

# **Human Resource Development Strategy (Phase 2)**

## **Residential Construction Industry**

- **Implementation of the Initial Steps Proposed in the Sector Partnership Study**
- **Residential Construction Industry Career Development Strategy**

July 2001

Final Report

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### The Issues

- The fundamental challenge facing the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan is current and future capacity.
- The current construction occupational descriptions do not break down the residential components of each occupation.
- The existing apprenticeship program and provincial training programs for construction trades and workers are very comprehensive, with significant portions devoted to non-residential construction.
- Based on the results of a survey of the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan last year, the major issues identified were:
  - shortage of skilled workers (particularly in the carpentry trades)
  - low wages
  - young people not entering the trades
  - poor image of the industry
  - underground economy

### The Strategy

- In order to address these issues, a training strategy was developed to encourage individuals to pursue a career in residential construction and to promote a professional image of the industry. The strategy was for industry, in partnership with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, to develop residential occupations, which would lead to training and certification within the provincial apprenticeship system. The goal is to ensure that all people entering the residential construction industry have the opportunity to work towards a designation within the provincial apprenticeship system.
- As the first step towards achieving this goal, the following objectives were identified:
  - Develop a list of all the different job functions within the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan
  - Group job functions into residential occupations
  - Develop a validated description of each occupation in terms of the following:
    - Primary Tasks
    - Working Conditions
    - Abilities, Skills & Knowledge
    - Education & Training Requirements
    - Employment & Advancement
    - Salary
  - Review the existing Occupational Analyses to determine which ones can be used to develop training programs for residential occupations, and whether or not additional analyses need to be produced

## **The Study**

- A list of job activities (both in the office and in the field) was compiled by interviewing construction managers and other individuals involved in, and knowledgeable about, the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan. With their assistance, the job activities were then grouped into residential construction occupations.
- A Development Group and a Validation Group were compiled to help develop occupational profiles for each identified occupation. The groups consisted of people that have worked in residential construction for several years on a daily basis, and ranged from individuals working in large organizations to those working in small, owner-operated companies. The responses from the Development Group were used to develop draft Occupational Profiles.
- The draft Occupational Profiles were sent to the Validation Group, which was asked to verify the information in the Occupational Profiles.
- Because the Occupational Analyses do not distinguish between tasks for non-residential and residential construction, each Occupational Analysis was reviewed and analyzed. Tasks that were identified as being applicable to residential construction were identified and separated from the document.

## **Future Work Plans**

- Priority needs to be given to occupations where there are shortages of skilled workers.
- Areas in which there are industry problems should also be considered a priority.
- Areas in which there is currently an interest in developing training should also be considered a priority.
- Occupational Analyses need to be developed for occupations that are not included in the current series. Also, existing Occupational Analyses need to be expanded and/or modified to reflect residential construction.
- Each residential occupation needs to be examined by the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification process to determine whether or not it should become a trade, a subtrade or a proficiency.
- A working relationship needs to be established with the relevant trade boards.
- A certification process for those occupations that do not have trade boards and are not included in the Apprenticeship program needs to be developed.
- It is imperative that the SHBA develop a communication strategy to inform the industry of the training strategy and how it will affect them.
- The SHBA needs to work with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to explore strategies that can be implemented to assist First Nations people in obtaining training.

- The SHBA needs to work with the Commission to develop an understanding of the current process that allows individuals to be credited for the experience and training that they already have.
- The SHBA must make the training strategy a priority and continue its commitment to the goal of the residential construction industry.
- Partnerships with other organizations must be formed, and additional sources of funding must be explored.

### **Next Steps**

- A communication plan will be developed to provide SHBA members and industry with complete information on the training strategy that is being developed with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. In addition, the SHBA will make a presentation to the Board of Directors of the Commission, and a letter will be sent to the Commission requesting that they approach the trade boards. A conference with the Atlantic Home Building and Renovation Sector Council will also be planned.
- The SHBA will work with the Commission and First Nations organizations and training institutions to develop an understanding of the current processes that have been developed to remove some of the barriers that Aboriginal people face when applying for apprenticeship training.
- A strategy will be developed to assist those individuals that are currently working in residential construction to pursue certification.
- The SHBA will work with the Commission to develop an understanding of current training delivery options. Training strategies that are most effective for Aboriginal people in the province will be explored by working with First Nations training institutions.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iii
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Objectives	3
2.0 METHODOLOGY	4
3.0 RESULTS	5
3.1 Job Activities in Residential Construction	5
3.2 Occupational Profiles	5
3.3 Review Of Occupational Analyses	6
4.0 FUTURE WORK PLANS	7
5.0 NEXT STEPS	9
6.0 HOW CURRENT WORK FITS INTO THE BROADER INDUSTRY CAREER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	10
LIST OF APPENDICES	
A. DEVELOPMENT GROUP SURVEY	
B. LIST OF THE COMPANIES SURVEYED	
C. JOB ACTIVITIES AND OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS	
D. OCCUPATIONAL PROFILES	
E. RESIDENTIAL OCCUPATIONS AND EXISTING OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSES	
F. REVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSES	
F1. OFFICE OCCUPATIONS	
F2. FIELD OCCUPATIONS	

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Residential construction is a large sector in Saskatchewan, representing about 47% of the total value of construction in the province, and thus generating significant employment and investment opportunities. The fundamental challenge facing the industry is current and future capacity. The average age of skilled workers is getting close to that of retirement, and the sector is not engaged in the active process of replacing them with younger people. Secondly, the sector is experiencing a very high turnover of workers.

The current construction occupational descriptions do not break down the residential components of each occupation. In addition, residential jobs have become very specialized, and job descriptions are often quite narrow.

The existing apprenticeship program and provincial training programs for construction trades and workers are very comprehensive, with significant portions devoted to non-residential construction. Also, there are few if any programs available for specialty and general workers in the low-rise residential construction sector.

The Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association, in partnership with Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, Canadian Home Builders' Association, SIAST, New Home Warranty Program of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Dumont Technical Institute, and the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board, conducted a study of the Saskatchewan residential construction industry in 2000 in order to identify the human resource and training needs, and to develop strategies for human resource and training planning.

Ninety-one companies (52 builders and 39 trades) were surveyed between February 3 and February 28, 2000. They were asked about current and future training needs, training recommendations, recruitment and retention, the residential construction workforce, and the main human resource issues in the industry.

Based on the results of the survey, the major issues identified were:

- shortage of skilled workers (particularly in the carpentry trades)
- low wages
- young people not entering the trades
- poor image of the industry
- underground economy

In order to address these issues, a training strategy was developed to encourage individuals to pursue a career in residential construction and to promote a professional image of the industry. The strategy was for industry, in partnership with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, to develop residential occupations, which would lead to training and certification within the provincial apprenticeship system. It is based on the premise that specific occupations within residential construction should be recognized, and that new entrants, as well as those already in the

industry, should be able to take training leading to certification. In addition, a strategy needs to be developed to assist individuals that are currently working in residential construction to pursue certification. The goal is to ensure that all people in the residential construction industry have the opportunity to work towards a designation within the provincial apprenticeship system.

The training strategy will address the issues as follows:

#### Shortage of skilled workers

Training and certification will increase the skill level of residential construction workers in Saskatchewan. Rather than having to provide extensive training for new employees, employers will be able to hire certified workers that already have the basic skills, including safety and use of tools. Also, because individuals will be able to plan a career in residential construction through the various training options, they are more likely to stay in the industry. They will be able to move from one area of expertise to another while getting recognition for what they already know.

#### Low wages

Workers with proven credentials will be able to increase their opportunities to earn more money and better benefits. This will be particularly important for young inexperienced workers who may be discouraged from entering or continuing in the industry because of low wages. Builders may see this as initially an increase in labour costs. However, in the long term, because of reduced training time, lower turnover, and improved quality of workmanship, this will balance out, or even result in a reduction in costs.

#### Young people not entering the trades

The development of certification programs in residential construction, and the subsequent development of information packages for teachers, career counsellors and parents, will give students access to the resources they need to plan a career in the residential construction industry. Also, because individuals will be able to obtain certification, education providers and parents will view the industry as a more “respectable” career choice.

#### Poor image of the industry

Certification of residential construction workers will increase the overall skill level of the workers. This will improve the quality of the work, thus contributing to a more professional image of the industry. Also, by requiring workers to take training and obtain certification, only those individuals interested in residential construction as a career will likely enter the industry. This will reduce the number of workers that are only interested in making some money while they pursue another career.

#### Underground economy

The SHBA is currently in the process of implementing a mandatory warranty program in the province. The legislation would require all homebuilders to be licensed and all homes to be registered with the Residential Construction Commission. In order to obtain a license, builders will have to complete education courses and be a member of a warranty program. As a result, every person purchasing a new home will have assurance that it has warranty coverage. In conjunction with this legislation, the warranty program providers may require their builder-members to use designated trades.

In order to validate the results of the survey, and to determine the viability of implementing the training strategy, two focus groups were conducted in the province, one

in Saskatoon and one in Regina. The focus groups addressed the issues of recruitment, retention and training. Discussions essentially confirmed the concerns expressed by the survey respondents. The groups also provided feedback on the strategy, and all indications were that this would be a positive step for the industry.

The training strategy was also presented to the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. Although the Commission recognizes the need for changes, and is fully supportive of the strategy, it is clear that industry and SHBA commitment is required to ensure its implementation and progression.

In order to continue developing the training strategy, funding was obtained from the Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association and Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training to carry out Phase 2.

This study discusses the first steps needed to implement the training strategy, that is, to identify and describe the residential construction occupations in the province and determine what needs to be done in order to achieve designations for these occupations.

## **1.2 Objectives**

Other than the HUDAC Training Manual, which identified and described 14 residential occupations in 1979, there has not been an analysis of the residential construction industry. Considering the size and importance of this sector in Saskatchewan, it is essential that this be done in order to ensure a skilled workforce.

The objectives of this study were to identify occupations in the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan, to develop validated occupational profiles for each, and to review the existing Occupational Analyses developed by Human Resources Development Canada.

Specifically, the objectives were to:

- Develop a list of all the different job functions within the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan
- Group job functions into residential occupations
- Develop a validated description of each occupation in terms of the following:
  - Primary Tasks
  - Working Conditions (outdoor/indoor, seasonal/full-time, hours of work, etc.)
  - Abilities, Skills & Knowledge
  - Education & Training Requirements
  - Employment & Advancement
  - Salary
- Review the existing Occupational Analyses to determine which ones can be used to develop training programs for residential occupations, and whether or not additional analyses need to be produced

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

A list of job activities (both in the office and in the field) was compiled by interviewing construction managers and other individuals involved in, and knowledgeable about, the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan. With their assistance, the job activities were then grouped into residential construction occupations.

A list of people working in the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan was compiled to help develop occupational profiles for each identified occupation. This group (called the Development Group) consisted of people that have worked in residential construction for several years on a daily basis, and ranged from individuals working in large organizations to those working in small, owner-operated companies. In order to obtain input from across the province, at least two people in Saskatoon, two in Regina, and two in other centres in the province were contacted.

A survey (Appendix A) was sent to the Development Group, which consisted of two parts. The first part listed the primary tasks of each occupation. These were compiled from several sources including the HUDAC Manpower Training Manual, the Occupational Analyses series, and Human Resources Development Canada National Occupational Classification system. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they performed each task by checking either “yes” or “no”, and to provide additional tasks and comments. The second part of the survey consisted of a list of questions pertaining to the following: working conditions, typical employers, salary range, opportunities for advancement, typical career path options, current and future job prospects, education and training requirements, experience required, and the main skills needed to be successful.

The responses from the Development Group were collected, reviewed and compared to existing occupational information. In some cases clarification was obtained by contacting respondents or other individuals with extensive knowledge of the industry. All of the information was used to develop draft Occupational Profiles.

The draft Occupational Profiles were sent to a second group of contacts, the Validation Group. The Validation Group consisted of a different set of people than the Development Group, but again was comprised of individuals with extensive work experience in each of the occupations. None of the individuals in the Validation Group were in the Development Group. However, in some cases, if a response was not received from an individual in the Development Group, he/she was asked to participate in the Validation Group. As in the first survey, at least two individuals in Saskatoon, two in Regina, and two in other centres in the province were contacted. The Validation Group was asked to verify the information in the Occupational Profiles. In some cases, following further investigation, comments or suggestions were used to modify the profiles.

The surveys were either faxed or mailed to members of the Development Group and the Validation Group. Respondents were given the option of completing the survey themselves and faxing or mailing it back, or calling and answering the questions over the telephone. If no response was received, individuals were contacted by telephone.

A list of the companies surveyed is presented in Appendix B. Development Group participants are indicated with a “D”; Validation Group participants are indicated with a “V”.

### 3.0 RESULTS

#### 3.1 Job Activities in Residential Construction

Appendix C lists the job activities in residential construction in Saskatchewan, and the grouping of these activities into existing or potential occupations. Although jobs in residential construction are very specialized in the province, the occupational groupings were kept fairly broad, as it was thought that an individual in a particular occupation should have the knowledge to perform all of the activities within that job when required.

#### 3.2 Occupational Profiles

Although participation in the surveys was excellent, we were unable to get feedback from every person contacted. Some were either unavailable or their busy schedules interfered with their ability to respond in a timely manner. Telephone follow-up produced an excellent response and good input.

Based on the results of the surveys, an Occupational Profile was developed for each of the following residential occupations:

New Home Builder	Residential Roofer
Residential Renovation Contractor	Residential Electrician
Residential Construction Manager	Residential Plumber
Designer/Draftsperson	Residential HVAC Technologist
Construction Cost Estimator	Residential Gas Fitter
Accountant/Finance Manager	Residential Insulation Installer
Accounting Technician	Drywall Installer & Finisher
Sales and Marketing Manager	Residential Painter & Decorator
Sales Representative	Exterior Finisher
Customer Service Manager	Stucco Applicator
Construction Service and Repair Technician	Bricklayer
Site Supervisor/Superintendent	Interior Finisher
Site Assistant	Floor Covering Installer
Construction Excavator	Hardwood Flooring Installer/Finisher
Concrete Former	Tilesetter
Concrete Finisher	Landscaper
Residential Framers	

There are other jobs within residential construction that have not been identified in this study. For example, Window Covering Installer, Fireplace Installer, Decorator/Designer and Cabinet Installer. Some of these jobs are proficiencies as opposed to full occupations (Window Covering Installer, Fireplace Installer). There is a separate Act for Decorator/Designer, and Cabinet Installer is currently in the process of becoming

recognized as a trade in Saskatchewan. This is an evolving process; there may be new occupations identified, some jobs may be combined to form an occupation, and some may be separated to become more specialized. Input will be needed to ensure that the needs of the residential sector are recognized.

The Occupational Profiles (Appendix D) will be used as part of the designation process for residential occupations in Saskatchewan.

### 3.3 Review Of Occupational Analyses

The Occupational Analyses Series, developed by Human Resources Development Canada, provide the basis for the apprenticeship program requirements. Specifically, the objectives of the program are the following:

- To identify and group the tasks performed by skilled workers in particular occupations
- To identify those tasks that are performed by skilled workers in every province and territory
- To develop instruments for use in the preparation of interprovincial standards “Red Seal” examinations and curricula for training leading to the certification of skilled workers
- To facilitate the mobility, in Canada, of trainees and skilled workers
- To supply employers and employees, and their associations, industries, training institutions and governments with analyses of the tasks performed in particular occupations

Each analysis is divided into blocks, tasks and sub-tasks. Blocks are the largest division within the analysis and reflect a distinct operation relevant to the occupation. Tasks are the distinct activity that, combined with others, make up the logical and necessary steps the worker is required to perform to complete a specific assignment within a Block. Sub-tasks are the smallest division, and combined with others, fully describe all duties constituting a Task.

With the exception of *New Home Builder and Residential Renovation Contractor*, the Occupational Analyses do not recognize the specific nature of the residential sector of the construction industry. The accurate description of residential construction occupations is essential to ensure an appropriate, skilled workforce.

The identified residential construction occupations in Saskatchewan and the relevant elements of the Occupational Analyses are listed in Appendix E. Because the Occupational Analyses do not distinguish between tasks for non-residential and residential construction, each Occupational Analysis was reviewed and analyzed. Tasks that were identified as being applicable to residential construction were identified and separated from the document. This review includes the Blocks and Tasks that would apply to the identified occupations in residential construction, but not the Sub-tasks. The results are presented in Appendix F.

The Occupational Analysis for *New Home Builder and Residential Renovation Contractor* is based on the perspective of a small builder, in which the owner would perform most of the administrative tasks. In a large company, many of these tasks would be performed by individuals specializing in a particular area, such as sales/marketing or accounting. In this case, the current analysis would need to be broken down into separate occupations, and a more detailed list of tasks added.

In some cases, more than one Occupational Analysis applies to a particular occupation. For example, Sheet Metal Worker, Plumber and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic are relevant to Residential HVAC Technologist.

#### **4.0 FUTURE WORK PLANS**

1. Based on the original survey, carpenters were indicated as being one of the main areas where there is currently a shortage of skilled workers and there is likely to be a shortage in the future. Priority needs to be given to occupations where there are shortages. The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission is currently involved in a research project that could lead to the recognition of the “Residential Framer” occupation. The results of this pilot program could be used as a model for research of other residential occupations.
2. Areas in which there are currently problems should also be considered a priority. For example, residential heating and ventilation systems are not always being installed correctly, resulting in multiple problems for homeowners. This issue is currently being reviewed by the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission.
3. Areas in which there is currently an interest in developing training should also be considered a priority. For example, the Saskatchewan Professional Painting Contractors Association is pursuing the revival of a provincial apprenticeship program for painters. Also, the Mechanical Contractors Association is interested in working on a pilot licensing program. Trade Boards and Associations need to be approached at the right time in order to form a cooperative relationship. The SHBA needs to be centrally involved.
4. Occupational Analyses need to be developed for occupations that are not included in the current series, including: Site Assistant, Construction Excavator, Residential Gas Fitter, Residential Insulation Installer, Stucco Applicator, Drywall Installer & Finisher, Tilesetter, and Construction Service & Repair Technician. Also, existing Occupational Analyses need to be expanded and/or modified to reflect residential construction. It is important that this is done because each province develops training standards based on these national analyses. The Atlantic Home Building and Renovation Sector Council (AHB&RSC) is currently in the process of reviewing the Occupational Analyses through an examination of the residential construction process. The objective is to ensure that the Occupational Analyses for the residential construction occupations identify appropriate skills and knowledge for tradespeople involved in residential new home building and renovation. The Council is working

with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Canadian Council of Director's of Apprenticeship (CCDA), industry organizations, residential new home building and renovation contractors, and trades-specific employers and employees. The Committee may wish to consider a joint venture project with the AHB&RSC in this capacity.

5. Each residential occupation needs to be examined by the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification process to determine whether or not it should become a trade, a subtrade or a proficiency. Trades and subtrades are recognized by other provinces, proficiencies are not. In some cases, occupations may need to be combined in order to be large enough to qualify as a trade or sub-trade.
6. A working relationship needs to be established with the relevant trade boards. It is imperative that the SHBA have the support of the trade boards that regulate the trades in question.
7. A certification process for those occupations that do not have trade boards and are not included in the Apprenticeship program needs to be developed. Decisions need to be made as to what credentials will be required, and who will be responsible.
8. It is imperative that the SHBA develop a communication strategy to inform the industry of the training strategy and how it will affect them. This will require working closely with and educating key stakeholders.
9. The SHBA needs to work with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to explore strategies the Commission has implemented to assist First Nations people in obtaining training.
10. The SHBA needs to work with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to develop an understanding of the current process that allows individuals to be credited for the experience and training that they already have.
11. The SHBA must make the training strategy a priority and continue its commitment to the goal of the residential construction industry, that is, to ensure that all people entering the residential construction industry have the opportunity to work towards a designation within the provincial apprenticeship system. This concept is not restricted to Saskatchewan. According to a study<sup>1</sup> conducted in Calgary and area last year, certification of residential construction workers was recognized as an important goal. It was determined that "in order for residential construction to establish credibility in the community, it will first be necessary to work on increasing the level of respect within the industry itself. Certification of new workers, and opportunities for continued formal training for experienced workers appears to be a key step in this direction".

<sup>1</sup>Employment Trends in Residential Construction in Calgary & Area Year 2000, The Carma Centre for Excellence & The Alberta Real Estate Foundation, April, 2001.

12. In order to continue the development of the training strategy, partnerships with other organizations must be formed, and additional funding must be obtained to initiate Phase 3. Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training has been approached for assistance and has requested a proposal. Once Phase 3 has been completed, the SHBA must take the lead to ensure that the Committee continues to meet and explore further funding options.

## **5.0 NEXT STEPS**

In order to ensure that the training strategy initiative is continued, the committee has identified the following next steps:

1. A communication plan will be developed to provide SHBA members and industry with complete information on the training strategy that is being developed with the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. As part of the communication strategy, the SHBA will also make a presentation to the Board of Directors of the Commission, and a letter will be sent to the Commission requesting that they approach the trade boards. In addition, a conference with the Atlantic Home Building and Renovation Sector Council will be planned.
2. The SHBA will work with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission and First Nations organizations and training institutions to develop an understanding of the current processes that have been developed to remove some of the barriers that Aboriginal people face when applying for apprenticeship training.
3. The SHBA will work with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to develop an understanding of the current process that allows individuals to be credited for the experience and training that they already have. A strategy will have to be developed to assist those individuals that are currently working in residential construction to pursue certification.
4. The SHBA will work with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to develop an understanding of current training delivery options. The SHBA and the Commission will work with the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) and Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) to determine what training strategies work best for First Nations people in the province.

## 6.0 HOW CURRENT WORK FITS INTO THE BROADER INDUSTRY CAREER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The following is a list of the tasks outlined in the original proposal to Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, and the current status of each. It should be noted that not all of these tasks are being undertaken by the SHBA.

<b><u>Tasks</u></b>	<b><u>Stage</u></b>
1. Identify all the activity-related jobs in the residential construction industry, and group into occupations	Completed
2. Develop a market description of each of the occupations	Completed
3. Compile an occupational analysis for each occupation	Completed
4. Develop curricula for apprenticeship certification training & for updating	Process has started
5. Develop training programs for apprenticeship certification & for updating	
6. Develop a strategy to credit individuals for the experience and training that they already have	
7. Develop a tracking system for Apprenticeship certification & updating	
8. Identify support for providing training	
9. Develop a communication strategy	Process has started