



November 25, 2020

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development Youth Advisors:

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RE: HRAI SUBMISSION FOR YOUTH ADVISORS

HRAI-Canada is the national trade association for the heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration (HVACR) industry, representing over 1,250 member companies across the country and about approximately 900 businesses in Ontario. Our members include manufacturers, wholesalers and contractors who collectively employ tens of thousands of skilled trade professionals across the country and contribute more than \$12B annually to the Canadian economy. HRAI also provides technical certification training that is recognized throughout Canada.

HRAI appreciated the opportunity to meet on Monday, November 9 and to discuss how we can work together to attract and develop the workforce needed within the broader skilled trades sector and for the HVACR sector in particular. If your schedules allow, HRAI would be pleased to host virtual roundtable(s) discussions with some of our members and representative from key industry partners including the Ontario Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Contractors Association (ORAC), the Ontario Geothermal Association (OGA), the Canadian Institute for Plumbing Heating of (CIPH), the Residential Heating, Ventilation and Cooling Association (RHVCA) and others. Please let us know.

In addition to the recommendations outlined below, HRAI recognizes the need for the HVACR industry to do a better job of supporting those attempting to enter the trades, specifically a need for industry to provide more mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute.

Martin Luymes
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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Start where it counts:** Work with the Minister of Education to develop a Ministry of Education Skilled Trades Strategy with includes more emphasis on trade career opportunities at the secondary school level. This should also include dedicated personnel in every school and every school board who can connect students to trade career opportunities based on interests of demonstrated aptitudes. Rather than designating trades as “Plan B” learning paths, there should be more explicit connection of trades to relevant mainstream academic subjects like math, physics and chemistry (e.g. using examples relevant to HVACR trades). This will provide the institutional sustainability needed to demonstrate the importance of and the need for skilled tradespeople.
- **Promote Trades differently:** Rebrand the trades to resonate more directly with the values and priorities of today’s students, which include the desire for meaningful and well compensated work, an interest in serving communities, a high comfort level with advanced technologies and concerns about addressing the climate crisis. Dedicate resources and commit to working with industry associations to rebrand and market the building trades as technically innovative and capable of delivering real solutions to issues like climate change and ensuring healthy indoor environments.
- **Modernize & Digitize Administrative Functions:** Administrative processes related to the tracking, certification and renewal of apprentices, apprenticeships, the education process and employers’ processes must be digitized as quickly as possible.
- **Continue the Achievement Incentive Grant:** Make this grant permanent to signal to industry, to youth, to parents/guardians and educators that improving the apprenticeship system is a long term strategy which requires ongoing investment to ensure the sector’s sustainability.

BREAKING THE STIGMA, ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS and ENCOURAGING YOUTH to ENTER THE TRADES

START WHERE IT COUNTS

To successfully address the issues associated with increased and sustained recruitment into the Skilled Trades sector, an informed strategy, sustainable funding and strong connections between industry and the education sector are required. A **Skilled Trades Strategy**, an **Education and Industry Expert Panel** and **updated curriculum** will improve the institutional sustainability needed to demonstrate the importance of and the need for skilled tradespeople.

HRAI recommends that the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Develop collaborate with the Ministry of Education and with industry representatives to develop a **Skilled Trades Strategy** which will include more emphasis on trade career opportunities at the secondary school level. This strategy should include dedicated personnel in every school and every school board who can connect students to trade career opportunities based on stated interests and demonstrated aptitudes.

In addition, an **Education and Industry Expert Panel** should be established to provide ongoing advice to the Ministry of Education. This would help define how industry can support the strategy and to ensure a strong connection between the school boards, schools and local businesses and organizations which require apprentices.

Particularly in the secondary school system, the following issues need to be addressed:

- **Curriculum:** Teachers and guidance personnel need to be better informed about career opportunities within the skilled trades and the process by which students can access those opportunities through pre-apprenticeship. As well, the curriculum itself requires some adjustment. For example, rather than designating the mechanical trades as non-academic “Plan B” or “Plan C” learning paths, there should be more explicit connection of relevant mainstream academic subjects like math, physics and chemistry to the knowledge requirements for mechanical trades. Appropriate illustrations that connect to HVACR trades, e.g. heat pumps and other applications of the refrigeration cycle can be used as practical explanations of thermodynamic theory.
- **Dedicated Space:** Like other trades, the HVACR trades would benefit from dedicated teaching spaces at the secondary school level, to give students opportunities to see, experience and learn as they consider career options.
- **Industry Partnerships:** There are examples of successful local partnership initiatives between school boards and industry in support of HVACR labs in schools. HRAI members have partnered with schools and schools boards in several parts of the province to provide assistance where needed, including donations of equipment and expertise.

For example, at Elmira District Secondary School, HRAI Canada and local member companies

have, for over 15 years, supported the HVAC Technician Program. The school facility is certified by TSSA, allowing participating students to earn preliminary Gas Technician designation, which enables them to begin working in the trade upon graduation.

Partnerships like this are possible but unfortunately are rare exceptions to the rule and are not part of system planning. This needs to be explored and systemized.

- **Co-op Placements:** Trades must be offered as viable co-op opportunities for students. School boards, schools and industry needs to make space available for these learners.

PROMOTE THE TRADES DIFFERENTLY

Rebrand the Trades to focus on Climate Change and STEAM

Trade career opportunities should be packaged in ways that resonate more directly with the values and priorities of today's youth. These values include the desire for meaningful and well compensated work, an interest in serving communities, a high comfort level with advanced technologies and concerns about addressing the climate crisis. The Ministry should dedicate resources and commit to working with industry associations to rebrand and market the building trades as technically innovative and capable of delivering real solutions to issues like climate change and ensuring healthy indoor environments.

- **Climate Change:** Many youth want to contribute to addressing climate change. The Building Trades and Construction sectors' play a significant role in addressing climate change through the utilization of technologies and building science which will reduce carbon emissions being generated by homes and buildings.
- **STEAM:** Describe and market the variety of opportunities within the sector – entrepreneurship, research and development, financial management, innovative technology and problem solving – beyond the more traditional concept of being 'on the tools'. Tradespeople in the HVACR and Construction Trades sectors work with highly innovative tools and products, there is ongoing research and development in the sector and this needs to be communicated and marketed with and by all stakeholders, in particular by the relevant Ministries of Labour, Training and Skills Development and Education.

SUPPORTING YOUTH ENTERING THE SKILLED TRADES IMPROVING ACCESS AND PATHWAYS INTO APPRENTICESHIPS

MODERNIZE and DIGITIZE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

Administrative processes related to the tracking, certification and renewal of apprentices, apprenticeships, the education process and employers' processes must be digitized as quickly as possible. These processes, platforms and methods already exist and in particular are successfully utilized by, for example, the Joint Training and Apprenticeship Committee and other training organizations. It is imperative that digital tools and resources ensure:

- Apprentices, their hours and courses are clearly tracked throughout the process,
- Clarity and consistency regarding the next steps in the apprenticeship process.
- Ministry contacts – which change frequently – are consistently updated and maintained,
- Next steps for the apprentice, the college, the ministry and the employer are clear, readily available and understood.
- All trade licenses, certifications and renewals are tracked, updated and accessible as required to those legitimately requiring access.

CONTINUE THE ACHIEVEMENT INCENTIVE GRANT

HRAI applauds the recent decision by the province to create an **Achievement Incentive Grant** with a \$21 million investment in 2020–2021 to encourage small and medium employers to train apprentices towards program completion and trade certification. This is a step in the right direction. Given that the vast majority of the businesses required to support and train apprentices are small businesses (1 to 20 employees), it is important that there is a recognition of the human and financial resources they dedicate to this process.

HRAI recognizes the need for the HVACR industry to better support those attempting to enter the trades by providing more mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities. Programs of this sort can make a significant difference.

HRAI recommends that the **Achievement Incentive Grant** be made permanent as a signal to industry, to youth, to parents/guardians and to educators that improving the apprenticeship system is a long term commitment which requires ongoing investment to ensure the sector's sustainability.

CREATE A GAS TECHNICIAN TRADE

Certification of Gas Technicians is the responsibility of the Technical Safety Standards Authority (TSSA) rather than the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD). Oversight of virtually all other certified trades and apprenticeships is the responsibility of the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

In most provinces, the Gas Technician certification is a trade. Creating an apprenticeship program for gas technicians or deeming it a trade would simply bring Ontario into alignment with other provinces. However, TSSA and MLTSD are separate organizations with distinct revenue models and accountabilities to government. For years, the two agencies have not found a mutually agreeable solution that would address this regulatory anomaly.

Currently in Ontario, as a recent survey of HRAI members articulated, there is no clear apprenticeship pathway for youth, New Canadians, guidance teachers, parents and others to see, understand and navigate in order to begin training for this much needed skilled trade. It is imperative that high quality training and a clear, timely pathway through the apprenticeship program to graduation is established.

Further, the Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table, established under the Canada Free Trade Agreement, has made commitments under its 2019/2020 work plan to continue working toward the removal of barriers to inter-provincial/territorial trade, investment, services and labour mobility.

This is the opportune time to discuss the creation of a Gas Technician Trade. This is an issue of importance to the HVACR sector.

HRAI and ORAC have a constructive working relationship with TSSA and would be pleased to enter discussions with representatives from the MGCS and MLTSD to determine an effective way to resolve this issue in order to create alignment with other jurisdictions and to increase labour mobility.

HRAI recommends that HRAI, ORAC, TSSA, MGCS and MLTSD officials negotiate an agreement whereby a Gas Technician Trade is created. This would create a clear apprenticeship pathway and address the significant need for these skilled workers.