

Chamber launches new scholarship program for students in skilled trades, manufacturing

Local high school students interested in pursuing careers in manufacturing and skilled trades are now eligible for a helping hand in their post-secondary education from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber launched their Manufacturing and Skilled Trades Scholarship Program for High School Students last week. It will provide financial assistance to two eligible students – one in manufacturing and one in skilled trades – who plan to attend a college, university, trade school or apprenticeship program to pursue their goals.

Areas of focus include mechanical engineering, industrial design, production management, and skilled trades of welding, plumbing, electrical work, and more.

"We are grateful to the Aurora Chamber of Commerce for providing these scholarship opportunities for students interested in pursuing a career in the skilled trades," said Scott Yake, Interim Director of Education for the York Region District School Board. "Providing support for young people to combine academic learning with a hands-on experience will open doors to endless opportunities in the skilled trades and allow students to shape their own future."

Added Dominic Scuglia, Director of Education for the York Catholic District School Board: "[The Chamber] is once again making a positive difference in the lives of Aurora students. Their brand-new Manufacturing and Skilled Trades Scholarship is an excellent opportunity for students who are interested in manufacturing and skilled trades to follow their dreams. Manufacturing and the skilled trades are needed careers that provide fulfilling work and allow individuals to give back to the community."

Each scholarship of \$5,000 will go to a Grade 12 student who must be a permanent resident or Canadian citizen, and a student in an Aurora high school – or a resident in the community.

In focusing on manufacturing and skilled trades, Sandra Ferri, President & CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, said they are recognizing a demand in the workforce.

"We've heard a lot, especially over the last few years with the pandemic and then coming out of the pandemic that there's a shortage of labour. People just can't find people to work. Specifically, there's a real need around manufacturing and skilled trades," she says. "Because those are big factors in the Town of Aurora, and we have been looking at doing something for high school students for a while now and this seemed like the right time to do it, and to do it in the areas where we know people are looking for people to shine a spotlight on those two sectors to say, 'these can be very lucrative for you and they can provide you with a very good living.'"

Ahead of the launch, Ferri says the Chamber consulted with local schools to see what areas of the skilled trade and manufacturing sectors were catching their eye. Local manufacturing companies also provided input on the program.

"This is really a Chamber initiative we wanted to really focus on the companies in Town and what the needs of those companies were for the future because this is a legacy initiative we're launching and we hope to have ongoing for years and years to come," says Ferri. "We will be looking to see where our scholarship recipients end up down the road. It will be a while before we can really see the long-term [impacts] of it, but we're also open to looking at what the trends are. Right now, it's manufacturing and skilled trades. Down the road as we progress down through the years there might be other areas we want to expand or shift to depending on where the needs are."

"We're really excited by this. We have been looking for something to support our youth in Town and we all feel this is a really good way to not only kick-start some other careers but also to support our local economy."

This excitement was shared in a statement from John Long, Vice President of Operations for Ontario Heating and Cooling Limited.

?The Chamber's leadership in supporting local youth to take the manufacturing and/or skilled trades career pathway will help to shine a spotlight on how lucrative these pathways can be and the importance of these areas to the business community.?

For more information on the scholarship program, visit aurorachamber.on.ca/scholarship-program. The deadline for applications is May 5, 2023 and recipients will be contacted on May 29. Applicants must answer questions that demonstrate their interest and commitment to their chosen field of study. Consideration will be given to students who are members of underrepresented groups in their field of study or who are pursuing high-demand occupations.

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