

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Skills Ontario Young Women's Conferences set for May 7-8**

*More than 1,500 female students to explore careers in skilled trades, technologies*

**TORONTO, ON (April 24, 2018)** – Female students from across Ontario will learn firsthand about career options in the skilled trades and technologies during the 2018 Skills Ontario Young Women's Conferences, taking place at the Toronto Congress Centre, May 7 and 8, 2018.

The conference, the largest of its kind across Canada, is expected to draw more than 1,500 students, who will meet over 70 tradeswomen mentors who will discuss the rewards of their career paths and provide advice, guidance and inspiration. Participants will also explore hands-on activities, challenges and watch as students from schools across go head to head in dozens of Skills Ontario Competition events.

Young women will meet female mentors who have blazed fascinating trails with organizations such as: Magna International, UA, Humber College, Hydro One, and many more.

"The skilled trades offer women high pay, good benefits, flexibility, rewarding work, variety and unlimited opportunity," says Skills Ontario CEO Ian Howcroft. "We look forward to continuing to work with our partners from government, industry and education to increase the momentum for gender equality, and a strong and diverse workforce."

The Young Women's Conferences are the culmination of various Young Women's Career Exploration Events that Skills Ontario and its partners host throughout the year to bring education, hands-on experience and mentorship together, ultimately making the connection to successful career opportunities in the skilled trades and technology sectors.

Women continue to be underrepresented in skilled trade and technology professions, with under 14% of registered apprentices being female, according to a 2015 Statistics Canada survey. Skills Ontario seeks to demonstrate that skilled trades and technologies are accessible, interesting, and a rewarding and profitable career choice for young women.

Mandy Rennehan, Blue-Collar CEO™ and founder of Freshco.ca (not the grocery store!), will deliver the keynote address to audiences at the conference on both days.

"One woman in the skilled trades is an army," says Mandy. "Women are amazing tradespeople. In fact, more than 60% of my company Freshco's employees are female – a rarity in the industry. I'm thrilled to be part of Skills Ontario to encourage more young women to defy old stereotypes and get into the incredibly fun, exciting, and lucrative skilled trades!"

Sponsors for the Young Women's Conferences include Magna International, Hydro One, the Government of Ontario, and Sound Events.

## About Skills Ontario

Skills Ontario is building Ontario's skilled trades and technologies workforce. We enable and empower all youth, including women and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth, to consider a career in the skilled trades and technologies. Engagement with students, teachers, parents, volunteers, employers and mentors ensure our programs connect education, experience, and employment. We deliver in-school presentations across Ontario, host Canada's largest skills competition, run summer camps for skills development and connect students to employers. We are focused on growth sectors such as construction and infrastructure, technology innovation, and hospitality services.

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