

New Policy Helps Alberta's Apprentices Get To Work

A new bidding policy for construction contractors will ensure apprentices receive work experience on all major Government of Alberta-funded infrastructure and transportation projects.

Beginning this month, bidders on large-scale, public infrastructure projects will be required to submit a brief outline of how they plan to use apprentices in the 11 construction-related trades. The new policy requires that apprentices participate on major public projects valued over \$15 million, or projects that will require at least two years to complete.

In addition, sub-contracts of \$500,000 or greater will also be required to comply with the new requirement.



“As our economy recovers, we’re doing everything we can to get Albertans back to work,” said Marlin Schmidt, Minister of Advanced Education with the Government of Alberta. “We are very fortunate that Alberta’s industry has played such a key role in delivering on-the-job experience, and this requirement is another way for our industry partners to continue their leadership and mentorship of apprentices.”

The policy requires bidders to complete an attestation form and a brief plan as part of their submission for the tender process, and follows months of engagement with industry partners and associations, including the Alberta Construction Association, Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association, and the Consulting Engineers of Alberta.

The trades subject to the new requirement are: carpentry, crane and hoisting equipment operations, electrical, elevator construction, gas-fitting, heavy equipment technician, ironworker, plumbing, refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanics, sheet metal and welding.

About 80 per cent of an apprentice's training is completed on the job under the supervision of a certified journeyman or qualified individual. The remaining 20 per cent is completed in a lab or classroom setting. According to Glenn Feltham, president at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, the new requirement means Albertans will have increased opportunities to access high-quality work-site training.



“Alberta’s apprenticeship system plays a central role in ensuring our province develops the skilled workforce that will enable future prosperity and competitiveness,” he said “Industry plays a critical role in the success of this learning model, through providing training, mentorship and employment to apprentices. This role needs to be recognized, celebrated and encouraged.”

“Apprentices will tell you that real-world experience and mentorship are invaluable to their training and development,” echoed j’Amey Bevan, chair of the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board. “This is an important initiative that recognizes the value of supporting apprentices and apprenticeship training on publicly funded projects.”

Colette Dufour is one of 50,000 registered apprentices in the province. “This will definitely help enable apprentices to learn, to be supported career-wise and to move forward,” she said. “It will also help ensure a better standard of living for apprentices and a strong, well-educated workforce.”



The new policy comes into effect February 2018. It's estimated that it will apply to about 60 major procurements per year, including projects for schools, health facilities, government buildings, roads and bridges.