



**Labourers' International Union of North America
(LiUNA)
Local 183 Training Centre**

Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
Bill 229: *Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (2020)*

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Introduction

The Labourer's International Union of North America (LiUNA) has over half a million members in North America and more than 130,000 here in Canada. In collaboration with government and employers, LiUNA fights for worker safety, innovative skills training, and best-in-class wages and benefits. In Ontario, LiUNA has a long and storied history striving to improve conditions for our members and ensure they have meaningful, safe, and well-paid employment. Our approach is always positive, proactive, and progressive. We believe in working collaboratively with government and employers for our mutual benefit.

From hospitals to highways, our members play a large role in major public and private sector construction projects. LiUNA members are committed to building a better province for all Ontarians. We have anchored the construction of the watermains, transit systems, and housing developments that form the backbone of the province. We are proud of the work our members do, and the value we provide to Ontario.

Ontario's Skilled Trades Strategy

Across Ontario, financial, social and economic barriers have historically impeded the entry of many young people into the skilled trades. This has contributed to a significant shortage of skilled tradespeople in the province, despite the meaningful and well-paying employment associated with the trades.

In its 2020 budget, the Ontario Government unveiled a three-pillared approach to removing the barriers which limit such opportunities for Ontarians. LiUNA believes that Ontario's new Skilled Trades Strategy is a proactive way to increase interest into the province's most in-demand sectors, while providing apprentices with the resources which they need to succeed.

The announcement successfully builds on legislation introduced by the provincial government over the past 2 years which sought to increase participation in the skilled trades. Previous actions such as the creation of new apprentice to journeyperson ratios created an environment which was more conducive to creating opportunities. The 2020 Skilled Trades Strategy offers an apprentice-focused approach to bridging the Skilled Trades Gap.

Promoting the Skilled Trades

The skilled trades have long been dismissed as undesirable work – an unfair and incorrect stereotype. These stigmas have contributed to today's current shortage of apprentices as many talented young people opt to avoid the trades. We applaud the province's promotion of apprenticeship pathways as a means of breaking these counterintuitive stigmas.

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We know that for many young people, career decisions start in high school. The government's investment into the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) will ensure that more young people are exposed to the exciting career opportunities found in the trades. Additionally, the program will provide our youth with hands-on skills to give them an added advantage before entering the workplace.

All government-funded programs, the OYAP, the Pre-Apprenticeship Training program, and the Specialist High-Skills Major program, give high school students on-site exposure to viable career opportunities. As the initiatives are delivered without cost to the student, the government is ensuring that no student is left behind due to financial need.

Reducing Financial Burdens

Historically, the costs associated with pre-apprenticeship training, purchasing equipment, and overall costs of living inadvertently limited participation in the trades. For many underserved communities, apprenticeships were financially unattainable. Through Ontario's apprenticeship supports, more young people will have the opportunity to pursue prosperous careers without the burden of the initial costs.

The Ontario Tools Grant helps apprentices purchase the tools and equipment they need to succeed on the jobsite or in the workplace. The cost of tools alone often

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prevents many young people from pursuing the trades – it's an unnecessary barrier that obstructs a bright future for many. The \$600 grant for construction apprentices ensures that young people, especially the many entering the trades after high school, can purchase the tools they are required to have on site. This is an investment into the apprentices who will lead our jobsites in the years to come – an investment which will offer dividends to the province for decades.

Moreover, by assisting with living costs, Ontario's Apprentice Learning grants ensure that young people are not forced to choose between a job now or attending in-class training. For the many apprentices who struggle to make ends meet, the grant provides the financial boost that they need as they prepare for a lifelong career. For decades, the skilled trades have created opportunity for Ontarians, and lifted many out of poverty. Skilled trades apprenticeships have led to well-paying jobs with benefits and pensions. They have helped support families throughout the province. The strategy will allow many more young people to realize their full potential through a career path they may have otherwise rejected due to the initial entry costs.

Training for a Successful Future

Pre-apprenticeship and in-class training programs provide apprentices with the training that they need to succeed on the jobsite. Ontario's investment into non-college training ensures that providers such as LiUNA offer up-to-date instruction on current equipment.

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Construction skills and practices change regularly as we develop new technologies and improve health and safety standards. It is critical that our apprentices learn the very techniques that are used on today's projects to prepare them for tomorrow's jobs.

Most importantly, pre-apprenticeship training is paramount to ensuring worker safety on the jobsite. In construction, worker safety is closely interconnected with hands-on experience with equipment. From working-at-heights to health and safety training, the government's investment allows us to provide safety training using the same equipment used in the industry. Up-to-date training ensures our workers are safe each and every day.

Non-college training providers use innovative delivery methods to maximize their impact on students. Through the development of mobile units, LiUNA offers training in remote and northern regions of Ontario – a step towards creating economic opportunities in historically underserved areas. Working with First Nations, LiUNA's mobile training program has offered skills certifications to members of Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario.

Additionally, Ontario's investment into non-college training supports special programs which are designed to encourage diversity in the trades. In partnership with the province, LiUNA facilitates a training and outreach program intended to increase female

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participation and leadership in the skilled trades. This is complemented by initiatives such as LiUNA's Black and Indigenous rights programs. Starting in the classroom, and continuing on the jobsite, we're committed to creating a safe and inclusive industry today, and for years to come.

Creating Opportunities

Apprenticeships are mutually beneficial for employers and apprentices. Many small- and medium-sized businesses, however, are unable to realize many of the benefits of hiring apprentices due to the expense. This means that many apprentices struggle to find employment within their trade. LiUNA believes that Ontario's investment into encouraging employer participation will increase opportunities for apprentices, while maximizing benefits to small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Ontario currently faces a crisis of low participation in the skilled trades. This is especially worrying for many construction firms who are forced to turn down business for lack of staffing. Apprenticeships are an opportunity for businesses to find their next generation of talent. As many members of the construction sector approach retirement age, the province's strategy will help local employers find talented workers who will grow to lead their businesses in the years to come.

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Urban centres across the province are growing exponentially – and our public infrastructure must grow at an equal rate. According to the Toronto Region Board of Trade, 147,000 construction related jobs will be created by 2031.¹ We do not, however, have trained workers to fill those positions. In order to prepare for necessary infrastructure projects in the future, we must prioritize training apprentices today. Ontario's strategy to create apprenticeship positions on infrastructure builds will ensure we have a skilled workforce which is prepared to take on the hospital, bridge, road and transit builds of tomorrow.

Conclusion

As Ontario takes on ambitious projects, skilled tradespeople will be at the heart of these challenges. In order to maximize the success of each project, it's imperative that the provincial government invest in providing young people with the resources that they need to succeed.

The Skilled Trades Strategy is a promising way to attract a new generation of talent towards apprenticeships. Most importantly, it ensures apprentices of all ages have the resources and training that they'll need to succeed safely on the jobsite. The strategy is a proactive approach to not only address the skills shortage, but rather shape a successful generation of apprentices.

¹ https://www.bot.com/Portals/0/unsecure/Advocacy/TRBOT_Talent_Study_2016.pdf

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For decades, the trades have created opportunities for Ontarians. The strategy ensures that any Ontarian, regardless of income or background, can pursue a prosperous and meaningful career. It means opportunity for all. LiUNA is proud to support the government's approach to the skilled trades in its 2020 budget. The investments announced by Ontario will help to create a new generation of apprentices. LiUNA welcomes the opportunity to shape them into the skilled tradespeople who will build the Province for decades to come.