

# MERIT TALK

## MERIT'S YEAR IN REVIEW



MeritTalk is a bi-monthly publication for employees in the Merit Contractors Association Benefit Plan

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■ The Merit Contractors Association held Annual General Meeting functions in Edmonton and Calgary to mark the completion of its 19th year of operations. At the AGM functions, reports were presented to the membership on the progress of the Association and the different programs it offers to Merit employees and their families.

The common theme of the reports: very rapid growth. Merit membership reached 960 companies by the Association's year-end of April 30th. New companies continue to join at the rate of about 15 per month and the milestone of 1,000 member companies will be reached soon.

The number of hours worked by Merit employees established a new record in the last year - 44 million hours. The Benefit Plan averaged over 21,000 employees in benefit. This year, it is quite likely that there will be 30,000 Merit member employees at the peak of the construction season.

Training is an important activity for Merit and in this past year we saw more people than ever attend courses. Topics like Blueprint Reading, Rigging & Hoisting and Scaffolding continue to be very popular. Merit's flagship training course, the Supervisor Training Program, continues to receive strong support with courses delivered across western Canada. Training for foremen and superintendents has recently been expanded with the addition of the

Advanced Supervisor Training Program and a Project Planning & Cost Control Course. Many employees take advantage of free CSTS training through Merit and last year nearly 750 new CSTS cards were issued.

The Association's other big training commitment is the Apprenticeship Tuition Refund Program which pays the cost of apprenticeship tuition for those employed by member companies. Last year 1.28 million was paid out to 1,850 Merit apprentices.

Merit's Group RRSP program also continues on a steady growth path. Total value of the plan is now in excess of \$70 million.

At its next Annual General Meeting in 2006, Merit will mark its 20th anniversary. With the great prospects for the construction industry, it is virtually guaranteed that Merit will continue to grow at an even faster pace. ■



# 2004 Awards of Merit

- Merit held its 19th Annual General Meeting and reception dinner on May 31 in Edmonton and June 1 in Calgary. As part of the reception dinner following the AGM, seven Merit member companies and four apprentices were recognized for their outstanding achievement.

## Willard Kirkpatrick Training Award 2004

The prestigious Willard Kirkpatrick Training Award is given to a Merit member firm demonstrating a superior commitment to establishing a training culture within their organization.

This year's award went to Allied Projects Ltd., a Calgary based Private Corporation. Mike Brunner is the President and General Manger of Allied Projects Ltd. and was in Calgary to accept the award.

Allied Projects Ltd. strongly encourages its employees to participate in training courses. Allied not only pays employees who are on training, but also reimburses employees upon completion of relevant courses. Available resources are made known to tradespeople/field workers, and training sessions are regularly provided in house. Allied Projects Ltd. has a diligent Safety Committee that ensures regular WHMIS and First Aid courses are available to employees, and the committee constantly seeks out additional training for the benefit of all Allied employees.

## Employer of Excellence Awards

In 1994, Merit's Board of Directors approved an annual award to recognize member companies exhibiting exceptional performance in human resource management. All employees are eligible

to nominate their company with the final decision being made by an independent judging committee. This year's Employer of Excellence Award winners are: **Cooper Concrete Construction Ltd.** (Lloydminster); **Pasquale Mancuso Concrete Services Ltd.** (Red Deer); **McLean Young Construction Ltd.** (Edmonton); **Genesis Building Corporation** (Calgary); **Alggin Metal Industries Ltd.** (Calgary); and **Kidco Construction Ltd.** (Calgary).

## Top Merit Apprentice Awards

The Top Merit Apprentice designation is awarded to outstanding first, second, third and fourth period apprentices employed by Merit Alberta member companies. Employees were nominated by their employer, and the winners were selected by an outside judging committee. The award winners for 2004 are:

**Michael Chaplin**, first period Plumber/Gasfitter employed by Top Gun Manpower Services Ltd. (Calgary);

**Daniel Eelhart**, second period Carpenter employed by Coram Construction (Edmonton);

**Ben Sawatzky**, third period Carpenter employed by Vantage Builders Ltd. (Vegreville) and

**Damian Henschel**, fourth period Pipefitter/Gasfitter employed by Pillar Oilfield Projects (Calgary). ■

*Congratulations  
to all of our award  
winners!*

# Scholarships!

- Alberta Apprenticeship Industry Training Scholarships, valued at \$1,000 each, are available to Alberta apprentices who meet the basic eligibility requirements and are registered in a trade. The scholarships recognize Alberta apprentices and encourage recipients to complete their apprenticeship.

To be considered for a scholarship, applicants must have an Employer Recommendation form completed in full and attached to an application, as well as a brief (two or three paragraph)

description of themselves: why they enjoy their trade, why they chose their trade, and how they would benefit from being awarded a scholarship.

Approximately 1,654 scholarships are awarded annually. Applications must be received no later than July 31, 2005. Application forms can be found at [www.tradesecrets.org](http://www.tradesecrets.org) ■

# Optional AD&D coverage

- Accidents happen, and their financial impact can be devastating. To help protect you and your family from the unforeseen financial hardship of a serious accident that causes death or dismemberment, Merit and The Cooperators offer Optional Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) Insurance. All employees covered by Merit's basic group life insurance policy are automatically entitled to basic accidental death & dismemberment insurance. However, the amount of insurance for accidental death is limited to \$50,000 for Hourbank employees that participate in the Hourbank plan.

Merit's Optional AD&D plan allows you to increase your coverage in the case of accidental death, dismemberment or disease.

### What does coverage cost?

Insurance can be purchased in increments of \$50,000, to a maximum of \$250,000 of coverage. Thanks to the large number of employees in the Merit Benefit Plan, payments under this plan are very competitive. Premiums range from \$24 per year for each \$50,000 of employee-only insurance to \$180 per year for \$250,000 of employee/family coverage. The following are examples of annual premiums.

Principal Sum	Employee Only	Employee/Family
\$250,000	\$120	\$180
\$200,000	\$96	\$144
\$150,000	\$72	\$108
\$100,000	\$48	\$72
\$50,000	\$24	\$36

### What does this plan cover?

This plan covers any accident resulting in death, dismemberment, paralysis or loss of sight, speech or hearing that occurs on or off the job. Coverage is restricted to injuries sustained as a result of an accident and does not include losses that are the result of a medical condition or disability. Payment for losses range from 25% to 200% of your principal sum, depending on the nature of your injury.

In addition to financial payments, injured employees may also be eligible for a home alteration and vehicle modification benefit, rehabilitation benefit and family transportation benefit.

In the event of the employee's death, surviving dependents may be eligible for day care and special education benefits and/or occupational training. ■

**Please note:** PST will be applied to these rates in Ontario.



# Jane OF ALL TRADES

- How often do you hear the term "Jack of all trades" and presumed a handyman is being discussed? Why not a handywoman? Women Building Futures is trying to change the preconceived notion that many have that tradespeople are male by introducing Jane, the Jane of all trades!

Women Building Futures (WBF) is a registered charitable organization committed to helping women prepare for a successful career in the trades. During an intense 14-week "pre-apprentice" Journeywoman Start program, female apprentices are taught skills and safety instructions to help them compete for construction positions in their chosen trade. The Journeywoman Start program consists of a six-week "boot camp", financial literacy, and pre-trades academic literacy. Students must also write the Alberta Apprenticeship Entrance Exam upon completion of the program.

Women Building Futures has experienced great success with the program: 95% of graduates are

successful in finding and keeping work in construction and related trades. When an employer hires a WBF graduate, all parties enter a commitment to ensure success on the job. Because WBF graduates are pre-screened and rigorously assessed, potential employers know that they are hiring apprenticeship-ready workers.

The program is highly competitive. Only 60 women are chosen to train as apprentices from hundreds of applications each year. Women in the Journeywoman Start program display good communication skills, proven mechanical aptitude, and most importantly, a willingness to learn. Eligible participants for the program bring with them an eagerness to learn a trade, and WBF in return provides women with the support they need to succeed.

WBF will be adding four new programs over the next year, including Careers in Roadbuilding and Heavy Construction, Commercial/Residential Construction, Industrial (Oil, Gas, and Mining), and Motiv Power.

For more information on Women Building Futures, visit [www.womenbuildingfutures.com](http://www.womenbuildingfutures.com) ■

■ Stress is inevitable, and occurs in some form every day. From reading the morning paper to working under strict deadlines to paying bills, stress is present. Although some level of stress act as a motivator, too much stress can feel overwhelming. It's impossible to eliminate stress, but you can learn how to manage stress with some simple techniques.

**Breathe:** Often in stressful situations, we tend to forget that breathing is a simple yet effective relaxation technique. Be aware of how you breathe in stressful situations. Do you breathe hard, or hold your breath when you feel anxious? Conscious breathing reverses the shallow breathing we tend to do in stressful situations. Breathe in slowly for seven seconds, then take nine seconds to exhale. Continue deep-breathing until you feel your body loosening up and relaxing.

**Play:** Learn a new skill, take up an enjoyable hobby, cultivate a new friendship, visit a different part of town. The more developed your interests and creativity, the more you'll be able to maintain a healthy perspective during difficult times.

**Talk:** Listen to how you talk to yourself. What are the underlying messages that you tell yourself? Turn any negative messages into positive, powerful self talk. Choose words that describe the results that you want (i.e. I am confident and in control; I can complete this task with great success). Your performance will begin to reflect these positive messages when you believe in them.

**Stop:** We can often get so frustrated and worked up over things, we get out of emotional balance. The next time you are worked up about something, stop and ask yourself, "Is it really worth the upset? Can I do anything about it? Do I really have to control it?" If you can say "no" to these questions and release your anxiety about the situation, you will immediately become relaxed and more energized.

**Sleep:** Sleep is essential, and is the body's chance to recuperate from the events of the day. If you're feeling overwhelmed, try sleeping. By taking a short 20 minute nap, you'll feel more alert and less stressed, and more ready to tackle the stress in your life. ■

## STRESSED FOR TIME?



✳ If you're experiencing a high level of stress and would like support in managing it, you can call your EFAP. The toll-free number on your EFAP wallet card connects you to professional counselling and other EFAP services – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call, 1-800-387-4765.

### More health related materials

Mercon Benefits offers free booklets from GlaxoSmithKline's Inspire Program on a series of health-related issues including:

- Taking Care of Your Heart
- Taking Control of Smoking
- Taking Control of Your Asthma
- Back Pains & Muscle Strains
- Stomach Discomfort

To request a booklet, please call Mercon Benefit Services in Edmonton at (780) 455-5845 or at 1-877-263-7266 or e-mail [mercon@merconbenefits.com](mailto:mercon@merconbenefits.com).

■ As Canadians, we share this country with bugs. Billions of them. For people who work in construction, mosquito bites and other assorted insect bites can be more than a slight irritation. When an insect bites, it injects its saliva into your skin. Sometimes, the insect's saliva contains bacteria. Certain insect bites, such as spider bites and wasp stings, can cause various reactions depending on the individual and the severity of the bite. Reactions may include anything from a rash to flu-like symptoms, to life-threatening allergic reactions in the infected individual. Fortunately, insect bites usually only cause itches, stings, or swelling. Any time you are in an area where insects, bugs, or spiders thrive, you become susceptible to bites. Take precautions against insect bites when you are working outdoors. There are several methods to prevent bug bites.

**Wear protective clothing**

Long sleeved shirts, jackets, long pants and hats protect you from mosquito bites. The less your skin is exposed, the less vulnerable you are to bites. Tuck your pants into your boots. Do not wear bright coloured clothing (insects are attracted to bright colours).

**Be cautious at dawn and dusk**

Insects, especially mosquitoes, are generally more active during the cooler times of the day. The moist air during dusk and dawn are breeding times for many insects. If possible, limit your time outdoors during these times.

**Use insect repellent**

There are three ways to apply repellent: lotions, oils, or aerosols. Choosing a method of application is up to the individual, but keep in mind most lotions are not water resistant, oil is difficult to remove at the end of the day, and aerosols need to be reapplied often. Regardless of the method of application, the ingredients used should be your prime concern.

**DEET based**

Although DEET is the most popular insect repellent in North America, Canada has begun a phase-out of repellents containing more than 30% DEET. DEET is incredibly toxic if it is swallowed, absorbed through the skin, or inhaled. Tests have shown that DEET does prevent insect bites, and you don't need a high

concentration of DEET to ward off the tiny predators. Choose a lower concentrated DEET based repellent and reapply more often.

**Peremetherin**

Peremetherin is an insecticide that should only be used on clothing. It cannot be applied to skin. One coating lasts approximately two weeks. When bugs come in contact with treated material, they are killed instantly.

**Alternative methods to repellents**

**Citronella**

An alternative to chemical-based products, Citronella is effective for a short period of time and has been used for decades to ward off insects.

**Natural ingredients**

Insect repellent products containing natural botanical oils such as oil of geranium, cedar, lemongrass, soy or citronella, are becoming popular choices for repellents, but must be reapplied often.

**Insect Repellent Wristbands**

Repellent wristbands are great in a fix, and they are relatively inexpensive. They can be clipped to hats, belts, or worn on wrists. Repellent wristbands protect against insects for up to 120 hours.

**Bug zappers:**

Though they are marketed to keep the bugs away, electronic devices like bug zappers actually attract mosquitoes.

Every situation is different. Determine the situation and your risk of insect bites before heading outdoors, and read instructions on repellents carefully. ■

**Get the Bugs Out!**

**The Buzz on Bug Bites and Prevention against Pests**



HEADS UP! TUITION FEES! • HEADS UP! TUITION FEES! • HEADS UP! TUITION FEES!

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- Great news! Merit Contractors Association will continue to refund the cost of tuition for Alberta apprentices working for Merit employers after having successfully completed their apprenticeship training. This does not cover additional school related costs such as parking, lockers or books.

Tuition costs increase as of September 1, but as part of the Centennial gift to Albertans, the Government is paying the tuition increase, effectively freezing tuition for

HEADS UP!  
TUITION  
FEES!

the year. Merit will continue to cover tuition costs up to a maximum of \$81.25 per week or \$650 for an eight- week program.

For more information on the tuition refund program, please visit our website at [www.meritalberta.com](http://www.meritalberta.com).

If you are a member outside of Alberta, please contact your provincial Association to determine if a tuition program is available for you. □

# Market Update

- It is difficult to come up with enough superlatives to describe how good the outlook is for construction in Alberta. It doesn't matter what sector of construction you work in - residential, commercial, roadbuilding or industrial - or where you are located, it appears that there are going to be abundant work opportunities. Alberta Economic Development's Major Project Inventory lists an incredible 949 projects with a total value of \$105.5 billion dollars.

An expanding population combined with a government committed to spending money on infrastructure is producing some very large public projects. Ring roads and bypasses for both Edmonton and Calgary are the most visible examples of highway projects. Across the province, there are many earthmoving and paving projects as well as the associated bridge and overpass structures. Other government spending will go to schools and hospitals. The new south hospital for Calgary will be one of the biggest projects.

Of course, the huge investments in oil sands developments are still proceeding and there will be demand for thousands of construction workers on those projects. Increasing production from the oilsands will demand more pipeline capacity so there will be some big pipeline projects ahead.

Every part of Alberta's economy seems to be running at full throttle and that is producing demand for construction of all types. Ironically, the one industry in Alberta that is hurting - the cattle business - is producing millions of dollars in construction work as meat packing capacity here is expanded in response to the U.S. border closure.

The construction industry is busier than it has ever been. There is far more work scheduled or already in progress than there was at the peak of the 1970's construction boom. All signs indicate that the good times are going to continue. □

## British Columbia Liberal majority good news for BC construction industry

- While the May 17 election in British Columbia was closer than most of the construction industry believed possible, Gordon Campbell became the first BC Premier reelected since 1983 and the BC Liberal Party emerged with a strong majority (46 to 33 NDP) that should mean at least another four years of prosperity.

With BC experiencing a dramatic revival under the Liberals and now at or near the top in almost every economic indicator, it was hard for the business community to fathom voters returning to an NDP Party that drove BC into "have not" status that saw the province for the first time receiving equalization payments from the federal government.

However, looked at in historical context the NDP's 41% of the 2005 popular vote is consistent with most

previous elections. In fact, Glen Clark in 1996 and Mike Harcourt in 1991 were elected as NDP Premiers with slightly less than 41% of the popular vote. BC is still home to strong labour, environmental and social reform movements that tend to be strongholds for the NDP.

The 2001 election that saw the Liberals win 77 out of the province's 79 seats occurred under a perfect storm of NDP incompetence, scandal and economic doldrums. Now that BC has returned to a more historically normal balance of seats in the legislature, the challenge will be for the Liberals to stay the course on economic issues, but also to develop and communicate policies on health and education that will resonate with voters before the next election in 2009. □

## Saskatchewan may not be "open for business"

- Despite the best efforts of the Saskatchewan Business Council (SBC) and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) to prevent Bills 86 and 87 from being reintroduced in the legislature, the Saskatchewan government reintroduced the Bills in April. The SBC, a group of 51 organizations representing most of Saskatchewan's employers, believes the Bills, if passed, will have a detrimental impact on economic development in Saskatchewan. Bill 87 gives the Labour Relations Board (LRB) the power to enter workplaces and search for evidence without a warrant. Warren Michelson, President of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, says Bill 87 "gives the Labour Relations Board search and seizure authority far in excess of what law enforcers have". Bill 86 states that the Director of Labour Standards can decide whether there has been a breach of labour standards, based on an anonymous complaint, and enter a workplace to search for evidence of a breach.

The amendment to Bill 87 states that the LRB could choose to bar an application to decertify a union for up to one year before the organization could reapply. If a shop becomes unionized, Bill 87 states that a union and an employer are required to commence collective bargaining within 20 days after a certification order is made. Not only is 20 days a restrictive timeframe, the union also has the power to impose a first collective agreement on an employer 90 days after certification. This means if the union isn't satisfied, it can evade agreement and one will be drawn up, most likely benefiting the union. Additionally, if an LRB member's term expires before proceedings are

complete, the member can continue on salary until the matter is either resolved or 90 days has passed. Bills 86 and 87 also expand the powers of the Chair and the Vice Chair of the LRB, who would have the power to make regulations, rules, and issue orders. Presently, there is no right of appeal from a decision of the LRB. The concern of the SBC is that although Canadian labour code permits employers to explain their case at a hearing, the LRB requires employers to follow rigid rules at LRB proceedings. Employers unfamiliar with legalities will require lawyers who are experts in labour law.

The government of Saskatchewan promotes the message that the "future is wide open", but Bills 86 and 87 "deter economic growth in Saskatchewan" says Michelson. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) proposes that Bills 86 and 87 be abandoned "in favour of an agenda of economic growth and development". CFIB is concerned that the amendments do not address the primary concern: the Labour Relations Board needs a more balanced climate. Presently, more than 50% of the CFIB's members have reservations about the LRB. The SBC feels that if the amendments are reintroduced, explanations need to be made about cases that have occurred that make the amendments necessary, the intended impact of the amendments, and how the LRB feels performance will improve because of the amendments. □

For more information:

Hilda Szabo

Merit Contractors Association of Saskatchewan

[www.meritcontractors.sk.ca](http://www.meritcontractors.sk.ca)

(306) 664 -1167

# CHOICE HOTELS

- Don't get caught without a hotel this summer! Take advantage of Merit's hotel discount program with the Choice Hotel Group.

Merit member employees now receive 15 to 20% off hotel room rates at participating Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality Inn, Clarion Inn, Sleep Inn, MainStay Suites, Econo Lodge and Rodeway Inn locations around the world.

The Choice Hotel group has over 260 locations in Canada and 5,000 locations world-wide, including hotels in major vacation destinations such as the Caribbean, Brazil, Europe and Hawaii. We feel this



program offers excellent value, plus a great selection of hotels at varying price points. In order to obtain these specially negotiated rates, Merit members must book their rooms in advance by calling 1-800-4-CHOICE (1-800-424-6423) or through the website at [www.choicehotels.ca](http://www.choicehotels.ca) and quoting the Merit Contractors Association ID #00088677. Same day reservations will be accepted, but you must use the toll free number or website to obtain the discount. ■

## Membership contest

- We are so close!! Merit's "Size Does Matter!" membership contest is closing in on 1,000 members**

**\$10,000 in prizes- are you qualified to win?**

Any employee or contractor who refers a prospective member to the Association will have their name entered into the draw if their referral results in the firm joining Merit. The more companies you refer to us that join, the more chances to win.

Just imagine yourself winning some amazing prizes! They include:

- + A fabulous cruise for two (value up to \$5,000)
- + A relaxing golf or ski vacation for two (value up to \$1,500)
- + Two airline tickets (value up to \$1,200)
- + A Big Screen TV (value up to \$1,300)
- + 2 iPods with accessories (worth \$500 each)

# are you in?

Prizes will be drawn and awarded at Merit's 20th anniversary AGM dinner in 2006. In addition, every time two prospective members join Merit as a result of your referrals, you will win dinner for two (a \$100 gift certificate). In each issue of MeritTalk, we'll update the membership on where we're at in numbers in our quest to reach 1,000 members. ■

**975 members and counting**

**So what are you waiting for? Help us get the word out that "Merit Works!"**

To refer a prospective member to us for follow-up, give us a call in Edmonton at (780) 455-5999, 1-888-816-9991 or in Calgary at (403) 291-9247, 1-877-637-2254.

## Rogers Wireless Enterprise

- Real-time wireless e-mail delivery and access to calendar and contacts.

To work effectively in today's business environment, most companies rely on the applications and information found on the office computer. Yet at the same time, an increased number of employees are spending more time away from their desks, inside and outside the office. A critical challenge emerges: how to provide your growing mobile workforce with access to the tools they need to get the job done?

Rogers Wireless can help. By giving mobile employees real-time access to corporate e-mail, calendar,

contacts and the internet, you connect them to the tools they use most. This translates into improved productivity, customer responsiveness, even workflow efficiency among teams: the very factors that keep your company competitive. And there's no better way to implement such an initiative than with an easy, secure reliable Wireless Enterprise Server Solution from Rogers Wireless. ■

**Contact:**  
Dennis S. Goddard, VP Business Solutions Group,  
Digital Communications 780-945-9396



# Merit Member Projects

The second in a two-part series, this map shows some of the many open shop projects being completed across the province by Merit member companies.

**K & M Building Contractors Ltd.**  
Ste. Marie School Conversion  
**Spirit River** \$467,000

**RMS Builders Inc.**  
Emerald Manor Apartments  
**Grande Prairie** \$2.5 M

**Kamwin Electric**  
Police Headquarters - UPS  
Generator Upgrade  
**Edmonton** \$1.2 M

**Embassy Electric**  
C-Store, Gas Bar, Car Wash  
**Edmonton** \$130,000

**SureForm Construction Ltd.**  
Enhanced Primary Treatment -  
Goldbar WWTP  
**Edmonton** \$42 M

**Old World Paving Stones Ltd.**  
Churchill Square  
**Edmonton** \$194,500

**Clark Builders**  
Grant MacEwan College Student  
Residence  
**Edmonton** \$37 M

**Synergy Projects Ltd.**  
Rocky Mountain Carwash  
**Edmonton** \$3.5 M

**Canem Systems Ltd.**  
O.E.M. Manufacturing  
**Edmonton** \$5 M

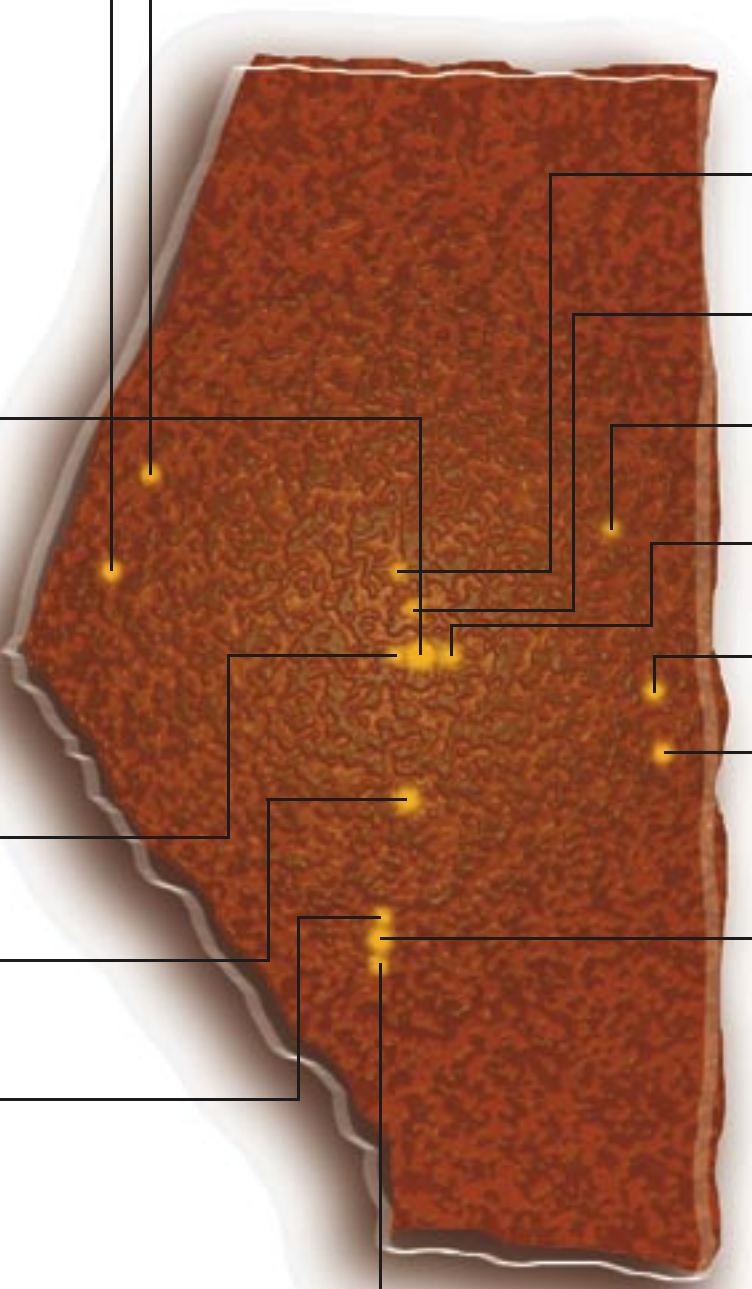
**Mogo Electric Services Ltd.**  
Burnco Precast Facility  
**Acheson** \$700,000

**Stuart Olson Construction**  
Red Deer Hospital Expansion  
**Red Deer** \$70 M

**Westcor Construction Ltd.**  
Calgary Lab Services  
**Airdrie** \$600,000

**Dawson Wallace**  
Okotoks Library  
**Okotoks** \$2 M

**Stuart Olson Construction**  
Okotoks Recreation Centre  
**Okotoks** \$9 M



**Binder Construction**  
Westlock Continuing Care  
Centre  
**Westlock** \$22.9 M

**Eton - West Construction Ltd.**  
Extra Foods and Gas Bar  
**Morinville** \$3.3 M

**GenMec ACL**  
J.A. Williams School  
**Lac La Biche** \$5.5 M

**Neil's Electric**  
Red-D-Arc Welderentals  
**Sherwood Park** \$110,000

**Binder Construction**  
Vermilion Supportive Housing  
**Vermilion** \$3.8 M

**Pentagon Structures Ltd.**  
Ammunition Transfer Facility  
**Wainwright** \$5.2 M

**Westcor Construction Ltd.**  
Harry Hays Building - Exterior  
Works  
**Calgary** \$1.8 M

**Synergy Projects Ltd.**  
Research Technology and  
Manufacturing Facility  
**Calgary** \$17 M

**Pentagon Structures Ltd.**  
Douglas Dale Elementary School  
**Calgary** \$4.4M

**Alberta Glass**  
Elbow River Casino  
**Calgary** \$500,000

# An invitation to Merit Contractor Association Members from Costco Wholesale

- Looking for some new jeans for work? Maybe it's replacing a well-worn drill or filling your optical prescription. The electronics department features everything from the newest High Definition Televisions to laptops and computer software. And yes, they still have a great selection of grocery, meats, deli and baked goods!!

Statistics show that the average family will save \$500.00 a year shopping at Costco Wholesale. Deduct from that the membership fee, and you're still \$450.00 ahead! Every year!

Costco Wholesale is pleased to offer Gold Star Membership to employees of Merit Contractor Association members. This membership, offered at \$53.50 (including GST) is issued with a free spouse card and \$10.00 Cash Card.

Your membership is valid for a full calendar year and is recognized at any of the worldwide locations.

Merit Contractor Association members who are ready to renew, are encouraged to look at upgrading to Executive Membership. This membership gives 2% back

on every purchase made (excluding Tobacco and Prescription Drugs). Coupled with the American Express card (no annual fee; revolving credit) which also gives 2% back – you are looking at a 4% rebate on items you need to keep the house running, the truck looking good and the kids happy!

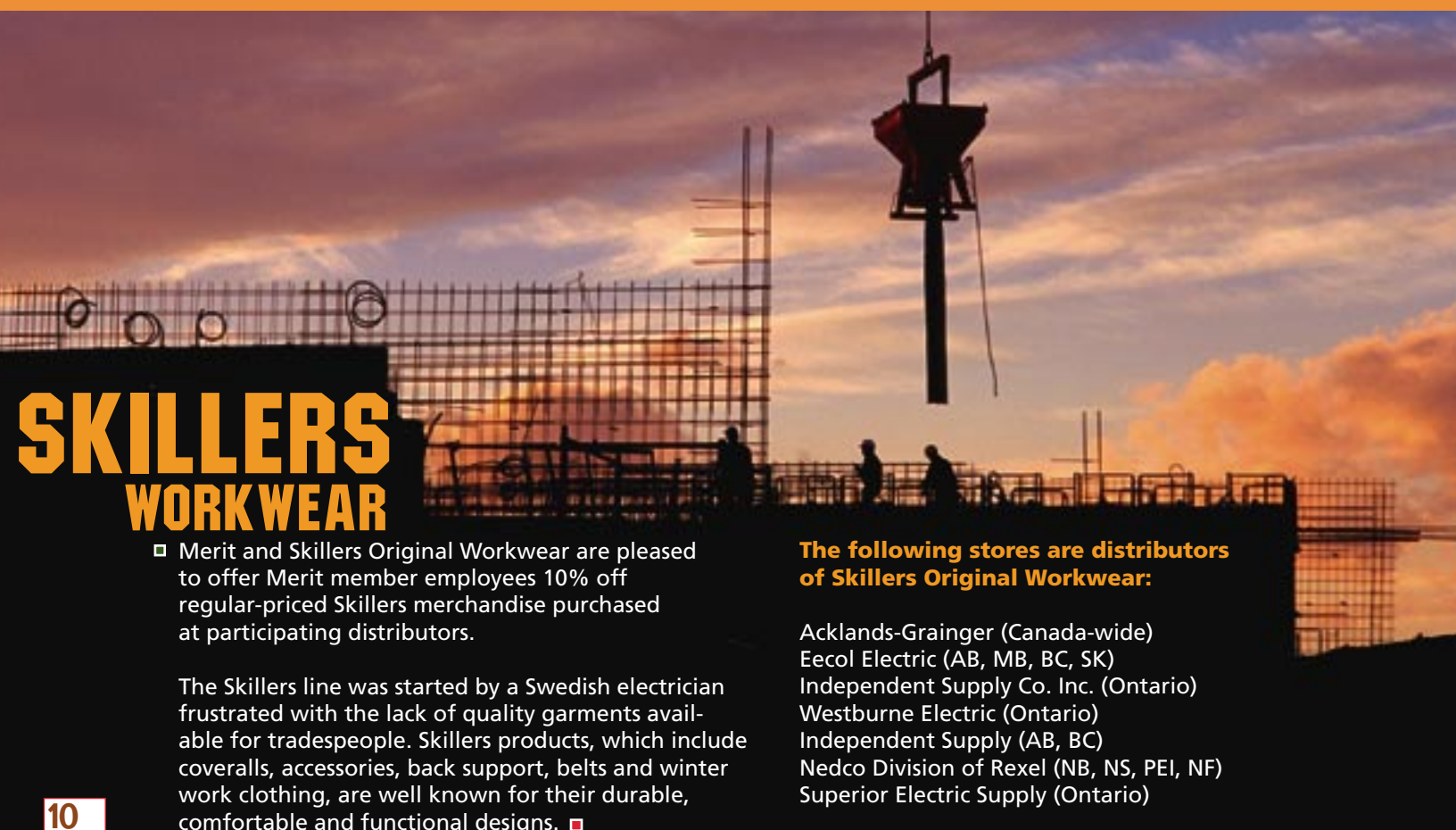
\$10.00 Cash Cards will be issued to all Executive upgrades AND to those who apply for the Co-Platinum American Express card.

Membership Staff will be happy to assist you in determining which membership is right for you.

As with all our products, Costco Wholesale stands behind a pledge to provide every Costco member with a 100% satisfaction guaranteed warranty on every product and service sold, including membership fees, or a full refund will be issued.

**Costco looks forward to seeing you!**

For more information or help with any of your questions, don't hesitate to call Sharon Fitger, Marketing Representative, Costco Wholesale at (403) 519-5126. □



## SKILLERS WORKWEAR

- Merit and Skillers Original Workwear are pleased to offer Merit member employees 10% off regular-priced Skillers merchandise purchased at participating distributors.

The Skillers line was started by a Swedish electrician frustrated with the lack of quality garments available for tradespeople. Skillers products, which include coveralls, accessories, back support, belts and winter work clothing, are well known for their durable, comfortable and functional designs. ■

**The following stores are distributors of Skillers Original Workwear:**

Acklands-Grainger (Canada-wide)  
Eecol Electric (AB, MB, BC, SK)  
Independent Supply Co. Inc. (Ontario)  
Westburne Electric (Ontario)  
Independent Supply (AB, BC)  
Nedco Division of Rexel (NB, NS, PEI, NF)  
Superior Electric Supply (Ontario)

# Private Client Services

- When it comes to personal insurance, it's difficult to know what you really need to make sure your treasured possessions are protected, and what you can do to save money.

Private Client Services, a division of ENCON Group Inc., has been the administrator of Merit's Group Automobile & Residential Insurance Program since 1992. The client managers help take the mystery out of insurance by explaining your coverage options – and its limitations – to you. They also work with you to ensure any claims you make are handled promptly and settled fairly

To help you control your residential insurance costs and ensure that you are adequately covered, the experts at PCS offer the following tips:

- Check out the competitive rates being offered under the Merit Contractors Association's Group Automobile & Residential Insurance Program. You may also be eligible for additional discounts on your residential insurance, such as: New Home, Claims Free, and Mortgage, Free discounts, and more.
- Tell your broker about any major changes. If you are planning any home renovations, running a small business from your home, or renting out your home, certain restrictions may apply to your coverage. Be sure to tell your broker so that you are adequately covered.

- Make arrangements to have your home checked while you are on vacation. During the heating season, if your home is unoccupied for more than four consecutive days, you must arrange for a competent person to enter your home on a daily basis. This will ensure that you are covered for freezing of pipes and the rupture or escape of water from the plumbing or heating system.
- Don't under/over-insure. You should estimate the value of your possessions, including taxes, and update your inventory at least once a year, so that you are not under-insured. Also, you should insure your house for 100% of the cost to rebuild it if it is destroyed.
- Install an anti-theft device in your home. With a monitored fire/burglary alarm system installed in your home, you qualify for a 5% discount.

For a no-obligation quotation, call Private Client Services today at 780-421-8143 or 1-877-476-6727. You can also visit their website at [www.pcs-insurance.ca](http://www.pcs-insurance.ca) to submit the expiry dates of your current policies and a client manager will call you with a quote 30-60 days before your coverage expires. ■

The information contained in this article provides only a general overview of subjects covered, is not intended to be taken as advice regarding any individual situation and should not be relied upon as such.

## Checking Hours on the Website [www.merconbenefits.com](http://www.merconbenefits.com)

- Did you know that you can check on the number of hours that your employer has reported for you every month to provide benefits under the Merit Hourbank Benefit Plan, using the Mercon website? The website can be accessed at [www.merconbenefits.com](http://www.merconbenefits.com).

After you have logged in, using your Username and Password, the first screen shows whether you are in benefit for the current and the previous month, as well as the number of hours that were reported for you for the past two months. Don't forget that hours worked in one month are based on payroll submissions and will not appear on the website until they have been processed at the end of the following month. For example, July hours must be reported by your employer by August 15th and will appear on the website towards the end of August.

If you want to check the hours worked in any prior months, you can click on the link that says Benefit Status History. This will allow you to verify your hours worked for up to the last 18 months.

This is an easy way for you to ensure that all of the hours you have worked have been accurately reported to Mercon Benefit Services. If you have any questions about the hours reported, you should first contact your employer. If they are unable to help you, then please call Mercon Benefit Services at (780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266.

If you don't have access to the Internet, then you can find out how many hours have been reported for you simply by contacting Mercon Benefit Services at the numbers listed above. ■



[for your information]

**Benefit Plan**

**Administrator**

Mercon Benefit Services  
(780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266  
(1-877-2MERCON)  
mercon@merconbenefits.com

**Claims Submission**

**Manitoba & West**

Alberta Blue Cross  
10009-108 St. NW  
Edmonton, AB  
T5J 3C5

**Ontario & East**

Merit Plan/  
Blue Cross Claims  
PO Box 7257 Stn A  
Toronto, ON  
M5W 1X9

**Employee and Family Assistance Program**

(EFAP) WarrenShepell Consultants Corp., the provider of the EFAP, is available to assist you with any concerns or issues you and/or your immediate family may be facing.

**For first time appointments and counselling:**

1-800-387-4765

**For appointment changes & general info:**

1-888-814-1328  
warrenshepell.com

**Problems with Pay Direct Card:**

Employees and Pharmacies can call Alberta Blue Cross at 1-800-361-9632.

Publication #40012285

**BANKING/FINANCIAL SERVICES**

**Royal Bank Group RRSP**

For information about your Merit group RRSP, contact Royal Bank, the administrator of the program.

Contact:  
Royal Bank, 1-800-463-3863, www.rbc.com

**Royal Bank Group Banking Program**

The Royal Bank offers Merit member employees preferred rates on mortgages, banking packages, investments, credit cards and loans. Royal Bank will also waive appraisal fees to a maximum of \$165 and CMHC application fees to a maximum of \$300.

Contact:  
the Royal Bank branch near you, www.rbc.com

**CAR RENTAL**

**Thrifty Car Rental**

Receive corporate rates when you rent, for business or for pleasure. Quote the Merit corporate account ID number: #1660221113.

Contact:  
Thrifty Car Rental, 1-800-THRIFTY (847-4389), www.thrifty.com

**INSURANCE**

**Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance Program**

The Cooperators offers AD&D insurance for you and your family in increments of \$50,000 to a maximum of \$250,000.

Contact:  
Mercon Benefit Services, (780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266

**Optional Life Insurance Program**

Manulife Financial offers Term Life Insurance to Merit members and their spouses at specially discounted rates. Insurance may be purchased in units of \$25,000 to a maximum of \$250,000.

Contact:  
Mercon Benefit Services, (780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266

**Private Client Services**

**A division of ENCON Inc.**

**Group Automobile & Residential Insurance**

Private Client Services has been providing Merit members and their families discounted group rates on their personal automobile and residential insurance coverages since 1991. Get experience on your side. Call for a quote today.

Contact:  
Private Client Services, in Edmonton at (780) 421-8143 or 1-800-465-0660 (Alberta), 1-877-476-6727 (Canada), www.pcs-insurance.ca

**MEDICAL DISCOUNT PROGRAMS**

**Eyeglass Discount Program**

This program offers Merit member employees and dependants 10 to 25% off frames and lenses at participating optical outlets across Alberta.

Contact:  
For a list of participating optical outlets in Alberta, call Mercon Benefit Services, (780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266

For a list of participating optical outlets in Saskatchewan, call Merit Saskatchewan at (306) 664-1167

For a list of participating optical outlets in Nova Scotia, call Merit Nova Scotia at (902) 453-6248

**Prescription Club Program**

Use your Prescription Club Card at Superstore, Real Canadian Wholesale Club or Safeway and receive a stamp each time you purchase a prescription. Once you have ten stamps, send in your card to the Merit Calgary office to receive a \$10 gift certificate from that store.

Contact:  
To obtain a Prescription Club Card, call Mercon Benefit Services, (780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266

**RETAIL DISCOUNT PROGRAMS**

**Choice Hotels Discount Program**

Merit member employees will receive 15 to 20% off hotel room rates at participating Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality Inn, Clarion Inn, Sleep Inn, MainStay Suites, Econo Lodge and Rodeway Inn locations around the world.

Contact:  
Book by calling 1-800-424-6423 or visit www.choicehotels.ca. Quote the Merit Contractors Association ID #00088677.

**Costco Membership**

All Merit member employees are eligible to receive a Costco membership. Members will receive a \$10 gift card when they join. (New Costco members only)

Contact:  
Mercon Benefit Services, (780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266

**ISECO Discount Program**

ISECO offers Merit member employees 15% off all regular-priced footwear and safety products such as work boots, hard hats, gloves and hearing protection.

Contact:  
For a list of stores visit www.iseco.com

**Mark's Work Wearhouse Discount Program**

Mark's Work Wearhouse offers Merit member employees 10% off regular-priced work clothing and footwear. Present your Contact Card at the till to receive the discount or contact Mercon Benefit Services to receive a coupon.

Contact:  
To locate the Mark's Work Wearhouse store near you, call 1-800-663-6275, www.marks.com

**Moore's Clothing for Men**

Receive 10% off all regular and sale-priced merchandise, from sport coats to shoes, when you present your "Corporate VIP Card" at time of purchase.

Contact:  
To locate the Moore's store near you, call 1-877-MOORES6 (666-7376). To obtain your VIP card, call Mercon Benefit Services, (780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266.

**Red Wing Shoes Discount Program**

Merit member employees receive 10% off regular-priced merchandise at select Red Wing Shoes dealers across the prairies.

Contact:  
For a list of participating outlets, call Mercon Benefit Services, (780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266

**Skillers Workwear**

Receive 10% off regular-priced Skillers products at participating retailers across Canada when you present your Contact Card at the till. (Sales tracking #010902)

Contact:  
For a list of participating retailers, call Mercon Benefit Services, (780) 455-5845 or 1-877-263-7266, www.skillers.ca

**TELEPHONE**

**Rogers Wireless Cellular Discount Program**

Rogers Wireless offers a special discounted cellular plan for Merit member employees across Canada.

Contact:  
Digital Communications Group, 1-877-MERIT81 (637-4881)ext.24

**Sprint Canada Long Distance Discount Program**

Sprint Canada offers Merit member employees special long distance rates: 7¢ per minute, anytime, anywhere in North America.

Contact:  
Sprint Canada, 1-877-816-3131

**MERIT MEMBER EMPLOYEE SERVICES**

**(Alberta, Saskatchewan & Nova Scotia only)**

**Employee Referral Service**

Merit's Employee Referral Service is a way for experienced construction personnel to find employment with Merit companies. To apply, drop in or call the appropriate Merit office.

**Tuition Refund Program**

Merit will reimburse apprenticeship tuition fees for Merit member employees returning to work for a Merit member company. (available in Ontario as well)

Contact:  
**Merit Edmonton**  
Linda Rhodes, (780) 455-5999, 1-888-816-9991  
**Merit Calgary**  
(Employee Referral Service Only)  
Lisa Fletcher, (403) 291-9247, 1-877-637-2254

**Merit Saskatchewan**  
Hilda Szabo, (306) 664-1167

**Open Shop Contractors Association (Ontario)**  
Mark Baseggio, (416) 483-3856

**Merit Nova Scotia**  
Bill McLellan, (902) 453-6248

MeritTalk is produced every two months by the Merit Contractors Association.

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**Merit Edmonton**  
#103, 13025 St. Albert Trail, Edmonton, AB T5L 5G4  
Tel: (780) 455-5999, 1-888-816-9991  
E-Mail: meritedm@meritalberta.com

**Merit Calgary**  
#205, 2725-12 Street NE, Calgary, AB T2E 7J2  
Tel: (403) 291-9247, 1-877-637-2254  
E-Mail: meritcal@meritalberta.com

www.meritalberta.com