

CHANGES TO RATIO CALCULATIONS

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Alberta Apprenticeship and industry Training Board makes it easier to hire and train more apprentices

The industrial activity in Alberta's oil sands is having an effect on all employers who employ tradespeople. The shortage of skilled tradespeople experienced by large companies is having a "domino effect" on medium and small employers including those in the non-construction trades. Many skilled tradespeople are moving to the higher paying jobs in the industrial construction industry leaving medium and small employers struggling to find skilled tradespeople to fill their place.

While employers are hiring apprentices, they are having difficulty finding enough journeypeople to train and supervise them. One way to get more journeypeople is to train and certify more apprentices. If the number of apprentices were increased, eventually there would be more journeypeople as well as a greater ability to train more apprentices.

The Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board (Board) has heard industry's concerns about the number of apprentices that an employer is allowed to employ (commonly called the ratio provision). Industry indicates that the rules are having a negative impact on their ability to employ and train apprentices, and to perform the work to which they are committed.

The Board, with the approval of the Minister of Advanced Education, is authorized under the *Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act* to make regulations governing the number of apprentices that may be employed by an employer.

Prior to May 1, 2006, the calculation of ratios included those individuals who had applied for certification or recognition of their certification and all apprentices. To help employers train more apprentices, the Board, with the approval of the Minister, has changed the rules around the way ratios are calculated. For the purpose of calculating ratio, the following are excluded from the count of apprentices:

- individuals who have applied for Alberta certification or recognition of their out of province certification, and
- final period apprentices in three and four year apprenticeship programs.

Historically, ratios have been used as a way to ensure quality on the job training. We expect employers to continue to provide quality on the job training as they always have. Employers are responsible, under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, to ensure the safety of the employer's workers and to ensure that workers who are not competent are appropriately supervised.

More specific information is available in the following "Questions and Answers" section on the following pages.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTION: What are ratios?

RESPONSE: Most trade regulations prescribe the number of apprentices that an employer may employ. These numbers are described in terms of the number of journeypersons available to supervise the training of an apprentice. Most trades allow employers to employ one apprentice for each journeyperson employed by the employer.

QUESTION: Why are there ratios?

RESPONSE: Journeyperson-to-apprentice ratios help ensure that apprentices learn their skills in an environment of appropriate supervision. Supervised on-the-job training and work experience are an important part of apprentices' training. Journeyperson-to-apprentice ratios vary among trades, and are based on the particular needs of each trade. In most cases, the ratio is one journeyperson to one apprentice.

QUESTION: Who sets the ratios?

RESPONSE: Ratios are set by the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, with the approval of the Minister of Advanced Education, in the individual trade regulations.

QUESTION: How will an employer know if an individual who has applied for certification is excluded from the count of apprentices?

RESPONSE: Advanced Education will be issuing to applicants for Alberta certification or recognition of their out of province certification an identification card that will be valid for six months. Applicants are expected to complete the certification process in that time period.

QUESTION: Will the changes affect all trades?

RESPONSE: The change relating to individuals who have applied for certification or recognition of their certification applies to all trades. The change relating to final period apprentices in three and four year apprenticeship programs applies to those 47 trades and branches of those trades that have apprenticeship programs longer than two years.

QUESTION: How will the change affect employers?

RESPONSE: It will make it easier for employers to hire and train more apprentices and ensure more certified journeypeople will be available for the future.

QUESTION: How will the change affect apprentices?

RESPONSE: The Board expects employers to continue to provide quality on the job training as they always have. Apprentices in their final period of apprenticeship will continue to require journeyperson supervision for the tasks of the trade they have yet to learn.

QUESTION: What about safety?

RESPONSE: The change does not reduce the responsibility of the employer to ensure the safety of the employer's workers and to ensure that workers who are not competent are supervised by someone who is. The Board is committed to safety. Employer rights and responsibilities for safety fall under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.