

Final Report

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**Project: Human Resource and Training Strategy for the
Residential Construction Industry in Saskatchewan**

April 2004

Background

In many parts of Canada, including Saskatchewan, the housing industry is increasingly concerned about acute shortages of skilled labour both currently and for the longer-term future (Canadian Home Builders' Association, 2002). In Saskatchewan, the average age of skilled workers is getting close to that of retirement and they are not being replaced by younger people. The image of the residential construction industry is not generally attractive and the current education system does not promote the industry as a suitable career choice.

The shortage of skilled workers places significant constraints on the economic performance of the residential construction industry and on its ability to meet consumer expectations. Housing affordability will be negatively affected by higher labour costs generally, and by delays and productivity constraints arising from the inability of builders to access skilled workers when and where they need them. If employers respond to these pressures by greater reliance on poorly trained workers, there will be serious implications for housing quality and safety (Canadian Home Builders' Association, 2002).

Participation by women, Aboriginals, and persons with disabilities in the residential construction industry has been limited. Because the future workforce in Saskatchewan will include a large proportion of young Aboriginals, the education and training strategy for the industry must place high priority on finding ways to improve their participation.

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

Existing reports show that some changes in the apprenticeship system in Canada could improve its contribution to the provision of skilled, productive workers to the residential construction industry (CHBA, 2002).

In order to address these issues, a study was conducted by the Saskatchewan Residential Construction Industry Sector Partnership to identify human resource and training needs in the residential construction industry. The Partnership was the cooperative effort of the Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association, the New Home Warranty Program of Saskatchewan, Canadian Home Builders' Association, SIAST, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, Federation

of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Dumont Technical Institute, Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board, and Saskatchewan Learning.

Based on the results of a survey of the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan, the major issues identified were: shortage of skilled workers, low wages, young people not entering the trades, poor image of the industry, and the underground economy.

In order to address these issues, a human resource and training strategy was developed to encourage individuals to pursue a career in residential construction, by gaining skills and knowledge through training, and receiving recognition for that training. The strategy is for industry, in partnership with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, to develop occupations, which will lead to training and certification. 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 tasks were completed in March 2001:

- A list of all the different job functions within the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan was developed.
- Job functions were grouped into residential occupations.
- A validated description of each occupation was developed in terms of Primary Tasks, Working Conditions, Abilities, Skills & Knowledge, Education & Training Requirements, Employment & Advancement, and Salary.
- Existing Occupational Analyses were analyzed to determine which ones could be used to develop training programs for residential occupations, and whether or not additional analyses need to be produced.

It was determined that the designation of particular sub trades would help to promote a more professional image of the industry and provide enhanced educational and training opportunities for young people.

Objectives

The purpose of this project was to:

- Complete the steps required to have four areas of carpentry designated as subtrades - framing, concrete forming, interior finishing and exterior finishing.
- Coordinate the development and integration of designated subtrades in the residential construction sector.
- Develop and implement a communication plan to inform the industry and other stakeholders about the training strategy.
- Produce a presentation package that can be used by schools and career counsellors.

Methodology

The following is a description of the methods that were used to complete the objectives:

1. Complete the steps required to have four areas of carpentry designated as subtrades - framing, concrete forming, interior finishing and exterior finishing.

An application was compiled for submission to the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission.

To complete the application requirements, the following tasks were performed:

- A committee of employers and employees from both the residential and commercial construction sectors was assembled. The members included representatives from the proposed subtrade areas as well as builders. The committee was responsible for approving the survey that was sent out to the industry, and two representatives were selected to present the application to the Apprenticeship Commission.
- A survey of the industry was conducted to determine which employers and employees were prepared to support the application for subtrade designation. This involved reviewing the original surveys and focus groups conducted in Phases I and II, and re-contacting those involved in the four proposed subtrades to update them and find out if they were supportive. The internet yellow pages was used to update the list.

The surveys were initially sent by mail. Because of a poor response, meetings were held in Saskatoon and Regina. Builders were contacted and asked to inform

their trades of the meetings and encouraging them to attend. In the meetings a pamphlet was distributed and a PowerPoint presentation was delivered outlining how the designation of subtrades will apply to new entrants and to existing members of the industry, and how industry will benefit as a whole. Following the presentation everyone was asked to fill out the appropriate survey. Finally, companies were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in the survey.

- Meetings were held with representatives of the Saskatchewan Construction Association and with the Carpenter's Union to garner their support. Any issues or concerns regarding the proposed subtrades were identified and addressed.
- Letters of support were gathered from the Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association, the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association, the Regina and Region Home Builders' Association, major home builders in the province, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Saskatoon Tribal Council, the Saskatoon Catholic Board of Education, and the Saskatoon Industry Education Council. Presentations were made to the Saskatchewan Construction Association and to the Carpenter's Union with requests for letters of opinion on this initiative. After repeated attempts to secure a letter, neither group provided one in time for submission of the application.
- A literature review was conducted to address other sections of the application including: how the designation of the subtrades will affect the Saskatchewan economy, how designation will increase public/consumer protection and safety, and current employment opportunities for the proposed subtrades in Saskatchewan and in other provinces.
- A detailed description of the proposed subtrades was compiled, including a detailed definition, a description of the work performed, and the major tasks of the proposed subtrades as performed in Saskatchewan. Occupational profiles of the subtrades were obtained from Phase II of the Sector Partnership study. Tasks and subtasks were obtained from the Occupational Analysis for Carpentry. Further information was gathered by working with the Apprenticeship Commission.
- The SIAST program for carpentry was used to determine the number of days and hours for the four proposed subtrade programs.
- Information about programs to enhance opportunities for Aboriginal people was obtained from the Saskatoon Home Builders' Association.

- A presentation was prepared for delivery to the Apprenticeship Commission.

This involved writing and preparing the materials for the presentation, and meeting with the committee, which will present to a committee of the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship Commission Board of Directors.

2. Coordinate development and integration of designated subtrades in the residential construction sector.

This involved working with the Apprenticeship Commission to develop a schedule of courses for each of the four subtrades and determining how many hours should be assigned to classroom training.

3. Develop a communication plan to inform and educate industry and other stakeholders about the human resource and training strategy.

The steps involved included the following: identifying the target groups; determining the message that needs to be conveyed; determining the best strategies, in terms of media and implementation, to use in communicating to these groups; and developing a schedule for delivery of the plan.

4. Create a presentation in PowerPoint format that can be used by schools and career counselling organizations.

The presentation outlines the current training process for careers in residential construction, and the future direction of the industry in Saskatchewan. The package can be easily converted to various formats, including handouts, video, CD, etc.

Results

The following is a summary of the results of the project:

1. Application for Subtrade Designations

In order to complete the application for subtrade designations, each proposed subtrade was discussed in terms of definition and major tasks, required academic skills and prerequisites, and major topics for technical training. In addition, the application reviewed the current state of technical training facilities, current employment opportunities in Saskatchewan and other provinces, opportunities for under-represented groups, contribution to economic development, and public/consumer protection and safety. The major portion of the application was the human resource study, which was a survey of the industry to determine whether or not subtrade designation is supported.

The human resource study indicated that the majority of employers thought there would be a shortage of all four subtrade areas within the next five years. The major reasons cited were young people not entering the trades and an aging workforce. It was also indicated that employers had difficulty recruiting workers in each of the four areas. The majority of builders and renovators also anticipated a shortage of workers in the next five years.

The following is a summary of the results of the surveys in the four subtrade areas.

Framers

A total of 60 framers were surveyed. It was determined that 80 percent of the respondents employed as framers did not have any formal technical training. However, 74 percent believed that technical training should be required.

Ninety-six percent of the employers that were surveyed supported a training system for framers and 96 percent supported the apprenticeship program.

Based on the results of the pilot framer exam (20% pass rate), those currently employed as framers in Saskatchewan do not have the knowledge and skills that would be required for a designated framer (as outlined in the framer portion of the carpentry curriculum).

Ninety-four percent of respondents employed as framers indicated that the industry would benefit from the designation of framer as a subtrade.

Eighty-four percent of employers indicated that the industry would benefit from the designation of framer as a subtrade.

Seventy-eight percent of builders and renovators surveyed indicated that the industry would benefit from the designation of framer as a subtrade. It is significant that such a high percentage of builders and renovators supported designation. They probably see a need for more highly trained framers.

It was estimated that there are approximately 65 to 70 full-time framers in the province.

In total, Employers indicated they would have 47 to 52 employees willing to attend technical training.

Concrete Formers

A total of 69 concrete formers were surveyed for the study. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents employed as concrete formers did not have any formal technical training. Sixty-seven percent believed technical training should be required.

Ninety-one percent of the employers that responded to the survey indicated that they support a training system for concrete formers and 93 percent supported an apprenticeship program.

Seventy-five percent of employees indicated that the industry would benefit from the designation of concrete former.

Seventy-eight percent of employers indicated that the industry would benefit from the designation of concrete former as a subtrade.

Seventy-five percent of the builders and renovators surveyed indicated that the industry would benefit from the designation of concrete former. It is significant that such a high percentage of builders and renovators supported designation. They probably see a need for more highly trained concrete formers.

It was estimated that there are approximately 115 concrete formers in the province; however, "concrete former" is not a specialized job in the smaller centres, i.e., a person that does concrete forming also does other carpentry jobs. It should be noted that because the surveys were conducted during the fall/winter months, some companies did not have as many employees as they would during the spring/summer months. Therefore, it was difficult to survey these employees.

In total, Employers indicated they would have 44 employees willing to attend technical training.

Interior Finishers

A total of 68 interior finishers were surveyed for the study. Seventy-eight percent did not have formal technical training; 64 percent believed that technical training should be required for interior finishing.

Ninety-three percent of the employers surveyed supported a training system for interior finisher and 83 percent supported an apprenticeship program.

Seventy-nine percent of respondents employed as interior finishers believed that the industry would benefit from the designation of interior finisher as a subtrade.

Eighty-five percent of employers indicated that the industry would benefit from the designation of interior finisher as a subtrade.

Seventy-five percent of builders and renovators indicated that the industry would benefit from designation. It is significant that such a high percentage of builders and renovators support designation. They probably see a need for more highly trained interior finishers.

It was estimated that there are approximately 100 interior finishers in the province; however, "interior finisher" is not a specialized job in the smaller centres, i.e., a person that does interior finishing also does other carpentry jobs. Also, in many of the companies, interior finishing is secondary to cabinetmaking in terms of the type of business.

In total, Employers indicated that they would have 16 employees willing to attend technical training.

Exterior Finishers

A total of 57 exterior finishers were surveyed for the study. All survey respondents employed as exterior finishers indicated that they do not have formal technical training, and 84 percent indicated that technical training should be required.

Ninety-four percent of employers supported a training program and 91 percent supported the apprenticeship program.

Ninety-two percent of respondents employed as exterior finishers indicated that the industry would benefit from the designation of exterior finisher as a subtrade.

Ninety-one percent of employers indicated that the industry would benefit from the designation of exterior finisher as a subtrade.

Sixty-seven percent of builders and renovators indicated that the industry would benefit from designation. It is significant that well over half of the builders and renovators supported designation. They probably see a need for more highly trained exterior finishers.

It was estimated that there are approximately 60 exterior finishers in the province; however, "exterior finisher" is not a specialized job in the smaller centres, i.e., a person that does exterior finishing also does other jobs.

In total, Employers indicated that 36 employees would be willing to attend technical training.

2. Coordinate the development and integration of designated subtrades in the residential construction sector.

A copy of the Proposed Courses and Days for SIAST Carpentry Programs was obtained from the Apprenticeship Commission. It indicated that the four proposed subtrade areas are covered throughout the four levels of training; however they are not allotted equal amounts of classroom time. Also, there are several courses that are common to each of the four areas. The following is a proposed approximate breakdown of the four areas. Framing was estimated to comprise 35 percent of the time, interior finishing 25 percent, and concrete forming and exterior finishing each 20 percent. This breakdown was used to determine the number of classroom days and number of hours.

	% of Time	Total Hours	# of Classroom Days	# of Hours
Framing	35	2520	48	360
Concrete Forming	20	1440	27	203
Interior Finishing	25	1800	34	255
Exterior Finishing	20	1440	27	203
TOTAL	100	7200	137	1020

3. Develop and implement a communication plan to inform the industry and other stakeholders about the training strategy.

A communication plan was developed to inform and educate the industry and other stakeholders about the education and training strategy for the residential construction industry in Saskatchewan. The steps involved included the following: identify the target groups; determine the message that needs to be conveyed; determine the best strategies, in terms of media and implementation, to use in communicating to these groups; and develop a schedule for delivery of the plan.

A communication strategy was developed for the following groups:

- Saskatchewan Residential Construction Industry
- Aboriginal Organizations
- Schools
- General Public

The following table shows the communication strategies for each of the groups and the schedule.

4. Produce a presentation package that can be used by schools and career counsellors.

Target Group		Message	Methods	Tools	Schedule
Construction Industry	Employers	Encourage workers to get designations and open up jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with associations, unions & organizations • Pamphlet distribution • PowerPoint presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamphlet • PowerPoint presentation 	Fall 2004
	Employees	Designation will provide better jobs			
Aboriginal Organizations		What are the job opportunities? How does it work? Where to start.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal contact • Telephone contact • Presentations at meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glossy booklet • PowerPoint presentation 	Winter 2005
Schools	Students	What are the jobs? How does it work? Where to start.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career fairs • Classroom presentations • Guest speakers • One-on-one discussions with staff presidents • Glossy booklet • PowerPoint presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glossy booklet • PowerPoint presentation 	Winter 2005
	Teachers Parents	What is the world of homebuilding? What are the job opportunities? Where to get the education. Career ladder			
General Public		What is the homebuilding industry?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper articles and features 		Summer 2005

Conclusion

Based on the results of the human resource study the designation of framer, concrete former, interior finishers and exterior finisher is supported by the industry, i.e., employers, employees and builders/renovators.

The current SIAST program for apprenticeship in carpentry covers all four areas, although not equally in terms of the time allotted. It will be necessary to work with SIAST and the Apprenticeship Commission to design the four programs.

A communication plan is necessary to inform stakeholders of the strategy that is being implemented for the residential construction industry. It must be stressed that there are career opportunities and that subtrade designation will benefit the industry as a whole. Most important is the communication plan for schools. The industry must attract young people to the trades.

The PowerPoint presentations will be excellent tools to educate stakeholders.

Next Steps

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

1. The SHBA will continue to work with the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to develop the curriculum and the training details for the four proposed subtrade designations.
2. The SHBA will work with employers to prepare job opportunities for new entrants requesting subtrade apprenticeship.
3. The SHBA will work with the Apprenticeship 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 interface with British Columbia and other provinces that are developing similar initiatives in order to provide consistency throughout Canada.
5. The SHBA will prepare the materials required for designated subtrades in other trade areas.
6. The SHBA will undertake presentations to schools, the industry, aboriginal groups and other stakeholders throughout the province in order to encourage enrollment in the subtrades.
7. The SHBA will work with aboriginal training institutions to determine what training strategies work best for aboriginal people in the province.
8. The SHBA will produce a high quality glossy booklet to use in presentations to schools, the industry and other stakeholders.
9. The SHBA will develop programs to improve the image of the residential construction industry.