

Beyond the Red Seal: Building an Inclusive Future for Skilled Trades in Canada

Prepared For: CCWESTT

Prepared By: Mary Fuke

June 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Apprenticeship in Canada.....	1
Overview of the Canadian Apprenticeship System.....	1
Designation of Trades.....	4
Pipeline to Skilled Trades Professions	5
Comparison to Other Apprenticeship Systems	7
Gender Disparity in Interprovincial Mobility	9
Conclusion	11
References	13
Appendices	15
Appendix A: Key Terminology	15
Appendix B: National Apprenticeship Information	16

Introduction

Skilled trades are the backbone of Canada's infrastructure, economy, and innovation. Since the formalization of the apprenticeship system in 1952, Canada has developed a complex but responsive network of policies, programs, and partnerships aimed at supporting and expanding the skilled trades workforce. At the heart of this system lies the apprenticeship model—an industry-driven approach that blends on-the-job training with classroom instruction and culminates in trade certification. This paper provides an overview of Canada's skilled trades and apprenticeship system, examining the roles of federal and provincial governments, the structure and access pathways for apprentices, and the challenges and opportunities that shape participation. Special attention is given to equity in the trades, particularly the barriers that continue to limit women's full participation and mobility within the system. The paper concludes with comparisons to international models and practical recommendations for fostering a more inclusive and effective apprenticeship landscape in Canada.

Apprenticeship in Canada

Apprenticeships are defined as a formal, paid training program where individuals learn a skilled trade by combining on-the-job training with technical classroom instruction. It leads to trade certification, often a Red Seal.

Figure 1: Differences between Apprenticeship and other Work-Integrated Learning Programs

Feature	Apprenticeship	Co-operative Education	Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)
Certification Outcome	Journeyman/trade cert.	Academic degree/diploma	Experience or credit only
Paid	Yes	Usually	Varies
Regulated	Yes (trade-based)	No	No
Duration	2-5 years	4-16 months	Varies widely
Structure	On the job (80 – 90 %) + In school terms (10-20%)	Alternating work + study terms	Mix of work and academic (varies)

Overview of the Canadian Apprenticeship System

In Canada, responsibilities for apprenticeship and skilled trades are shared between the federal and provincial governments, which assists individuals, registered apprentices and employers.

a) Federal Government

The Federal government's roles include those responsibilities that apply to skilled trades and the apprenticeship system nationally. This includes providing financial assistance, policy development, addressing workforce needs, and promoting awareness of the skilled trades.

- i. *Policy Development*: develops and implements policies and programs that support the skilled trades such as the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy, Union Training Innovation Program and more.

- ii. *Financial Assistance*: Funding is available to both apprentices and employers such as Loans and Grants for Apprentices, Tax Credits for Employers. This includes the Apprenticeship Completion Grant and the Canada Apprentice Loan for apprentices and the Apprenticeship Service fund for employers.
- iii. *Project Funding*: Funding for projects that support apprenticeship initiatives, including training equipment investments, innovation funding, workforce development and promotion of apprenticeships and skilled trades. An example of this is the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy. See more details below
- iv. *Promoting Awareness*: The federal government promotes skilled trades as a career option through various initiatives, including advertising campaigns and partnerships with educational institutions.
- v. *Red Seal Program*: Formally called the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program, this program provides common standards for a set of skilled trades that are known across Canada. This program promotes labour mobility, instils pride in journeypersons and promotes excellence to employers. More details on this program can be found in the section below. They oversee the development of the Red Seal Trade standards and certification (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024).
- vi. *Ellis Chart*: The Ellis Chart provides a comparative analysis of certification and apprenticeship programs across Canada. This online resource provides high level information for individuals to compare different trades programs; however more detailed information can be found on that province or territory's website. This chart is produced and maintained by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) in collaboration with the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024). A link to the Ellis Chart can be found in Appendix B: Resources.
- vii. *Canadian Council of Directors for Apprenticeship*: The Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) is a voluntary intergovernmental partnership among the provinces and territories, which are responsible for apprenticeship training and trade certification, and the federal government. The CCDA supports the development of the apprenticeship system and manages the Red Seal Program. The purpose of the 15-member council is to provide a forum for inter-jurisdictional collaboration on trades and apprenticeship. The council itself does not have any regulatory powers; however, membership is made up of one official from each province and territory, and 2 representatives from the federal department of Employment and Social Development Canada. Each member is accountable to the jurisdiction they represent and may hold regulatory powers through their home province or territory (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018).

b) Federal Government Programs to Support the Apprenticeship System

i. Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy

The Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy is a funding program targeted to support skilled trades (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024). The program assists apprentices, employers, unions, and other organizations that take part in the apprenticeship system.

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- promote careers in the skilled trades.
- help individuals explore, prepare for, participate, and succeed in apprenticeship
- help employers and unions participate in apprenticeship
- encourages new tools and approaches to better prepare pre-apprentices, apprentices, and journeypersons for the jobs of tomorrow

The strategy includes many different ways to support its purpose such as:

- funding for training equipment purchases
- funding for innovation in apprenticeship
- funding for green training
- funding for career exploration activities, skills training and work placements
- funding for organizations to support small and medium-sized employers of Red Seal apprentices
- taxable cash grants for Red Seal apprentices
- funding for organizations to support women apprentices

Funds from this program can help support pre-employment and/or pre-apprenticeship programs that are discussed further in this paper. Other programs that are offered include the Union Training Improvement Program (UTIP), Women in Skilled Trades (WIST) and more. All federal and provincial governments may offer new programs and discontinue others as the labour market evolves and needs change.

c) Provincial and Territorial Governments

The provincial government's role in the apprenticeship system is to create a supportive and effective apprenticeship system that fosters skilled trades and meets the needs of the workforce. Provincial governments play a crucial role in regulating and supporting apprenticeship systems. They establish legislation, set standards, provide financial support, and ensure the system's effectiveness, ultimately aiming to develop a skilled workforce (Careers in Trades, 2018). **Appendix A** provides links to all websites for provincial and territorial apprenticeship systems to explore further

i. Legislation and Regulation:

Provincial governments enact legislation that outlines the framework for apprenticeship programs, including registration requirements, training standards, and certification procedures. They establish regulations that ensure the quality and consistency of apprenticeship training across the province. They may appoint directors of apprenticeship to monitor the progress of apprentices and certify their successful completion of training.

For more information regarding the designation of trades in Designation of Trades section below.

ii. Financial Support:

Provincial governments provide financial assistance to apprentices through various programs, such as grants, tax credits, and bursaries. They may offer funding for tool purchases, exam preparation courses, or training-related expenses. They also provide grants to employers to help them cover the costs of on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs. Each province is unique and may provide funding, or other programs that support the needs of their province. It may not align with the needs of other provinces across Canada.

iii. System Oversight and Administration:

Provincial governments oversee the apprenticeship system through crown corporations or other government agencies. For example, Skilled Trades Ontario is responsible for regulatory decisions, financial support, and compliance and enforcement for the Ontario apprenticeship system. Similarly, British Columbia established Skilled Trades BC (formerly ITA BC) to oversee their apprenticeship system. In contrast, the Quebec government itself oversees all aspects of the apprenticeship system.

iv. Promoting and Supporting the Skilled Trades:

Provincial governments work to promote careers in the skilled trades and encourage more people to enter apprenticeship programs. Depending on their individualized mandate, they may offer career counseling and job search assistance to apprentices and employers. They may also invest in initiatives to reduce barriers to entry for apprenticeship programs, such as lowering academic requirements or creating alternative pathways.

v. Collaboration and Partnerships:

Provincial governments collaborate with various stakeholders, including employers, unions, education institutions, and training providers, to ensure the apprenticeship system meets the needs of the workforce. They may establish advisory committees to gather input and recommendations from these stakeholders. In order to ensure apprenticeship in-class training is updated many provinces have established advisory committees made up of industry representatives to review content and provide feedback for curriculum development. However, for some trades the curriculum cannot keep up to the rapid pace of innovation and change which puts the apprentice behind in the knowledge

Designation of Trades

In order for an occupation to be recognized within an apprenticeship system it must be formally designated under a province or territory's apprenticeship legislation. Each province is responsible for designating and de-designating trades which is why the number of designated trades varies across Canada. **Figure 2** outlines the number of designated trades for each province with Ontario and British Columbia having the highest number of trades. Provinces are given this oversight and authority as each province has diverse needs and the designation of an occupation typically begins due to a skills gap, need for formalized training and certification, a demonstrated labour market demand, a public safety concern, or a combination of these factors. The only coordination of designated trades is completed through the Red Seal program. Each province determines the

process to rationalization if a trade is designated, however they all follow similar rationale including:

1. **Identification of Need:** The initiation of the process may be triggered by industry groups, unions, employers, training institutions or government.
2. **Proposal Submission:** A formal proposal or request is submitted to the appropriate apprenticeship authority which outlines the name and description of the occupation to be considered; core job tasks and duties; rationale for the request; and support from industry stakeholders.
3. **Stakeholder Consultation:** The apprenticeship authority reviews the proposal and consults with various groups to confirm industry support, relevance of the request to the current needs of the labour market
4. **Occupational Analysis:** This may be conducted to define the skills and knowledge required, job scope and working conditions and training requirements. This analysis is used to form the basis of the training and certification if the occupation is designated
5. **Decision and Approval:** Once all steps have been completed the proposal is evaluated and a decision is rendered by a formal review panel or advisory board.
6. **Program and Certification Development:** If approved, the program is developed including curriculum, training standards, required hours for technical and on-the-job training and certification criteria.
7. **Designation and Implementation:** In order for the occupation to official become designated the province or territory's legislation must be amended and approved by the Legislative Assembly and obtain Royal Assent. (Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, 2022)

Only trades that are designated within a province or territory can be issued a Certificate of Qualification upon completion of the apprenticeship program and pass the exam by the provincial or territorial apprenticeship authority. Once a trade is designated, a review process is implemented to periodically evaluate the program ensuring it remains relevant and in demand. Trades that are deemed not relevant may be de-designated and the corresponding apprenticeship program discontinued. For example, in 2005 British Columbia discontinued Horse Logger as designated trade due to the increased use of machinery in the industry (qathet Museum and Archives, 2024; Skilled Trades BC, 2024).

With no standardized approach, many can find it confusing when each province has a different number of designated trades and may become frustraed when navigating the apprenticehsip system.

Pipeline to Skilled Trades Professions

There are many pathways that lead individuals to apprenticeship and careers in the skilled trades.

1. Youth Programs

Youth apprenticeship programs across Canada share common goals and structural elements, but they differ significantly by province and territory as education is a provincial jurisdiction. There are similarities and differences between the provinces and territories which include, name of the program and each province has its own unique feature that addresses the needs of

that province. Similarities include target groups, dual credit recognition, early entry to the skilled trades and partner collaboration, whereas some key differences are name of the program, incentives, eligibility and level of recognition for credits earned (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022).

Figure 2: Designated Trades Across Canadian Provinces and Territories, including Red Seal Trades

Province/Territory	Total Designated Trades	Red Seal Trades Offered	Non-Red Seal Trades
Red Seal	54	54	---
Alberta	53	53	0
British Columbia*	120	54	66
Manitoba	55	54	1
Saskatchewan	49	44	5
Ontario	144	54	90
Quebec	57	54	3
New Brunswick	70	54	16
Nova Scotia	70	54	16
Prince Edward Island	70	54	16
Newfoundland & Labrador	72	54	18
Yukon	54	53	0
Northwest Territories	53	53	0
Nunavut	54	54	0

Barriers exist to these programs such as employer shortages, transportation challenges, equity in the trades and interprovincial mobility. Although all youth programs are designed to address early exposure in the trades, some programs don't see participants until their last year of high school which allows for limited exposure before graduation. Also, mirroring the apprenticeship program, a shortage of employers exists for many reasons including availability of positions, insurance concerns due to age and lack of mentors. Rural and remote areas face additional challenges due to the lack of transportation options for students who do not have a driver's license or do not have access to public transportation. Interprovincial mobility is a challenge for these programs as transferring the apprenticeship hours can be complicated and/or may not be recognized by the province if the student relocates. Participants must apply to have their credits assessed by the incoming province for example, Skilled Trades Ontario lists Canadian Certificates that are recognized and also has a Trade Equivalency Assessment if your credential is not on the recognized list. (Skilled Trades Ontario, 2025)

2. Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

Pre-apprenticeship programs across Canada are designed to prepare individuals for entry into skilled trades (Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, 2025). Although it is similar to youth programs, these programs are usually formally recognized by the provincial apprenticeship system. While all provinces and territories offer such programs, they vary significantly in delivery, eligibility, focus, and funding. This model offers a direct connection to enter a formal apprenticeship program, has an emphasis on safety, trade specific foundational skills (such as math, communications and other skills) and includes hands on experiential learning. Many of these programs are funded through federal or provincial government grants. In Ontario, the Pre-Apprenticeship program is funded through the Minister of Immigration, Labour, Training and Skills Development, tuition-free and registers the participant with the apprenticeship program so it is directly connected so they receive credit for the first level of the trade upon successful completion of the program. Some provinces differ in contract, such as Alberta, some programs are not tuition free and may not be formally recognized by the apprenticeship system.

Overall, pre-apprenticeship programs in Canada share common goals, but reflect the unique labour needs, education systems, and demographic priorities of each province and territory. Ontario and British Columbia offer some of the most structured and accessible pathways, while regions like the Territories and Atlantic Canada face greater logistical and funding challenges.

3. **Specialized Training Programs (Workforce Development)**

Workforce development programs, also called pre-employment programs by some, is another option to encourage more under supported groups to engage in the skilled trades. These programs offer individuals an opportunity to upskill, reskill or start a career and help the economy adapt to changing labour market needs. They range in length and types of programs, but all help prepare the participants to find and maintain jobs in the field (ResearchFDI, 2023). Programs will vary across the provinces and territory as they tend to address gaps in the local labour market and some are funded by provincial and territorial government. Examples of funded programs and organizations include Women in Skilled Trades (Federal), Women's Economic Security Program (Ontario), Women Building Futures (Alberta) and Build Together – Women of the Building Trades(Canada's Building Trades Unions)

To learn more about these programs in your province please refer to the provincial apprenticeship link available in Appendix B.

Comparison to Other Apprenticeship Systems

Canada's apprenticeship system shares similarities with other global models but also has unique features shaped by its structure, industry-driven approach, and emphasis on mobility. Figure 4 shows a comparative overview of how Canada's system stacks up against five other prominent apprenticeship systems worldwide.

Key Strengths of Canada's System

The Red Seal Program is a unique feature of Canada’s apprenticeship system not offered by other jurisdictions. As discussed, it allows for consistent national standards that improves labour mobility across provinces (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024). Canada seems to lead in diversity efforts to support underrepresented groups in the trades (see Figure 5). Although results are slow, it is important to note that Canada sees this as an important problem to solve. It is also important that programs are designed with input from employers and unions. Lastly, Canada offers multiple pathways to enter apprenticeship such as the youth programs, pre-apprenticeships and other workforce development programs. Programs to support individuals are innovative and address the needs of the provincial and local labour markets.

Some areas of improvement in Canada are the fragmented structure of the systems, low completion rates and limited early exposure to the trades. In Germany, the vocational and education training (VET) system has an extensive dual system that involves the industry and in-school training starting at an earlier age than the Canadian system (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, ND). This contributes to gender imbalance as there is less exposure to these career options until high school in some cases.

Figure 4: Comparative Analysis: Canada vs Other Apprenticeship Systems

Feature	Canada	Germany	Australia	United Kingdom	United States
Governance	Shared by federal and provincial/territorial governments; provinces regulate training and certification.	Federal and state governments; tightly regulated under the Dual System.	National standards implemented at the state level.	National Apprenticeship Service; funded by UK government	Primarily federally regulated through the U.S. Department of Labor.
System Type	Industry-driven with Red Seal for interprovincial certification.	Dual system (school + company training); highly structured.	Competency-based, flexible duration.	Employer-led with government-approved standards.	Voluntary, flexible, and employer-led.
Length of Apprenticeship	2–5 years depending on trade.	Usually 3–3.5 years.	3–4 years typically.	1–4 years, depending on level.	Varies widely: 1–6 years.
Credential	Red Seal (interprovincial); Journeyperson Certificate. Provincial Certificate of Qualification and/or Certificate of Apprenticeship	State certification and chamber of commerce diploma.	Certificate III/IV or Diploma.	Levels 2–7 NVQs or apprenticeships.	Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship (CCA).
Funding	Government subsidies, tax credits; apprentices are often paid.	Companies pay; state funds schools.	Public funding + employer contribution.	Government covers most costs.	Public-private partnerships; some union-led.
Labour Mobility	Red Seal enables movement across provinces.	EU-wide recognition (within limits).	National system; some mutual recognition.	Recognized across the UK.	National registry exists, but recognition across states varies.
Equity & Access	Targeted supports for women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers.	Strong supports; but limited female participation in trades.	Inclusive initiatives (e.g., for Indigenous Australians).	Focus on social mobility; limited diversity in higher trades.	Underrepresentation of women and minorities; equity programs expanding.

Retention of women and those who identify as women continues to be an issue compared to other countries. Based upon the last data available in 2020-2021, Canada registers approximately

11.5% of women in apprenticeships, however this is low compared to Australia at 28% and 34% in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023). (OECD Publishing, 2023). In comparison, the number of women who complete reduces that number further in Canada as only 36% finish their apprenticeship (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2024). To put this into perspective for every 100 apprentice registrations in Canada only 12 are women and from those 12, only approximately 4 complete their apprenticeship. Overall, in Canada, completion rates continue to be a systemic problem as only approximately 46% complete across all genders (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2024). It was hard to find specific comparative completion statistics for Germany, Australia and the United Kingdom as they don't seem to publish these results, however the United States notes a completion rate of 7.3% in 2017, compared to 1.6% in Canada in 2016. (Hanks, McGrew, & Zessoules, 2018) (Statistics Canada, 2017)

Figure 5: Women in Apprenticeship: An International Comparison

Feature	Canada	Germany	Australia	United Kingdom	United States
% of Women in Apprenticeships	~14% overall; <5% in construction trades	~40% overall; <10% in skilled trades	~27% overall; <4% in construction & electrical	~50% overall; ~9% in engineering & construction	~13% overall; ~3% in construction, higher in health & services
Fields with High Female Participation	Hairstyling, baking, early childhood education	Retail, office administration, health care	Aged care, business admin, hairdressing	Health, childcare, customer service	Healthcare, early education, hospitality
Main Barriers	Gender bias, limited mentorship, lack of employer awareness, harassment	Cultural stereotypes, traditional career tracking in schools	Gendered assumptions, safety concerns, family responsibilities	Occupational segregation, lack of outreach in schools	Harassment, low visibility, lack of childcare or support
Inclusion Strategies	Government funding for equity groups; Women in Trades programs (e.g., SWIT, ITA-BC's Equity Action Plan)	Diversity campaigns, but limited targeted programming for tradeswomen	National Women in Apprenticeships initiative; wage subsidies for women	Diversity Champions Network; STEM-focused interventions	USDOL's Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) grants
Supports Available	Pre-apprenticeship for women; mentorship; childcare subsidies; equity targets (some provinces)	Mentorship is limited; employer-led initiatives vary by region	Strong VET sector focus; Indigenous & rural women supported	Diversity reporting required for larger employers	Non-profit and union-led mentorship; financial support for nontraditional trades
Trends & Outcomes	Slowly rising participation; equity-driven policies increasing	Participation remains low in technical trades; cultural norms persist	Focus on boosting Indigenous and rural women's access	Stronger growth in high-paying sectors for women	New federal investment expanding training and supports

Gender Disparity in Interprovincial Mobility

Over the years careers it is well-known that careers in the skilled trades have been traditionally male dominated, although Canada has been working towards balancing the scale and improving equity in skilled trade professions there is still a long way to go. Even though women and those who identify as women, represent almost 50% of workforce, less than 10% of Red Seal trades are held by women with the majority being in traditional careers such as hairstylist. Since the 1990's

the percentage of women in the skilled trades has risen by approximately 3.5 percentage points, which is not a significant change over a 25-year period (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2023) . Although some movement has been made, the barriers faced remain mostly unchanged. Interprovincial labour mobility in Canada—while designed to promote freedom of movement for workers—can unintentionally disadvantage gender equality in skilled trades due to several structural and social issues. This section will outline some of the existing barriers and why they continue to be a challenge to gender equality in the skilled trades workforce.

a) Uneven Recognition of Experience and Credentials

Under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, Chapter 7, Article 705.2, “each Party shall recognize any worker holding a jurisdictional certification bearing the Red Seal endorsement under the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program as qualified to practice the occupation identified in the certification” (Internal Trade Secretariat, 2024) which improves labour mobility for many but presents barriers for others. Many do not have this certification, especially those who are trained under non-standard or province/territory specific programs. There are currently 54 Red Seal trades, yet Ontario has over 140 designated trades, for example, so not all are recognized, nor will they have this endorsement. There are also other factors that affect mobility such as the type of designation trade. Welder, for example, is recognized as a Red Seal endorsed trade, yet in Alberta, welder is compulsory trade and in Ontario it is **not** required to complete an apprenticeship or hold a Certificate of Qualification to work in the field which adds to the complexity of the system. When a welder in Ontario moves to Alberta, they must apply to Apprenticeship and Industry Training, Trade Qualifier Program to have their education and experience assessed if they do not have a Certificate of Qualification which will determine if they meet the requirements in Alberta and/or what additional qualifications are required (Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training, 2025).

Another barrier is that women may struggle to reestablish qualification after returning from care-giving or part-time employment when moving across provinces. Since each province determines the number of apprenticeship hours and trade scopes there are differences across the jurisdictions requiring the individual to overcome additional hurdles such as re-training or re-testing (Careers in Trades, 2018).

b) Disproportionate Family Responsibilities

Employment in the skilled trades often requires workers to travel to job sites, especially in remote areas (e.g., oil and gas in Alberta or infrastructure in Northern Canada). Although family dynamics continue to change, women still tend to be less geographically mobile, due to family responsibilities and lack of support systems in new regions. Childcare is less likely to be available and connections to community support are not known (Statistics Canada, 2025). For these reasons, women can sometimes be overlooked for mobility-based hiring networks and union call-out lists.

c) Isolation and Lack of Support in New Locations

When women do relocate, they often enter new job sites without local peer networks or supports. Relocation can result in isolation, higher rates of harassment, and lack of access to women-specific mentorship or advocacy groups. Support programs for women in trades are often

provincially based, so moving provinces can mean losing access to vital resources (e.g., training programs, grants, or employment supports) (Statistics Canada, 2017).

d) Lack of Portability for Family and Childcare Supports

Family and child-related support programs (e.g., childcare subsidies, parental leave top-ups) are inconsistent across provinces. Women relocating for trades work may face reduced access to affordable childcare, impacting their ability to accept jobs or complete apprenticeships (Statistics Canada, 2025).

e) Disadvantages in Competitive Hiring Processes

Women are less likely to have interprovincial networks or union affiliations, both of which are key for finding trade jobs in new provinces. Hiring is often informal and word-of-mouth, favoring men with broader geographic ties and experience on regional projects (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Recommendations

In order to break down these barriers the following is recommended:

1. **Cross-Provincial Support Programs:** Better collaboration cross-province to provide access to community support prior to relocation
2. **Improve credential recognition:** For those who do not hold a Red Seal Endorsement or are apprentices there needs to be better alignment and recognition across jurisdictions. Completing this work and publishing it helps those who wish to relocate to another province understand credential recognition prior to arriving and may assist individuals in the decision making process.
3. **Increased access to childcare:** A national childcare model that is targeted to mobile workers and their families. On-site childcare options should be considered where possible. A collective model can be considered in a location where there are multiple employers that employ a mobile workforce.
4. **National reform to improve equity in hiring:** This continues to be an ongoing issue that can be partially alleviated through the implementation of the other recommendations noted. However, there is an ongoing need to address other issues such as harassment, and gender friendly job sites at both union and non-union shops.

Conclusion

Canada's apprenticeship and skilled trades system offers a wide array of pathways and supports for individuals pursuing careers in high-demand occupations. Strengths such as the Red Seal Program, targeted workforce development initiatives, and intergovernmental collaboration have made it possible for many Canadians to succeed in the trades. However, persistent challenges, including low completion rates, fragmented provincial systems, and gender disparities, continue to hinder progress. Some key takeaways include:

- **Underrepresentation in Skilled Trades is Global:** Despite overall apprenticeship growth, the number of women remains small in high-paying, non-traditional trades.

- **Cultural & Institutional Factors Matter:** Early education, stereotypes, and gender norms shape access and career choices continues to be issues in multiple jurisdictions.
- **Canada Shows Promise but Needs Scale Up:** Targeted initiatives are working, but broader systemic change is still required — especially for groups with increased complexity such as Indigenous and rural women.

Structural reforms to improve mobility, greater consistency in credential recognition, and enhanced supports for women and underrepresented groups are essential. By addressing these issues and learning from global best practices, Canada can strengthen its skilled trades workforce and ensure a more inclusive, adaptable, and resilient future.

References

- Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training. (2025). *Recognized Trade Certifications*. Retrieved from Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training: <https://tradesecrets.alberta.ca/become-certified/recognized-trade-certificates/?ddlTrade=0123&ddlJurisdiction=9>
- Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. (2023, September). *The Demographics of the Skilled Trades Workforce In Canada: Insights from the 2021 Census*. Retrieved from Canadian Apprenticeship Forum: <https://caf-fca.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2023-census-Report-EN-2.pdf>
- Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. (2024, April). *Apprenticeship Registration Trends and Completion Rates*. Retrieved from Canadian Apprenticeship Forum: <https://caf-fca.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024-04-UTIP-report-EN.pdf>
- Careers in Trades. (2018). *What's An Apprenticeship*. Retrieved from Careers In Trades: <https://careersintrades.ca/whats-an-apprenticeship/apprenticeship-systems/#:~:text=Apprenticeship%20regulation%20is%20the%20responsibility,start%20for%20information%20and%20guidance.>
- Employment and Social Development Canada. (2018, February 22). *Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship*. Retrieved from Red Seal - Sceau Rouge: <https://www.red-seal.ca/eng/about/ccda.shtml>
- Employment and Social Development Canada. (2022, April 27). *Understanding the Realities: Youth Employment in Canada – Interim report of the Expert Panel on Youth Employment, 2016*. Retrieved from Employment and Social Development Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/youth-expert-panel/interim-report.html>
- Employment and Social Development Canada. (2024, July 17). *About the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy*. Retrieved from Employment and Social Development Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/canadian-apprenticeship-strategy.html>
- Employment and Social Development Canada. (2024, October 29). *About the Ellis Chart*. Retrieved from Ellis Chart - Tableau Ellis: <https://www.ellischart.ca/eng/about/.2ll.3s.shtml#mb-pnl>
- Employment and Social Development Canada. (2024, December 5). *Red Seal Program*. Retrieved from Red Seal-Sceau Rouge: <https://www.red-seal.ca/eng/about/program.shtml>
- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training. (ND). *The German VET System*. Retrieved from Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training: <https://www.bibb.de/en/39.php>
- Hanks, A., McGrew, A., & Zessoules, D. (2018, July 11). *The Apprenticeship Wage and Participant Gap*. Retrieved from The Center for American Progress: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/apprenticeship-wage-participation-gap/>

- Internal Trade Secretariat. (2024, January 16). *Chapter 7 - Labour Mobility*. Retrieved from Canada Free Trade Agreement: <https://www.cfta-alec.ca/cfta-agreement/chapter-seven-labour-mobility>
- Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. (2025, April 2). *Pre-apprenticeship Training*. Retrieved from Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/pre-apprenticeship-training#:~:text=How%20to%20apply-,Overview,and%20tools%20are%20also%20covered>
- OECD Publishing. (2023). *Joining Forces for Gender Equality: What is holding us back?* Retrieved from OECD: <https://doi.org/10.1787/67d48024-en>
- ResearchFDI. (2023, August 4). *The Crucial Role of Workforce Development Programs in Fostering Economic Growth*. Retrieved from ReaserchFDI: <https://researchfdi.com/crucial-role-of-workforce-development-programs-fostering-economic-growth/#:~:text=These%20programs%20are%20designed%20to%20enhance%20the,and%20relevant%20in%20an%20ever%2Devolving%20job%20market.&text=Workforce%20development%20can%>
- Skilled Trades Ontario. (2025). *Experienced Workers*. Retrieved from Skilled Trades Ontario: <https://www.skilledtradesontario.ca/experienced-workers/>
- Statistics Canada. (2017, November 17). *Barriers to Labour Mobility in Canada: Survey Based Evidence*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-626-x/11-626-x2017076-eng.pdf?st=H1Cd9niB>
- Statistics Canada. (2017, 11 29). *Percentage of women and men aged 25 to 34 with an apprenticeship certificate, Canada 2006 and 2016*. Retrieved from The Daily: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171129/cg-a002-eng.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Statistics Canada. (2025, March 19). *Canadian Survey on the Provision of Child Care Services, 2024*. Retrieved from The Daily: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250319/dq250319b-eng.htm>
- Statistisches Bundesamt. (2023, April 12). *Vocational training in the dual system: number of new apprenticeship contracts slightly up in 2022*. Retrieved from Vocational Training: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Education-Research-Culture/Vocational-Training/_node.html

Appendices

Appendix A: Key Terminology

1. **Designated Trade** -Refers to an occupation that is designated or recognized by a government or regulatory body, typically under an apprenticeship or trade certification act. Designation of a trade means there are established industry standards, training and certification requirements and depending on the trade, restricted activities that can only be performed by qualified individuals
2. **Compulsory Trade** – a designated skilled trade that requires the individual to complete an apprenticeship and become certified or licensed to practice that trade. A trade is typically designated compulsory due to the potential risks to public safety. NOTE: Some provinces may have another term such as regulated trade
3. **Non-Compulsory Trade** – a designated skilled trade in a province or territory that does not require an individual to be certified to practice that trade. NOTE: Some provinces may use other terminology such as non-regulated trade
4. **Red Seal Endorsement** – Nationally recognized certification in Canada that signifies a tradesperson has met the national standards for that trade. Journeypersons can use this acronym to show the successful attainment of their Red Seal Certificate and professional status. This Red Seal Endorsement helps facilitate labour mobility across Canada
5. **Trade Equivalency Assessment** – An individual may be assessed to determine if their training and/or work experience from another country, province, or territory is equivalent to the current province or territory's standards. Each province has a process that must be followed to make this determination.
6. **Certificate of Qualification** – Official document that proves an individual is qualified to work in a particular provincial trade.
7. **Certificate of Apprenticeship** – Document issued to individual who has successfully completed all the requirements of a formalized apprenticeship training program.

Appendix B: National Apprenticeship Information

Province	Organization/Dept Name	Link
Red Seal	Red Seal Program	https://www.red-seal.ca/eng/welcome.shtml
Alberta	Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training	https://tradesecrets.alberta.ca/
British Columbia	Skilled Trades BC	https://skilledtradesbc.ca/
Manitoba	Apprenticeship Manitoba	https://www.gov.mb.ca/aesi/apprenticeship/
Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission	https://saskapprenticeship.ca/
Ontario	Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training & Skills Development Skilled Trades Ontario	https://www.ontario.ca/page/apprenticeship-ontario https://www.skilledtradesontario.ca/
Quebec	Le diplôme d'études professionnelles (DEP)	https://www.quebec.ca/en/employment/learn-trade-occupation
New Brunswick	Skilled Trades NB	https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/skilled-trades-nb.html
Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency	https://www.nsapprenticeship.ca/
Prince Edward Island	Ministry of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population	https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/workforce-advanced-learning-and-population/apprenticeship-program
Newfoundland & Labrador	Ministry of Jobs, Immigration and Growth	https://www.gov.nl.ca/atcd/
Yukon	Ministry of Education and Schools	https://yukon.ca/en/education-and-schools/apprentices-and-trades
Northwest Territories	Ministry of Education, Culture and Employment	https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/apprenticeship-trade-and-occupation-certification
Nunavut	Ministry of Employment, Training and Career Development	https://www.gov.nu.ca/en/employment-training-and-career-development/apprenticeship-trade-and-occupations-certification