

CUPE BC 2022 CONVENTION SKILLED TRADES COMMITTEE REPORT

With a new committee ready to further advance skilled trades in BC, 2022 brings motivation and innovation. We will continue our focus on reconciliation, promoting diversity and supporting women in the trades.

Based on a recent Canadian Apprenticeship Forum Labour Market report, BC will likely require nearly 47,800 new certified journeypersons over the next decade to keep pace with economic growth and rising retirements, two-thirds of which will be concentrated in the top 15 Red Seal trades. This will necessitate attracting more than 149,620 new apprentices in more than 50 Red Seal trades. Following up on last year's report about VLPS, in addition to supports provided by the provinces and territories, colleges across the country also provide examination and other forms of accommodation for students, including apprentices, when they are on-campus. As well, most colleges now have a Centre for Students with Disabilities, where learning coaches or learning strategists are available to assist students. Some examples of the accommodations that are provided include course materials in alternate formats, assistive and adaptive technologies, extra time on tests and the ability to take tests without distractions, help with note taking, an interpreter, captioning, learning strategies, and a reduced course load. Learning strategies such as time and task management, studying and test taking are also shared with students. The ITA has dedicated staff to assist those apprentices who require accommodations: www.itabc.ca/exams/accommodations-esl-disability-options

Also from the CAF 2021 National Best Practices Forum Summary, we are happy to see some of our suggestions come forward, e.g., "If an employer does not have the capacity to offer the apprentice tasks that are covered in the examination, participants suggested employers could share their apprentice with another employer who could offer the apprentice more diverse work experiences. Other participants said this was a good idea, as long as the employers and other partners such as the unions agreed to the terms of such an arrangement," and "Sometimes

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learners require other forms of support, such as money for food and housing or childcare services. If possible, relieving apprentices of their financial worries will give them more energy to focus on studying for their examinations. Bursaries, emergency loans, grants or free childcare may be offered to apprentices,” and “Because some apprentices will not come to a Centre for Students with Disabilities, staff must reach out to the apprentices in their classes in order to facilitate access to the available learning supports. By speaking to everyone in the class about the supports that are available, individuals who may be struggling feel less isolated and singled out from the rest of their class.”

Information about grants: itabc.ca/grants-tax-credits/grants

Thanks goes out to the work of committee members who participated in Government round table talks on mandatory Skilled Trades Certification – Electrical Workers & Employers on July 6, Mechanical Workers & Employers on July 19 & 20, and Women in Trades on July 22. The follow up to this was an Engagement Meeting with BCFED Apprenticeship and Skills Training Working Group RE: Skilled Trades Certification in BC, and Parliamentary Secretary Andrew Mercier, on Aug 30.

On Feb 14, 2022, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training Anne Kang said new legislation being introduced aims to create SkilledTradesBC, an agency that would focus on supporting and training apprentices. The BC provincial government estimates there will be up to 85,000 openings in skilled trades over the next decade. Kang says the new agency's role would focus on overseeing the skills training requirements for apprentice and journeyman workers in 10 trades, including industrial electricians, heavy-duty equipment technicians and gasfitters.

She says skills training requirements for the trades in B.C. were eliminated in 2003, but making them a requirement provides workers with recognized credentials that benefit employers and employees. Kang says that under the new certification program, which could start later this year, workers would have at least one year to register for apprenticeship programs or take an exam to get certified.

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In a second announcement on Feb 17 the government brought in the StrongerBC Economic plan. Andrew Mercier, Parliamentary Secretary for Skills Training, said:

“With more than 85,000 new trades jobs expected in the next decade, it is imperative that we invest in the educational opportunities and facilities that apprentices and students need to get the job done. I’m excited for the future laid out in the StrongerBC Economic Plan and supported by skilled trades certification. I know our skilled tradespeople are up to the challenge of helping build a stronger B.C. for us all.”

We are really looking forward to the trades exploration summer camps running on August 8-19, 2022 in Quesnel. Lisa Scott from our committee will be helping facilitate both weeks. Week one will be a camp for females ages 9-12/Grades 4-7 and week two will be a camp for Indigenous youth ages 9-12/Grades 4-7. Students will be introduced to the Trades and Construction Industry. These Construction and Trades Exploration camps will run at the College of New Caledonia, Quesnel Campus. The students will tour the College, shop and classroom, where they will be spending the 5 days discovering all aspects of industry. They will be covering an array of trades and industries, with guest speakers and tradespeople, and will be building projects to match all forms of industry. The camps will include Occupational Health and Safety, Introducing Tools, Tool Identification, Computer Aided Drawing (CAD) Prints & Drawings, Engineering, Carpentry, Electrical, Welding, Masonry, Painting, Plumbing and Sheet Metal. Participants will complete the final day with a celebration, which will highlight the students, their projects, and their successes.

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