Skilled trade workers represent a critical component of employment and growth in the province. Unfortunately the province relies on antiquated labour laws and a 1970s apprenticeship system model that rewards a few well connected stakeholders, but limits opportunities for young and laid-off workers looking for a career in the skilled trades.

What is the Journeyperson-to-Apprentice Ratio?

If a worker wants a career in the trades, they must first apprentice with a qualified employer in order to receive important on-the-job training. Employers must demonstrate their ability to train a worker based on the company’s experience as well as the number of licensed journeypersons it has on staff. This requirement is known as the ‘journeyperson-to-apprentice ratio’ and it varies from trade to trade.

The plumbing trade is a good example of the antiquated nature of our apprentice system with 15,219 licensed men and women practicing the trade. The current requirement for employers to train plumbing apprentices is 1 journeyperson on staff for the first apprentice hired and an additional three on staff for every additional apprentice hired. This means a company has to have 4 journeypersons on staff in order to hire 2 apprentices and 7 journeypersons on staff in order to hire 3 apprentices. This requirement means that small companies are shut out of participating in the apprenticeship system in a meaningful way.

Recent federal and interprovincial agreements such as the Agreement on Internal Trade mean that many journeypersons are able to receive their license in another province or country, effectively by-passing our apprenticeship system while Ontario workers wait for scarce apprenticeship opportunities to present themselves.

What is the Ratio in other provinces?

For many trades, including plumbing and electrical, Ontario has among the highest ratios in the country at 3:1 for most companies.

Ontario in Last Place

Recent federal and interprovincial agreements such as the Agreement on Internal Trade mean that many journeypersons are able to receive their license in another province or country, effectively by-passing our apprenticeship system while Ontario workers wait for scarce apprenticeship opportunities to present themselves.

What effect is this having?

Our high ratio means it’s more difficult for Ontarians to find apprenticable work. Data is bearing this out in our aging workforce and shortages of trades-people as demonstrated by the average worker age in certain trades.

Ontario Ranks Last in Proportion of Population aged 25 to 64 with a Registered Apprenticeship Certificate Holder

Apprenticeship Regulations By Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Apprenticeship Training (per thousand full-time workers)</th>
<th>Apprenticeship Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4.5:1 (1:1 in residential sector)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>No Ratio Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CD Howe Institute: “Access Denied: The Effect of Apprenticeship Restrictions in Skilled Trades”

Action Is Needed

The College of Trades ratio review process has taken a slow and bureaucratic approach to changing ratios. No other province had undertaken a cumbersome and piecemeal approach to ratio regulations. The province needs to take action by moving to an across-the-board 1:1 journeyperson to apprentice ratio.

A 1:1 across the board ratio is needed in the construction sector or Ontario will continue to fall behind!