

# Questions and Answers: Reforming Apprenticeship and Supporting the Skilled Trades

## What's new

### **1. Why did the government create the new agency called Skilled Trades Ontario?**

The skilled trades and apprenticeship system plays a critical role in Ontario's economy. However, the system was outdated and overly complex. As such, the government created Skilled Trades Ontario to replace the Ontario College of Trades. This is part of the government's plan to build an apprenticeship and skilled trades system that is easier for people to access and navigate. This would attract more people to the skilled trades, better prepare them for good jobs, and address industry needs.

The government created Skilled Trades Ontario to provide clearer access to enhanced services for apprentices, skilled trades workers, and their employers.

### **2. How will Skilled Trades Ontario help skilled trade workers, businesses, and other people in Ontario?**

The new model would minimize duplication and provide one point of access to apprentices, tradespeople and sponsors of apprentices, including businesses and union training centres. Workers and businesses in Ontario will benefit from streamlined service improvements, easier navigation of the system, and the reduction of red tape – helping businesses find the talent they need and allowing the economy to grow faster.

At maturity, it will bring together services under one industry informed organization, help apprentices and workers access registration and get certification all in one place, with enhanced digital service delivery. These modernized, digital-first services will be continually improved based on ongoing stakeholder input.

### **3. How is this new agency different from the Ontario College of Trades?**

In the new simplified and client-focused model, the new agency is industry-informed and accountable to the Minister of Labour, Training, and Skills Development. The agency's government-appointed board is made up of individuals with competencies and skills that reflect the agency's mandate.

Unlike the Ontario College of Trades, at maturity, Skilled Trades Ontario will be the single point of access for all apprenticeship and skilled trades clients, focusing on training and certification. The agency does not have a role in compliance and enforcement activities.

Skilled Trades Ontario has greater accountability to government, including the requirements to submit annual reports, business plans, and audited financial statements.

You can learn more by visiting the [Skilled Trades Ontario website](#).

### **4. What did the ministry do to improve the online experience for clients, businesses, and stakeholders?**

The ministry has developed a digital portal called the Skilled Trades Ontario Portal (STO Portal). In January 2022 the STO Portal replaces the ministry's Apprenticeship Online and Change my Sponsor web applications. This allows apprentices to submit an application and update their sponsor information.

Group sponsors will be able to submit applications online for multiple apprentices at once, saving them time.

The paper-based Trade Equivalency Assessment application and payment processes will be digitized by the portal.

The digital portal will also enable tradespeople to track their training journey online. It will feature basic profile management, display exam results, certification renewal and online payment of fees.

New releases of digital services will continue over the next year, based on user input, to ensure tradespeople and businesses continue to receive digitally enabled services that meet their expectations.

#### **5. How can an employer hire an apprentice under the new system?**

Skilled Trades Ontario and the ministry will support employers who want to hire an apprentice. The process of registering a training agreement with the ministry will be the same, with improved online functionality for apprentices and sponsors. The full process can be found at [Ontario.ca/HireAnApprentice](https://www.ontario.ca/HireAnApprentice). Employers can also use the [Ontario Job Bank](#) to find a suitable apprentice and to post apprenticeship opportunities.

Finally, employers can also contact the [Employment Ontario network](#) to find suitable candidates for apprenticeship. The Employment Ontario network helps match employers with job seekers and job seekers with employers.

## **Future State**

#### **6. When will Skilled Trades Ontario agency reach a mature state?**

The ministry is taking a thoughtful and measured approach to the transition to Skilled Trades Ontario.

The ministry would continue to co-deliver existing apprenticeship services until the agency has reached a mature state. The transition to a mature state agency, with proposed apprenticeship services integrated, is expected to take up to three years.

#### **7. Who will develop the apprenticeship program standards and issue certifications during the transition of Skilled Trades Ontario into a mature state?**

The ministry continues to handle apprenticeship registration while the Skilled Trades Ontario is responsible for certification until it reaches a mature state and is able to take over the delivery of apprenticeship registration.

Skilled Trades Ontario will be responsible for the apprenticeship program standards development.

## Background

### 8. What happened to the Ontario College of Trades?

The Ontario College of Trades is closed. It transitioned several of its functions to Skilled Trades Ontario:

- Development and maintenance of apprenticeship training and curriculum standards
- Development and maintenance of exams
- Issuance of certificates for journeypersons
- Assessment of non-apprenticeship stream applicants (trade equivalency assessments).
- Maintenance of the public register
- Ongoing client services and supports

The ministry continues to co-deliver several functions with Skilled Trades Ontario until it reaches its mature state:

- Apprentice registration (registered training agreements)
- Monitoring of apprentice progression and in-school scheduling
- Issuance of Certificates of Apprenticeship
- Administration of exams, including exam marking

### 9. Why did Ontario pass the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act?

Skilled trades workers are at the front line of our economic recovery, with businesses playing a crucial role in training our next generation of workers through apprenticeship programs.

A Skilled Trades Panel appointed by the government learned during consultations with stakeholders that the skilled trades and apprenticeship system was hard to navigate. With responsibilities shared between the Ontario College of Trades and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, apprentices sometimes had to go back and forth between the College and the ministry to register as an apprentice or write, pay for

and receive exam results, among other services. These inefficient, confusing processes discouraged people from pursuing a career in skilled trades, made it harder for businesses to find skilled trade workers.

The legislation addresses this problem by allowing the government to create a new crown agency, Skilled Trades Ontario, which allows apprentices, journeypersons and employers to access all client services in one place, and with more digital self-service options that will make the system more efficient and easier to use. Compliance and enforcement is separated from the agency and handled by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. The legislation will be implemented in phases to provide time to adjust to the new system.

#### **10. Were stakeholders consulted on these developments?**

Yes, the government has listened to stakeholder feedback. These changes to the legislative framework and the new service delivery model were informed by the recommendations of the Skilled Trades Panel, which consulted with the public and industry stakeholders.

#### **11. What was the role of the Panel? What was its mandate?**

In September 2020, Ontario appointed a Skilled Trades Panel to provide recommendations on improving the oversight and delivery of apprenticeship training and certification and ensuring the skilled trades sector is more responsive to the province's changing economy.

The panel's mandate involves two phases. In Phase 1 (completed December 2020), the panel provided advice and recommendations to the minister on the replacement of the Ontario College of Trades and on a new approach to oversight and delivery of the skilled trades and apprenticeship system in Ontario. In Phase 2, the panel provided advice and recommendations to the minister on matters related to classification and training for the trades.

#### **12. What was the focus of the Skilled Trades Panel's Phase 1 mandate?**

The first phase of the panel's work, from September to December 2020, focused on a new service delivery model to replace the current services delivered by the Ontario College of Trades. This work is complete, and the [panel's recommendations can be found on Ontario.ca.](#)

The government is now moving forward with introducing a new legislative framework, **Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021**, informed by the panel's Phase 1 recommendations. When the proposed legislation is fully proclaimed, it would replace the **Modernizing the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2019** and the **Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009**, becoming the new legislative framework for skilled trades and apprenticeship.

### **13. Who did the Skilled Trades Panel consult with for the Phase 1 work on the new service delivery model?**

Recommendations were informed by consultations with the public and industry stakeholders who provided advice on the path forward for the skilled trades and apprenticeship system. The panel engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including apprentices, tradespersons, employers, training delivery agents, unions, businesses, associations and organizations from each of the four trade sectors.

The panel received approximately 70 written submissions and held over 20 virtual meetings with stakeholders. The panel carefully considered each submission and the included advice. The ministry is releasing the panel's report, which includes its [Phase 1 recommendations, on Ontario.ca.](#)