

April 8, 2020

The Honourable Minister Carla Qualtrough, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion

Dear Minister,

**Re: Apprentices Face Unique Challenges, Financial Pressure and Isolation in Face of Pandemic**

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF-FCA) recently surveyed members of the *Apprentices in Canada ePanel* about what supports they need during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to their feedback and as the national voice of Canada's apprenticeship community, we call on the federal government to recognize and make provisions for the unique challenges faced by apprentices during the COVID-19 health crisis.

In regular economic circumstances, apprentice employees are frequently among the first employees to be laid off and last to be rehired on recovery. In addition to economic cycles, apprentices are of an older average age and may have financial or family commitments such as mortgages, car payments and providing for young children.

Protecting the health and safety of apprentices is paramount and particularly so during the COVID-19 pandemic. Apprentices, like other tradespeople, require access to appropriate sanitation facilities, including hand washing stations. Other post-secondary students with a co-op or work placement may not face the same health and safety concerns as apprentices on worksite or living in a remote camp.

Unlike co-op students at university or college who may have the option to work remotely, apprentices cannot do their on-the-job training at home. If they are laid off, they lose the ability to earn hours towards their apprenticeship and progress will be delayed. This impacts the labour market as certified tradespersons are more likely to be employed full-time and earn more than those with no certification. For employers, low completion rates indicate a significant number of workers have not achieved the core skills and competencies required by industry in an apprenticeship program. Employers will have fewer skilled workers to draw from at a time when technology is demanding more sophisticated skill sets. Where journey person to apprentice ratios are legislated, the deferral or lack of certification leads to further delays hiring of additional entrant apprentices.

Apprentices who have lost their jobs require opportunities to continue the in-class/theoretical learning. Access to online learning platforms and resources will allow them to maintain training momentum and reinforce their knowledge. In a recent survey, CAF-FCA members overwhelmingly identified a need for online delivery technology and equipment for both instructors and apprentices.

During this time of uncertainty, CAF-FCA will continue to gather resources, share best practices and distribute them widely to apprentices and other stakeholders. Over the next few weeks, CAF-FCA will work with other apprenticeship stakeholders to identify actions the Government of Canada should take to address challenges and barriers to progression as a result of the ongoing health crisis.

Sincerely,



France Daviault  
Executive Director

Cc: The Honourable Minister Filomena Tassi, P.C., M.P., Mr. Pierre Laliberté, Ms. Judith Andrew