

Government launching new Crown agency, Skilled Trades Ontario, to replace OCOT



Skilled Trades Ontario, a new Crown agency, would replace the Ontario College of Trades (OCOT).

By Jim Wilson
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Ontario is revamping apprenticeships in the province by introducing new measures to help tradespeople get their certification from one streamlined destination.

Under the legislation, Skilled Trades Ontario, a new Crown agency, would replace the Ontario College of Trades (OCOT), becoming the province's industry-informed training authority. Skilled Trades Ontario will lead the promotion, research and development of the latest apprenticeship training and curriculum standards.

“Skilled trades workers are the engine of our economy,” says Monte McNaughton, minister of labour, training and skills development. “Under the current system, responsibilities are shared between OCOT and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, causing confusion and added burden for people wanting to pursue a career in the skilled trades, which leads to employers struggling to find qualified skilled trades workers. That is why our government is building a skilled trades system that attracts more people into well-paying and meaningful careers that are truly life-changing.”

The new agency will also provide a “seamless, one-window experience” for client-facing services, including apprentice registration, issuance of certificates and renewals and conduct equivalency assessments, with many services offered digitally.

In March, [Ontario announced it is investing \\$47 million in apprenticeship programs through 2021-22.](#)

Feedback

The development has been well received by stakeholders, including the Residential & Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

“RCCAO commends Minister Monte McNaughton’s continued commitment to improving the skilled trades process and system in Ontario. The tabling of the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act is another step in the right direction in terms of simplifying and streamlining the provincial skilled trades and apprenticeship system,” it says in a LinkedIn post.

“These types of initiatives, especially around having clear and consistent pathways to entering the system, are crucial to ensuring that we have the workforce necessary to support Ontario’s infrastructure needs and pandemic recovery efforts.”

“Thank you Monte McNaughton for introducing the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act. If passed this legislation will make Ontario's skilled trades and apprenticeship system more efficient, accessible, and easier to navigate,” says the Ontario Sewer And Watermain Construction Association, also on LinkedIn.

"The union supports the changes including the decision to maintain compulsory trades and scopes of practice for tradespeople," says John Breslin, Unifor national skilled trades director.

Skilled trades Panel

The legislation was the province’s response to the Skilled Trades Panel’s first report, which recommended that Ontario streamline and simplify the apprenticeship system by establishing a new Crown agency.

The labour and trade ministry will provide system oversight and will be responsible for regulatory decisions and financial supports for the new agency. It will also be responsible for compliance and enforcement of the skilled trades, building on existing expertise, best practices and a robust inspector network that is already in place across the province.

“We heard loud and clear from apprentices, journeypersons and employers alike that OCOT is not working,” says McNaughton. “Following our expert panel's recommendations, we are taking a thoughtful and measured approach by launching Skilled Trades Ontario, a new agency that will put the trades first.”

The Skilled Trades Panel is currently consulting on Phase 2 of its mandate, which will focus on classification and training in the trades. Stakeholders can take part in the online consultation [here](#).

Ontario also previous invested [\\$21 million in pre-apprenticeship training programs to help those facing employment barriers to start careers in the skilled trades](#).