



Ontario Federation of Labour

Consultation Paper

To

Ontario College of Trades

Transition Board Apprenticeship Ratios

November 30, 2010



“Apprenticeship matters to all of society because this is the process by which skills and expertise are passed on from one generation of journeypersons to another. Ensuring that new generations of workers are trained as journeypersons is a joint responsibility between employers, government and trade unions.....

Just like doctors need to know all aspects of the human body before they can specialize in one area, journeypersons need to know their trade inside and out before specializing.” *Jobs, Skills and Expertise for Life* OFL Apprenticeship Fact Sheet Number One (2009)

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) we would like to thank the Ontario College of Trades (OCT) for the opportunity of sharing our thoughts concerning the consultation paper *Transition Board Apprenticeship Ratios*. We will use this opportunity to discuss a number of concerns to our members.

Background

The Ontario Federation of Labour is the largest provincial federation of labour in Canada. Our hundreds of thousands of members from a variety of unions work in every economic sector and live in communities across Ontario from Kenora to Cornwall and from Moosonee to Windsor.

From our founding convention in March 1957 until the present day the OFL has always been concerned about the issue of apprenticeship and what policies and procedures would best serve the needs and interests of both the individual worker and the wider society.

A *Convention Action Plan 2009-2011* was discussed and endorsed by the delegates at the last Ontario Federation of Labour Convention (November 23-27, 2009). This document puts forward a vision for an economy and society in our province which reflects the needs and wishes of our members. Part of this document deals with the issue of apprenticeship training:

Apprenticeship Training

To expand access to and the quality of apprenticeship training, the Ontario Federation of Labour will work with its affiliates to:

- a. De-bunk the myth of the widespread “skills shortage” and “labour shortage”;

- b. Monitor and improve the functioning of the College of Trades to ensure that it meets its stated goals;
- c. Oppose inter-provincial trade deals and other provincial legislation such as the *Labour Mobility Act*, that could erode trades qualifications standards;
- d. Lobby the Ontario government to implement a training levy to ensure that employers are investing in apprenticeship and other crucial training;
- e. Campaign to restore shop classes and industrial arts into the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools;
- f. Insist that the Ontario government give direction to college administrators to follow the trade guidelines for applied education;
- g. Promote strategies that eliminate barriers to authentic trades and apprenticeship training for women, internationally trained tradespersons, and those from racialized communities and Aboriginal peoples; and
- h. Educate both OFL affiliates and the general public about the importance of authentic apprenticeship training including:
 - The difference between compulsory and non-compulsory trades;
 - The significance of a Certificate of Apprenticeship, the Certificate of Qualification, and the Red Seal; and
 - The consequences of continued fragmentation and de-skilling of the workforce.

Earlier, in January 2008 the OFL presented a brief to the *Compulsory Certification Review* chaired by Tim Armstrong for the Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities. This brief (copy attached) was developed by the OFL Apprenticeship Committee, and represents a consensus among OFL affiliates from a broad cross section of labour. The Apprenticeship Committee includes

representatives from the building trades, energy and hydro workers, teachers and college faculty members, support staff in the elementary, secondary and post-secondary education sectors, commercial and industrial trades people, and a variety of other trade unions working on apprenticeship and training issues within our Federation. The brief gives a clear indication of the thinking of our members on the range of issues related to apprenticeship. It also reflects the thinking of the Ontario Federation of Labour on this important issue. The Armstrong Report was released in April 2008.

What are your views about the proposed review panel decision-making process?

This is the second question asked in the consultation paper but in our mind it is the most important question. Like other labour organizations we are concerned about such statements as “review panel members shall have **no vested interest (our emphasis)** in the trade under review.” We believe that this statement should read that “review panel members shall have **experience/expertise** in the trade under review.” This approach would place value on the experience/expertise of the Ontarians serving in this position.

Such an approach already exists in Ontario and that is in the model of operation for the Ontario Labour Relations Board. This model allows for the experience/expertise of the individual to be reflected in any decision. With a continuing connection with their constituency this model allows the individual to benefit from exposure to new developments and thinking about issues. Simply put this is a model that works. A detailed rationale for adopting this model has been put forward in the submission to this consultation paper by the Coalition of Compulsory Trades Representing Employers and Unions. The Ontario Federation of Labour supports this rationale.

What are your views about the proposed criteria for ratio review?

The proposed criteria of quality training, impact on labour supply, health and safety of workers, the public and the environment and economic impact are recognized by the OFL as important issues.

In the OFL 2008 brief to the *Compulsory Certification Review* chaired by Tim Armstrong the OFL made the point that by restoring authentic apprenticeship training in whole trades, increasing the number of compulsory certified trades and improving enforcement mechanisms there would be a positive effect on the economy by:

- increasing the value of certification among employers, apprentices and the general public;
- maintaining high training standards and wages associated with trade certification;
- limiting the scope of the underground economy;
- increasing the tax revenue base by reducing activity in the underground economy and increasing legitimate economic activity;
- maintaining the wage premiums associated with proper certification;
- expanding apprenticeship opportunities;
- improving the quality of work undertaken; and
- enforcing high quality standards in the area of consumer and environmental protection.

The OFL will continue to be involved in developments in this important subject area through the on-going work of our Apprenticeship Committee. The OFL Apprenticeship Committee plays a critical role as a forum where issues are discussed; policy consensus is developed as are recommendations for action. The Ontario Federation of Labour appreciates this opportunity of sharing our views with the Ontario College of Trades on these important issues.

Respectfully submitted,

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

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