

BC's sheet metal industry finds stability in real estate ownership

Sheet metal jobs offer good benefits, opportunities for growth, and wages that allow young, single parents to support a family. Skilled workers are always in demand and demand is on the rise as a result of the greening of the industry and new testing, finishing and co-generation plant developments that are all creating new work.

To prepare people for work in the industry, the BC Sheet Metal Association and the Sheet Metal Workers International Union Local 280 have jointly overseen the Sheet Metal Workers Training Centre. The training centre was run from a rented facility for many years, but recently it secured \$1.2M financing with Vancity to purchase its own building in the Fraser Valley, where the industry is.

Kathy Wutke, Vancity Community Investment Manager, oversaw financing. With 35 years' labour union experience, Kathy knows the value of longstanding relationships and she has managed the training centre's account for years. Strong ties are important to the training centre. Jud Martell, Training Co-ordinator, said the training centre has banked with Vancity for years, and when the need for financing arose, he knew Vancity could help. "Vancity is great to work with," Jud said. "Kathy guided us through the financing process and was very patient. With her experience she was able to give us a vision of what could be done and show us some options."

Financing the Sheet Metal Workers Training Centre appealed to Vancity because a social real estate investment means stability for this BC industry. Owning its own building offers the training centre a resale value and future leveraging opportunities. Money that was once spent on rent will now be put toward new programs, equipment and expansion.

The training centre has already met its short-term goals and is looking well into the future. Jud wants the training centre to continue to be *the* school sought by employers and students alike. "We want to supply the best people," he says. "Years from now, we hope students will say the Sheet Metal Workers Training Centre gave them every opportunity to succeed."