



Building Barriers to the Future of Trades



Chris Gardner
ICBA President

It's yet another example of the B.C. NDP's penchant for policies that date back to before the turn-of-the-millennium.

Recent legislation has reimposed "compulsory trades", beginning with 10 initial trades. This means all

workers will have to either be a licensed tradesperson or registered apprentice to do any of the work within the scope of these trades. Government is also introducing "supervision ratios", limiting the number of apprentices an employer can hire relative to the qualified journeypeople on the job site.

Both of these measures will restrict

entry into trades training just when we need to be ramping it up.

Training delivery is out-of-date and we are suffering from a chronic under-investment in new training spaces.

Do we really need government dictating to contractors the number of apprentices who can work side-by-side with ticketed tradespeople? Meanwhile, the training delivered to those who can find positions will be much more restrictive due to compul-

sory designations, which will erase cross-functional or more specialized learning and experience.

All this will come with a vast new enforcement regime - meaning we will be hiring inspectors rather than instructors. Any offsetting benefits are hard to see, since licensing, permitting, inspections and other regulatory oversight already provides safety and quality assurances for construction workers and end users.

Like most of the construction sector, ICBA wasn't asked for input when these retrograde policies were designed. But like all of B.C., we'll now have to live with their negative impact on skills training and workplace productivity, and ultimately the negative impact on housing availability and affordability.

Ratio Restrictions Make for Smaller and Older Workforces

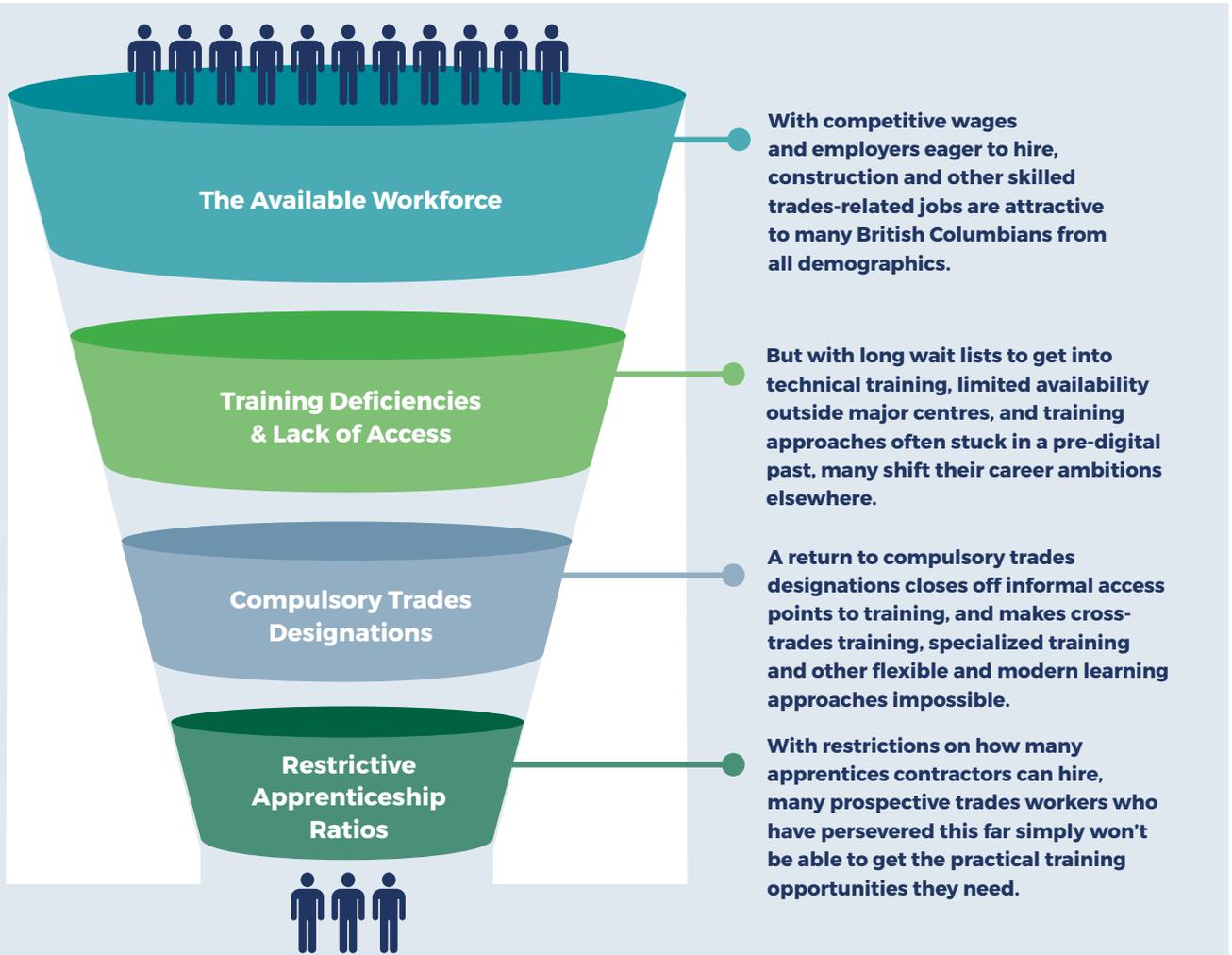
One of the troubling aspects of B.C.'s move to restrict entry into apprenticeship is the lack of evidence to support the government's claim it will improve outcomes for workers and our province. Common sense and the available data make it clear that the reverse will happen.

Impacts of High Journeyman-to-Apprentice Ratios



Source: "Access Denied: The Effect of Apprenticeship Restrictions in Skilled Trades", C.D. Howe Institute (2013). A "high ratio" means more than one journeyman per apprentice.

Narrow the Funnel and Restrict the Supply



Compulsory trades designations and restrictive ratios also impact workplaces:

productivity ↓ and costs ↑

“Instead of regulating the rate of apprentice entry, governments should focus on regulating the quality of work and safety standards when appropriate. In other words, instead of regulating inputs governments should shift the focus of trades regulation to outputs.”

- C.D. Howe Institute

“Reserving certain activities - especially those that are not particularly risky or complicated - to be performed exclusively by one trade will create enormous inefficiencies without offering any offsetting benefits.”

- Modernizing Ontario's Skilled Trades Apprenticeship and Training System, Dawson Strategic

The Solutions and Investments We Really Need

There's a lot that could be improved in B.C.'s trades training system. We need to directly tackle the real problems and focus on the outcomes we want - rather than on new regulations that will be confusing and costly to enforce and offer no proven benefits. Instead, let's invest in:



Training Access

Reduce troublingly long wait times for apprenticeship technical training and make it more widely available in communities throughout B.C.



Training Modernization

Make better use of remote training and other technology-based options, catching up with innovations already implemented by many private trainers.



Diversity & Inclusion

Do more to attract a diversity of people into the construction and trades workforces, with smooth pathways for women, Indigenous people and others.



Promotion & Perception

Counter outdated perceptions, particularly among youth, that trades training is a second-best post-secondary option.



Financial Support

Expand financial supports for apprentices who commit to pursue training and for the employers who step up with the resources to provide it.

“If federal and provincial governments want to increase the number of people working in trades, as they claim is a priority, they should take steps to loosen restrictions which particularly affect the opportunities of younger workers to seek employment in the trades and diminish the ability of firms to hire them.”

- C.D. Howe Institute

Construction Industry Issues and Asks

A recent survey conducted in B.C. and other provinces confirms strong recent industry performance and optimism for the rest of 2022. But it also demonstrates that it's an especially bad time for B.C.'s government to be erecting skills-development barriers and adding to cost pressures and delays.



“Shortage of Workers” is a Top 3 operational challenge for the industry, and is more acute in B.C. than any other province



The two predominant industry responses to current supply chain challenges are to **Increase Prices** and **Take Longer to Complete** – bad news for housing affordability and availability

Far and away the most common ask of government from the B.C. industry is to

Cut Red Tape / Get Out of the Way

Survey conducted February 8-24 by One Persuasion, with 605 responses across five provinces.

ICBA AND ITS MEMBERS

Committed to and Leading on Apprenticeship

When ICBA weighs in on apprenticeship issues, we're speaking with the benefit of the real-world experience that comes with being **B.C.'s largest single sponsor of apprentices** – far outstripping the role of unions – and ICBA is a major provider of construction industry training.

1,400+
ICBA-Sponsored
Apprentices in 2021

#2 ICBA RANK
as a **sponsor** of female and
Indigenous apprentices in 2021

81.5%
of B.C. Construction
Apprentices are **Sponsored**
by **Open Shop Employers***

5,000+
Approximate Number of Construction
Workers who Pursue Diverse **ICBA**
Professional Training Annually

* 2019 analysis based on Industry Training Authority data. "Open Shop" employers are non-unionized, or have collective agreements with progressive unions that do not belong to the B.C. Building Trades.

The BC CONSTRUCTION MONITOR is an ICBA publication providing ahead-of-the-curve information and statistics on the B.C. construction industry and issues relevant to it.



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