

Chapter 34

Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission – Enabling Apprentices to Achieve Certification

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By January 2019, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission strengthened its processes to enable apprentices to achieve certification.

The Commission implemented a formal policy for industry inspections and progressed on documenting that employers receive an industry inspection as required. Not consistently documenting inspections as required increases the risk of the Commission not detecting employers who are not following the rules. In addition, apprentices may not receive appropriate supervision and on-the-job training.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Skilled workers are important to the Saskatchewan economy. New apprentices entering the various trades assists in the growth and sustainability of the trades, and in turn supports economic activity. Apprenticeship is an agreement between a person who wants to learn a trade (an apprentice) and an employer who needs a skilled worker. It typically takes an apprentice between four and six years to complete a program and achieve certification.

The Commission is responsible for developing and executing a relevant, accessible, and responsive apprenticeship training and certification program in Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan has over 60 designated trades and sub-trades in four sectors—agriculture, tourism & service; construction; motive repair; and production and maintenance. Apprentices registered in carpentry, electrical, and plumbing trades represent about 45% of apprentices registered in Saskatchewan’s apprenticeship and training certification program.¹ At January 2019, the Commission had about 904 registered carpenter apprentices, 1,380 registered electrician apprentices, and 704 registered plumbing apprentices. It also had about 860 employers in compulsory and regulated trades. Compulsory trades include electrician, plumber, sheet metal worker, sprinkler fitter, and refrigeration and air conditioner mechanic.² Hairstylist is the only regulated trade in Saskatchewan.

¹ Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, *2017-18 Annual Report*, p. 40-41.

² *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Regulations, 2003*, s. 26.



2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

Our *2014 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 11 concluded that Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission had effective processes to enable apprentices to achieve Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Certifications to meet market demand, except for areas related to the eight recommendations we made. The Commission had implemented six of the eight recommendations by February 29, 2016.³

This chapter describes our second follow-up of the Commission's actions on the two remaining recommendations we first made in 2014.

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Commission's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Commission's management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To perform this follow-up audit, we discussed actions taken with management, reviewed relevant documentation, and tested certain procedures where necessary.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at January 31, 2019, and the Commission's actions up to that date.

3.1 Policy on Industry Inspections Formalized

We recommended that the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission implement a formal policy for industry inspections that requires the use of a risk assessment to decide which employers to inspect and how often. (2014 Report – Volume 1, p. 88, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement December 3, 2014)

Status – Implemented

The Commission formalized its policy on industry inspections in May 2016.

The policy requires inspection of employers in compulsory and regulated trades every two years, and inspection of all other employers every three years. The Commission has assessed employers in compulsory and regulated trades as higher risk because of regulatory requirements for these trades (e.g., required apprentice to journeyman ratio).

Having a formalized policy helps ensure staff understand which employers should be inspected and how often.

³ Our *2016 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 30 reports the progress the Commission had made.

3.2 Industry Inspections Not Completed as Required

We recommended that the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission verify and document that employers receive an industry inspection as required. (2014 Report – Volume 1, p. 89, Recommendation 5; Public Accounts Committee agreement December 3, 2014)

Status – Partially Implemented

The Commission is not consistently documenting that it is inspecting employers in compulsory trades as often as its policy requires.

For the 30 employers we examined, we found that two employers in compulsory trades had not received an industry inspection in the past two years as required by the Commission's policy. The Commission had last inspected one employer in March 2015 and the other employer in September 2016. The Commission told us that for one instance, staff vacancies had delayed the inspection. For the other instance, the Commission found it had not properly documented the inspection.

Not consistently documenting inspections of employers in compulsory trades as required increases the risk of the Commission not detecting employers who are not following the rules. In addition, apprentices may not be receiving appropriate supervision and on-the-job training.

