



Electrical Industry Coalition seeks role in plans for skilled trades

Safety and training key to ensuring province's infrastructure needs met

April 22, 2019 - The Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario (ECAO), the Ontario Electrical League (OEL) and the IBEW are joining forces to work with the Ontario government to educate them on why reducing the scope of practice of a 309A Electrician-Construction and Maintenance would not only risk public safety but will also deter others from entering the trade.

On April 11, the Ontario government introduced its budget, which included a proposed framework to replace the Ontario College of Trades that is intended to modernize the apprenticeship system and promote careers in the skilled trades. The framework also referred to a proposed new model that would potentially allow uncertified individuals to do the work of trades currently deemed compulsory.

The ECAO/OEL/IBEW coalition has committed to developing a research paper to assist the government in understanding what this would mean for the electrician trade. The coalition represents almost the entire electrical industry in Ontario.

"It's been well over a decade since all three organizations within the electrical industry have united on an issue so this should give the public a sense of its importance," said Stephen Sell, President of the Ontario Electrical League (OEL).

"As employers managing some of the largest electrical contracting projects in the Province of Ontario, we want to ensure that we have highly trained electricians and apprentices so we can deliver our services safely and effectively," said Graeme Aitken, Executive Director of the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario (ECAO).

"We hope the government will listen to Ontario's experts in the electricity industry on why the government's model does not work for our trade. We have a long history of success in the apprenticeship system and look forward to sharing our experience and knowledge to assist the government in creating a model that is practical, effective and keeps safety top of mind" said James Barry, Executive Chairman IBEW CCO.

Compulsory Trades

There are 23 trades in the province of Ontario that are designated as compulsory. A compulsory designation means an individual must be a registered apprentice, journeyman candidate or hold a certificate of qualification as a journeyman in order to legally do the work (scope of practice) within that trade. This designation is generally used for trades where the work poses a safety risk to the individual workers and the public.

Scope of Practice

The Scope of Practice for Ontario's 309A Electrician - Construction and Maintenance is developed through the Interprovincial Red Seal Program - a highly respected and well recognized national standard for the trade across Canada - under the title Construction Electrician. The Red Seal utilizes an extensive process with experts from across the country when developing a Scope of Practice for a Trade.

In Ontario, electricians install, service, troubleshoot, repair and maintain electrical systems. Within an electrical system, every component and every task - no matter how seemingly innocuous - is critical.

Allowing someone not in an electrical apprenticeship nor a certified journeyman to do a task currently within the Scope of an electrician - regardless of being trained to do that specific task - will put both workers and the public at risk, given the complexities and ever evolving technological advances that impact electrical systems.

The Coalition's third-party research paper will provide a report on this issue utilizing leading experts in the industry. The research paper will only focus on the impact to the electrical trade, recognizing there may be other trades where this model may work.
Ensuring a skilled trades workforce for the future

For Ontario to be "open for business" we require qualified individuals who can manage the complex demands of the important infrastructure investments it has announced. Ontario will still need electricians who have been trained in all aspects of the work as well as individuals in apprenticeship programs working toward and learning to be electricians.

This model will deter individuals from entering the electrical trade and create a skilled shortage because:

- It diminishes the value of the trade.
- It increases risks for the apprentice or journeyman electrician who would be performing dangerous electrical work that was started or partially completed by untrained workers.
- Reduce the job market for the trade due to portions of work being completed by others.

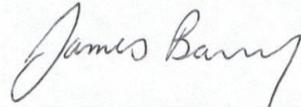
- The financial benefits of investing time in an apprenticeship will be reduced.



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Electrical League



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