WorldSkills Calgary 2009.



INSIDE

- Competition shines spotlight on skills **Page 2**
- Holmes, Team Alberta lead Stampede Parade **Page 3**
- Local schools benefit from \$16M legacy **Page 4**
- WorldSkills kicks off to rave reviews **Page 5**
- Visiting countries receive warm welcome **Page 6**
- SAIT campus turns into a mini UN **Page 7**
- WorldSkills proves to be a hit with students **Page 8**
- Sustainability front & centre at 'green' event **Page 9**
- Emotions run high after H1N1 death **Page 10**
- Judge switches roles at WorldSkills event **Page 11**
- Volunteers make competition a reality **Page 12**

'Best ever' WorldSkills; City's hospitality 'legendary'

THE WORLD'S FINEST SKILLED TRADES COMPETITORS TOOK TO THE PODIUM IN A DAZZLING WORLD SKILLS AWARDS CEREMONY SUNDAY, THE GRAND FINALE OF THE WEEKLONG EVENT THAT SAW CALGARY SET A GOLD STANDARD IN HOSTING THE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION, AND TEAM CANADA SMASH ITS OWN RECORD FOR AWARDS.

Competitors and organizers say they were blown away by WorldSkills Calgary.

"This has been the best competition ever," WorldSkills International president Jack Dusseldorp told thousands of spectators from around the world filling the seats and waving flags at the Stampede Corral.

The spectacular opening and closing ceremonies, the "legendary friendliness" of Calgarians and the outstanding international competition made the 40th WorldSkills event the finest on record, he said.

"I'm sure you will agree that Calgary has set a high standard for London 2011."

Sunday's ceremony was the culmination of four days of intense competition. Confetti and streamers flew and dancers filled the aisles as pulsing music and sweeping lights ushered winners to the stage.

Team Canada quickly nabbed a spot on the podium, with Brian Everts winning silver in aircraft mechanics. It was the first of Canada's eight medals, including three golds — its best showing since winning six medals two years ago at WorldSkills in Shizuoka, Japan.

Before the ceremony even began, competitors from around the world began a spontaneous march around the arena floor, waving flags to thousands of appreciative spectators who got to their feet and whistled and hollered for their favourite team.

"I think it was the best," said a beaming Marvin Robinson, 22, a cooking competitor from Team Jamaica. "This is huge."

Team Austria's Patrick Hermmuller said facing off with the world's best has been an overwhelming opportunity.

"It's difficult to find the words," he said. "It was so intense, but so interesting."

The major technology, trades and skilled professions event has drawn the eyes of the world to Calgary throughout the week.

Crowds of visitors streamed the gates of Stampede Park to watch the four days of intense competition, which is expected to pump more than \$82 million into the local economy. About 900 competitors from 51 teams around the world went toe-to-toe in a variety of skills and trades.

"It was extraordinary. All of the elements came together," said WorldSkills Calgary president and CEO Richard Walker. "I think Canada hosted the world brilliantly."

"It's really raised awareness to the value of skills and how skills inject vibrancy to the economy, and the importance of education and skilled professions in the economy."

Organizers began dismantling the massive WorldSkills facelift at the Stampede grounds after the last competition Friday. Trucks, semis and forklifts started pulling down the 400 tonnes of equipment carted in especially for the event, Walker said.

Some of the \$16-million worth of brand-new tools has already been packaged up and labelled with the names of various school districts, where the equipment will find a new home, he added.

Overall, the event has been one for Calgary's history book, Walker said.

"The legacy is manifold. It's \$16 million of state of the art equipment coming into the school system, a legacy of raised awareness of skilled trades ... a lasting legacy of friendships that have been made internationally," said Walker.

According to Walker, the seven-day event is on target to exceed to the 150,000 attendance goal, including visitors from the closing

ceremonies, farewell party and tailgate party for the Labour Day classic football game.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Premier Ed Stelmach and other government officials dropped in on WorldSkills throughout the week. Dignitaries from around the world also attended to cheer on their home teams, Walker said.

"The WorldSkills experience has been extraordinary. I've heard from official delegates from countries around the world that have attended 12 or 15 events in the past years. To a person, they said that this is the best world skills they've seen and the community support is amazing," Walker said.

As many as 50,000 Alberta students visited the competition.

The "roller-coaster week" saw a series of ups and downs as the 38-member Canadian team rolled up their sleeves and faced off with competitors from around the world.

Competing on home turf has been an added bonus throughout the week, said Canada's team leader, Luc Morin.

"They felt so much Canadian pride this week, it's unbelievable."

The competition was fierce.

"I'm feeling pretty good. I did have a few troubles, some things didn't go quite as well as I hoped, but it was a great experience. I enjoyed all of it," said Karl Loos, a CNC milling competitor from Whitehorse.

The 20-year-old says the skill is complex, and involves producing cylindrical components through metal cutting using computer numerically controlled lathes.

The experience has been worthwhile, Loos said.

"I've got tons of training I never would have if I hadn't been in this,"

— Sarah McGinnis



Candace Bourgeault, left, and Veronica Piedimonte check out the undercarriage of Candace's Pontiac Sunfire after the pair changed the oil during a mechanics class for girls at St. Francis High School.

In dusty shop overalls, Candace Bourgeault and Veronica Piedimonte crouch beneath a red Pontiac Sunfire to check a fluid leak.

"It's dirtier than I thought," Bourgeault says, pointing to the underbelly of her prized car hoisted above them in the St. Francis High School automotive shop.

Both Grade 12 students enrolled in the school's first all-girls mechanics class to learn how to maintain vehicles on their own.

"I know there were a lot of girls who wanted to take mechanics, but they didn't want to do it with all the guys," acknowledged Piedimonte.

"It's intimidating."

Women do well working with modern, compact vehicles and the field is increasingly opening up for them, said automotive teacher Bernie Hindmarsh.

But these days fewer young people are considering trades as career options, he said.

"The biggest hurdle is their parents," Hindmarsh said. "Parents still think the path to success is only through university. . . . But there are some really good opportunities in the trades."

Calgary student shows off her cabinetry skills

It's not just parents who need convincing, said Guy Mallabone, vice-president external for SAIT Polytechnic.

While attending a high school preparation night at his daughter's school, Mallabone recalls the principal discussing the importance of picking the right math courses to get into university and of investigating different universities early on.

"It was clear she meant post-secondary, but the word she used was university," said Mallabone.

"Over the years, the subliminal message going out to kids is if you don't go to university, then it must be a second choice."

A quiet revolution is taking place in Calgary designed to shatter the perception that trades are somehow lesser than other careers.

In exactly 100 days, experts in 45 fields will descend on this city for WorldSkills Calgary 2009. More than 900 youth aged 17 to 23 will vie for gold in the international trades event Sept. 1 to 7.

Watching the world's best create metal sculptures, design computer networks and build car frames will be tens of thousands of Calgarians who, organizers hope, will see skilled careers in a new light.

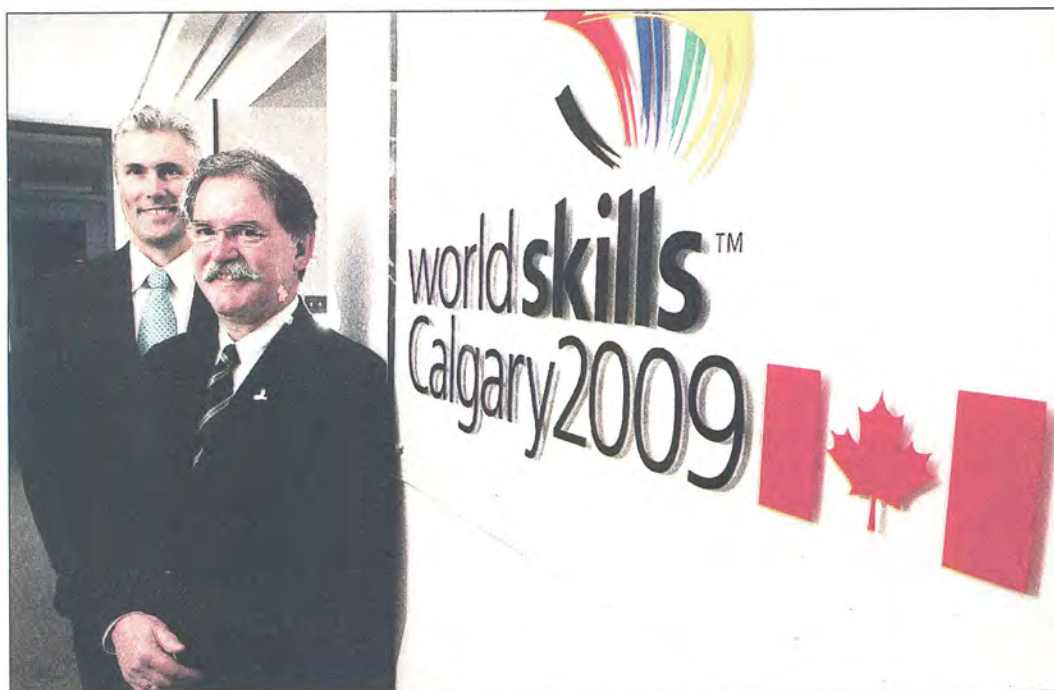
"This will show young people . . . what the future can hold," said WorldSkills Calgary president and CEO Richard Walker.

"Once you have a skilled profession, you can travel the world with it. It becomes your passport."

Hosting the world for this one week has taken more than four years to plan.

WORLD SPOTLIGHT ON SKILLS

International competition increases awareness of trades, provides \$82-million boost to city, schools



David Hoey, left, CEO of WorldSkills International, and Richard Walker, president and CEO of WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

There will be 3,500 world delegates speaking 30 different languages.

"This is going to be the largest participant event hosted in the Olympics," said Marco De Iaco, vice-president of sport, culture and major events at Tourism Calgary.

Coming at the end of what is expected to be a challenging tourism season, WorldSkills will also provide an estimated \$82-million boost to the economy, said Walker.

WorldSkills staff have helped teams book 35,574 hotel room nights in Calgary, and are aware of other bookings in Banff and Kananaskis, said Sibylla Lane, vice-president of finance for WorldSkills Calgary.

"It's a significant boost to the city. They're not just staying in Calgary for three nights or four nights. They're staying for seven nights, 10 nights and 13 nights," said Lane.

But before the sightseeing can begin, much has to be done. Stampede Park will host 45 events over four days of competition.

Roger Dery is redesigning the Stampede's IT infra-



St. James School student Olivia Zaldivar builds an inukshuk for WorldSkills bricklayer Daniel Cullen of New Zealand.

structure to accommodate the high-tech needs of the competitions. He's got more than 1,000 computers to set up and 43 kilometres of computer cable to string over the 83,610 square metres of grounds.

Then there's the on-site data centre he's creating which will "hold the equivalent of 8,000 pickup trucks filled with books," Dery said.

Across town, SAIT's campus is being transformed into the competitors village.

Co-ordinators are preparing prayer spaces for multiple faiths, and polishing off menus to meet the varied dietary needs of visitors, said Mallabone.

By increasing the profile of trades, WorldSkills Calgary is helping boost the confidence of all Jack James High School students, said assistant principal Cathy Shellenberg.

"We have a lot of talented kids. WorldSkills gives a lot of value to what our kids are doing naturally," she said.

Grade 12 culinary arts specialist Alex Lee wowed local judges with his recipes, winning silver at the regional skills competition earlier this year.

"It gave me confidence, lots of it. It also honed my skills," Lee said.

While international teams won't arrive in Calgary for three months, the spirit

of the event has already taken hold in many schools thought One School One Country, a unique WorldSkills education program pairing Calgary schools with international teams.

Classes at St. James School have each adopted one of the 17 New Zealand competitors and their teachers have adapted activities to each team member's skill or homeland.

Older students are making soapbox cars to learn about autobody while younger kids build chairs out of recycled material to get a feel for carpentry.

"I think we should care about (WorldSkills Calgary)," said Grade 4 student Breanna Stadlwieser.

"It's a once in a lifetime chance to meet people."

Alberta Education is also banking on WorldSkills becoming a phenomenon in schools.

The government has pledged \$4 million to cover transportation costs so Grade 9 and 10 students from across Alberta can attend the event.

The Calgary Board of Education is preparing to send 16,000 students and 1,600 adult supervisors, said Marsha Levy, CBE system principal of corporate partnerships.

Perhaps the biggest educational legacy of WorldSkills Calgary 2009 will be the \$16 million worth of state-of-the-art tools which will be donated to schools and post-secondary institutions across Alberta after the event.

Securing high-tech equipment for specialized skills courses, and finding instructors qualified to lead them, has been an ongoing challenge for many school boards.

The CBE is addressing this by creating a career and technology skills centre at Lord Shawnessy High School to act as a hub for in-depth trades classes, said Cathy Faber, director of curriculum and learning technologies.

"It's about providing more choice for students and promoting quality programs and amalgamating scarce dollars, scarce resources and scarce equipment," Faber said.

Deanna Therrien doesn't need to be convinced of the benefits of a trades career.

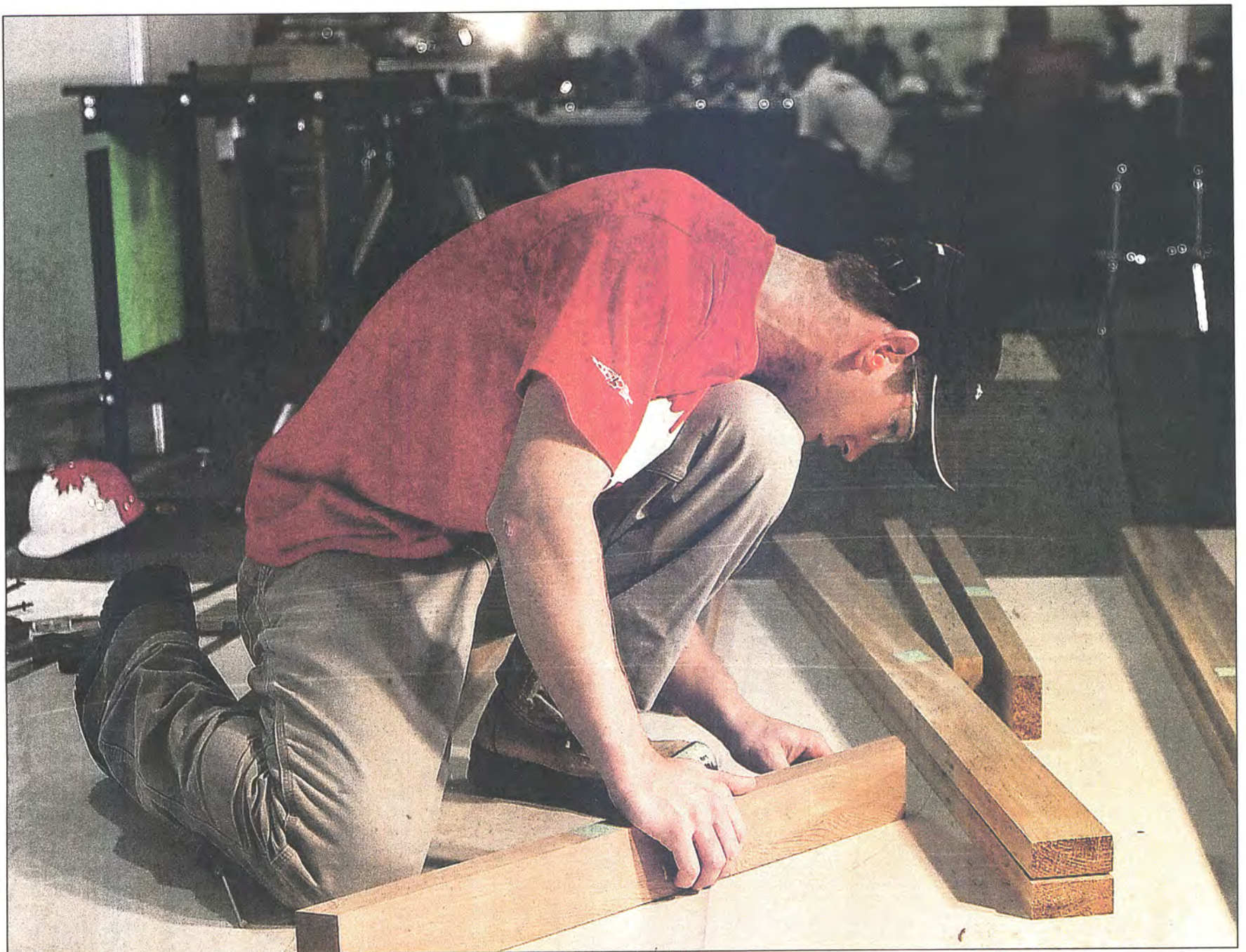
The 18-year-old Jack James High School student is already well-versed in construction and wood-working and has helped her class construct a house with Homes by Avi.

Though construction work has remained a male-dominated field, Therrien is undeterred.

"I love the trades and I'm good at it," Therrien said confidently.

Thanks to the buzz surrounding WorldSkills Calgary, future WorldSkills competitions may give Therrien the chance she needs to show off that talent.

— Sarah McGinnis



Scott Blair of Team Canada works on building a children's gazebo — a four-day, 22-hour project — in the carpentry competition at WorldSkills Calgary 2009. Materials from the competition — including carpentry, cabinetmaking and joinery — will be donated to Habitat for Humanity following the competition.

GOING GREEN REDUX

Products created and tools used at WorldSkills Calgary 2009 won't go to waste

The mantra "reduce, reuse and recycle" is taking on new meaning at WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

Everything from construction materials and leftover food to wedding gowns and printed posters will find new life and benefit several non-profit organizations once competition wraps up on Saturday.

"This is the first green WorldSkills competition in the 59-year history of WorldSkills," said Richard Walker, president and CEO of WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

That means focusing on sustainable environmental design and conducting an environmental audit, as well as reusing as much as possible from the 51 competitions.

Take the offset printing event, in which competitors use presses to print products like cards and posters.

"Historically, the competitors were given a task in which they had to print something very complex," said Walker, adding that at the end of the event, many of the printed products served no useful purpose and wound up in the trash.

"We thought why not incorporate all of the skills aspects, but have an end product that means something."

This year the 14 offset printing competitors — hailing from North America, Europe and Asia — are producing a poster for War Child Canada, a charity that provides humanitarian assistance to kids around the world affected by war.

And they're using non-toxic vegetable-based inks that reduce the burden on the environment, said Tyler Nagel, a national expert for Canada and an instructor



at SAIT.

Likewise, the 25 competitors in the web design event are beaver away on a web portal for Skills Canada.

By the end of the four-day competition, each competitor will have designed and built a website similar to Monster.com, where employers can post jobs and potential employees can set up a profile, said Jeff Boulton, chief expert in the web design event.

"We're looking at the possibility of contracting the gold medallist to work with Skills Canada to further develop the winning website," said Boulton. He says such a website would typically cost "thousands and thousands" of dollars to create.

Similarly, the 14 custom-designed wedding gowns from the fashion technology competition will be auctioned off to the public to benefit the Canadian Cancer Society.

Walker said organizers wanted to donate all of the meals prepared in the WorldSkills cooking competitions. However, due to safety concerns, they discovered that wasn't possible.

Any unused food still in its original packaging will go to the Mustard Seed Street Ministry or the drop-in centre.

Habitat for Humanity will be one happy beneficiary of the Cabinetmaking, Joinery and Carpentry competitions.

Michael O'Reilly said his organization will receive 15 garden gaze-

We thought, why not incorporate all of the skills aspects, but have an end product that means something.

RICHARD WALKER,
WORLD SKILLS CALGARY
2009 PRESIDENT AND CEO

bos, 20 contemporary kitchen cabinets and 20 pieces of joinery wall art made of wood—all items currently under construction.

"It's a very timely donation," said O'Reilly, with Habitat for Humanity's ReStore, which sells new and used furniture, appliances and building materials. The store's proceeds go toward building affordable homes for families in need.

The items will be auctioned off—along with show home furniture and accessories donated by Calgary home builders—on Oct. 3. (See habitat-calgary.ca for details.) Perhaps the ultimate in recycling is the \$16-million equipment legacy program.

The Government of Alberta will distribute \$14 million worth of equipment and tools used during the competition to schools and post-secondary institutions. An additional \$2 million is earmarked for insurance, storage and transportation costs.

"In the past, a lot of institutions have relied on donated equipment that comes from industry," said Walker.

"But when it's outdated for industry and they donate it to a school, then kids learn on outdated equipment. Now many of the institutions will have state-of-the-art equipment."

— Valerie Berenyi

Contestants 'designing for the cure'

Silent auction of bridal gowns funds cancer fight

As 14 young fashion designers hunch over their patterns and high-tech Juki sewing machines at WorldSkills Calgary 2009, they are doing more than creating wedding gowns under intense pressure.

They are also "designing for the cure," said Brenda Speirs-Fryatt, workshop supervisor in the Fashion Technology event.

In past WorldSkills competitions, the designers were free to take their garments home and do with them as they pleased. Not this year, said chief expert Jozee Dulude, a fashion designer and teacher from Montreal. For the first time ever, once the judging is complete, the garments will be auctioned off to raise money for the Canadian Cancer Society.

"At the end of four days of competition, we will have 14 beautiful wedding gowns," says Speirs-Fryatt, a fashion technology and design instructor from Winnipeg.

"We wanted the gowns to have purpose and, with a silent auction, we will raise money for cancer research and the gowns will continue to be appreciated and give joy."

The 14 international competitors are each creating a two-piece wedding gown sewn from silk shantung and other fabrics such as lace, tulle and organza.

On Day 1, the competitors make an identical bustiers. On Days 2 and 3 they receive a selection of fabrics to create and sew a skirt of their own design. On Day 4 they receive a "mystery box" containing decorative items like pearls, feathers and beads to adorn the bustier and skirt.

"They won't know exactly what's in the box," said Speirs-Fryatt.

The final projects, which must be completed by 2 p.m. on Saturday, are judged on overall appearance, creativity of design and the level of technical difficulty.



Team Canada's Daisy Liang of Vancouver works on a wedding gown as part of WorldSkills Calgary 2009. All the gowns made by competitors will be auctioned, with the money going to the Canadian Cancer Society.

The skirts will then go on display for a silent auction on Saturday in the Fashion Technology area, Booth 31 in BMO Centre at Stampede Park. Bidding is open to the public between 9 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Speirs-Fryatt said it's a great opportunity for brides to be to nab a one-of-a-kind bridal gown and contribute to the fight against cancer.

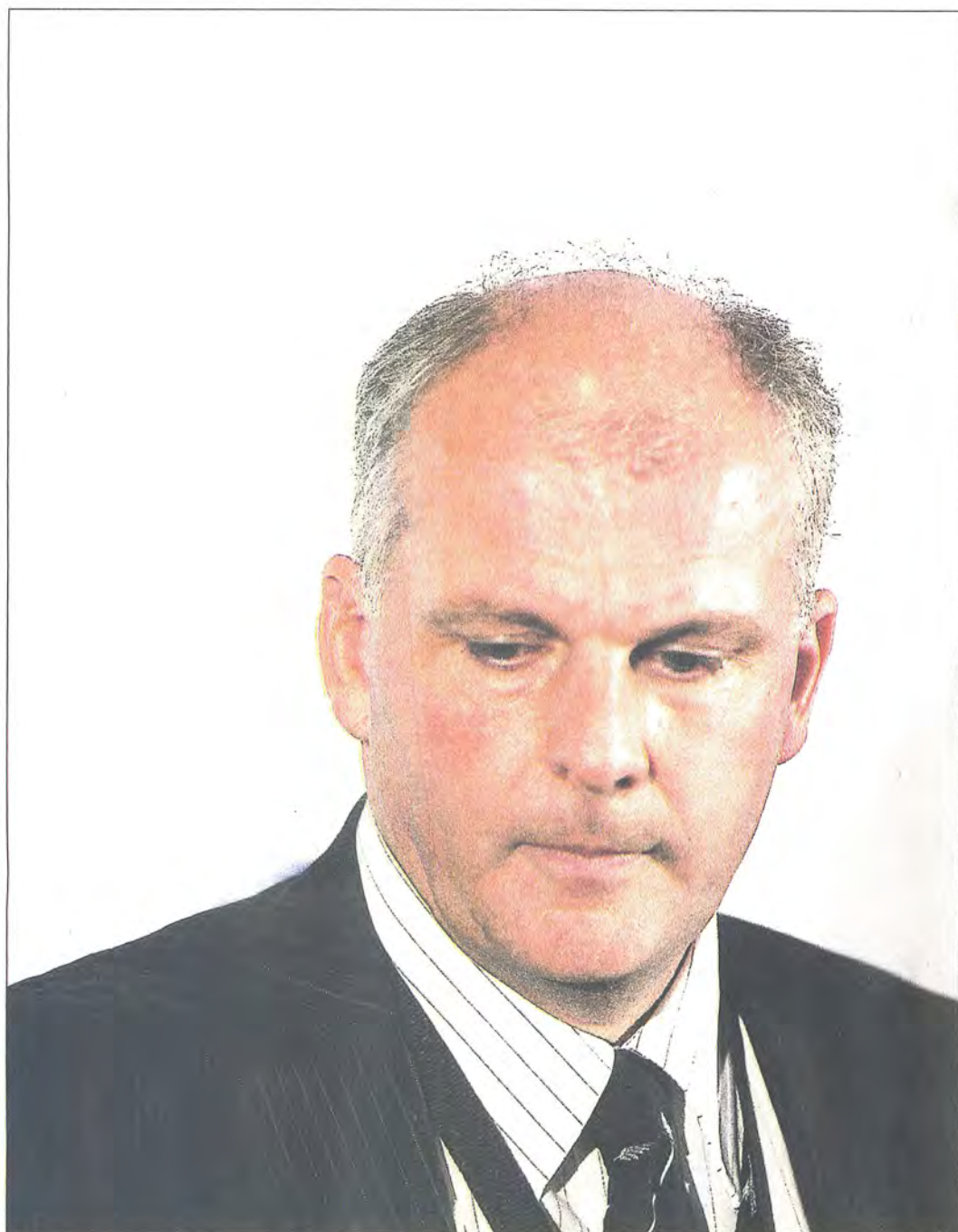
"There's one little hitch: everything is being made to a standard size 8, although they could be altered to fit someone smaller."

Each country competing in the Fashion Technology event has also donated a designer garment for the silent auction. Finland sent a long, colourful dress by famed designer Marimekko; Japan donated a black skirt suit by Pierre Cardin.

"This is the most innovative independent fundraiser we've ever had," said Aimee Donahue, revenue development co-ordinator for the Canadian Cancer Society, Calgary. All proceeds will go to the society's support and research services, said Donahue.

Before they go home to their new owners, the bridal gowns will also be featured in an exclusive fashion show held at the Nashville North Venue at 9 p.m. as part of the WorldSkills Farewell Party.

— Valerie Berenyi



'We are from New Zealand. We don't give up,' said Peter Spencer, CEO of WorldSkills New Zealand after the sudden flu-related death of a member's relative.

OFFICIALS EASE SWINE FLU FEARS

Team New Zealand vowed to press on in the international WorldSkills competition despite the sudden flu-related death of a member's relative, using a traditional Maori dance to focus their energies toward the grieving family as well as their respective events.

"It's a difficult time ... (but) we're strong. We're rocks from New Zealand and we'll forge on," said Peter Spencer, CEO of WorldSkills New Zealand.

One day after a team member's stepfather died in a Calgary hospital from H1N1-related causes, local health officials said the influenza case is likely an isolated one.

The unidentified New Zealand competitor was initially quarantined after her stepfather's death as a precaution. She has not shown symptoms of illness, but withdrew from her event.

The incident has affected the entire team, which gathers each morning to perform a 'haka'—a traditional Maori war chant—before going into competition.

"Apparently they did their haka this morning and it was a really strong one, with a lot of feeling in it, which is good because that would have been going out to the family," said Debbie Bond, who along with husband Gordon are here to watch their daughter Jemma Bond, 21, compete.

As emotional as the sudden death has been for the entire New Zealand team, moving forward seemed to be a theme at WorldSkills Calgary, which continued its third day of international skills competitions as planned Friday.

When asked if any of the rest of his team considered pulling out of competition over flu concerns, Spencer gave an emphatic no.

"We're from New Zealand. We don't give up," he said.

The woman's stepfather, believed to be in his early 40s, likely contracted swine flu in his own country. He died in a Calgary hospital Thursday morning after arriving a day earlier at a local emergency room with a severe case of the disease.

Family members and close contacts of the man are being monitored for signs of influenza, but public health



experts said Friday no one else is showing symptoms of H1N1.

"It's obviously a sad event for another family and we extend our condolences," said Dr. Andre Corriveau, chief medical officer of health for Alberta.

"This will likely end up being an isolated case ... I hope (competitors) don't have any concerns about continuing their participation in their games."

More than 900 trades and technology students from around the world are competing in the event, which has also drawn some 3,500 delegates.

Some watching the WorldSkills 2009 competition Friday were worried about the death from H1N1, the new influenza virus that emerged in Mexico this spring and has since been declared a global pandemic.

Hans Kluijdt of the Netherlands, who came to Calgary to watch his son compete in the electrical category, had several questions about where the patient contracted the virus, but said he wasn't finding many answers.

"Absolutely (it's) a concern," said Kluijdt. "We just heard today that person died."

It's not clear whether the woman's stepfather had any pre-existing health conditions that may have led to a more serious H1N1 infection.

"This is a devastating event for the competitor and upsetting to all of us in the World-Skills family," Guy Mallabone, chairman for WorldSkills Calgary 2009, said at a news conference Friday morning.

"As hard as it may be for much of us to carry on today with the regular competition and scheduled activities, that's exactly the appropriate thing to do," he added.

"We have 900 skilled young people gathered from around the globe to compete, to learn from each other, to grow in their respective dis-



Handwashing stations at Stampede Park for WorldSkills are aimed at flu prevention.

ciplines. Alberta Health Services assured us at this time there's no reason to alter any competition event."

Between Wednesday and Thursday, an estimated 53,000 people were thought to have already attended WorldSkills. Another 30,000 were expected Friday.

The New Zealand man is the eighth person with H1N1 to die in Alberta since it first appeared earlier this year. The virus has infected more than 1,600 people in the province, and Alberta Health expects a resurgence of cases as fall approaches.

In New Zealand, where the winter flu season is wrapping up, health officials are reporting a total of 3,145 confirmed H1N1 cases and 17 deaths from the virus.

Alberta Health physicians said Friday it's likely the latest H1N1 victim contracted the virus in his home country, shortly before leaving for Canada, or on the plane ride. Corriveau said the normal incubation period for the virus is at least two days and the man fell ill one day after he arrived in Canada on Aug. 28.

Corriveau also said an assessment by public health officials determined there is a low risk to those who are at WorldSkills, including the New Zealand team.

Department officials also say WorldSkills was well prepared for H1N1, noting the event had packages for team leaders with thermometers and masks. Hand sanitizing stations were also set up around Stampede grounds, where the competition is taking place.

— Michelle Lang, Sarah McGinnis, Valerie Berenyi

Skill City tent allows novices to landscape

The landscape gardening booth is an oasis in the midst of the Skill City tent.

A popular feature at WorldSkills Calgary 2009, Skill City is where anyone — students, parents or curious media types — can try their hand at laying bricks, curling hair, welding steel and more. The big white tent is hot, noisy and packed with exuberant teens.

The plant-filled landscape gardening area is a breath of fresh air, and it's where I tried the sample hands-on project — a variation on paint by numbers using small potted plants instead of paints. The project featured a small diagram with numbers corresponding to the four different types of potted plants: Creeping Thyme, Blue Star Creeper, Carpet Bugle and Giant Carpet Bugle. I simply placed the plants in the required pattern to complete the small-scale planning and "planting by numbers" exercise. Done.

"Planning and planting are just two of the hundreds of things we do," said Nicole Graftas, a journeyman landscape gardener from Edmonton who was manning the booth.

"It's soft landscaping and it's what makes things pretty. But I love the grunt work of hard landscaping. It keeps me fit."

Graftas recently completed her training through Olds College. It's a four-year process in which students spend two months in class and the rest of the year working at their trade — the classic "earn and learn" scenario that tradespeople are able to do.

St. Mary's High School students Erin Cott and Marie-Ange Lataille, both 14, tried a more complex pattern using eight plants at a nearby table. Cott said she likes being outside and is interested in design, but wasn't sure if landscape gardening is the career for her.

Liz Klose, a manager with the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association who was also working in the booth, is just glad to be exposing young students to the trade.

"We're germinating the idea of this career with youth," said Klose.

"It's a good career for people who like to be out of doors, like to be creative and work with their own two hands to make the world a better place."

— Valerie Berenyi



Herald reporter Valerie Berenyi, left, tested her landscape gardening skills with the help of Nicole Graftas, a journeyman landscape gardener from Edmonton, here for WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

Apprentices set to receive \$40M boost

Grants will allow youth to complete certifications

With an international skills competition underway in Calgary on Wednesday, the federal government reaffirmed its commitment to help young people apprentice in skilled trades.

Ottawa has pledged to invest up to \$40 million per year in a new apprenticeship completion grant program where applicants receive up to \$2,000 to finish their training and become a certified journeyman.

"Many people who started out as apprentices, once they were in the job, found it rewarding enough to continue to work without completing their papers," said Human Resources and Skills Development Minister Diane Finley.

"Now (during layoffs) they're having trouble transferring their skills to another employer or to another industry. Having the papers completed with the new grant ... will make certain they are in a better position in the future so they will have mobility across the country."

The new grant means young people can receive up to \$4,000 of government support toward their training when paired with the apprenticeship incentive grant available to beginning apprentices.

Ward Webber owns his own custom cabinet and furniture business in Langdon with his sister, and is the first Albertan to receive the new apprenticeship grant.

"I almost didn't com-

plete my apprenticeship," Webber said. "I was really frustrated in my fourth year and seriously thought about dropping out three weeks before I finished."

He was told by some in the industry that completing his training wasn't critical, but Webber hung on to finish at SAIT Polytechnic in February.

After receiving his \$2,000 grant from Finley on Wednesday, Webber said the program should be the boost some need to finish their training.

Finley was here to participate in WorldSkills Calgary 2009, a global skills and trades competition on the Stampede grounds this week. She officially opened Canada House, a 5,000-square-foot tent with displays from Canadian trades and technologies.

Mike Holmes, host of TV's Holmes on Homes, said events such as WorldSkills Calgary are necessary to encourage young people to consider a career in the trades.

"For whatever reason years ago, the trades were sort of shunned. 'You don't want to be in the skilled trades—be in computers, become a doctor or lawyer,' kids were told. I think that was too much stuck in the brains of children when there's so much more out there," said Holmes, a Calgary Herald columnist.

He encouraged young people to visit WorldSkills to witness the numerous opportunities unfolding.

"The biggest tip I can say is find something you like. If you don't like it, you aren't going to do well in it," Holmes said.

"Go see a few things. Open up your mind and see what's available."

— Sarah McGinnis



Japanese competitor Shiro Ishii, right, has some fun teaching a few words of Japanese to members of the Brazilian team at the WorldSkills Competitors' Village at SAIT. More than 900 competitors from around the world are staying at SAIT during the weeklong event.

CAMPUS TURNS INTO MINI UN



ROBERT REMINGTON

I am wandering around the competitor's village at WorldSkills looking for someone who speaks English.

Shiro Ishii looks like a good candidate. He's with a group of Colombians, teaching them basic greetings in Japanese.

"Hi. What's your event?" I ask.

"Sorry. No English," he says, holding up his badge identifying him as a competitor in landscape gardening.

Of course. A Japanese gardener. Nobody else stands a chance.

I spot a group of Italians from South Tyrol. They are in a circle, chanting some sort of victory cheer.

I ask Carlos, their translator, what they are saying. "I don't know," Carlos says. "They speak a different dialect."

South Tyrol, I discover, is an autonomous Italian province where the linguistics are a blend of German, Italian and Ladin. The latter is a Rhaeto-Romance language spoken in the Dolomite mountains between the regions of Trentino-Alto Adige-South Tyrol and Veneto. It is closely related to the Swiss Romansh, Surselvan and Friulian.

Clearly I am way in over my head.

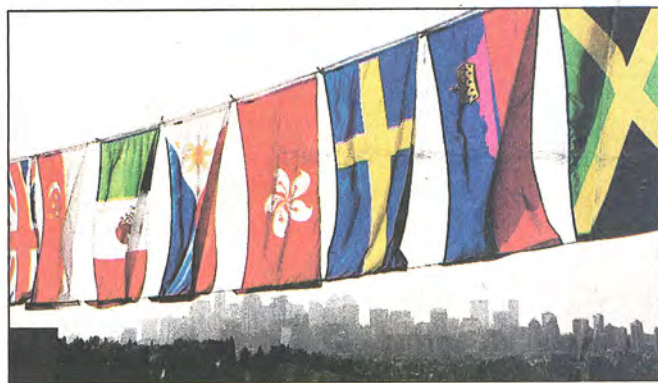
Before long, I spot a man from Sweden. All Swedes, I've been told, speak some English. Wrong.

Next, a member of the Swiss team. Switzerland has four official languages — German, French, Italian and Romansh. Hmm. Romansh. Perhaps he can translate for the South Tyrolians. But, as luck would have it, I have found the only man in Switzerland who speaks no English. My French sucks and I can only say ciao, buongiorno and one swear word in Italian. I move on.

Finally, a South African. "What is your event?" I ask Karl Drogemoller.

"Mechatronics," he says. Clearly, he doesn't speak English, either.

"Mechatronics is an event," explains his teammate, Kyle Janes von Ren-



WorldSkills' competitors hail from 51 countries. Their national flags have been hung from two student residences on SAIT's campus.

burg.

The pair tell me that mechatronics is a synergistic combination of mechanical engineering, electronic engineering, control engineering, computing, systems design engineering and other things beyond the comprehension of journalists.

In its lay essence, mechatronics is used in factories and assembly lines to make stuff.

The WorldSkills competitors village, located at SAIT, is a veritable League of Nations these days, where reporters looking for somebody to interview would be well advised to bring a translator and a technical manual.

More than 900 competitors from 51 countries are staying at SAIT for WorldSkills, a kind of Olympics for skilled trades and technology students aged 17 to 22.

It is the first time that WorldSkills competitors have been housed in one location in an Olympic-style athletes village. At previous competitions, national teams usually stayed at individual hotels.

"There never has been a (WorldSkills) village like this," says Patricia Rokosh, SAIT's skills co-ordinator.

"At other WorldSkills, the competitors might have met a few people from their particular skill. Being together like this, they are going to make international friends for life."

Catering to the cultural diversity of more than 1,200 people, including competitors, coaches and team leaders, has been a logistical challenge.

SAIT has arranged everything from special foods to consideration for competitors observing the fast of Ramadan.

"There has been a lot of thought that has gone into it," Rokosh says.

National flags hang from

two SAIT student residences where competitors are being housed. The Swiss have managed to drape a banner between two rooms on the 12th floor reading "Go for Gold."

"We're trying to figure out how they managed to do it," says Rokosh.

Mechatronics, perhaps. Although still relatively unknown in Canada, WorldSkills is a major event in other nations, especially in Europe and Asia.

"For many countries, this is the Olympics," says Rokosh.

"Most of these competitors will come away set for life with a job. Some countries award them cars. It is a very big deal."

Drogemoller and von Renburg agree.

"It looks very good on a C.V. — that you are the best in your country at what you do. And, if you win here, it is even better," von Renburg said.

For many competitors, including himself, WorldSkills marks the first time they have travelled internationally.

Most are curious about Calgary.

"Is it always this warm?" they ask. "The streets are very clean" and the people "are very friendly."

With this many young people under one roof, away from home, some for the first time, the big question must be asked.

Are there any wild parties? "Yes. There was karaoke the first night," said Drogemoller.

Good grief. We must get this crew down to Cowboys and show them some real western hospitality.

Odds are they won't go. There's too much at stake.

"We're going to stay away from that stuff," said one New Zealand welder. "Until the last day."

Japanese receive rousing greeting

Waving small Canadian flags and clad in red and white, students at Willow Park School gave a heroes' welcome to 18 members of Team Japan on Tuesday as the WorldSkills Calgary 2009 competitors stepped off a yellow bus into the bright sun at the south-west middle school.

The young competitors were each formally greeted by two students before being whisked into the school gym for a rousing pep rally that featured music and dance as well as the Canadian and Japanese national anthems, lead by a 10-girl choir singing in English and Japanese.

The festivities were part of The One School, One Country program that saw 55 Calgary elementary and junior high schools meet with teams from each of the competitor countries the students have been studying since the spring.

"It's been a wonderful opportunity for us to come together as a school community," said Willow Park School principal Leslie Robertson, who was resplendent in a red dress, white jacket and sparkly red heels.

Teacher Natalie Norcross said being paired with Japan has made for many good teaching moments, above and beyond studying the country as part of the Grade 8 curriculum. Grade 5 students learned about Japanese floral arranging; Grade 6 students made paper kites with Japanese lettering on them.

The whole school — 603 students in Grades 5 to 9 — will have an opportunity to sample everything from making sushi to writing haiku to practising tae kwon do when Willow Park School hosts its own Japanese skills day on Friday.

Sarah Klym is look-



It's been a wonderful opportunity for us to come together as a school community.

LESLIE ROBERTSON,
WILLOW PARK SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL

ing forward to trying her hand at origami and sushi-making. And the 13-year-old student was thrilled to have the Japanese delegation at her school: "We've never had foreigners at our school before."

Willow Park student Hana Rogstad, 14, who is part Japanese and spent six weeks travelling in Japan with her family this summer, acted as translator during the school assembly.

"It was an honour," Rogstad said after, flushing with pride.

She said she's loved learning about Japanese history and culture, both at school and while travelling.

"My mom knows how to do Japanese flower arranging and she's going to show me how."

The Japanese competitors were treated to a hamburger lunch outdoors after the ceremonies.

"These taste better than Japanese hamburgers," Takeshi Tsutsumi, a 22-year-old competitor in car painting, said through a translator. He is one of 45 competitors on Team Japan. Like many of his teammates, it's his first visit to Canada.

"There's lots of green, and nice air," Tsutsumi noted. "And the people are so kind."

— Valerie Berenyi



Competitors from the 18-member Team Japan share a laugh as they arrive at WorldSkills Calgary 2009.



Grade 10 students Hannah Stirling, left, and Kayley Kaptian, both from Western Canada High School, are captivated by the bricklaying demonstration as they wait their turn to try it out in the Skill City tent at WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

EVENT A HIT WITH LOCALS



attend WorldSkills, Alberta Education offered a \$1.7-million grant to fund transportation costs for all Grade 9 and 10 students across the province.

Limited available school busses meant many local schools used the LRT to transport students to the event.

"We took a school bus to the train and it went fantastically," Henry Wise Wood High School assistant principal Shari Goodfellow said. "There were supervisors on the trains to make sure everything was safe."

The public school board also had a support team on site to help connect any lost students to their groups. Goodfellow spent much of one day helping out at the event, but said there was only one child momentarily unaccounted for. He was located on the Stampede grounds fairly quickly, Goodfellow added.

The Calgary Catholic School District also had 12,000 of its students attend the international event this week.

"So far I've heard that everything has gone smoothly for us," said Calgary Catholic School District spokeswoman Janet Sutherland.

Whether students enjoy or dislike different skills they see at WorldSkills, giving youth a hands-on experience with possible careers can only help them narrow the possibilities of what to pursue in life, said Walker.

"If they're sitting in a classroom constantly doodling or drawing in class, we need to help them find their passion."

— Sarah McGinnis

Regular field of dreams

Companies on hunt for talent

There will be plenty at stake when the WorldSkills Calgary 2009 competition kicks into high gear this week.

For the winners, it will be a gold medal, rounds of applause — and just maybe, a ticket to a great job and career with a top employer.

Companies from across Canada and around the world are expected to be on hand for the international skilled trades and technologies competition, in search of the next hot prospect to recruit.

"The WorldSkills competition reminds us that skills, trades and technological professionals continue to play a crucial role in the success of the modern, global economy," says Diane Whittington, corporate events manager for Samsung, one of several major corporations that will be actively looking for new talent at the competition.

"Samsung's commitment to WorldSkills 2009 reflects the company's broad investment in building a top-class talent pool. In short, attracting skilled tradespeople is a fundamental practice at Samsung."

There will be plenty of top-notch talent to choose from. With more than 900 students taking part from 51 countries/regions, this really is the cream of the crop in the world of skilled tradespeople, says WorldSkills International CEO David Hoey.

"The industry is just crying out for a large quantity of skilled workers, around the world," he says.

In Alberta, that need is even more acute. For years, job growth has far outstripped availability when it came to hiring talented workers in skills and trades.

According to Statistics Canada, the number of people working in the trades across Canada grew approximately 16.4 per cent between 1999 and 2008.

In Alberta, that figure was 37 per cent. And in Calgary, the growth in tradespeople was a staggering 45.5 per cent during the same period.

Many Canadians don't realize that the skilled trades and technologies industry has exploded in recent years, offering a host of new career paths that didn't even exist a decade or two ago, says Aliesia Fieldberg, a spokeswoman for WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

"It is a wide variety of skills," she says.

"There are the traditional skills of bricklaying and construction, but there's also graphic design and mobile robotics."

"The trades are evolving, and incorporating new technologies."

Samsung, for example, is a leader in high-tech innovation, and that's reflected in the types of jobs available for students, says Whittington.

"There has been a tremendous growth in the types of trades in electronics available for students," she says.

"Electrical installations, industrial control, industrial electronics, IT PC/network support, IT/software applications, mechanical engineering/CADD, mechatronics, polytechnics/automation, CNC milling & turning, mould-making, welding and plumbing — all of these areas are possible fields at Samsung for young people to embark on a career."

So how many WorldSkills competitors will parlay their performances into a professional career?

Hoey says it's impossible to say. Yet one thing is for certain. When it comes to WorldSkills Calgary 2009, there will be no losers, he says.

"I get asked all the time: 'Why hold these competitions?'" says Hoey.

"We have an expression: 'Everyone wins.' It's pretty simple, really."

— Marianne Helm

Keeping track of thousands of kids takes skill

Wearing matching red and white football jerseys, a troop of Grade 10 Western Canada High School students weave through the thick crowd which has consumed Stampede Park for WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

Phys. Ed teacher Mark Wyse used the old uniforms as a means of identifying his teens in the veritable army of local students taking in the international competitions.

Other teachers deploy matching bandanas or umbrellas to steer their students through the throng.

"We weren't really sure what to expect," admits Wyse, who wore a fluorescent safety vest so his students could find him. "These are all Grade 10 students. They're new to the school. We've never had these students before ... but it's going really well and the kids are really good."

Of the 150,000 spectators expected to attend WorldSkills Calgary 2009, more than 50,000 will be stu-

dents on organized school trips.

Having students attend the event is key to opening their eyes to the various careers available to them, said WorldSkills Calgary 2009 president and CEO Richard Walker.

"We have all done a great job of convincing young people if they don't get into university they've failed. That's a terrible message to give to a young person that's 17 or 18 years old. Really only 18 per cent of Grade 9 students get into or go through university. We just need to help them identify what their passion is," said Walker.

Calgary schools resumed classes early to make massive district-wide field trips to WorldSkills Calgary possible.

Heading back to school in late August didn't dampen 11-year-old Kris Gimblett's enthusiasm for the international skills and trades Olympics.

"It was way worth it. It's sweet," said the Grade 7 student from Senator Riley School.

Gimblett spent part of his day creating a panzer tank using computer animation and watching the robotics competition in action.

"I'm probably going to

see if I can convince my parents to bring me down here again," Gimblett said.

Robots were also a highlight for 11-year-old Evan Waddell.

"There were robotic jellyfish. They were programmed to go up in a tank and then stop and go back down. You could see them working on the robots," said the Ascension of Our Lord School student.

The Calgary Board of Education planned to send 16,000 students to WorldSkills Calgary during the first three days of competition.

Although all elementary and many middle school students didn't trek down to WorldSkills, the event came to them in a way.

More than 25,000 elementary and middle school students from 162 Calgary public and Catholic schools participated in the One School One Country program.

These younger kids spent months learning about their adopted WorldSkills team and it was important they get the chance to meet their foreign guests, said Flitton.

In addition to tens of thousands of Calgary students from Grade 7 to Grade 12 expected to



Team Canada arrives at the opening ceremony of WorldSkills Calgary 2009 at Stampede Park. Nearly 1,000 competitors from around the world, and thousands of cheering delegates, made the event unforgettable for many participants, who were 'thrilled and proud' to be in Calgary.

SPLENDID START TO EVENT

World's competitors wear colours with pride as opening ceremonies kick off

As excited as Australia's Andrew Arthur is to finally compete today in the much-anticipated WorldSkills competition, it's Tuesday's opening ceremonies that will forever stay with the 21-year-old.

Surrounded by his teammates, nearly 1,000 proud and rowdy competitors, and thousands of clapping and cheering delegates, Arthur was simply glowing.

"Spectacular. Enormous. It's beyond anything I imagined it would be," said the Aussie, who will compete in the manufacturing team challenge category.

In their quest for a gold medal, he and two teammates are expected to build exercise equipment that will produce electricity.

"I am so happy and thrilled and proud to be here, and to see all of these people supporting us and the other competitors just feels so right," said Arthur.

The Grandstand at Stampede Park was packed Tuesday evening for the opening ceremony of the 40th WorldSkills event, hosted for only the second time in Canada. The fans in the stands



waved — and wore — their countries' colours with pride.

They sat patiently through some of the opening dance numbers and the fireworks, but erupted in cheers as the "athletes" paraded in teams across the stage, led by their country's flag.

But it was the team from New Zealand that proved to be a crowd favourite after performing the haka, a traditional Maori dance made popular by the country's All Blacks rugby club, which performs the dance before each match.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper joined Team Canada's group of 38 competitors, who stood in awe as the crowd rewarded the host country with a standing ovation.

"As host, I wish everyone the best of luck, but I have to admit I am saving my loudest cheers for Team Canada,"

Spectacular. Enormous. It's beyond anything I imagined it would be

ANDREW ARTHUR, AUSTRALIAN COMPETITOR IN THE MANUFACTURING TEAM CHALLENGE CATEGORY

said Harper. "Let's hear it for the Great 38."

Premier Ed Stelmach, Mayor Dave Bronconnier, TV handyman Mike Holmes and WorldSkills Calgary chairman Guy Mallabone were among the dignitaries who welcomed competitors and visitors.

As for Arthur, he said he'd be lying if he claimed he didn't want to take home the gold, but says the competition is intense, given that all competitors are the best of the best in their homelands.

"I am looking at the gold, but really, just getting here is an honour," he said.

"And if we lose, then good on the blokes that take us."

The competitions at Stampede Park are free to watch.

— Deborah Tetley

Single site to house teams for first time

The last time Yves Zimmer plunked a cowboy hat on his head was during a childhood trip to Disneyland.

On Saturday, the 20-year-old stepped off an airplane and, along with hundreds of WorldSkills competitors, was promptly welcomed with Calgary's traditional white cowboy hat.

"It's nice," said Zimmer, who arrived in Calgary from Luxembourg.

"I feel very happy to be here."

Lugging suitcases and shoulder bags, WorldSkills competitors are arriving from all corners of the globe this weekend, taking up residence in their temporary new home—SAIT's WorldSkills Competitors' Village.

More than 1,000 guests, including over 900 competitors, will be lodged in two residence towers on the SAIT main campus for 10 days during the event.

It's the first time in WorldSkills history that all competitors will stay in a single-site competitors' village, rather than spread out in hotels across the host city.

"One of the best things about this type of scenario is the kids get to meet each other," said SAIT's skills coordinator, Patricia Rokosh.

"It's very intense competition. There wasn't as much opportunity to really have this cultural experience. That's what this does."

"We've done our best to make this a complete global village."

In their apartment-style rooms, with private bedrooms and common areas, competitors have access to wireless Internet and may use SAIT's recreational facilities.

Rolling up in a bus along with Teams Malaysia and Hungary, the five-person Team Luxembourg was eager to settle into their new home.

Competitors will have some leisure time before and after the competition to check out Calgary and the nearby mountains, and maybe grab a drink with new friends — one of the first items on Zimmer's list, he said.

"I want to do every-



Charles Kaufmann, one of five members of Team Luxembourg, arrives at the WorldSkills Competitors' Village at SAIT to begin preparing for the international competition.

thing," said Zimmer, who will be competing in industrial control in the international skills and trades event this week.

Industrial control is in the construction and building technology category. Contestants will install conduits, cables, automatic devices and control centre fittings.

Team Germany arrived three days ago and has already toured the mountains.

The balmy late-summer weather has been a surprise, said Florian Weiss, 22, who's up for automobile technology.

"We thought it might be cold, maybe even snow. But 25 degrees, I don't think that's so bad," he said, laughing.

His teammate, Stefan Gross, 20, says his job printing books at a factory in Bavaria has been good training for the offset printing category.

He expects competition for gold to be stiff. But once the event wraps up, Gross is looking forward to dipping down to the U.S., including stops in San Francisco and Las Vegas.

As for Weiss, who works in a garage in Bavaria, Calgary has been a car-buff's paradise.

"There are everywhere big cars," said Weiss, who usually sees compact European models on the road.

"It's a dream for me."

— Jamie Komarnicki



Prime Minister Stephen Harper welcomes competitors at the opening of WorldSkills. "I wish everyone the best of luck, but I have to admit I am saving my loudest cheers for Team Canada."



Students at St. Sebastian School wave Icelandic flags as they welcome the WorldSkills team to their school. Many Calgary elementary and middle schools adopted a team as part of the One School One Country program.

A WARM WELCOME FOR ICELAND

St. Sebastian students cheer adopted country

A sea of tiny hands waves miniature Icelandic flags, with some wee arms straining to be seen above the crowd, as hundreds of St. Sebastian School students give a welcoming cheer to a delegation of Icelanders visiting their southeast school Tuesday morning.

For months, the Calgary Catholic School District students had practised an Icelandic lullaby, memorized facts about this "land of fire and ice," and even designed artwork in preparation for the moment they'd meet their WorldSkills Calgary 2009 team.

"As you compete, know your family in Iceland will be cheering you on and so, too, will your new family at St. Sebastian," vice-principal Nadia Verna told WorldSkills delegates on the eve of the biggest competition of their lives.

An estimated 25,000 students at 55 schools across the city welcomed 900 international competitors as part of the first day of WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

The renowned international skills and trades Olympics is being held at the Stampede grounds this week. Many Calgary elementary and middle schools ad-

opted an individual team as part of the One School One Country program.

For the past school year, teachers designed some of their instruction around learning about the foreign country or the careers their adopted teams were competing in as a buildup to Tuesday's individual welcoming ceremonies.

"It was like the first time I saw someone from Iceland," 12-year-old Gabriel Ramos said Tuesday shortly after meeting the three-member team from Iceland.

"I was kinda nervous about playing for them in hand bells, but it was OK," said the St. Sebastian School student. "It turned out to be pretty fun, and I learned stuff about Iceland I didn't know before."

The honoured guests appeared a bit taken aback by the enthusiasm of the kids, many of whom were decked in cowboy hats and western wear to give their visitors a taste of the Calgary Stampede.

"It was overwhelming," said Bjorn Agust Sigurjonsson, an official observer of WorldSkills Calgary from Iceland. "Much more than we thought it would be."

He was impressed by a series of slide shows that displayed picturesque views of Alberta and Iceland.

"There are many similarities between Iceland and here," he said, noting the snow-covered mountain ranges.

Competitor Kristofer



Thorgeirsson struggled with English as he interacted with two young tour guides. But he was intrigued by the lacrosse stick that students showed him and the other displays children had created to give an insight into Alberta's culture, its sports and its natural resources.

"It's very great, very great," he said.

Alberta Education Minister Dave Hancock was on hand at the southeast elementary to witness the team's roaring welcome.

He was impressed by the enthusiasm of both these students and Calgary's public and Catholic school districts for embracing the opportunity.

"It's wonderful, the spirit of the students," Hancock said, as students and teammates settled down for a Stampede-style pancake breakfast.

"Children are learning about other cultures, understanding about the world, and also about the skills competition and the fact people who are visiting here have come for something they are passionate about and want to excel at."

— Sarah McGinnis

Tiny Finland fields sizable delegation



ROBERT REMINGTON

There is a big WorldSkills tent at Stampede Park known as the Global Skills Village. It was so insufferably hot on Tuesday, it's amazing no one recruited one of the skilled trades wunderkinds to throw together some air conditioning to cool the joint.

It was like a sauna — which is perhaps why the Finns seemed unfazed by it. At the Finland booth, located across the aisle from France and next door to Germany, the Finnish delegation cheerfully passed out pens, little wooden puzzles and brochures on visiting Finland. I half expected them to strip down and start beating themselves with birch boughs.

Finland, a country of five million people, has the biggest delegation at WorldSkills — 45 competitors and a delegate total of about 200, including its minister of education, Henna Virkkunen.

Known in Canada mainly for exporting Finlandia vodka and hockey players like Miikka Kiprusoff, the country has a long history of technology (think Nokia phones) and design. It comes as no surprise, then, that Team Finland has competitors in mobile robotics, polymechanics, manufacturing, electronics, mechatronics, computer software, jewelry design and mechanical engineering.

If there was a log-building category, the Finns would probably walk away with a gold medal with their eyes closed, although the Norwegians would give them a good run for their money. True to their reputation as skilled woodworkers, the Finns also have competitors in joinery, cabinetry and carpentry. They are also strong in dress design and floristry.

Eija Alhojarvi, the executive director of Skills Finland, wouldn't risk jinxing the team when asked to predict where they might medal.

"We don't want to put any pressure on the competitors."

But when asked how a country one-sixth the size of Canada can field a team with almost 10 more members than our 38, the answer is simple. Finland hosted WorldSkills in 2005, which began driving interest in vocational trades when the country started preparing

its bid for the event five years earlier. The WorldSkills legacy should also produce similar benefits for Canada, which hosted the event in Montreal in 1999, but on a much smaller scale.

Today, about 90 per cent of Finland's vocational schools participate in a national competition system for Skills Finland, the national arm for WorldSkills International.

"There has been a steady increase in vocational education in that past 10 years," says Mika Tammilehlo, Finland's director of vocational and educational training. "More and more youngsters are interested in vocational trades, which is a new situation for us."

Finland, like Canada, began its Skills program in 1989. That 20 years of skilled trades development is starting to pay off now, at the right time, with skilled craftsmen from the baby boom generation facing retirement.

The world-wide recession has temporarily slowed demand for some trades, says Skills Finland vice-president Seija Rasku. That will change, she says, when the economy rebounds.

Finland, Tammilehlo notes, has developed an education system that can respond to such career fluctuation demands. Secondary school students who enrol in vocational programs can use their courses to qualify for university admission should they decide on a different career path. "So, there is no dead end," says Tammilehlo.

Calgary's Judi Romanchuk, the honorary counsel for Finland, says the size of the Finnish delegation speaks to the importance that the nation puts on vocational training.

"To warrant a visit from their minister of education, it's big," Romanchuk said. Virkkunen, the education minister for less than a year, says it was important to see WorldSkills for herself.

"I can see how hard the competition is and the training, for years now, that our team has put into it. WorldSkills is very well-known in Finland and it is very respected. It is very important, when we are developing our vocational training system, to see what other countries are doing and see the level where we are."

As for beating the rival Swedes at WorldSkills, Virkkunen is a political diplomat, skirting the question. If it were hockey, the gloves would be off.

WorldSkills is very well-known in Finland and it is very respected.
FINNISH EDUCATION MINISTER HENNA VIRKKUNEN



Sara Kaloinen, a Team Finland delegate, jokes that the Devil's Fist, a cube puzzle popular in her country, is "what we do on the long dark nights in the winter."



Calgary Stampede marshal and WorldSkills spokesman Mike Holmes with Stampede president David Chalack and Team Alberta WorldSkills competitors.

One of Canada's most trusted handymen is trading in his hard hat for a cowboy hat as the marshal of this year's Calgary Stampede Parade.

Mike Holmes — host of Holmes on Homes and the man who made "Make it Right" a catchphrase — says this will not only be his first time in the parade — it'll be his first time to the Stampede, too.

"For years now, people have been saying, 'Mike, you gotta come to the Stampede — it's the greatest thing,'" he says.

"But I've been working so much, there hasn't been an opportunity. So when this came up, it was the opportunity to not only be a part of it, but also go to enjoy it myself."

Holmes, who paid tribute to his father's mentorship as he was announced as the 2009 marshal, is himself acting as mentor to this year's honorary parade marshals.

The eight members of Team Canada competing at WorldSkills Calgary 2009 in September will be riding alongside Holmes, the

HOLMES & WORLDSKILLS SADDLE UP

Handyman joined by WorldSkills Team Alberta contingent as marshals of Stampede Parade

competition's spokesman.

"It's a great honour to share the stage with Mike," says Steven Dingwall of Calgary, whose specialty is industrial control. "And sharing the stage with the Stampede is also a great honour."

Tiffany Vandermeij, who will compete in paint and decorating, says being in the parade — and in WorldSkills — gives her and her colleagues a chance to pro-

mote the local skills and trades industry and education programs.

"The Stampede awards excellence, and so does WorldSkills," she says. "It's a great opportunity to get out there and maybe inspire young people to get into (trades)."

Craig Spady of Red Deer says Holmes is very much a role model for those aspiring to get into the trades. "Seeing his show, ev-

erything he does and his integrity — he is definitely a role model," says the electrical installations specialist.

Other Team Canada members riding as honorary marshals this year are Daniel Reid of Cochrane (information network cabling), Devon DeBoer of Calgary (autobody repair), Daniel Green of Drumheller (auto painting), Matthew Chadder of



Millarville (IT PC/network support) and Brad Chyz of Calgary (sheet metal).

"We chose Mike Holmes to be our marshal because he really fits the Stampede's values," says Calgary Stampede president and chairman of the board Dr. David Chalack. "He's all about doing things right — and that fits in with our Western heritage and values."

"What the Calgary Stampede stands for is doing what you say you're going to do, in a timely way, doing the right thing, working hard, and creating value."

Holmes, meanwhile, admits the uniform of the parade marshal — the white hat — will take some getting used to.

"The only hats I wear on my head are construction helmets, so this is something different," he says. "But it feels pretty damn good."

— Alex Frazer-Harrison

WorldSkills starts to take shape in the city

An army of workers has begun assembling multi-storey tent frames and installing kilometres of computer cables on the Stampede grounds as they prepare to welcome the world.

It will take hundreds of people working almost around the clock to ready the venue for WorldSkills Calgary 2009, an international Olympics for young skilled workers.

"It's kind of unbelievable after five years of planning to see the skills structures and tents go up," said Richard Walker, president and CEO of WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

"Plans are coming off paper and onto the ground."

Around 900 competitors from 51 countries are heading to Calgary to compete for gold in 45 skill categories.

WorldSkills Calgary kicks off with opening ceremonies Sept. 1. From Sept. 2 to 5, upwards of 150,000 people are expected to visit Stampede Park to witness the world's best skilled workers participate in grueling competition.

"My big hope is that Calgarians come to understand how big this is and what an opportunity this is for them and their kids," said Walker.

"This event won't be back in Canada for another 30 years."

Much like during Stampede, every square inch of the grounds and most of the buildings will be dedicated to the event.

Fifteen tents will provide competition space and room for a trade show and opportunities for



Venue manager Michelle Rhyason looks between some machinery being set up at Stampede Park as part of the massive preparations underway for the launch of WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

young people to try a skill.

Nashville North will be known more for its culinary skills than country tunes during WorldSkills. The big white tent will host food services for about 3,000 competitors, judges and experts daily, said venue manager Michelle Rhyason.

"It's certainly difficult for most people to appreciate the volume and magnitude of the amount of equipment and people who need to be accounted for," said logistics manager Kevin Harvey, who has to oversee the assembly of truckloads of specialized equipment over the next 2½ weeks.

On Thursday, IT manager Roger Dery was preparing for his technical team of 120 workers and volunteers to install 43 kilometres of computer cable across the Stampede grounds.

His team has to establish a network cable able to host 1,000 computers, 120 laptops, 200 print-

ers and thousands of text messages from hundreds of cellphones.

"We're rewiring everything," said Dery, as he glanced at a map of tent sites and portable offices that will have to be set up.

"We've been planning this for 15 months now. I'm happy to finally be getting the job done," he said.

Initially about 300 people will be working almost around the clock, seven days a week, to set up tents and prepare facilities, said Rhyason.

But starting next Wednesday, there will be almost 1,000 people at the park making sure the setup will be done on time.

Despite the complicated logistics of hosting an event of this size, organizers remain confident they'll be able to get everything ready on time.

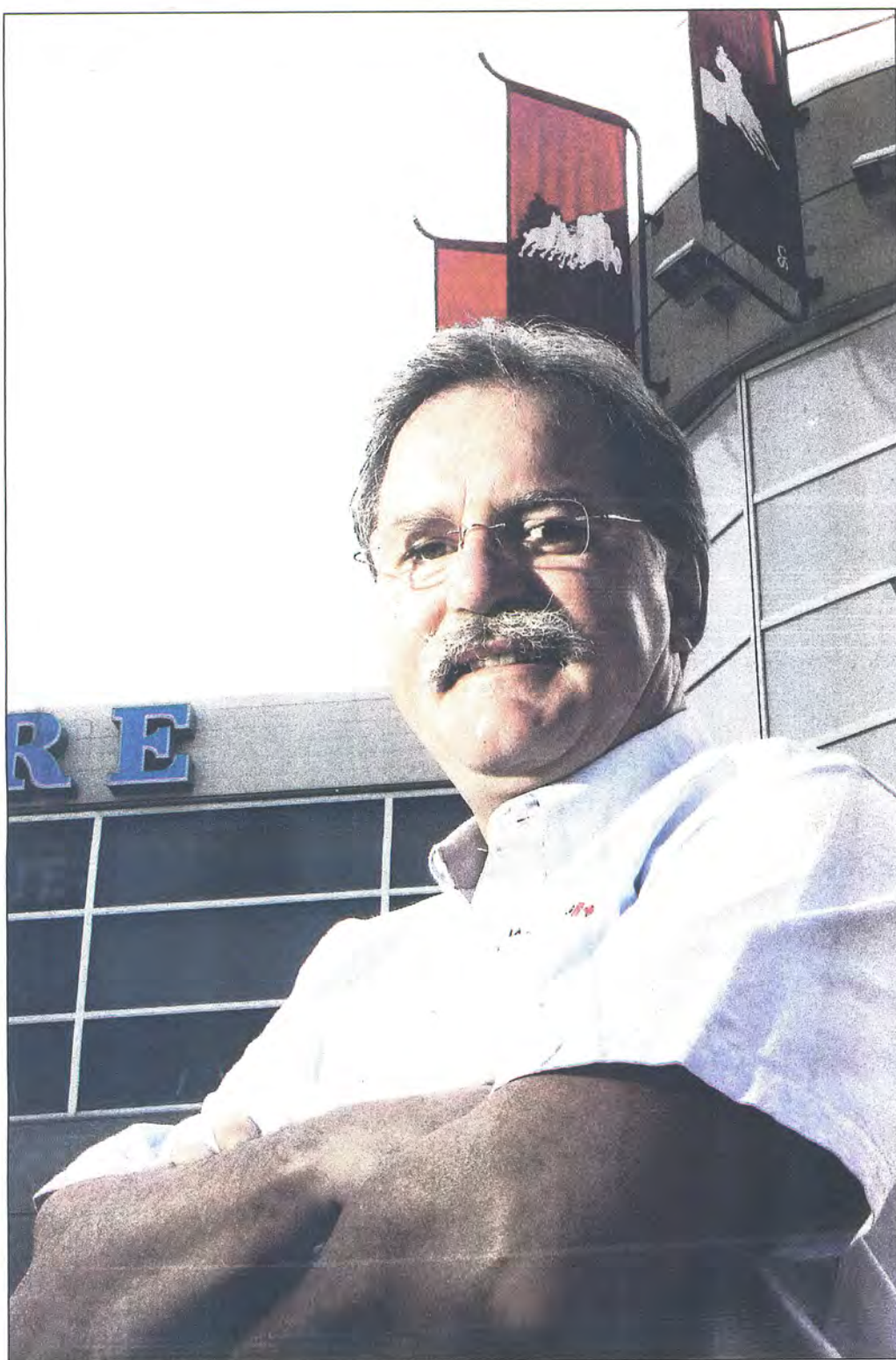
"I think we're going to pull it off," Walker said.

— Sarah McGinnis

JUGGLING THE RECORD BOOKS

Tristan Court takes part in the City of Calgary's WorldSkills Cultural Celebration, which included an attempt to beat a world record for the most jugglers in one place at one time





WorldSkills Calgary 2009 president and CEO Richard Walker says watching the world's best compete is inspiring.

USHERING IN OLYMPICS OF TRADES

The cars are hoisted, the kitchens pristine and the mannequins bare as organizers prime WorldSkills Calgary 2009 for four days of intense international competition, transforming Stampede Park into the Olympics of technology, trades and skilled professions.

The major international event is set to infuse \$82 million into southern Alberta's economy as more than 900 competitors from 51 countries vie for gold in fields as diverse as landscaping, aircraft maintenance, robotics and jewelry.

As many as 150,000 visitors are expected to flood the gates of Stampede Park, which has undergone a major overhaul to host the global skills and trades event.

And when the kilometres of computer cable, tonnes of tool boxes and countless heavy and light-duty props are taken down after the event, organizers hope the competition's lasting legacy will bring a new appreciation for skills and trades.

"That's what Canadians don't understand, is how big this event is to the world," said WorldSkills Calgary president and CEO Richard Walker.

"The idea is to raise the awareness of young people to opportunities that are out there in technology, skilled professions and trades. You can be very satisfied being in robotics — being the person who creates the next Canadarm."

Setting up the competition has been a logistical juggle that took over four years.

Apart from the massive amounts of equipment brought in and renovations to the Stampede grounds, officials have organized about 1,000 international delegates and experts and more than 900 youths to arrive in Calgary and braced for non-stop foot traffic at various events.

To visit Canada, several of the competitors needed visas, which had to be prepared far in advance, Walker said.

Further, with the event held during Ramadan, organizers have made available meals before dawn and after sunset, on top of other dietary restrictions from global competitors.

Workers have also brought in seven large generators in addition to Stampede equipment to provide extra power for the events, Walker said.

The province has pitched in about \$24 million to the \$56-million operating budget, with the federal government and private sponsors picking up the rest.

It's just the second time the global competition has been held in Canada, after the 1999 event in Montreal.

At least 50,000 students are scheduled to attend — visitors, it's hoped, who will walk away with dreams of their own of career paths in skills and trades. The future generation of workers will provide the long-term payoff of hosting the event, observers say.

"This event is going to blow most people's minds," said Adam Legge, vice-president and chief economist with Calgary Economic Development. "To be able to expose people, particularly students and parents, to show them it's not just a tool belt and hammer, this takes skill, this takes expertise, this takes a high degree of knowledge ... we want to see that talked about more and see these occupations supported in terms of career pathing."

The future gain of hosting WorldSkills has been evident in the past, according to WorldSkills International CEO David Hoey.

"Kids who are 13, 14, 15 who come to the competition ... they'll go through the system,

they'll get the education, all of a sudden you've got an increased quantity of skilled tradespeople and an increased quality of skilled trade people," Hoey said.

"It does take quite a few years for that impact to be truly measured."

Past host countries have noted a 15 to 20 per cent increase in applications for technology and polytechnic schools, says Walker.

While WorldSkills organizers peg the economic impact at \$82 million, Marco De Iaco, Tourism Calgary vice-president of sport, culture and major events, estimates a more conservative \$70-million to \$75-million figure.

Still, the economic punch is substantial, particularly at a time when tourism events have been hit hard, he added.

"Even when the economy is robust and very strong, that is a healthy injection and a very welcome injection into our tourism industry," he said.

Participant events such as WorldSkills — where crowds of competitors and visitors come for a specific event rather than leisure or entertainment travel — tend to have a stabilizing effect on the tourism industry, said De Iaco.

"The fact the tourism industry is struggling and facing a very daunting task of bringing it back to a sustainable level, this (WorldSkills) is very good for our city."

At least 30,000 hotel room nights have been booked in the official WorldSkills block around the city, with thousands more reserved in other Calgary locations, De Iaco said.

"People have to eat, they have to sleep, move around, they all buy plastic Mounties to take home," noted Walker. "It doesn't take long to spread \$82 million around."

— Sarah McGinnis

WorldSkills leaves behind \$16M legacy

Specialty
tools provide
advanced
learning
prospects



Truckloads of high-tech equipment and specialty tools will soon be arriving at Alberta schools as part of a \$16-million legacy from WorldSkills Calgary 2009.

Tens of thousands of students are expected to attend the weeklong trades and technology Olympics at Stampede Park during the first week of September as part of a push to encourage youths to consider careers in a variety of fields.

Many of the materials to be used in the global competition will be donated to Alberta schools and post-secondary institutions.

"It's all about being able to show the kids here's the type of stuff you are going to get when you get out into the workforce," said Advanced Education and Technology Minister Doug Horner.

"It would take us a long time where we could get to the point to justify the purchase of all of these things on an individual basis to each of these schools. So this is perfect."

Students in the Rocky View School Division are already learning how to fix, modify and adapt computer hardware and software, thanks to several computers, networking devices and software donated as part of the WorldSkills legacy program.

The more than \$100,000 worth of equipment has helped the district launch A+, a new computer program where students gain hands-on experience in the computer industry, said associate superintendent Murray Besenski.

"With the amount of equipment required, this it is not something a school district our size could have (otherwise) afforded," he said.

The Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Catholic School District

will soon both receive shipments of equipment which will be used primarily in high school career and technology classes.

Calgary Catholic schools will receive materials related to car painting and autobody repair, including vehicle parts for students to work on, said district spokeswoman Janet Sutherland.

"It is going to make a huge difference in all of our high schools compared to what they are able to work with now," said Sutherland.

The CBE will be awarded everything from computers and televisions to mechatronics devices, cooking tools and equipment for mechanical engineering design using computer aided drafting programs.

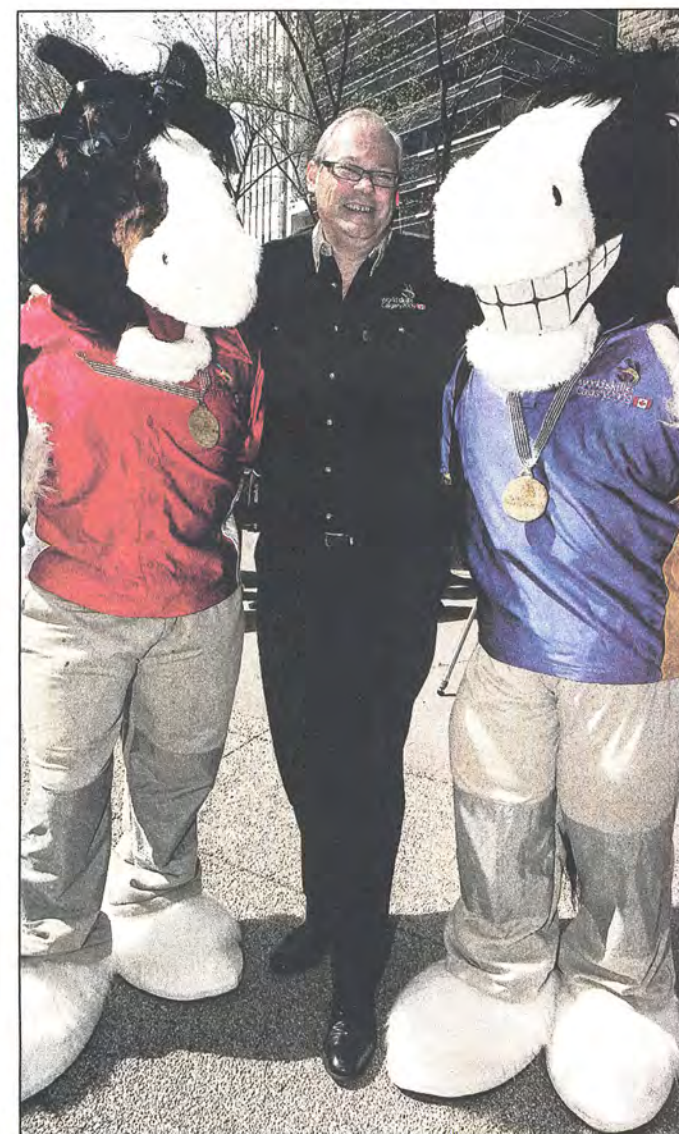
"The world has changed drastically in the last few years, especially when you're talking about technology," said CBE spokesman Ted Flitton. "SAIT Polytechnic is also benefiting from this donation."

"The equipment we will receive will have a definite impact on student learning," said SAIT vice-president academic Gordon Nixon.

While SAIT has been fortunate to receive government funding for tools and materials to support growing programs, this latest batch of equipment will allow funds to be diverted to other projects, he said.

Ensuring high schools have new equipment can help encourage students to consider a career in a field they may not have considered before, said Horner.

— Sarah McGinnis



Mascots Tess and Tug join Guy Mallabone, chairman of WorldSkills Calgary 2009 and vice-president of external relations at SAIT Polytechnic, which will be a beneficiary of WorldSkills' \$16-million legacy program.



Event judge Werner Amort from Italy sets up the hairstyling skills competition at WorldSkills Calgary 2009. Amort was a competitor in 2005, and says it gave his career a huge boost.



ROBERT REMINGTON
I've always had this fascination with welding. After meeting Werner Amort, I think I'd prefer to be a hairstylist.

Welding is important. Without it, we wouldn't have cars, buildings, bridges and metal sculptures. Unlike a hairdo, there is permanence to it. A good weld will hold forever. A good hairstyle can be wiped out in an instant by wind or rain.

But welders don't get to live in Milan and work with Cameron Diaz and Bond girl Olga Kurylenko, just two of the more famous heads of hair styled by Amort, a 24-year-old Italian judge in the hairstyling competition at WorldSkills.

Amort got a huge career boost after placing fifth in hairstyling at WorldSkills in Helsinki in 2005. The makeup artist and hairstylist now works primarily on fashion shows and photo shoots in one of the great fashion centres of the world. Nothing against welders, but he's also got style—bright, yellow hair with a flamboyant wisp at the front and black, round eyeglasses that, I suppose, one can only buy in Milan.

On Thursday, Amort and the other hairdressing judges had the unenviable task of choosing winners in three of eight hair skills categories. The 20 competitors, including Canada's Samuel Chabot, are required to complete technical cuts that are commonly used internationally in adjudicated competitions.

There is, however, nothing common about them. "This is not something you'd typically wear to your prom night or going to have fun. This is competition hair," as one docent told a group of watching school students.

JUDGE IS USED TO THE HOT SEAT



We are from all over the world, and everyone sees it differently
WERNER AMORT, JUDGE IN THE HAIRSTYLING COMPETITION

beard and moustache, all dyed jet black, like Elvis. As with the female styles, it is a competition cut and not something that would normally be seen on the street.

"You wouldn't want your boyfriend looking like that. It's too scary," the docent said.

Competitions like this elevate the public's perception of hairstyling, which often gets little respect as a profession, says Hanneke Janssen of Calgary, a hairstylist who is working at WorldSkills explaining the event to spectators.

"In school, they tell you that if you can't do anything else, become a hairstylist. That's sad," says Janssen.

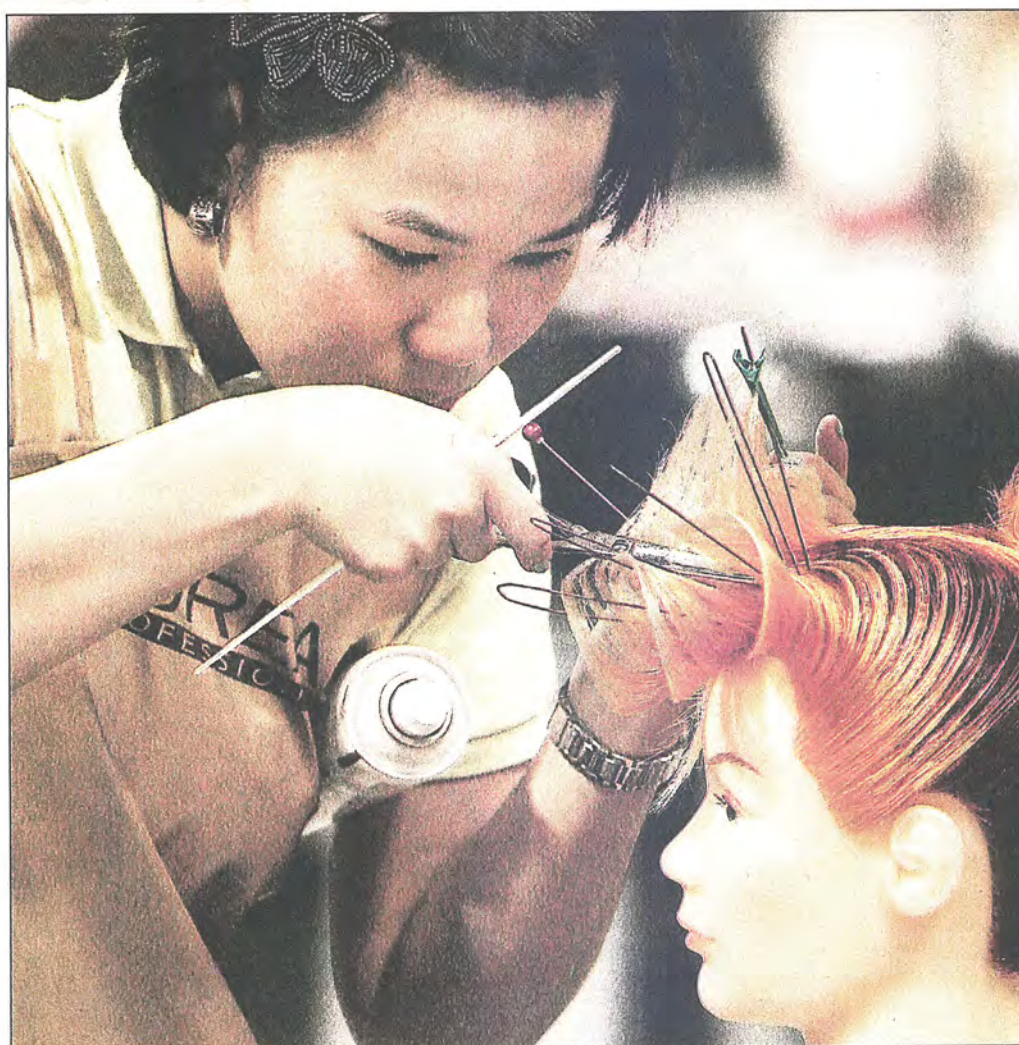
For those at the top of the profession, she says "the sky's the limit" in terms of salary and opportunity.

"The movie industry will hire them to do the hair and makeup at awards ceremonies," but the industry can be difficult and demanding, as can the clients.

Hairstylists must have artistic flair, business savvy and be skilled in diplomacy.

Although many trades suffer during economic slowdowns, hairstylists can do well.

"In a bad economy, a lot of people are applying for jobs and the first thing they want to do is look presentable. So we, as a rule, do well in a recession. Of course, things will decline, but not as bad as some other trades."



Ha Neul Park of Korea competes in the hairdressing skill competition. Competitors dye, preen, coif and add ornaments to their creations.

The finished hairdos look more like exotic birds. Working on mannequins with human hair imported from China, competitors dye, preen, coif and add ornamental decorations

to their creations in a time limit of four hours.

"It's very difficult," Amort says of the subjective judging process. "We are from all over the world and everyone sees it differently."

In addition to female styles for day and evening wear, competitors must complete a technical men's "classic cut" that is flat on top and perfectly precise on the sides, with a styled

Embrace tech-savvy youth, author warns

Businesses should view today's youth not as MySpace and Facebook-obsessed narcissists, but as a technologically-savvy lot that thinks differently than generations past, having grown up in the digital age.

Looking at computer, video-game and gadget-absorbed teens and 20-somethings without cynicism is critical for corporations as they strive to stay competitive in the knowledge economy, said bestselling author and business consultant Don Tapscott.

The attitude adjustment

is just the first step for business, which must also embrace managing their companies differently to accommodate the working styles and habits of young people, said Tapscott, the keynote speaker at the WorldSkills Leaders Forum in Calgary on Thursday.

"This is the first time in human history that young people are an authority about something important," he said.

"When I was 11, I was an authority on model trains. Today, the 11-year-old at the

breakfast table is an authority on the digital revolution that's changing business, commerce, government, skills, learning, every institution in society."

Coming to grips with accommodating young people is crucial in labour-challenged Alberta.

Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach told the forum that, in the next decade, one in every four positions in the skills trades within Canada will be vacant, "because we will be short about one million workers."

"In a country of just over

32 million people, that is a substantial barrier, a barrier to our future in the global economy," the premier said.

Stelmach said while there are many complex reasons for the shortage, the main reason is there are not enough young people choosing skills careers.

This is why the WorldSkills competition is so important, he said.

Tapscott told the forum of 650 leaders from government, industry, education and labour organizations that one of the realities business has to consider is

that young people consider e-mail "yesterday's technology," and instead use Twitter, Facebook and blogs to communicate.

Through his research, Tapscott said he's come up with eight norms of how the net generation operates. Following the points will be critical for designing any kind of system, be it work or education, he said.

He said the eight norms are: freedom, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, entertainment, speed and innovation.

— Gina Teel



WorldSkills International president Jack Dusseldorp kicks off the WorldSkills Calgary 2009 closing ceremonies at the Stampede Corral.

CANADA GOING FOR GOLD

Record medal haul in reach for Canadians heading into final day of competition

All eyes are on the clock today as it ticks to 6 p. m.

That's when officials begin handing out the gold, silver and bronze medals for the 45 events at WorldSkills Calgary 2009 during the closing ceremony at the Stampede Corral.

We won't know the winners until then, but Team Canada is hoping to meet or beat its best-ever results when it nabbed six medals two years ago at WorldSkills in Shizuoka, Japan.

"As far as results go, we'll know at the same time as everybody else, but I'm confident we're going to do well," Team Canada leader Luc Morin said Saturday just before competition ended at 2 p. m. and the final judging began.

"We've seen very high morale here," Morin said of Canada's 38 team members who've been competing at Stampede Park for the past four days.

"Students are very excited, very confident and very comfortable with their work sites — not too many issues with equipment, tooling or needs like that."

"And there's some comfort coming because we are the host country. There's

been lots of support from family, friends and students on the site," said Morin.

The Team Canada competitors who have consistently done well in daily results, scoring in the top five in their events, include Jonathan Arbour of Aubert-Gallion, Que., in Cabinetry; Marc-Olivier Belanger of Mirabel, Que., in Welding; Scott Blair of Westport, Ont., in Carpentry; and Brian Everts of Maple Ridge, B. C., in Aircraft Mechanics.

Another one to watch is Dan Van Holst of Waterloo, Ont. He emerged in the top five in the Automobile Technology event Friday.

Morin cautions that doing well in daily results (which are not cumulative) won't necessarily result in a medal win.

This year, in an attempt to model itself after the Olympic Games and generate more public interest, WorldSkills International has pushed to have results reported daily. Not all 45 of the trades and occupations were able to do so, given the nature of their competitions.

Canadian competitors are trained not to be distracted by things like daily results



and crowds of spectators— "We've always used the catchphrase, 'Be in your bubble,'"—but the hot weather of the past week was challenging for some, especially those competing in tents outside, Morin said.

"It was a distraction, but I can say to the credit of WorldSkills Calgary that they made sure the students had enough water, provisions and fans on-site."

Team Canada took in stride the case of H1N1 flu that killed the stepfather of a Team New Zealand competitor Thursday, said Christianne Scholfield, a spokesperson for Skills Canada.

"Our sympathy goes out to the team from New Zealand, but it hasn't distracted our team. They're focused on the competition."

A total of 51 countries are vying for gold at the 40th WorldSkills competition.

Tickets to the closing ceremonies are sold out.

— Valerie Berenyi

70,000 volunteer hours make event a reality

Trying to snag Maureen O'Hara-Leman for a few quiet moments is a near impossible task these days.

As volunteer director of WorldSkills Calgary 2009, O'Hara-Leman is busy bombing around Stampede Park overseeing the efforts of the more than 3,000 volunteers on-board to ensure every aspect of the storied event runs smoothly.

The stature of the Olympics-like competition helped O'Hara-Leman secure between 65,000 and 70,000 hours of volunteer time through a recruiting plan she essentially started from scratch in May 2008.

"It was a bit like doing a great big puzzle of 10,000 pieces without the box," she said, noting specific information on the volunteer program from the 2007 WorldSkills in Japan wasn't available.

From a manpower perspective, WorldSkills' volunteer base of 3,000 matches the hiring requirements of the 10-day Calgary Stampede, which additionally taps its year-round bank of more than 2,000 volunteers.

Building a roster of more than 3,000 volunteers was a huge task, but Calgary's a big volunteer town — a reputation that helped the city land the event in the first place.

People readily signed up to volunteer for WorldSkills once they learned more about the competition, she said. Raising awareness of the event was a big piece of the volunteer recruitment drive.

After a week of long days on the grounds, it culminates with the tear-down today. Volunteers will have about three days to take down all the gear they've just spent three weeks putting up.

O'Hara-Leman said the scope of the setup and the amount and variety of equipment that had to be dealt with "has really been amazing."

All told, volunteers have handled everything from building walls and unpacking flowers to delivering pop and drinking water to the venues.

Robert Martin says volunteering at WorldSkills gave him a bird's-eye view of how skilled tradespeople are.

"It does give you an opportunity to see just about everything that people do for you everyday," he said.

"How the plumbers work, how the florists assemble the bouquet that you give to your wife on your anniversary. The quality of some of the work is just stunning," Martin said.

— Gina Teel



Ontario's Dan Van Holst works on an engine in the automotive technology category during the WorldSkills Calgary 2009 competition.



Maureen O'Hara-Leman, volunteer director for WorldSkills, had to start her recruiting plan from scratch.