

Chapter 36

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

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By August 2020, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission implemented our remaining recommendation by conducting and documenting timely industry inspections of employers as required.

The Commission requires and conducts inspections of employers with staff in compulsory trades (e.g., construction electrician, plumber) every two years and non-compulsory trades (e.g., carpenter) every three years.¹

Conducting timely inspections decreases the risk of apprentices not receiving appropriate supervision and on-the-job training.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission is responsible for developing and executing a relevant, accessible, and responsive apprenticeship training and certification program in Saskatchewan.²

Skilled workers are important to the Saskatchewan economy. Saskatchewan has over 60 designated trades and sub-trades in four sectors—agriculture; tourism and service construction; motive repair; and production and maintenance.

New apprentices entering the various trades assist in the growth and sustainability of the trades, and support economic activity. Apprenticeship is an agreement between a person who wants to learn a trade (i.e., 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.

Compulsory trades include construction electrician, plumber, sheet metal worker, sprinkler fitter, and refrigeration and air conditioning mechanic.³ Other non-compulsory trades include 44 various trades including carpenter, hairstylist, welder and parts technician. At August 31, 2020, the Commission had about 613 registered carpenter apprentices, 1,005 registered construction electrician apprentices, and 464 registered plumber apprentices. In addition, it has about 890 employers in compulsory and non-compulsory trades.

¹ Compulsory trades are those trades where registration as an apprentice is mandatory. Non-compulsory trades do not require candidates to be an apprentice and they can challenge the certification directly.

² *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Act, 2019.*

³ *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Regulations, 2003, s. 26.*



2.2 Audit Focus

This chapter describes our third follow-up audit of management's actions on a recommendation we first made in our 2014 audit about the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission's processes to enable apprentices to achieve Interprovincial Red Seal certification.⁴

Our *2014 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 11, concluded the Commission had effective processes to enable apprentices to achieve Interprovincial Standards Red Seal certification to meet market demand, except for areas related to the eight recommendations we made.^{5,6}

By March 2019, the Commission had implemented seven recommendations, but was not fully inspecting employers in accordance with its policy.⁷

To conduct this audit, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Commission's progress toward 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 our follow-up audit, we discussed actions taken with management, reviewed relevant documentation, and tested a sample of inspections.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION

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 August 31, 2020, and the Commission's actions up to that date.

3.1 Industry Inspections Completed as Required

We recommended 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—Implemented

The Commission is inspecting employers in compulsory and non-compulsory trades as often as its policy requires, and consistently documents the results of its inspections.

The Commission uses inspections to monitor employer's compliance with *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Act, 2019* and *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Regulations, 2020*. These set out requirements to ensure the appropriate

⁴ Interprovincial Red Seal certification is a standard of excellence for skilled trades. A Red Seal certified tradesperson is able to work throughout Canada.

⁵ The audit focused on the processes for the construction electrician, carpenter and plumber trades.

⁶ Market demand is defined as the employer training demand.

⁷ 2016 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 30, and 2019 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 34.

apprentice-to-journeyperson ratios and that only registered apprentices are working for these employers. It plans to inspect employers in compulsory trades (e.g., construction electrician, plumber) every two years and non-compulsory trades (e.g., carpenter) every three years consistent with its policy.

As of August 2020, the Commission consistently documented its assessment of employers training apprentices in compulsory and non-compulsory trades.

We tested 30 employers—20 in compulsory trades (e.g., plumber, construction electrician), and 10 in non-compulsory trades (e.g., carpenter). Inspection files showed the Commission completed the inspections within the expected timeframes.

Conducting and documenting the results of inspections as required decreases the risk of the Commission not detecting employers who are not following requirements. In addition, it decreases the risk apprentices are not be receiving appropriate supervision and on-the-job training.

