

Message from Regional Manager Jeff Richardson

The Case for Compulsory Certification?

In most provinces and territories in Canada, the Carpenter trade is a Designated trade. Being a Designated trade means that there is an apprenticeship pathway that leads to Red Seal Certification. However, very few jurisdictions in Canada have made the Carpenter trade a Compulsory certified trade. If it were a compulsory certified trade, that would mean that anyone calling themselves a Carpenter or advertising that they do Carpentry work, would have to be either a registered apprentice or a Red Seal Journeyman.

In 2009, the Carpentry Guild of Nova Scotia, led by Peter Greer, made application to the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education to have the Carpenter trade made a Compulsory Certified trade. In response to the application, the Department made a public call for persons to form an Adhoc Committee (eventually changed names to the Carpenter Trade Advisory Committee) to deal with the application. That committee began meeting in August 2011. The goal of that committee was to review the application and make a recommendation to the Board of the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency on whether the Carpenter trade should be made a Compulsory Certified trade. Pending the recommendation of the Committee, the Board would in turn make a recommendation to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education.

To prepare a recommendation to the Board, the committee would need to meet and reach consensus on the idea of Compulsory Certification. Once the Committee reached a consensus, they would also need to get public input. The Committee met numerous times over the course of the next several years to fully explore the implications of Compulsory Certification. One of the major challenges that the Committee had to deal with was the breadth of the Carpentry trade and the large number of uncertified workers currently employed in the trade. If the Committee were to recommend Compulsory Certification, some thought had to go in to how all the uncertified workers would be able to come into compliance.

Over time, the Committee was able to reach consensus on Compulsory Certification. Thought had gone into a process whereby uncertified workers would be able to come into compliance. With consensus and a plan in hand, the committee went forward with public consultation across the province. As expected, reaction was mixed. While the process of public consultation was playing itself out, two groups in Nova Scotia wrote letters to the Minister opposing the idea of Compulsory Certification.

It was at this point that the work of the Committee was put on hold for a period of time, while some changes were made to the Apprenticeship system in Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) was formed. Once the NSAA was up and running, the Committee was reconvened and was tasked with exploring the idea of Specializing the trade into four parts: Formwork, Framing, Exterior Finish, and Interior Finish. This direction was given considering feedback that government had received during the initial public consultation. The Committee did this work and did another round of public consultation. Again, as expected, the reaction from the public was varied. Many of the people that participated in the public consultation were registered apprentices, Red Seal journeymen and faculty of the NSCC. The overwhelming response from this group was that Specialization was not the direction to go. They supported the original idea of Compulsory Certification. Based on most of the feedback received, the Committee did make a recommendation to the Board that Specialization of the Carpenter trade NOT proceed. In the Spring of 2020, the Board agreed with the recommendation of the Committee.

The Board also concluded the work of the Committee and said that the idea of Compulsory Certification would not be considered any further until such time as a new application was made.



Simultaneous to this process over the years, pressure has been applied to the Nova Scotia government to support Apprenticeship and Certified trades in its own procurement policies. A few years ago during the construction program of six new schools, they did ask contractors to sign a letter of engagement with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education confirming that they supported the Apprenticeship system and would employ at least one (yes, one) apprentice. Obviously, this did not go as far as most wanted. Very recently, the province of NS has started introducing language in its tenders required that 25% of the tradespeople must be registered Apprentices, and of those 25%, a portion of them must be Women, African Nova Scotians, Indigenous and New Canadians.

What does this mean for the Carpentry trade and the Carpenters Union, in particular? Obviously, this will increase the demand for registered Apprentices. Carpenters who are already registered should be easily able to fill these positions as these projects get underway. Carpenters who have years of experience but have never registered as an apprentice will be able to do so. There should be no shortage of people to fill these spots. To employ and supervise these apprentices, Red Seal Journeypersons will also be required and may likely be in short supply. Carpenters who have their Red Seal will be in demand.

One of the other avenues available to experienced carpenters to get their Red Seal is through the Trade Qualifier. Basically, you must demonstrate that you have 10,800 hours of experience in all aspects of the trade and challenge an exam. Any carpenters who have the experience and do not plan to retire in the next few years, should give serious consideration to pursuing the Trade Qualifier route. Your union offers training to prepare you for the exam. Financial supports are likely to be in place to help with the cost of the exam as the NSAA and employers work to fill the demand.

So, what is the connection between Compulsory Certification and these new Procurement policies? Compulsory Certification addresses many, if not all the challenges imposed by that these Procurement policies. This may be the opportune time for a new application for Compulsory Certification.

In conclusion, here are some recommendations for consideration:

- If you are a registered apprentice, see it through to completion.
- If you are not a registered apprentice, get registered.
- If you are an experienced carpenter and you have the necessary experience to go the Trade Qualifier route, pursue it.
- If you are already a Red Seal, encourage your coworkers to pursue certification and make sure the apprentices get the experience they need.
- If you reside and work in one of the other Atlantic provinces outside NS, encourage your provincial government to implement similar Procurement policies that support Apprenticeship.
- As an organization, consider what role you can play both in NS and beyond, in continuing to professionalize the trade and supporting the case for Compulsory Certification.

Due to COVID19 protocols, and public health orders, our class sizes are limited in numbers as physical distancing must be observed. The CMC has implemented all necessary precautions and policies for all of our staff and students. We also must adhere to a strict NO SHOW fee policy, as all of our safety courses and programs are in high demand, and every seat we offer is in demand. If you are registered, you are expected to attend, and if you do not cancel in advance, you will be charged the fee for that course, and no further training can be accessed through CMC until that fee is paid.

Also, please make sure to complete your UBCJA COVID19 Preparedness orientation online, you must have this 25 min program finished before you can attend any classes. Contact the CMC at 902 252 3553 to find out how to access this online, and to register yourself for upcoming Fall Arrest, Confined Space, Forklift/ Telehandler, and other classes today. We are offering classes in our Stellarton location on a monthly basis as well as PEI. Any questions you may have please contact Director Len Bryden at 902 252 3553 Ext 2073, Stay trained, and stay safe!

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