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Canadian
Home Builders'
Association



Association canadienne
des constructeurs
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CHBA Submission for F-P/T Consultations on the Labour Market Transfer Agreements, August 18, 2016

The Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) is pleased to see the federal and provincial/territorial governments seeking input on the labour market transfer agreements, which are supported by significant contributions made directly by employers in our sector through the Employment Insurance (EI) Program.

The residential construction industry supports over 1 million jobs in new home construction, renovation and repair, and continues to be one of the largest employers in Canada. One of every 18 workers in Canada is employed, directly or indirectly, in residential construction. BuildForce Canada has also projected that our industry will see over 118,000 skilled workers retiring over the next 10 years.

Given the ongoing labour needs of our industry, we share your view that the programs funded through transfer agreements, namely; Labour Market Development Agreements, Canada Job Fund Agreements, Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities and Targeted Initiative for Older Workers, must continue to be responsive to labour market needs.

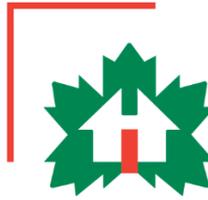
We are pleased to provide the following feedback on the questions outlined in the discussion paper for the federal-provincial/territorial consultations on the labour market transfer agreements:

Q1. *Given varied and changing labour market conditions, what should employment and skills training programs be trying to achieve and for whom?*

In addition to helping unemployed and underemployed Canadians prepare for and connect with jobs, employment and skills training programs should be designed to assist employers in finding suitable candidates, implementing retention strategies, and helping to support upskilling where necessary. Supporting programs need to be able to respond to local and regional labour market needs. In each case, the requirements need to be clearly defined and the administrative burden kept to a minimum. The measures used to monitor the effectiveness of programs must take employers'/business needs into consideration, and wherever possible and appropriate, programs should be employer-driven.

In the specific case of Labour Market Development Agreement funded programs, we present CHBA's long-term policy positions regarding Employment Insurance (EI) in order to help put our specific recommendations into perspective:

- The residential construction industry believes that EI premiums should be reduced or maintained at levels appropriate to sustain the program and the funds in the EI Account should be dedicated to the purposes intended. Meaning, employment insurance and supporting programs funded through the EI Account should only apply to the rate payers. Whereas other sources including Canada Job Fund agreements should be used to fund supporting programs for other unemployed and underemployed individuals.



- The industry believes the design of the EI program should be dictated by policy and must be the outcome of evidence-based analysis.
- The industry also believes it is important to consider any unintended consequences to employers when making changes to the EI program. For example, this would include unjustified reporting requirements or any changes that would make it more onerous for employers to participate in EI funded support programs.

CHBA's specific recommendations with respect to LMDA funded programs are as follows:

1. Make information on all LMDA funded programs (provincial and federal) and the results of those programs easily accessible, for review and sharing with employers.
2. Allow for as much flexibility as possible in updated Labour Market Development Agreements, in order to accommodate regional and sector specific needs and opportunities.
3. Ensure that all LMDA funded training and support programs are available to all EI eligible trades and occupations working, or seeking to work in, the residential construction industry.

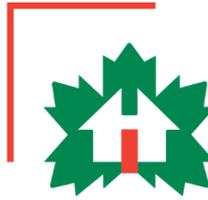
Q2. *Are current employment and skills training programs flexible enough to respond to the needs of a diverse workforce, e.g. vulnerable workers, youth, Indigenous Peoples, recent immigrants and others who need particular support? If yes, what in particular is working best, or how can these groups best be supported?*

CHBA does not monitor the effectiveness of federal or provincial/territorial skills training programs for identified groups. Therefore, we are unable to comment on this specific question. However, CHBA would be very interested to learn how employment and skills training programs are being monitored with respect to these important target groups.

Q3. *Are all Canadians, in particular jobseekers and potential jobseekers, aware of and able to access appropriate employment and training programs to find and/or keep a job? If yes, what in particular is working best? If not, who and why?*

There is growing awareness of the Canada Job Grant (CJG) by our members which has been promoted at all three levels of our Association. Some provincial home builders' associations have taken on the administrative role for members and/or worked with partners to design, implement and promote CFG funded programs. This type of employer-driven approach in partnership with provincial governments has worked well for employers in our sector.

CHBA supports the continuation and expansion of employer-driven programs, including the Canada Job Grant, with all challenges for employers identified in *Canada Job Grant Year 2 Review* addressed. During the consultations on LMDA funded programs in 2014, as reported by CHBA to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA), it was challenging to find information on specific LMDA funded programs in many of the provinces. Information on all skills training programs needs to be readily available to employers, in a user-friendly format, and their role for participating clearly outlined in each case.



Q4. *What are the employment and skills training needs that employers see as critical to address their workforce and economic objectives? What is the role of employers versus government?*

In the residential construction industry there is a growing shortage of skilled workers, including tradespeople and those working in supervisory positions (i.e. residential construction managers). The residential construction industry is focused on retention measures, upskilling the existing workforce and attracting new talent.

Many employees in the residential construction industry become self-employed. Therefore, support for self-employment along with user-friendly information on existing programs is important to people working in our sector.

Q5. *What innovative approaches and partnerships could be used to address emerging issues and needs in the labour market?*

CHBA's partnership with BuildForce Canada has been and continues to be a good approach for identification of emerging issues and needs in the labour market.

Q6. *How could employment and skills training programs be more responsive? (e.g. changing nature of work, increasing entrepreneurship, diverse workforce)*

Employment and skills training programs need to be responsive to the local labour market and needs of employers in a given region. Barriers for participation need to be identified and addressed. The best way to design more responsive programs is to work directly with employers in the design of programs and share positive examples across the country that can be replicated.

Q7. *What kinds of labour market information are most valuable in supporting planning and informed decision making? This could include:*

- *Information to support career planning for a jobseeker; or*
- *Information for employers to support workforce development needs.*

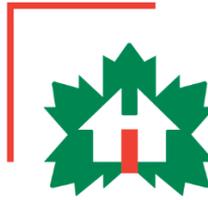
Regional information (supply and demand data) for residential trades and occupations and insights on future trends, based on scenario-based forecasts, are valuable to both jobseekers and employers. The information needs to be as current as possible and updated on a regular basis with industry validation.

Gaps in baseline data (e.g. Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey) need addressed in order to allow BuildForce Canada and others developing labour market information to continuously improve the quality of data made available to job seekers, employers and policy makers.

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Q8. *What forms of engagement with stakeholders work best? What approaches to outreach might be considered to improve the sharing of information between labour market partners?*

A variety of forms of engagement often works best with stakeholders such as CHBA with 8,500 members spread across the country. Consultation, dialogue and engagement directly with the Association provides both national and regional perspectives, with insights garnered and synthesized from our vast and diverse membership. Depending on the given topic, focus groups organized through the Association are often also a good way to directly seek input from members. Short surveys and questionnaires can also work when seeking input from local, provincial and national levels of the Association.

Industry associations such as CHBA are a good vehicle for sharing information. A national on-line hub for those developing labour market information (LMI) might be a good approach for sharing information between labour market partners.

Obviously, ensuring that employers are aware of the various forms of user-friendly LMI produced by various levels of government and others is crucial.

Q9. *What information do Canadians need to better understand the outcomes of investments in employment and skills training programs?*

A province-by-province comparison showing the outcomes of investments in specific employment and skills training programs based on different industries. Where applicable, the size and types of participating employers would be helpful. For example, *the National evaluation of Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSM): incremental impacts for "long-tenured workers" EI claimant category and cost-benefit analysis of EBSMs*, reported on in the 2015 EI Monitoring and Assessment Report, could be expanded to report on the outcomes of specific programs on a province-by-province basis. Continuation and expansion of the cost-benefit analysis and application of lessons learned including feedback from employers is strongly recommended.

In conclusion, we commend the Forum of Labour Market Ministers for seeking input on the federal - provincial/territorial labour market transfer agreements from stakeholder organizations. We look forward to having the results of this important consultation. In the meantime, we would be pleased to provide additional details upon request.