

**BRIEF TO THE COMMISSION ON  
POST-SECONDARY  
EDUCATION**

**Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification**

**Submitted by:**

**The Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Board**

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## **PREFACE**

The New Brunswick Apprenticeship system presently faces issues of a magnitude unprecedented in its 63-year history in this province. These issues represent not only challenges to the survival of Apprenticeship, but an opportunity to change and re-vitalize the system to better serve the needs of the workforce in order for it to contribute to the New Brunswick socio-economic environment.

The purpose of this paper is to preserve the fundamental principles of effective industry training, while supporting the adaptation necessary to enable the system to thrive in a new competitive environment.

Other Post-Secondary training systems are moving to emulate many features of Apprenticeship. The Apprenticeship system meanwhile needs to forge ahead towards even greater investment in a Human Resource Development Strategy which is more effectively integrated into the labour market.

## BACKGROUND

Apprenticeship is believed to be one of the oldest forms of formal education. The vast and rapid development of this country has been greatly due to the immigration of labourers who brought with them not only trade skill knowledge, but also methods of ensuring that their knowledge would be passed along.

In 1944 New Brunswick acted on a Federal Government Commission's report by passing the *Apprenticeship Act*. In doing so New Brunswick formalized Apprenticeship training, which previously had been carried out in an arbitrary manner.

Under the *Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Act*, the Branch strives to undertake programs that contribute to the economic and social environment of New Brunswick. Since Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification is a "value added" program, many individuals have received essential skills leading to sustainable employment.

With over 41,000 New Brunswickers being certified in more than 80 designated occupations since the inception of the Apprenticeship program, Apprenticeship has truly met its mandate of undertaking programs that contribute to the provincial socio-economic environment.

Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification is responsible to provide New Brunswick industry a skilled labour force in the occupations designated under the *Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Act*.

Out of the current 72 designated occupations, Apprenticeship provides training opportunities and certification in 58 occupations, it provides certification only in the other 14 occupations. The certification in 44 occupations is recognized throughout Canada by way of the Interprovincial (Red Seal) Standards Program.

In order to offer Apprenticeship Training and Occupational Certification, the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Branch is structured around two delivery units.

**Regional Services** are comprised of the registering of apprentices, monitoring of on-the-job and in-school training as well as the completion of apprentices and the promotion of all services. Regional services are provided by 27 staff.

**Central Services** includes developing training and evaluation standards, purchasing and coordinating the technical training, evaluating the achievement of standards and the issuing of certification. A staff of 14 is presently performing these services. Central Services also includes activities involving New Brunswick's participation in the Interprovincial Standards Program as well as coordinating the province's share of this partnership with the rest of Canada.

## **APPRENTICESHIP IS BASED ON FOUR PRINCIPLES**

Apprenticeship is organized around a number of essential principles. While the format and organization of Apprenticeship Training could change, the following fundamental principles must be protected.

- 1) The substantial and critical part of training that occurs in the workplace;
- 2) Provincial and Interprovincial standards for training and evaluation set by Industry;
- 3) A genuine partnership among employers, workers, government and training institutions forms the basis of the training system;
- 4) Industry is provided ownership of the Apprenticeship program through:
  - the approval of technical and on-the-job training standards;
  - the granting of credit for prior learning and work experience, and
  - the endorsement of a widely recognized certification system.

## **PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER JURISDICTIONS**

The Interprovincial (Red Seal) Program, which is the flagship of the Apprenticeship system across Canada, represents the Pan-Canadian standards for certification which forms the basis of portable training and workforce mobility. The Red Seal Program is managed by the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship and the Federal Department of Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

## **APPRENTICESHIP AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATION BOARD**

For the purposes of Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification, the industry is primarily represented by the Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Board, which includes representatives of the employers, contractors' associations, organized labour and employees, who are participants in the Apprenticeship system.

### **CURRENT ISSUES**

1. Apprenticeship Training Funding
2. Apprenticeship Branch Funding
3. Positioning Apprenticeship in the Post-Secondary Education System
4. Expansion of Apprenticeship
5. Revision of the Apprenticeship Act & Regulations
6. An Integrated Human Resource Development Strategy

The Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Branch will demonstrate its commitment and leadership by meeting challenges which are facing Apprenticeship in a manner which addresses these six compelling current issues. It will also preserve and enhance a proven training program and extend its benefits to other sectors of the economy.

Industry, because of its substantial investment in the workplace training component of Apprenticeship, as well as its significant, although indirect, participation over standards and curricula for Apprenticeship training, should be provide with stronger responsibility in the co-ordination and administration of its system in order to address these issues to its satisfaction.

The interests of employers, workers and governments around industry training are substantially aligned with effective training that will provide:

- workers with labour market relevant skills, providing employability;
- employers with an adaptable, skilled workforce so they can compete effectively and expand in the marketplace;
- employment opportunities that will meet the socio-economic development objectives of government.

Apprenticeship Stakeholders must assume the leadership role in designing the future of Apprenticeship. If it fails to meet this challenge, others will undoubtedly come up with their own solutions for industry. Past experience has proven that when solutions for Apprenticeship are not identified by its Stakeholders, industry's needs are not given top priority.

*1. Apprenticeship Training Funding*

As a workplace-based training system, Apprenticeship already attracts a substantial investment in training from industry. The classroom portion of Apprenticeship training, however, is funded by the provincial government. Not being considered by government as a Post-Secondary Education program, Apprenticeship has suffered the effects of budget cuts that were not inflicted on other Post-Secondary Education programs. Considering the needs for trades people in the construction sector in the next 5-10 years in New Brunswick and across Canada, Industry is concerned about the capacity for the College network in being able to deliver to Industry's needs.

*2. Apprenticeship Branch Funding*

Not being considered by government as a stand alone autonomous Post-Secondary Education program, Apprenticeship has suffered financially from being transferred from department to department and from division to division. This has caused a limited allocation of human resources, which does not allow the Apprenticeship program to evolve at the same rate as in other Canadian jurisdictions and in such a way to address Industry's needs.

*3. Positioning Apprenticeship in the Post-Secondary Education System*

Apprenticeship has always been part of the Post-Secondary Education and Training System in New Brunswick. Until recently, however, it has not generally been recognized as such. There are reasons for this. A large part of Apprenticeship training occurs in the workplace where it is invisible to the public; the visible component of Apprenticeship training is delivered mainly by NBCC/CCNB, creating the impression that it is part of the college network. Apprenticeship has also suffered from the lack of understanding of the Apprenticeship program.

Apprenticeship is finally emerging as a recognized part of the Post-Secondary Education System. While it is a part of the system, it is distinct because it is based on a workplace-based training partnership. As part of the overall Post-Secondary Education System, Apprenticeship must position itself to compete effectively.

Apprenticeship needs a strong voice at the larger Post-Secondary Education table so that it can protect its interests. It can also advocate the comparative advantage of Apprenticeship training in order to extend the benefits of the system to other sectors of industry and the provincial economy in general.

#### *4. Expansion of Apprenticeship*

Apprenticeship is a proven and cost-effective training system. The New Brunswick socio-economic situation would benefit by using the Apprenticeship model of training in many non-traditional sectors of the economy. New groups of labour market entrants would also be able to benefit from the advantages of this model. For this to take place, the system must be expanded. Apprenticeship must also be marketed more effectively to young people who are considering career choices. The Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Board, with support from the Apprenticeship Branch, has worked with the high school system to improve awareness of Apprenticeship as the preferred method for reaching a career in the skilled trades.

This new awareness of the skilled trades will promote access to Apprenticeship by a much wider audience of high school students, including young men and women, students of aboriginal ancestry, and students of all academic achievement levels.

Many recent initiatives have demonstrated the flexibility and responsiveness of the Apprenticeship model. The Apprenticeship program must be strategically positioned to thrive in a changing competitive environment.

#### *5. Revision of the Apprenticeship Act & Regulations*

The legislation and regulations governing Apprenticeship in New Brunswick were revised about ten years ago. At the time of the last revision, many of the current issues and challenges facing Apprenticeship had not been contemplated. As the environment in which the Apprenticeship

system exists changes, so must the provincial *Act* which defines and regulates Apprenticeship.

The present *Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification Act* is silent on many important issues facing Apprenticeship. It will need to be reviewed and revised in order to give the Apprenticeship system the flexibility and tools it needs to manage the current issues.

#### 6. *An Integrated Human Resource Development Strategy*

Business, individual and provincial economic prosperity depends on an effective Human Resource Development Strategy. The effectiveness of such a strategy in a particular sector is measured by the extent to which it can integrate skill development with labour market needs.

An Integrated Human Resource Development Strategy delivers several fundamental benefits. It ensures that:

- private and public sector investment in training is made in relevant skills and knowledge;
- individuals receive training which meets current industry standards and is backed up by a widely recognized certification system;
- an adequate, but not excessive, supply of skilled labour is available for business operations and expansion.

As a standardized, accredited, workplace-based training system, Apprenticeship is the model of an Integrated Human Resource Development Strategy. But Apprenticeship presently only addresses relevant skills and knowledge training that is required for certification under the *Act* in use. Apprenticeship cannot rest on its past achievements. As the world changes around us, industry must take the necessary steps to protect and enhance the effectiveness of its skilled workforce. In order to keep the New Brunswick employers' current with the world market, they need to be provided with a workforce current with the world market's required skills and knowledge. The Apprenticeship Branch, being in constant contact with industry, is best placed within the Post-Secondary Education network to provide industry with continuous training for its workforce. The Apprenticeship Branch needs to be given the responsibility and authority to develop and coordinate the delivery of post-certification and continuous training.



## CONCLUSION

New Brunswick, in the development of a self-sufficient economy, should take advantage of the benefits of the Apprenticeship program. As a provincial Post-Secondary Education program, it is the most cost effective training model for the New Brunswick taxpayers.

Apprenticeship is a very worthwhile program for employers as well. It has been demonstrated through a national study that apprentices during their training, where they receive wages from employers, will bring a return on investment of 40%.

Apprenticeship must be provided the means and the resources to allow Industry to be competitive by providing it with a skilled workforce as well as helping Industry in keeping that workforce skilled.

The Apprenticeship authority must ensure that the Apprenticeship program continues to provide a benchmark for workforce training against which all other Human Resource Development Strategies are measured.