

**SUBMISSION
TO
HONOURABLE MURRAY COELL**

**SUBMITTED NOVEMBER 4, 2008 TO
HONOURABLE MURRAY COELL,
MINISTER OF ADVANCED EDUCATION & LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT**

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Introduction

In this brief submission we would like to bring forward the following issues for the Minister's consideration.

First is the evolution of the Construction Industry Training Organization (CITO) with its funding application to the ITA toward a full service training model. Second is the issue of apprenticeship completions and the soon to be released study by the BC Labour Market Information sub-committee. Third is to review initiatives by Ontario to address training governance and qualification standards as detailed in the recent Review of Compulsory Certification for Trades by Tim Armstrong. Fourth is to update the Minister on Building Trades involvement in federal/provincial collaboration on Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) and to discuss an advisory role for the Building Trades, as an industry stakeholder, in labour market adjustment advisory committees. Finally, is a review of recommendations by the Construction and Home Building Industry Advisory Committee (CHIAC) to the BC Competition Council and specifically the call to establish a Ministry of Construction.

The Construction Industry Training Organization

The Construction Industry Training Organization (CITO) is the first ITO with wide representation from the construction employer community prepared to deliver on the mandate of construction industry trades training as set by the ITA. The CITO goals have remained realistic and achievable in spite of the immense challenges of setting up an entirely new training system. Since the establishment of CITO the Resource ITO and Transportation ITO have been established. Both have recognized the importance of labour involvement at the Board level. In spite of CITO's lack of labour representation the Board recognizes the important role played by union/employer Joint Training Boards. The CITO Board requested my participation on the scoping committee. On behalf of the Building Trades I am signatory to the Service Canada Agreements for CITO's trade governance committee.

The CITO is now at a cross roads in its development. Commitments from government for funding will be decided soon. Without a sound financial commitment, the CITO will not be able to provide full scope training. As a condition of a funding commitment and given the importance of labour, we encourage the Minister to recommend a formal role for labour interest on the CITO Board.

BC LMI Apprenticeship Completion Report

Second, we would like to draw the Minister's attention to the results of the BC Labour Market Information Committee's report; The Apprenticeship Completions Report. The report is the result of collaboration between the BC Construction Association, the BC Building Trades Council, the Construction Labour Relations Association, the Canadian Home Builders Association, Service Canada, the ITA and others. The report will be formally released this week. It has taken up more than two years of investigations and a budget of over \$80,000.

While BC now has over 30,000 people registered in apprenticeship training programs just 3,000 are completing their program of studies. The findings of the Apprenticeship Completions Study are based on the most comprehensive research into the reasons behind non-completion. Over 3,500 survey responses were gathered from active apprentices, completers, non-completers and employers.

The findings clearly identify the factors that contribute to higher rates of completion. The most important are careful pre-screening of apprenticeship applicants, greater support for apprentices from sponsors and counselors to ensure that technical training takes place, resolving financial barriers for apprentices from rural BC and for apprentices with young families. I encourage the Minister to make full use of the report's findings to evaluate and implement the recommendations that are offered.

The Compulsory Certification Project, Tim Armstrong

Third, I want to draw attention to the recently completed Compulsory Trades Project by Tim Armstrong for the Province of Ontario. This comprehensive research project involved stakeholders from all sectors of the construction industry. The full report is over 180 pages, we have appended the Executive Summary to this submission to facilitate your review of the report.

Armstrong found that requiring compulsory certification, as compared to voluntary certification standards, does improve workplace safety. The report also found that consumer safety was greater with the requirement that worker certification be mandatory.

Economic benefits to employers off-set increased training costs due to compulsory certification. Productivity gains, employee retention benefits, addressing skill shortages and improved worksite safety leading to lower WorkSafe premiums were all cited as off-setting economic benefits from the mandatory certification requirement.

The key recommendation of the project was that the industry be provided with the authority to set the standards for certification. Self-regulation is not out of step with other professions. The College of Physicians, College of Teachers and Law Society are all accepted authorities setting the standards for their professions. Armstrong's "College of Trades" would accept compulsory certification applications from specific trades, establish expert panels to consider these applications and provide advice to the Minister regarding implementation, monitoring and enforcement of compulsory requirements. The College would also set apprenticeship/journeyperson ratios, among other responsibilities.

Foreign Credential Recognition

Fourth, federal/provincial collaboration through the Construction Sector Council (CSC) on the Foreign Credential Recognition is another on-going Building Trades project. Together with the BC Construction Association through the CSC Foreign Credential Initiatives, we supported the I-Step program, as well as participate in the mentorship project and trade-mapping project. Through a Contribution Agreement with the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Industry Training Authority and funding from

the Construction Sector Council, we are moving forward with the Foreign Credential Skills Assessment (FCSA) project. The objective of the project is to develop a training process for immigrant counselors to assist them finding employment for their clients in the construction workforce.

Industry collaboration on the FCSA opens the door to a discussion regarding what role the Building Trades, as an industry stakeholder, can provide to the Canada-BC Labour Market Adjustment Committee. We are ready and willing to participate in any way, on advisory panels or sub-committees. As the Canada-BC Joint Committee on the LMA moves forward we see our participation as a natural extension to the collaborative work we are already engaged in.

Construction and Homebuilding Industry Advisory Report

Finally, I would like to revisit the key recommendation of the Construction and Home Building Industry Advisory Committee (CHIAC) to the BC Competition Council. Construction is unlike any other industry. The industry is characterized by short term, project by project work that requires a highly skilled and mobile workforce. Industry requires that workers constantly change employers. Industry interacts with some 30 different government departments and agencies resulting in conflicting government administrative procedures. A lack of understanding of the construction environment has caused unnecessary delay and costs to industry and the regulatory framework.

The Building Trades support the call for the establishment of a Ministry of Construction to consolidate government responsibilities and services. A Ministry of Construction would also improve communication and understanding from within government and out to industry stakeholders. The scope of the new Ministry would include; Labour Relations, economic and infrastructure development, tendering regulations, training, Safety Authority, worker safety, the underground economy and foreign worker issues.

Summary

The BC construction industry is one of the largest drivers of the provincial economy. Developing a highly skilled workforce depends on a collaborative approach by business, labour and government to trades training, labour market research and policy development, establishing and maintaining standards for worker qualifications, the ability to equitably assess foreign credentials and provide remedial training where necessary. These challenges can best be met by co-coordinating government services for construction through a stand alone Ministry that understands and facilitates employers, workers and consumers in the industry marketplace.