

Executive Summary

Annex A of the *Canada-Ontario Labour Market Partnership Agreement* sets out the areas in which the federal and provincial governments intend to cooperate to “expand and enhance apprenticeship.” As such, we have grouped our issues for discussion under the themes listed in *Annex A*.

1. **Enhancing and expanding access to apprenticeship**

- Recognize the difference between apprenticeship training and other so-called trades-type programs that do not allow an apprentice (individual) to be certified in the whole trade. The Ontario Federation of Labour recommends that the Ontario government support apprenticeship in whole trades.
- Recognize that the shortage of skilled trades persons is not a problem of information sharing, communications or lack of interest in acquiring a trade by individuals.
- The Ontario government must return to one piece of legislation covering apprenticeship: the *Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act*.
- Increase the number of Compulsory Certifications and introduce a legislative process for establishing the certifications. It does not make apprenticeship appealing when you spend a major part of your education in training and then the trade gets diluted or is not a whole trade.
- Increase funding to public community colleges and non-profit union training centres.
- Initiate consultations on the establishment of a Provincial Training Levy to deal with the shortage of jobs for apprentices. We need employers, specifically in the industrial sector, to step up to the plate and provide these jobs. In other words, we do not have an apprentice or person shortage, we have job shortage and so apprentices are simply not being trained. Some argue the ratio formula of apprentices to journeypersons is a barrier to having more apprentices. In fact, by insisting on this ratio, we are ensuring that apprentices are taught the trade in a safe way. Moreover, by exempting from the Training Levy those

employers who are already adhering to this practice, we are creating further incentives for compliance, and further opportunities for bone fide apprenticeship training.

2. Removing barriers to apprenticeship

- Re-establish shop programs in public elementary schools and secondary schools and ensure the funding formula covers the cost of space, equipment, teaching and support staff that are needed.
- Eliminate classroom fees that are presently non tax deductible. Shifting the burden of the cost of training down to the individual is not the answer for young people, as well as others who would consider a trade in the future. The average age of an apprentice, in some trades, is 26 years old. These are workers who have mortgages, families and other financial commitments. Classroom fees just create barriers for all workers, regardless of age.
- Remove the reference to “community group” under the definition of “equivalent learning” in subsection 1 (1) b of Bill 52, so that community organizations are not given the right to grant certificates to students. This kind of measure privatizes education and by-passes our public education institutions who have the training and credentials to give high school certificates.

3. Fostering high-quality learning

- The Ontario Federation of Labour believes that the Ontario government must continue to administer the apprenticeship system, set standards and rules, and monitor the enforcement of apprenticeship in Ontario. These structures and processes cannot be devolved to education institutions without having an adverse effect on apprenticeship.
- The government must give more weight to the recommendations of the Provincial Advisory Committees for their trades and their industry.
- Increasing government funding levels for public elementary and secondary schools and community colleges is critical. Funding must be made available to restore shop classes to the classrooms

and to improve mathematics, science, problem-solving and English skills.

- At the public community college level, increased public funding is essential to ensure that the in-school portion of the apprenticeship is taught using appropriate technology in classes of 20 students or less. Apprenticeship funds in the community colleges should be applied to bona-fide apprenticeship programs, not to general trades-type programs. These funds should not be eaten up by administration.
- Increase government funding for non-profit union training centres.
- Unions must be considered a key partner in the development of apprenticeship programs, training and labour adjustment. Unions play a crucial role in expanding and enhancing high quality apprenticeship training.
- Eliminate “for-profit” consultants and private companies that deliver apprenticeship training.
- All program delivery and apprenticeship curricula must be monitored on an on-going basis to maintain the quality and integrity of the trade.
- Training must also be measured in terms of completion rates: improving the number of apprenticeships will be meaningless if there is a high drop-out rate or if there is no corresponding increase in the number of journeypersons.
- The Ontario Federation of Labour urges the Ontario government to ensure that trade union partners are represented in all aspects of decision-making. In particular the Ontario Federation of Labour reiterates its call for the establishment of a Labour Market Partners Forum that can act as provincial-federal advisory body and make recommendations on the implementation of all Canada-Ontario Labour Market Adjustment measures.

4. Enhancing mobility

- By bringing all trades back under the rubric of the *Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act*; insisting on mandatory

certification; and expanding enforcement measures for both individuals and employers, Ontario can play a leading role in improving and expanding the Red Seal program and improving the mobility of skilled workers. Compulsory certification will also improve apprenticeship program completion rates.

- Ontario should help to set Pan Canadian standards, based on industry needs for all occupations identified as suitable for the apprenticeship training model. These standards should cover all aspects of training, including on-the-job and in-school training, training qualifications, examinations, and certifications.
- The government should make the costs of moving and relocation tax deductible for qualified trades people moving from one area to another to work.

5. Promoting skills utilization

- Increasing access to and improving the completion of bona fide apprenticeship training in Ontario will mean little if there are no decent jobs available for skilled trades people.
- Ontario must play a leadership role in developing a jobs strategy that takes into account the unique needs of Northern and rural communities and develops a broader vision for long-term, sustainable jobs.
- Enforcing the regulations contained in the *Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act* is crucial for ensuring that employers hire qualified, certified trades people, to ensure that standards are being respected and that health and safety is promoted in the workplace. Government enforcement measures will help to reduce the underground economy, create greater demand for skilled workers, and improve the mobility of the workforce.