

Laird Cronk: Men need to be 'more than a bystander' in standing up for women's rights

LAIRD CRONK ([HTTPS://VANCOUVERSUN.COM/AUTHOR/LAIRD-CRONK](https://vancouversun.com/author/laird-cronk)) Updated: March 7, 2019



B.C. Federation of Labour president Laird Cronk is calling on men to learn how to be better allies to women, particularly on the job *GETTY IMAGES*

March 8 is International Women's Day and while we celebrate women's achievements on this day, I urge men to join me in thinking about how our actions,

individually and collectively, and the traditional power we've held in society affect women.

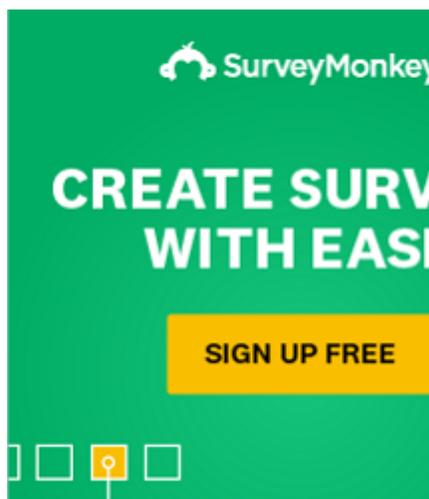
I'm fortunate to have an exceptional work partner, B.C. Federation of Labour secretary-treasurer Sussanne Skidmore, with whom I've had many valuable and insightful conversations about finding ways to achieve a greater gender balance in workplaces and society as a whole.

I recently attended a "Be More Than A Bystander" training session for men, through the B.C. Centre for Women in the Trades, which changed me deeply. Something transformational happens when a group of men are taken on a journey of seeing the world through women's eyes.

When men are compelled to examine how women prepare for everyday life, we begin to understand the inequities that exist for women, not the least of which in the workplace.

As a progressive man, a husband and co-parent of three young women, I was confident I understood what women face daily. But the training I received helped me recognize more what women have to think about daily in a society entrenched with male privilege.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW



I looked at how women think about the clothes or shoes they wear, when their shifts end, what part of town they will go to, how they transport themselves and how to escape if situations arise where they must get out fast.

My eyes were opened to the responsibility men have to prevent bullying and harassment and end violence against women with practical techniques to be more than a bystander.

The BCFED and its affiliates have supported the Ending Violence Association of B.C. and the B.C. Lion's Be More Than a Bystander program for four years. The train-the-trainer program is designed to break the silence surrounding violence against women and girls by teaching Lions' players how to speak up and communicate that violence and abuse is not acceptable. The Lions' trainers then teach these skills to Grade 8-12 students in schools.

Last year, the BCFED partnered with EVA BC and the B.C. Lions to modify this program for the construction sector, giving men from the construction industry the skills to be more than a bystander and teaching those skills to others.

You may ask, What does this have to do with me? The answer is simple. The B.C. Lions are a cultural icon and what better way to change culture than by using cultural icons to lead the way? This is the magic behind the Be More Than A Bystander program. It brings men into spaces with community figures they look up to and facilitates tough conversations about the way women are treated and what men can do about it.

If you are a man, especially if you work in a sector dominated by men, contact the B.C. Centre for Women in the Trades and ask them how to get this training for your workplace.

The centre is led by tradeswomen and focuses on mentoring and networking, shifting the culture of discrimination, bullying and harassment in the skilled trades industry. They are your ticket to getting your workplace up to code when it comes to women's rights on the job. A quick email to info@bctradeswomen.org (mailto:info@bctradeswomen.org) or a visit to their website, www.bccwitt.ca (http://www.bccwitt.ca), will get you on your way to a more respectful workplace.

I did it, and I'm glad I did it. Now I'm dedicated to being more than a bystander. I urge other men to join me.

Laird Cronk is president of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

Letters to the editor should be sent to sunletters@vancouversun.com. The editorial pages editor is Gordon Clark, who can be reached at gclark@postmedia.com (<mailto:gclark@postmedia.com>).

[CLICK HERE](mailto:vanweb@postmedia.com) (<mailto:vanweb@postmedia.com>) to report a typo.

Is there more to this story? We'd like to hear from you about this or any other stories you think we should know about. Email vantips@postmedia.com (<mailto:vantips@postmedia.com>).

TRENDING IN CANADA

0.

**Beverley McLachlin |
Legislature allegation
Vancouver Sun**

◀ Previous

This Week's Flyers