Investigating Apprenticeship Completion in Canada:
Reasons for Non-Completion and Suggested Initiatives for Improving Completion

April 2011
Acknowledgments

CAF-FCA would like to thank all the members of the Working Group for the time and effort they contributed to this project.

CAF-FCA would also like to acknowledge the partners who helped us organize the discussion groups. Many thanks to the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology Polytechnic in Alberta, the College of the North Atlantic in Newfoundland and Labrador, the BC Industry Training Authority, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Their assistance was greatly appreciated.

Note to Readers

The opinions expressed in this research document do not necessarily represent the views or official policies of the CAF-FCA, the Working Group, or other agencies or organizations that may have provided support, financial or otherwise, for this project.

The discussion findings are not a statistically significant sample and there is a risk that the views gathered in this process may be skewed to distinct circumstances or misrepresent the experiences of others. The comments only reflect the opinions and perspectives of those who participated in the discussions. Generalized conclusions from these specific consultations should not be drawn.

For definitions of terms such as the Red Seal Program, Red Seal Endorsement, Sector Councils, Essential Skills, Pre-Apprenticeship, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), Certification, Designated trades, National Occupational Standards, etc., the report entitled “National Apprenticeship Survey Canada Overview Report 2007,” has a glossary that starts on page 62.

http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-598-x/81-598-x2008001-eng.pdf

It is crucial that, on an ongoing basis, stakeholders continue to have an open dialogue about human resource practices in the skilled trades and it is hoped this report can contribute to that discussion.
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Executive Summary

Mandate

By engaging stakeholders in a discussion about completion, the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum – Forum canadien sur l’apprentissage (CAF-FCA) sought to develop a clearer understanding of the factors impacting apprenticeship completion and what can be done to potentially help apprentices complete their programs. The statistical evidence indicating that there is no one clear reason for non-completion, served as an impetus for CAF-FCA to discuss with stakeholders the circumstances that might lead to these results.

Background

The catalyst for CAF-FCA’s investigation of apprenticeship completion came largely from two previous studies: (1) Statistics Canada’s National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS) 2007, and (2) British Columbia Labour Market Information Committee’s (BCLMI) 2007-2008 Apprenticeship Completion Project. Both projects aimed to identify barriers to apprenticeship completion. These sources highlight that there is no one reason for stopping an apprenticeship program. The majority of NAS respondents who had discontinued their programs reported “other” reasons for not completing their apprenticeship program. These findings prompted CAF-FCA to ask stakeholders why respondents identified “other”.

Methodology

This study summarizes statistical data from previous studies and findings from seven discussion groups that were organized by CAF-FCA. The regional distribution of sessions and participants was as follows:

**Figure No. E. 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calgary, Alberta</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver, British Columbia</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa, Ontario¹</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto, Ontario</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatoon, Saskatchewan</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ This group was larger because CAF-FCA Board of Directors attended this session along with a variety of other stakeholders.
Stakeholder discussions were approximately two hours in length and centered on these two main questions:

1. What reasons for non-completions do you think have been missed by the 2007 NAS and other research?
2. What can be done to enhance completions in Canada?

**Findings from Statistics**

According to the National Apprenticeship Survey:

- **Long-term continuers**: 27 per cent by 2007 had been apprentices for 1.5 times the prescribed duration of their apprenticeship. This group makes up more than one quarter of the sample and this highlights possible delays in the progression of these respondents through the system.

- **Completers**: 56 per cent completed their apprenticeship by or before 2007.

- **Discontinuers**: 17 per cent had discontinued their apprenticeship by 2007.

Discontinuers were the focus of several questions within NAS. One key finding was that 62.8 per cent of persons who were discontinuers in 2002-2004 re-entered the system.

**Findings from Group Discussions**

**Reasons for Non-Completion**

Most apprenticeship stakeholders participating in the discussion agreed that respondents to the NAS 2007 survey who indicated “other” for discontinuing their apprenticeship did so because they were unable or reluctant to provide the actual reason.

Additional reasons for discontinuation suggested in the discussion groups can be divided into three categories:

1. **Employer-specific factors related to labour market and workplace conditions**
   - These factors relate to business cycles, human resource strategies, and corporate culture. The reasons might be unrelated to and/or unknown by the apprentice. Specifically, apprenticeship stakeholders noted:
     - Limited opportunities to provide the needed variety of experiences across the scope of the trade.
     - Apprentice shows poor performance, is unreliable, or is unable to work in a team, and/or difficulties with supervision, etc.
     - Workplace lacks a mentoring culture – too few journeypersons know how to mentor and, therefore, the apprentice gets turned off by the on-the-job training experience.
2. **Apprentice-specific factors related to personal barriers and experience**
   - These factors reflect social and personal circumstances that are ever-changing and variable by age, trade, and other factors.
     - Younger generations are more likely to explore and reject jobs/career opportunities.
     - Entering apprentices have limited experience in the trades and discover that the working conditions are not a good fit.
     - Apprentices may avoid providing direct reasons for stopping their programs that they may perceive to be embarrassing such as exam anxiety and weaknesses in math and reading. Other reasons for discontinuation that apprentices may not want to divulge include fear of losing their jobs while in technical training, reluctance to take on more responsibilities that come with being a journeyperson, and harassment on the work-site.

3. **System-based conditions and barriers**
   - Discussions revealed a third set of reasons related to the structure and management of the apprenticeship systems. Specifically:
     - Lack of reliable labour market information. Apprentices may enter during an economic period when vacancies are expected and discover there are no jobs.
     - Financial demands related to technical training, including tuition, books, tools, and other expenses for technical training sessions.

### Actions for Improving Apprenticeship Completion:

Based on their experiences, participants identified the following actions to enhance completion rates in Canada:

1. **Initiatives targeting employer-related factors**
   - Communicate the value of certification to employers.
   - Establish communication and flexibility among Training Delivery Agents (TDAs) and Employers.
   - Interviews and orientation sessions for entering apprentices.
   - Improve the quality of mentoring.

2. **Initiatives targeting apprentices’ personal barriers and experience**
   - Ensure access to exploratory career programs.
   - Clearly communicate the requirements of apprenticeship to potential entrants before they start.
   - Communicate the value of certification to apprentices.
• **Better communication is needed.** Apprentices, employers, apprenticeship authority officials, and instructors need to keep one another informed. For example:
  ◦ Employers should inform the apprentice if layoffs have economic reasons, and are not related to work performance.
  ◦ Apprentices and the apprenticeship authorities should keep in contact so that progress is tracked and requirements are made clear.
  ◦ Employers/journeypersons and instructors need to discuss any weak areas the apprentice is facing so that he/she can get help sooner.

• **Ensure access to learning supports.** Some apprentices may need access to tutoring, exam prep courses, or/and the option for writing a special needs exam.

3. **Initiatives Targeting System-Related Factors Based on the Structure and Features of the Programs**

• **Promote a career path to apprentices.** Provide a “road map” that describes the bridges and ladders that connect related trades training and allow portability of credits across programs.

• **Completion needs to be celebrated as a major milestone.** Apprentices need to understand that completion is a worthwhile goal to achieve.

• **Pro-active responses to economic cycles and their impacts on apprenticeship.** Provide labour market information to help candidates better understand who is hiring. In addition, consider arranging for attendance at technical training during economic downturns.
Conclusions and Implications

The discussion groups offered recommended actions that might help apprentices complete. Examples might include initiatives that:

- bring employers together with TDAs to coordinate details of technical training. These might include changes to class and exam schedules, curriculum and tracking the progress of apprentices.

- promote promising practices in mentoring that draw on initiatives in individual industries (e.g. construction) and regions (e.g. Alberta programs) and reflect the impact of mentoring on the progress of apprentices and the productivity of business operations.

- disseminate labour market information and projections that cover the full range of trades and regional markets to employers, trainers and apprentices. Effective communication of this type of material would involve forums where employers could validate assessments of conditions and encourage training and certification in trades where employment prospects are strong.
A. Mandate: The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum-Forum canadien sur l’apprentissage (CAF-FCA) engaged Prism Economics and Analysis to facilitate group discussions with apprenticeship stakeholders on the topic of apprenticeship completion. The primary goal was to explore National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS) findings and to identify action items that would enhance completion.

Background Context:

Completion leads to a number of positive outcomes based on findings from the NAS when the data on completers versus discontinuers is compared:

- A greater proportion of the discontinuers, 75 per cent, were without any certification.\(^5\)
- When compared to completers, discontinuers were more likely to be unemployed or out of the labour force.\(^6\)
- Discontinuers were less likely to have permanent jobs in comparison to completers.\(^7\)
- 60 per cent of discontinuers earned less than $25 an hour, compared with 40 per cent of completers.\(^8\)
- 37 per cent of discontinuers earned between $25 to $50 in comparison to 50 per cent of completers.\(^9\)
- For completers, the median wage was $27 an hour while for discontinuers, it was $20 an hour.\(^10\)

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2 There is a description of this survey in the methodology section of this report.
3 As defined in NAS, completers are people who had been registered apprentices and had completed their apprenticeship programs (with or without certification) at some point from 2002 to 2004. Based on the 2007 status, 18,318 respondents were considered completers by the survey at the time of the interview.
4 As defined in NAS, discontinuers are people who had been registered apprentices at some point in the past and had discontinued their apprenticeship programs between 2002 and 2004. In 2007, 4,673 respondents were considered discontinuers.
6 Ibid., 25.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 26.
9 Ibid.
10 Median indicates the middle point where half are above this value and half are under.
11 Ibid.
Despite the importance of completion in terms of the outcomes for the individual, it is difficult to pinpoint why individuals are not completing. NAS did try to explore this issue by asking those who discontinued their apprenticeship programs to identify why they stopped. Despite an extensive list of reasons that were provided such as “not enough work,” “insufficient income,” and “received a better job,” over thirty per cent of respondents indicated “other” as their main reason for non-completion. Similar findings from a BC survey\(^\text{12}\) confirm that there is no one reason for non-completion. This poses a challenge to the apprenticeship community about why apprentices do not complete their programs. What do these findings mean for the community? What actions would help enhance completion given the reality that the reasons are so diverse and personalized? These findings prompted the CAF-FCA to seek a better understanding of the circumstances that cause individuals to discontinue their apprenticeship training. Moving forward, CAF-FCA also wanted to identify what actions could potentially enhance completion.

**B. Methodology**

The study was approached using two distinct quantitative and qualitative methodologies: statistics and group discussions. This report summarizes the information from the statistics and discussion findings in separate sections. While reading each section, readers should keep in mind the distinctions between the sources in terms of who was included and the timeframe.

Firstly, statistical trends were examined based largely on data gathered from Statistics Canada’s NAS data and Registered Apprenticeship Information System (RAIS) data. Other notable research includes the British Columbia Labour Market Information Committee Study on Apprenticeship Completion. The summary of this information is provided in Part 2 of the report.

**Description of NAS**

It is important to provide a brief description of how the NAS survey was implemented so the data can be placed in the appropriate context. The 2007 NAS was a telephone survey undertaken by Statistics Canada to gather information on the challenges and barriers, labour market experiences, and demographic information of apprentices across Canada. The sample population for the survey was randomly selected from a list of people who were registered as apprentices with their provincial or territorial authorities from 2002 to 2004. Data from today’s apprentices is not represented in these results. A total sample of 67,000 respondents was targeted. However, in 2007, information was collected from 30,572 respondents who represented 105,057 apprentices in the population. The information was collected from January to May 2007\(^\text{13}\).

The three sampled groups in NAS were defined as:

- **Long-term continuers**: people who were still registered apprentices in 2004 and who had been registered apprentices for longer than one and a half times the prescribed duration time required to complete their apprenticeship programs and who had not earned their certification by 2004. In 2007, at the time of the interview, 7,581 respondents were considered long-term continuers who were still continuing.

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\(^{12}\) Based on a study done in British Columbia with electricians, carpenters, finisher trades including wall and ceiling installers, drywall finishers, and plasterers. For more detailed information on survey administration, see R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., “Apprenticeship Completion Project BC Labour Market Information Committee,” September 2008.

Completers: people who had been registered apprentices and had completed their apprenticeship programs (with or without certification) at some point from 2002 to 2004. Based on the 2007 status, 18,318 respondents were considered completers by the survey at the time of the interview.

Discontinuers: people who had been registered apprentices at some point in the past and had discontinued their apprenticeship programs between 2002 and 2004. In 2007, 4,673 respondents were considered discontinuers.

Each group was asked a common set of questions as well as a separate set of questions specific to their situations. The questions focused on the following areas:

- Pre-apprenticeship education, training, and work experiences
- Experiences concerning technical training and work as an apprentice
- Reasons why discontinuers do not complete their program
- Difficulties encountered during apprenticeship
- Experience with the certification process
- Employment since the apprenticeship program
- General social-demographic characteristics

For more detailed information on the sampling methods used in the data collection, see “Microdata User Guide National Apprenticeship Survey, 2007,” provided by Statistics Canada in English:


Description of the British Columbia Labour Market Information Committee (BCLMI)

The BCLMI Committee developed an Apprenticeship Completion Project to understand the factors and barriers impacting completion of apprenticeship in construction trades in their province.

Description of Registered Apprenticeship Information System (RAIS)

Statistics were also obtained from RAIS. RAIS is an annual survey. The purpose of the survey is to gather information on individuals who receive training and those who obtain certification within a trade where apprenticeship training is being offered. Specifically, the survey compiles data on the number of registered apprentices taking in-class and on-the-job training in trades that are either Red Seal or non-Red Seal and where apprenticeship training is either compulsory or voluntary. It also compiles data on the number of provincial and interprovincial certificates granted to apprentices or tradespersons.

14 To see the document in French http://www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/document/3160_D2_T1_V1-fra.pdf. The copyright rules can be found at the following site: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/reference/copyright-droit-auteur-eng.html#a1
For more detailed information on RAIS see the Statistics Canada website definitions, data sources and methods section:


**Description of Group Discussions**

Secondly, to understand stakeholders’ viewpoints, seven discussions were completed with more than 148 stakeholders from across the country. The information from these discussion groups is summarized in Part 3 and Part 4 of the report.

Two-hour discussion groups were organized in Toronto (two sessions), Ottawa, Calgary, Saskatoon, St. John’s and Vancouver between November, 2009 and May, 2010. The presence of partners willing to help with the organization of the groups determined the locations.

It was the aim to talk to a wide range of stakeholders including employers, union representatives, training instructors, provincial government officials, community agencies, and industry association representatives. Local colleges and provincial apprenticeship authority partners sent an email invitation to relevant stakeholders on CAF-FCA’s behalf. CAF-FCA also sent an email invitation to stakeholders based on its own set of contacts in each of the cities where the groups were held. The Ottawa group was held in conjunction with a CAF-FCA Board Meeting so Directors could participate in the discussion along with a variety of other stakeholders. The majority of participants in the discussion groups were instructors/training representatives, with 36 attendees. Labour officials were next, with 26 participants. Twenty-one industry association representatives participated, as well as 20 employers. There were 16 provincial officials, 17 community agency representatives, and 12 “other” participants.

No particular trade group was targeted in the discussions. The participants worked in a variety of trades including construction (industrial and residential), food services, motor vehicle service, auto body repair, and landscaping.

Since apprentices perspectives were already gathered in the survey research, they were not targeted in the group discussions. Rather than apprentices’ individual comments about their circumstances, we wanted to obtain stakeholders’ broader perspectives based on their experiences with multiple apprentices.

It is acknowledged that there are many routes to completion or trades certification, and the specific requirements vary based on the specific provincial or territorial apprenticeship system. Individuals can do a full-length program with technical training and workplace training. They can earn a Certificate of Apprenticeship (C of A) by completing this process and then they can write their Certificate of Qualification (C of Q) examination. Alternatively, individuals can work a certain number of hours in a trade and then challenge the C of Q exam as a trade qualifier. These individuals do not complete the full-length program. For the purposes of this report, participants talked about apprentices in the process of trying to complete their programs to earn a C of A and then a C of Q. Comments did not focus on the experiences of trade qualifiers.

16 Territorial officials did not participate in the discussions.
17 Ibid.
18 “Other” included research organizations, federal government representatives and university representatives. These individuals attended the session in Ottawa.
**Figure No. 1**
**Total Participants by Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calgary, Alberta</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saskatoon, Saskatchewan</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion groups were structured in three parts:

**First.** Members introduced themselves and the facilitators explained the objectives for the session. Participants were informed that the discussion would focus on exploring reasons for non-completion as well as coming up with actions to enhance completion.

**Second.** A short presentation summarized data on apprenticeship registrations and completions, the findings of the NAS, and other research. Current initiatives targeting apprenticeship completions were described. The presentation was intended to establish a common starting point for the discussion. A version of the presentation is available in Appendix A.

**Third.** Participants focused on answering two main questions:

- What reasons for non-completions do you think have been missed by the 2007 NAS and other research?
- What can be done to enhance completions in Canada?

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19 This group was larger because the CAF-FCA Board of Directors attended along with a variety of other stakeholders.
**Figure No. 2**  
**Overview of Main Differences between Sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Apprenticeship Survey</th>
<th>Discussion Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numbers</strong></td>
<td>More than 30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who?</strong></td>
<td>Individuals who completed their training (journeypersons), long-term continuers (doing on-going training), and discontinuers (stopped training).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Referred to in report as...</strong></td>
<td>Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value of Source</strong></td>
<td>Broad national picture based on a statistically significant data set.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limitations of Source</strong></td>
<td>Statistics based on earlier time period. More current statistics are not available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not deal with current apprentices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20 No territorial officials participated in this study.
Statistics from the Registered Apprenticeship Information System (RAIS)

The RAIS is a main source of national apprenticeship data. The RAIS unifies and synthesizes the provincial/territorial apprenticeship data. Data includes, for example, the number of new registrations, total registrations, completions and discontinuations. In this source, the term “total registered” includes those still registered from the previous year plus the newly registered apprentices from the current year and includes apprentices who have not yet completed or withdrawn from training.

Overall, there were 358,555 people registered in apprenticeship training programs in 2007, up 9.3 per cent from 2006 and more than double the level in 1997.21

Nationally, 24,495 people completed their apprenticeship training in 2007, up 17.5 per cent from 2006, the fastest rate of growth during the last 10 years.

The metal fabricating and motor vehicle and heavy equipment trades groups recorded just over 5,300 completions each, the highest of all groups.

Figure No. 1
Registered apprenticeship training: Completions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td>% total</td>
<td>% change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building construction trades</td>
<td>2,005</td>
<td>3,190</td>
<td>3,915</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical, electronics and related trades</td>
<td>2,565</td>
<td>4,110</td>
<td>4,580</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and service trades</td>
<td>2,695</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>2,705</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial and related mechanical trades</td>
<td>1,545</td>
<td>1,985</td>
<td>2,125</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal fabricating trades</td>
<td>3,635</td>
<td>4,605</td>
<td>5,355</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle and heavy equipment trades</td>
<td>3,655</td>
<td>4,425</td>
<td>5,340</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other1</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total2</td>
<td>16,370</td>
<td>20,855</td>
<td>24,495</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The trade group “Other” consists of miscellaneous trades and occupations not classified elsewhere. Many of the new apprenticeship trades and occupations that have been introduced since the 1990s have been added to this group. Because of the smaller number and inconsistency in this group, it has been excluded from analysis.

Analysis of RAIS data from 1991 to 2007 enables us to compare completions for a given level of registrations. Figure No. 2 summarizes the results for all the Red Seal trades.

**Figure No. 2**  
**Red Seal Trades: Total Registrations in Canada**

![Graph showing growth from 131,000 in 1996 to 360,000 in 2007.](source)

Figure No. 2 highlights the growth in the apprenticeship system since the start of the long economic expansion in 1996. This period of economic growth was concentrated in industries like construction, utilities, and transportation where employment is “trades-intensive”. Employers often expressed concern about skill and labour shortages in the Red Seal trades. The total number of apprentices in the Red Seal trades more than doubled from 1996 to 2007, the last year for which RAIS data is available.

**Figure No. 3**  

![Graph showing completion and new registration trends from 1991 to 2007.](source)

Source: Registered Apprenticeship Information System (RAIS) 2007
Figure No. 2 covers registrations in all years and represents the total number of apprentices in the system. Figure No.3 focuses on the number of new registrations (additions to the system) and the number of completions as apprentices finish the program with some form of certification. Figure No.3 suggests that completions have been lagging behind new registrations. Measuring completions and completion rates is a tricky business and beyond the scope of this report. However, one rough approximation of the matter is suggested by the third measure in Figure No.3, where new registrations are lagged by four years, the most common duration of an apprenticeship, so that the number of new registrations from four years earlier is compared to completions in that year.

**Figure No. 4**

**Red Seal Trades: Completing Apprentices and Trade Qualifiers, 2009, Canada**

![Graph showing completions and trade qualifications over time]

Source: Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship - Annual Report 2009 and Statistics Canada - RAIS Data

Statistical measures of the various end points for certification is shown in Figure No.4. Data recorded here tracks the number of completions from Figure No.3 and the number of Inter-provincial (IP) examinations passed, the number of Red Seals issued, and the number of trade qualifiers or certifications issued to individuals who challenge and pass the exams without taking the apprenticeship program.

Data reported in Figures No.2 to No.4 highlight two key historical features of apprenticeship:

- **First**, there is evidence that fewer apprentices are completing given the number who start.
- **Second**, there are a variety of ways to obtain certification and these seem to track the pattern of general completions.
Statistics from the National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS)

As already mentioned, NAS was a telephone survey conducted in 2007 and surveyed 30,572 persons who were registered as apprentices in 2002, 2003, or 2004. Readers will recall that findings grouped respondents according to their status in 2007 in three categories:

- Long-term continuers: 27 per cent by 2007 had been apprentices for 1.5 times the prescribed duration of their apprenticeship. This group makes up more than one quarter of the sample and this highlights possible delays in the progression of these respondents through the system.
- Completers: 56 per cent completed their apprenticeship by or before 2007.
- Discontinuers: 17 per cent had discontinued their apprenticeship by 2007.

Discontinuers were the focus of several questions within NAS. One key finding was that 62.8 per cent of persons who were discontinuers in 2002-2004 re-entered the system. When they re-entered, they either kept working on their apprenticeship program or finished their program. When we look at this group of former discontinuers who re-entered the system, we find that women had a higher completion rate than men. By 2007, 38 per cent of women, who had previously discontinued, had become completers while 24 per cent of men had completed their programs.\(^{22}\) Landed immigrants in this group had a higher completion rate. By 2007, 31 per cent of landed immigrants had become completers while 25 per cent of their comparison group had completed their programs.\(^{23}\) Aboriginal peoples had slightly lower completion rates compared to non-Aboriginal peoples. By 2007, 23 per cent of Aboriginal discontinuers had become completers while 26 per cent of non-Aboriginal discontinuers had completed.\(^{24}\) The above information emphasizes an important point. Even though some individuals might stop for a certain period of time, some of them do eventually finish their programs.

In addition to the questions about re-entry, all discontinuers were asked why they stopped their training in the first place. Discontinuers were asked to select the main reason for discontinuing their apprenticeship in 2002, 2003 or 2004 from the following list of reasons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason Code</th>
<th>Reason Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Not enough work or insufficient income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Received an offer of a better job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Disliked the work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Disliked or had difficulty with the technical training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>No certification required to work in the trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Temporary job, had no intent to become certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Moved for reason unrelated to apprenticeship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Illness, disability or medical reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Returned to school, not related to trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Harassment or discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Family issues (e.g. caring for family, divorce, separation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Insufficient government financial assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Cost of tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Other reason - Specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>None of the above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{23}\) Ibid.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 30.
The majority of respondents (30 percent) of discontinuers reported “other” reasons for not completing their apprenticeship program. For those who selected “other,” they were asked to specify their reason for stopping. When these comments were examined, no common themes emerged suggesting the reasons for stopping training are diverse and personalized.25

Following “other,” respondents identified factors such as not enough work or insufficient income (16 per cent) and received a better job offer (10 per cent).26

Eight per cent of respondents disliked the work or the working conditions or discontinued their program because they wanted to change jobs or careers, became self-employed or lost interest.27

An additional 4 per cent discontinued due to employer, company, or union issues, including problems such as the employer discontinuing the apprenticeship program or not following the rules.28

Very few discontinuers stopped their programs as a result of family issues or because they returned to school to study in a field unrelated to the trade, or because the program was a temporary job or hobby. Only 3 per cent discontinuers noted these as factors.29

Only 2 per cent noted they discontinued due to harassment or conflict at work or because a certificate was not required to work in the trade.30

An unrelated move or insufficient government financial aid was only noted by 1 per cent.31 The cost of tools was cited the least often, indicated by less than one-half a percentage of discontinuers.32

When results are compared for women versus men, Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal, landed-immmigrant versus not a landed immigrant, the pattern stays the same. “Other” was the top reason for all groups. The percentage identifying “other” was 29.5 per cent for women and 30.3 per cent for men. For Aboriginal peoples the percentage was 23.2 per cent. It was 30.6 per cent for non-Aboriginal. Almost 42 per cent of landed immigrants versus 29.7 per cent of those who are not landed immigrants identified “other” as the main reason for non-completion.

Although overall “other” is the main reason for discontinuing for all groups, when we examine the results for the alternate choices, we do see differences among the comparison groups. About 13 per cent of women, but only 2 per cent of men cited family and personal reasons for discontinuing their programs. Family and personal issues were also more predominant among Aboriginal peoples than non-Aboriginal (7 per cent versus 3 per cent).33

25 Ibid., 23.
26 Ibid., 22.
27 Ibid., 23.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 32. Figures were not provided for the landed immigrant versus those who are not landed immigrants.
Approximately, 6 per cent of women compared with only 2 per cent of men, discontinued because of harassment or discrimination, disputes or conflicts of interest with employers or unions, or because they did not get along at work.\(^{34}\)

**Figure No. 5**

**Main reason discontinuers did not complete the apprenticeship program during 2002 – 2004**

When we do a trade breakdown of the ten trades with the most discontinuers, we see similar results. The majority of respondents identified “other” as their main reason for discontinuing their apprenticeship.

Trades with the highest number of discontinuers and the 3 top reasons for not completing their apprenticeship program, NAS, 2007

- **Carpenters**
  - Other (23.3 per cent)\(^{36}\)
  - Not enough work or income (16.3 per cent)\(^{37}\)
  - Wanted to or changed job or career/became self-employed/lost interest (10.6 per cent)

- **Electrician**
  - Other (29.3 per cent)\(^{38}\)
  - Not enough work or income (15.3 per cent)\(^{39}\)
  - Received a better job offer (11.2 per cent)\(^{40}\)

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\(^{34}\) Ibid. Figures were not provided for the landed immigrant versus those who are not landed immigrants.

\(^{35}\) This information was specifically obtained from Statistics Canada NAS data for this project.

\(^{36}\) The standard error was 1.6.

\(^{37}\) The standard error was 1.5.

\(^{38}\) The standard error was 1.3.

\(^{39}\) The standard error was 1.9.

\(^{40}\) The standard error was 1.4.
Automotive Service Technician
- Other (27.1 per cent)\(^{41}\)
- Not enough work or income (20.2 per cent)\(^{42}\)
- Wanted to or changed job or career/became self-employed/lost interest (9.0 per cent)\(^{43}\)

Welder
- Other (36.3 per cent)\(^{44}\)
- Received a better job offer (16.9 per cent)\(^{45}\)
- Not enough work or income (12.7 per cent)\(^{46}\)

Cook
- Other (35.2 per cent)\(^{47}\)
- Not enough work or income (17.0 per cent)\(^{48}\)
- Disliked the work/working conditions (8.8 per cent)\(^{49}\)

Hairstylist
- Other (28.4 per cent)\(^{50}\)
- Family issues (e.g. caring for family, divorce, separation, death in family)/personal reasons (16.5 per cent)\(^{51}\)
- Disliked the work/working conditions (9.4 per cent)\(^{52}\)

Sheet Metal Worker
- Other (28.8 per cent)\(^{53}\)
- Not enough work or income (19.0 per cent)\(^{54}\)
- Disliked the work/working conditions (12.2 per cent)\(^{55}\)

\(^{41}\) The standard error was 2.6.
\(^{42}\) The standard error was 2.4.
\(^{43}\) The standard error was 1.7.
\(^{44}\) The standard error was 3.8.
\(^{45}\) The standard error was 3.2.
\(^{46}\) The standard error was 2.8.
\(^{47}\) The standard error was 3.9.
\(^{48}\) The standard error was 3.2.
\(^{49}\) The standard error was 2.6.
\(^{50}\) The standard error was 3.5.
\(^{51}\) The standard error was 3.0.
\(^{52}\) The standard error was 2.4.
\(^{53}\) The standard error was 3.6.
\(^{54}\) The standard error was 3.3.
\(^{55}\) The standard error was 3.0.
Investigating Apprenticeship Completion in Canada: Reasons for Non-Completion and Suggested Initiatives for Improving Completion

■ Plumber
- Other (38.7 per cent)\textsuperscript{56}
- Not enough work or income (22.5 per cent)\textsuperscript{57}
- Received a better job offer (7.0 per cent)\textsuperscript{58}

■ Painter
- Other (21.6 per cent)\textsuperscript{59}
- Not enough work or income (19.5 per cent)\textsuperscript{60}
- Wanted to or changed job or career/became self-employed/lost interest (14.2 per cent)\textsuperscript{61}

■ Instrument Technician
- Other (39.1 per cent)\textsuperscript{62}
- Received a better job offer (15.4 per cent)\textsuperscript{63}
- Wanted to or changed job or career/became self-employed/lost interest (14.5 per cent)\textsuperscript{64}

The British Columbia Labour Market Information Committee (BCLMI)

Interviews targeted active apprentices, program completers, discontinuers, and employers/sponsors. The study was done with electricians, carpenters, and finisher trades, including wall and ceiling installers, drywall finishers, and plasterers.\textsuperscript{65} The findings are based on a total of 3,584 respondents. Here is how the groups were represented in the survey: 33 per cent were active apprentices, 19 per cent were completers, 25 per cent were discontinuers, and 24 per cent were employers/sponsors.

\textsuperscript{56} The standard error was 3.9.
\textsuperscript{57} The standard error was 3.5.
\textsuperscript{58} The standard error was 2.3.
\textsuperscript{59} The standard error was 4.5.
\textsuperscript{60} The standard error was 4.5.
\textsuperscript{61} The standard error was 3.9.
\textsuperscript{62} The standard error was 4.9.
\textsuperscript{63} The standard error was 3.8.
\textsuperscript{64} The standard error was 3.9.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
The findings from BCLMI Committee were similar to the NAS in that over 30 per cent of discontinuers chose “other” as their primary reason for discontinuing. Figure No. 6 provides the breakdown of responses:

**Figure No. 6**
PRIMARY REASON DISCONTINUERS DID NOT COMPLETE THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

- Harassment or discrimination: 0.8%
- Cost or inconvenience of moving to find work: 1.0%
- Temporary job, had no intent to become: 1.7%
- Moved for reason unrelated to apprenticeship: 2.1%
- Returned to school, not related to trade: 3.4%
- Insufficient government financial assistance: 3.7%
- Illness, disability or medical reasons: 5.2%
- No certification required to work in the trade: 5.2%
- Family/personal (e.g., caring for family, etc.): 5.3%
- Disliked the work: 6.9%
- Disliked or had difficulty with the technical aspect: 7.8%
- Received an offer of a better job: 9.8%
- Not enough work or insufficient income: 12.7%
- Others: 33.0%

Discontinuers who provided “other” as a reason, revealed the following more specific explanations:

- Barriers to attending schooling (waitlists, location, program, etc.) (8 per cent)
- Required hours/training/sponsor (6 per cent)
- Difficulty passing the exam (final, Red Seal, Inter-provincial) (4 per cent)
- Too busy, no time (4 per cent)
- Employer-related difficulties (dislike, conflicts, lack of support) (3 per cent)
- Found work pursuing another trade (3 per cent)

Discontinuers were asked what would have encouraged them to finish their apprenticeship. Notably, the most popular reason cited by 25 per cent of respondents was “nothing.”

The BCLMI study also surveyed employers to get their perspective on challenges to completion. Forty-seven per cent of employers either agreed or strongly agreed that “insufficient financial support” posed a challenge to completion. The least common challenge cited by employers was “lack of work for the apprentice” with only 11.6 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. Although 12.7 per cent of apprentices noted “not enough work or insufficient income”, this category captures two factors - insufficient income could be a separate issue from not enough work. However, the opposing responses may also point to the different experiences and understandings of the workplace.

**Part Two Summary**

In summary, recent findings from the RAIS, NAS, and the BCLMI project highlight that, historically, registrations in apprenticeship are higher than completions. It is important to keep in mind, however, that just because someone stops does not mean they will not come back at a later point. A significant percentage of discontinuers do end up re-entering the system. A portion of these individuals do complete their programs. The reasons for stopping an apprenticeship program in the first place are very diverse and personalized. Even though respondents were given quite an extensive list of reasons for not completing, the majority of discontinuers in NAS identified “other” as the main reason for non-completion. This finding remains true when a further breakdown is done by comparison groups (women versus men, Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal, and landed-immigrant versus those that are not a landed immigrant) and by trade. Some existing government and industry-based initiatives try to support apprentices by providing financial aid, assistance with learning, and help with the administrative process. Other initiatives were mentioned by participants at the discussion groups and these are described in Parts 3 and 4 of the report.

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66 Ibid., 76.
Part Three:
Reasons for Non-Completion identified in Group Discussions

This section of the report turns to the results of the discussion groups. Readers should keep in mind when reading this section that the participants in the discussion groups were not apprentices, but were a variety of other stakeholders, including employers and college instructors. They provided their opinions only. Readers should also keep in mind the time frame. The discussions occurred in 2010 which was obviously a different time frame and economic climate than when the NAS data was collected in 2007. Every participant saw the NAS data and was asked, based on their experiences, why thirty per cent of respondents would have identified “other.” Most agreed that “other” was probably chosen if the respondent was unable to articulate a reason or was reluctant to provide the actual reason when giving their answers over the phone. Participants suggested some of these reasons could include exam anxiety, failed tests in technical training, quit the job or was fired, did not like mentor, or decided to work underground. Participants also provided additional employer or system related factors that may have contributed to individuals not completing. When examining participants’ comments, readers will observe that some of the reasons mentioned by the participants do not fit the “other” category and actually relate to reasons listed as options in the NAS survey. For example, “too little work” or “layoffs required,” relate to “not enough work or insufficient income” which was identified as an option in NAS.

Reasons for Discontinuation

Comments in the discussion groups were divided into three groups:

1. Employer-specific factors related to labour markets and workplace conditions
2. Apprentice-specific factors related to personal barriers and experiences
3. System-related factors based on the structure and features of the programs

Group 1 – Employer-specific factors related to labour market and work place conditions

Many participants talked about employer related initiatives. Readers should keep in mind, however, that in the NAS statistics only 4 per cent of discontinuers identified that they stopped due to employer, company, or union issues, including problems such as the employer discontinuing the apprenticeship program or not following the rules. These reasons for discontinuing are largely rooted in the employers’ circumstances. These reasons are not necessarily equally clear to employers and apprentices. In particular, the reasons might be unrelated to and / or unknown by the apprentice. In this area, participants mentioned:

1. Too much work scheduled for the employers and deadlines that conflict with technical training such as in-school periods.
2. Too little work available for the employers’ workforce and lay offs are required.
3. Limited opportunities to provide apprentices the needed variety of experience across the scope of the trade.
4. Pressures that arise from commercial relationships among businesses and an emphasis on subcontracting work to self-employed workers under circumstances that do not allow for apprenticeship.

As business conditions change, employers may delay or end the apprenticeship process for these reasons.

**Human resource management circumstances may oblige employers to end apprenticeship for reasons related to the apprentice’s performance. These reasons may not be communicated to apprentices:**

5. Poor performance, reliability, attitude, inability to work in a team, difficulties with supervision, etc.

**Employers may lack a training culture and this could be associated with:**

6. Quality of mentoring: too few journeypersons play the effective mentoring role that apprenticeship systems require.
7. Limited willingness to allow time for training on-the-job or technical training.

These circumstances could result in the progress of apprentices lagging and even ending.

**Group 2 – Personal Barriers and Apprentice’ Experiences**

The discussion groups often focused on the personal circumstances of the apprentice. Once again readers should remember that NAS respondents did have the choice to identify some of these reasons participants mentioned as a part of NAS, but did not select them. Very few discontinuers stopped their programs as a result of family issues. Only 3 per cent discontinuers noted this as a factor. Only 2 per cent noted they discontinued due to harassment or conflict at work. Interestingly, in the discussions initiatives were not mentioned on how to facilitate completion for those who have re-entered the system, even though the NAS statistics revealed over half of the discontinuers in 2002-2004 ended up re-entering the system.

8. Younger generations are more likely to explore and reject job/career opportunities. Moving onto other possibilities is much more natural for this age group and is not perceived negatively. Entering apprentices may have very limited experience working in the trades and may discover that working conditions and physical requirements are not suited to them. An apprentice might also be unprepared to deal with the technical training portion of the program because they do not have the necessary background.

9. Apprentices may avoid offering direct reasons because of circumstances that they perceive to be embarrassing:

   a. aversion to exams or exam-anxiety either during technical training or during the Certificate of Qualification exam may lead some people not to complete. Older apprentices may have been away from a school environment for a long time and may be fearful that their classroom skills are inadequate for the technical training portion of the apprenticeship program.
b. weaknesses in math, literacy or other basic skills. Some apprentices may be unsure about where to go for help or do not want to admit they have weaknesses in these areas.

c. wide gaps in age can create tensions and alienate apprentices. Older journeypersons may adopt supervisory styles that fail to motivate today’s youth.

d. reluctance from the apprentice to take on journeyperson responsibilities.

e. fear that they will lose jobs while at technical training.

f. harassment and prejudice on the work-site. Many apprentices may not be prepared to deal with this treatment and may feel isolated.

Group 3 – System Related Factors Based on the Structure and Features of the Programs

Discussions revealed a third set of reasons that relate to the structure and management of apprenticeship systems. The NAS results show that these were not significant factors, according to respondents. Insufficient government financial aid was only noted by 1 per cent of respondents as a reason for discontinuing. The cost of tools was cited the least often, indicated by less than one-half a percentage of discontinuers.

10. A lack of specific and reliable labour market information (LMI). Apprentices may enter during an economic period when vacancies are expected only to find that there are no jobs available upon completion.

11. The status of the trade as compulsory or voluntary.

12. Financial demands related to the technical training periods, e.g. delays in EI benefits, tuition fees, costs of tools, or books.

13. According to some participants, there was a perceived lack of follow-up by apprenticeship authorities to track training progress, to identify problems, and to guide apprentices through to completion. The apprentice has to know their responsibilities, especially in regards to the paperwork, and has to understand the steps required to progress through the apprenticeship system.

14. Inability to get into technical training due to full classes or scheduling conflicts.

15. Not enough journeypersons available to effectively fill the mentor role and to assist apprentices with the workplace training portion of the program.
Part Three: Summary

Participants in the discussion groups described a wide range of circumstances associated with delays, discontinuation, and non-completions. Interestingly, many of these reasons were, in fact, listed in the NAS survey, but were not chosen by respondents. The reasons can be divided into three groups:

1. **Employer-specific factors related to labour market and workplace conditions**
   - These factors relate to business cycles, human resource strategies, and corporate culture.

2. **Apprentice-specific factors related to personal barriers and experience**
   - These factors reflect social and personal circumstances that are ever-changing and variable by age, family situation, trade and other factors.

3. **System-based conditions and barriers**
   - Factors such as limited resources, lack of communication, or scheduling conflicts, may prompt delays and discontinuations.

It was common for participants in the discussions to talk about circumstances that converge and lead to apprentices becoming delayed, discouraged, or frustrated. According to participants, it is a combination of factors that often leads apprentices to not complete. It therefore makes sense that apprentices themselves identified “other” in NAS rather than pinpointing a specific reason.

“...In school, we see them getting 95 per cent and then they get a 70 per cent on the exam - we see that a lot. Issues include both terminology and fear of the test.”

Toronto Dialogue Session
Part Four:
Actions and Initiatives for Improving Completion

This section of the report lists actions identified through the research. Most NAS respondents indicated “other” as their main reason for non-completion. For this reason, the analysis of the actions and initiatives that were mentioned is based more on qualitative than on quantitative evidence.

Group 1 – Initiatives targeting employer-related factors

Many participants talked about employer related initiatives, even though the NAS statistics revealed only 4 per cent of discontinuers identified that they stopped due to employer-related difficulties.

- **Communicate the value of certification to employers.** Employers need to see that apprenticeship and certification adds to their business performance. Some employers may need to be educated about the costs associated with chronic labour shortages and the disadvantages of having no skilled pool of trained journeypersons to draw from.

- **Establish communication and flexibility among Training Delivery Agents (TDAs) and Employers.**
  For example, participants suggested:
  - Co-ordinated training schedules among TDAs and employers.
  - Partnering between TDAs and employers to adapt curriculum to on-the-job skill requirements.
  - Flexible training, online, or e-learning systems may be considered.

- **Interviews and Orientation for Entering Apprentices.** Some employer participants suggested a personal interview and orientation process as a way to further ensure the candidate was an appropriate fit for the trade and the company.

- **Improve the quality of mentoring.** Participants offered some examples of how mentoring could be improved to enhance workplace training. Journeypersons need to be committed to training apprentices. They need to use a style and approach that engages the apprentices and motivates them to stick with it. Apprentices need to learn a variety of tasks on-the-job so they get a sense of the trade. They also need to receive feedback on how they are doing. Both journeypersons and apprentices need to know the skills required and need to keep track of what the apprentice is doing on a regular basis so any gaps can be identified quickly. The Construction Sector Council and the Construction Owners Association of Alberta have mentoring guides and programs that were referred to by participants. The Construction Sector Council information is helpful because it has workshops and pocket-sized guides that clearly outline the roles and responsibilities for mentors and mentees. Generational differences are addressed in these materials.

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“I work with the college to inform them when it’s a good time to let the apprentices go to college – this has taken a long time to cultivate, to stagger the different blocks, to come up with a schedule that includes everything.”

St. John’s Dialogue Session

“If you accept anyone, then there is little value to becoming an apprentice. There are benchmarks in other programs, this needs to be something you work for.”

Saskatoon Dialogue Session
The Construction Owners Association of Alberta has a ready-to-use tool that allows the journeyperson to work with the apprentice to check off the skills areas and tasks completed by the apprentice. It also allows them to see what skills and tasks still need to be taught. This tool helps keep the journeyperson and apprentice on track with workplace learning.

- A buddy system between a first-year and fourth-year apprentice can also help the first-year apprentice “hang in there.” Having an assigned “buddy” in addition to the mentor gives the apprentice someone to talk to who “knows the ropes” and can help navigate the process of adjusting to the workplace.

- Developing sensitivity programs for employers, journeypersons, and apprentices was also suggested as a way to prepare the workplace and to foster integration.

**Group 2 – Initiatives Targeting Apprentices’ Personal Barriers and Experience**

The participants discussed many initiatives that could be undertaken at the beginning of the apprenticeship to encourage individuals to become better informed about the job and process. Interestingly, initiatives were not mentioned on how to facilitate getting people back into the system who have left. The statistics revealed that 62.8 per cent of persons who were discontinuers in 2002-2004 re-entered the system. When we look at this group of former discontinuers that re-entered the system, we find that women and landed immigrants had higher completion rates than their comparison groups. No initiatives were mentioned that addressed how we can prevent women and landed immigrants from leaving and how we can facilitate their progress once they return. This might be worthwhile considering they do have higher completion rates compared to other discontinuers who return to the system.

In talking about helping apprentices overcome personal barriers, we should also keep in mind that in the BCLMI survey when discontinuers were asked what would have encouraged them to finish, the majority said “nothing.”

- **Ensure access to exploratory career programs.** These programs can give candidates some exposure to the structure and requirements of the workplace prior to starting their first job. Candidates need to know what the work conditions will be like on-the-job so they can be prepared. For example, the work may be outside or, at the beginning, may involve some repetitive tasks. A better understanding of the requirements and the nature of the work upfront can avoid entrants being misinformed and leaving the program because it was not what they expected. This preparation is especially important given that fewer individuals are exposed to the trades at home and at school. It can be beneficial to have employers involved in these programs so the candidates produced will meet their needs and the employers will want to hire them. In addition to the provincial/territorial apprenticeship programs available, the following specific programs were mentioned:

  - **Student Transition Education in Employment Program – STEP.** High school co-op programs available in Newfoundland and Labrador across disciplines and trades.67
  - **Try the Trades – The Skilled Trades Mentoring Program.** Individuals between 18-39 gain exposure to residential construction sites.68
  - **Momentum.** Provides underemployed individuals with a full-time pre-apprenticeship trades training program in the construction and manufacturing industries.69
  - **CAREERS: The Next Generation.** Information sessions are held with junior and senior high school students about exploring the trades with an employer. Interested students who qualify are then connected to an employer for a workplace internship.70

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68 For more information on Try the Trades, visit [www.trythetrades.ca](http://www.trythetrades.ca). Retrieved June 2010.


Clearly communicate the requirements of apprenticeship to potential entrants before they start. In most trades, there are certain levels of math and literacy that must be attained if the candidate wants to be successful in the program. Participants felt that some candidates did not have enough awareness of the prerequisites prior to starting their program.

Communicate the value of certification to apprentices. If apprentices do not see the value in completion and obtaining the certificate, they will not be motivated to finish the process. The apprentice needs to see the career path and where apprenticeship and certification can eventually lead.71

Better communication is needed. Among stakeholders, improved communication might prevent some apprentices from getting discouraged and stopping their programs.

- When layoffs occur, for example, this can be discouraging for the apprentices because they think they did something wrong. If employers are satisfied with the performance of the apprentices, they need to explain to them that the lay-off is due to economic reasons and that they could be recalled when there is more work.
- Apprentices need to keep in touch with the apprenticeship authorities. They should know the process and requirements to ensure they keep on top of the paperwork.
- Better communication between employers/journeypersons and instructors about weak areas may enable apprentices to get help sooner. If the apprentice struggles on his/her own and then fails the first test doing technical training, this can be discouraging and cause the apprentice to quit. Often the employer/journeyperson knows about the weak area for the apprentice prior to them leaving for technical training. Some instructors said in the discussion groups that they might find a “heads up” helpful so they can be prepared to give the apprentices extra help.

Ensure access to learning supports. Some apprentices may need access to tutoring in order to complete their technical training.

As well, apprentices may need exam preparation courses prior to the Red Seal examination or an option for writing a special-needs exam. Coaching may be required for those apprentices who lack confidence when it comes to taking tests. Arrangements for extra time and tutoring are best made prior to the apprentice starting his or her technical training, not after the training has started.

Here are some specific examples of initiatives that address this issue:

- Canadian Elevator Industry Educational Program offers 16 hours of exam review.
- There is currently a pilot project in Ontario allotting for a one-week prep course to assist in writing the C of Q.
- In some provinces/territories, the date for writing the C of Q is scheduled as soon as possible after the technical training is complete.
- Many provinces/territories offer exam interpreters when there are language or learning barriers.

Group 3 – Initiatives Targeting System-Related Factors Based on the Structure and Features of the Programs

Although many participants talked about celebrating completion as a milestone and communicating the value of completion to individuals, we do not know from the statistical evidence to what degree this would influence apprentices as they were not asked about positive measures that would have made them stay in the surveys.

• **Promote a career path to apprentices.** A career path should include a “road map” that describes bridges and ladders that connect related trades training and allow portability of credits across programs. Apprentices also need a plan when registering that outlines progress plans for the duration of the apprenticeship.

• **Completion needs to be celebrated as a major milestone.** Completion needs to be seen as a worthwhile goal so more apprentices will want to achieve this status.

• **Proactive responses to economic cycles and their impacts on apprenticeship.** Improved labour market information, including more detailed and timely assessment of labour markets, would help direct candidates to employers who are hiring. Participants suggested that options might be arranged for attendance at technical training during an economic downturn. Alternatively, arrangements might be negotiated with other employers, if possible, to retain apprentices during downturns.

Part Four: Summary

Participants in the discussion groups offered many suggestions and ideas about reducing non-completion. Several of these ideas are already being implemented in the jurisdictions. Many of the ideas focus on changes that improve communication among the stakeholders. This repeated reference to communication is a consequence of the many different stakeholder groups involved in the apprenticeship process. Miscommunication across just one link can disrupt progress.

For example, initiatives that target employers focus on communication and cooperation between employers and training delivery agents (TDAs), apprenticeship authorities, apprentices, mentors and supervisors. Employers often need to be at the center of communication around progress of apprentices.

Initiatives targeting apprentices focus on orientation and assessing aptitudes, e.g. exam anxiety and preparation, communication about progress and other factors that relate to the apprentices’ experiences and expectations as they move through the program.

Finally, initiatives targeting the TDAs and apprenticeship authorities emphasize adding flexibility to systems and attention to the bigger picture that surrounds all stakeholders. This might include, for example, providing information on career potential and labour market information.

A second common theme was the need to highlight the advantages to certification for each and all of the stakeholders. Being reminded of these advantages is expected to offer a needed boost for the extra effort (e.g. employer-based incentives for certification, preparing and writing exams, flexibility around writing exams, etc.) to carry apprentices all the way to full certification.
Part Five:
Conclusions and Implications

Findings reported here highlight the complexity of the apprenticeship process. Understanding the reasons for delays and discontinuations requires insight into the interactions among many stakeholders: employers, apprentices, trainers, administrators and others. Discussions with stakeholders revealed a long list of situations specific to each player as well as more complex circumstances where these situations are combined to delay or derail the process. Given this background, it is easier to understand the National Apprenticeship Survey research findings suggesting that there is no short list of reasons for non-completion.

Key statistical findings from RAIS, NAS, and the BCLMI survey:

- Trends suggest completion rates are increased from 2006 to 2007. The historic pattern still holds true, however, that more apprentices enter the system than finish.
- Metal fabricating and motor vehicle and heavy equipment trades groups had the highest completions.
- According to the NAS, 56 per cent of respondents completed their apprenticeship by or before 2007. By 2007, 27 per cent of respondents had been apprentices for 1.5 times the prescribed duration. Seventeen per cent had discontinued their apprenticeship. Among those who discontinued, one clear reason for non-completion did not stand out with thirty per cent of respondents identifying “other” as their main reason for stopping. The BCLMI survey found similar results. When specific trade results are examined, the results still show that “other” is the main reason for not completing.
- With the statistical evidence not providing a clear answer, stakeholders were asked for their opinions based on their experiences. The lack of clear statistical evidence poses a challenge in terms of coming up with solutions that will have a substantial impact.

Discussion Findings:

The discussion groups offered actions and recommendations that might help apprentices complete. Since these suggestions cannot be linked to a specific issue raised in the statistical evidence, it is unclear what impact implementing these initiatives would have. Examples might include initiatives that:

- bring employers together with TDAs to coordinate details of technical training. These might include changes to class and exam schedules, curriculum and cooperative ways to track the progress of apprentices.
- promote promising practices in mentoring that draw on initiatives in individual industries (e.g. construction) and regions (e.g. Alberta programs) and reflect the impact of mentoring on the progress of apprentices and the productivity of business operations.
disseminate labour market information and projections that cover the full range of trades and regional markets to employers, trainers and apprentices. Effective communication of this type of material would involve forums where employers could validate assessments of conditions and encourage training and certification in trades where employment prospects are strong.

Implications for CAF

These key findings have three things in common;

First, insights about delays and non-completion are tied to the complex relationships and circumstances that link all the apprenticeship stakeholders. Focusing only on one stakeholder group (e.g. apprentices) is not the best way to find improvements.

Second, circumstances are common to all provinces and jurisdictions but

Third, solutions are often being sought in unique and temporary programs in separate jurisdictions. For example, some provinces offer scholarships while others offer residency-related incentives. Plans to create initiatives targeting non-completions and assessments of the relative success are not shared.72

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum is ideally positioned to coordinate both research on the causes and pan-Canadian experiments that target solutions.

Implications Related to the Economy

Delays and non-completion impose economic costs on the provinces, TDAs, employers and apprentices. The capacity to bear these costs will be reduced by the current weakness in the economy. Employers facing reduced profits will be seeking ways to reduce labour costs. Apprentices will be anxious about employment security or face unemployment that will reduce their chances to broaden their skills. Perhaps most important, the weaker economy will impose spending restraint on provincial governments. This may well reduce funding for initiatives that target delays or non-completions in apprentices. But the long-term need for skilled trades is rising as the economy recovers and as the skilled and experienced workforce retires.

There is a real risk that each stakeholder group will lose sight of the issues raised here. Even a short period of inaction will create even larger gaps in the ranks of the Canadian skilled workforce, even as the need increases later in this decade.

New ideas on the cause of delay and non-completion raised here and the initiatives that might address them are key human resource challenges for Canada.

72 Tax and related financial incentives are an exception here as the Federal Apprenticeship Incentive grants have prompted provinces to adopt variations (e.g. adding incentives for non-Red Seal programs).
Apprenticeship Completions: A Discussion of Issues and Actions

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Prism Economics and Analysis

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Calgary, Alberta
Outline
1. Objectives
2. Context
   2.1 Measuring Completions
   2.2 Research Findings on Non-Completion
   2.3 Gaps and Future Research
   2.4 Initiatives and Actions
3. Questions

1. Objectives
- CAF is seeking insights from apprenticeship leaders and stakeholders on:
  - Actions that would increase the number of apprentices completing their Certificate of Qualification given recent research findings
1. Objectives

• Please note:
  • This discussion is not intended to find consensus or synthesize viewpoints.

1. Objectives

• Discussion Outcomes:
  • National actions based on common themes generated across regional discussions
  • A final report summarizing regional discussions to be reviewed by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum’s Board of Directors.
2.1 Measuring Completions

Registered Apprenticeship Information System of Statistics Canada:
- the number of new registrations
- total registrations
- leavers
- completions
- certificates granted

Source: Statistics Canada

2.1 Measuring Completions

Total Registrations and Completions, 1991-2006, Canada
2.1 Measuring Completions

- Defining Completions
  - Certificate of Apprenticeship
  - Certificate of Qualification
  - Challenging the Exam
  - Permanent employment in the trades
  - Voluntary versus Compulsory Trades

- Completion Rates
  - Early departure versus all departures
  - Tracking apprentices switching programs
2.2 Research findings on Non-Completions

- National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS) 2007: Optional Reasons for Non-Completion
  1. Not enough work or insufficient income
  2. Received an offer of a better job
  3. Disliked the work
  4. Disliked or had difficulty with the technical training
  5. No certification required to work in the trade
  6. Temporary job, had no intent to become certified
  7. Moved for reason, unrelated to apprenticeship

2.2 Research findings on Non-Completions, continued

  8. Illness, disability or medical reasons
  9. Returned to school, not related to trade
  10. Harassment or discrimination
  11. Family issues (e.g. caring for family, divorce, separation)
  12. Insufficient government financial assistance
  13. Cost of tools
  14. Other reasons –Specify
  15. None of the above

Source: NAS 2007, Statistics Canada
2.2 Research findings on Non-Completions

- NAS 2007, Findings: Reasons for Non-Completion, Canada

![Bar chart showing reasons for non-completion]

Source: NAS 2007, Statistics Canada

2.2 Research findings on Non-Completion


- Main Findings:
  - Reasons for non-completion were similar to the NAS 2007.
  - No single reason for non-completion dominated.
  - Over 30% of non-completers stated ‘other’ from a list of reasons for discontinuing.
2.2 Research findings on Non-Completion

• Non-completers who gave ‘other’ as a reason in the BCLMI Study revealed the following more specific explanations:
  • Barriers to attending schooling (waitlists, location, program, etc.) (8%);
  • Required hours/training/sponsor (6%);
  • Difficulty passing exam (final, Red Seal, Inter-provincial) (4%);
  • Too busy, no time (4%);
  • Employer-related difficulties (dislike, conflicts, lack of support) (3%);
  • Found work pursuing another trade (3%)


2.2 Research findings on Non-Completion

• Non-Completers Comments On What Would Have Encouraged Them to Finish Their Apprenticeships, BCLMI Study 2007

![Graph showing percentage of respondents]

2.3 Gaps and Future Research

- Additional reports based on the National Apprenticeship Survey (2007) will be released by HRSDC in 2009/2010 on the following topics:
  - Profile of Participants
  - Motivation for Entry
  - Completion of Apprenticeship
  - Inter-Provincial Mobility
  - Quality of Training
  - Impact of Trade Regulation
  - Labour Market Outcomes
  - Supply and Demand
  - Immigrants, women and Aboriginal people

2.4 Initiatives and Actions

- Federal Grants
  - Apprenticeship Completion Grant:
  - Taxable cash grant of $2,000 for successfully completing.
  - Benefits an estimated 20,000 apprentices, through annual completions
2.4 Initiatives and Actions

• Federal Grants
  - Apprenticeship Incentive Grant:
    • Tax credits are also available for employers to encourage their investment in apprenticeship.

2.4 Initiatives and Actions

• Provincial Incentives – Alberta
  • Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Scholarships:
    • Provides more than 200 annual Scholarships of $1,000 each.
    • The scholarships are designed to recognize the excellence of Alberta apprentices, and to encourage recipients to complete their apprenticeship or occupational training programs.
  • This Scholarship Program is cosponsored by the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, Private Industry and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology.
  • A scholarship list is available through “Family of Scholarships”, a publication offered by The Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board.
3. Key Questions
1. What reasons for non-completions do you think have been missed by the 2007 NAS and other research?
2. Are you aware of programs or approaches that assist apprentices to complete? What are the success and challenges associated with these programs?
3. Are you aware of programs or approaches that assist employers of apprentices? What are the successes and challenges associated with these programs?
4. What can be done to enhance completions in Canada?

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Federal and provincial/territorial governments, along with industry, have started several initiatives that encourage completion. The most common support is financial. In order to address financial barriers that may impair apprentices from finishing their programs, there are a variety of grants and awards available. To further motivate apprentices, there are financial incentives when completion is achieved. Some of these incentives are geared towards employers as well so they will be rewarded for seeing their apprentices through to completion. For those who may not be finishing due to weaknesses in their math or reading skills, tutoring, help with essential skills, and exam preparation support are available. In cases where progress may be delayed due to apprentices not understanding the requirements, individualized support is available to assist apprentices throughout the process.

The following summary is meant to provide some examples and is not a comprehensive list. Readers are encouraged to consult their provincial/territorial apprenticeship authority website or their industry association website to see a more comprehensive of what inventory is being done in their area.

**Federal Initiatives**

**Apprenticeship Grants**

Through the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant and the Apprenticeship Completion Grant, registered apprentices who complete their apprenticeship training and receive their certification in a designated Red Seal trade may be eligible to receive up to a maximum of $4,000.

- **Apprenticeship Completion Grant**
  - Taxable cash grant of $2,000 for successfully completing.
  - These grants will benefit an estimated 20,000 apprentices, through annual completions

- **Apprenticeship Incentive Grant**
  - The Apprenticeship Incentive Grant (AIG) is a taxable cash grant of $1,000 per year, up to a maximum of $2,000 per person, available to registered apprentices once they have successfully completed their first or second year/level (or equivalent) of an apprenticeship program in one of the Red Seal trades.

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Provincial/Territorial Initiatives

Alberta

A Scholarship Program is co-sponsored by the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, private industry, and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. The initiative provides more than 200 annual scholarships of $1,000 each.

Manitoba

Competitiveness, Training, and Trade has established a bursary fund to complement the 25 scholarships awarded to apprentices annually. The bursary will provide financial assistance to current and prospective apprentices who can demonstrate financial need.

The Apprenticeship-Workplace Essential Skills Training Centre offers free training and tutoring in the Essential Skills upgrading needed for specific skilled trades. This service is targeted towards apprentices in the workplace, trades qualifiers, tradespeople studying for exams, and anyone considering a career in the skilled trades.

Community-Based Training for Aboriginal Apprentices provides northern and rural First Nation, Métis, and Inuit apprentices the opportunity to complete the technical training component of their apprenticeship in or near their home communities. On-site training provides communities with the opportunity to develop or enhance facilities that complement local infrastructure. Community-Based Training, combined with improved Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition techniques and Essential Skills initiatives, is expected to lead to more certified tradespeople in Aboriginal communities and an overall increase in the number of Aboriginal apprentices by improving retention and completion rates in apprenticeship training programs and increasing success rates on certification examinations.

British Columbia

The Training Tax Credit Program applies to both Red-Seal and non-Red Seal apprenticeship programs.

Employer Benefits:

- First 2 years of an apprenticeship: 20% of wages to a maximum of $4,000 each tax year per apprentice (30% to maximum of $6,000 for persons with disabilities and First Nations apprentices)
- Lesser of $2,500 or 15 per cent of wages paid to an apprentice that completes level 3 of any apprenticeship program. (22.5% to maximum $3,750 for persons with disabilities and First Nations apprentices)
- Lesser of $3,000 or 15 per cent of wages paid to an apprentice that completes level 4 or higher of any apprenticeship program. (22.5% to maximum of $4,500 for persons with disabilities and First Nations apprentices)

Although a search was completed, no specific initiatives were found for NWT or Nunavut.


Apprentice Benefits:

- $1,000 Scholarship awarded to Secondary School Apprentices for sustained and exceptional work as an apprentice.
- Level 1 and 2: The provincial government provides an equivalent tax credit to the federal one for non-Red Seal trades. The provincial government also offers an enhanced tax credit. The enhanced tax credit provides an additional $500 to apprentices with disabilities and First Nations in Levels 1 and 2.
- Level 3: The provincial government provides a credit of $2,000 (Red Seal and non Red Seal). The enhanced credit provides an additional $1,000 for persons with disabilities and First Nations apprentices.
- Level 4 or Higher: The provincial government provides a completion tax credit of $2,500 for those completing the 4th (or higher) level of their apprenticeship. The enhanced credit provides an additional $1,250 for persons with disabilities and First Nations apprentices.

Ontario

- Bonus to apprentices completing in non-Red Seal trades: Apprentices will be eligible for a one-time grant of $2,000 upon completion of their full program requirements in non-Red Seal programs. The grant complements the federal Apprenticeship Completion Grant.
- Employer Completion Bonus: For all trades, employers will be eligible for a $1,000 bonus when their apprentices complete training and receive certification.
- Financial supports of up to $1,500 per term to help apprentices with the cost of school if they are not eligible for Employment Insurance (EI).
- Program adjustments allow the choice to complete more technical training up front if work placements are temporarily unavailable.
- Examination preparation supports are provided to trades and training providers where a need has been determined.
- Ontario also offers tax credits for apprenticeship to employers. The Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit is worth a maximum of $10,000 per year, per eligible apprentice, and can be claimed during the first 48 months after an apprenticeship is registered. This credit is available primarily to employers in construction, manufacturing, motive power, and a few service-sector trades. It was made a permanent incentive during the 2010 budget and the 25-per-cent rate of wages/salaries was increased to 35 per cent. The rate of wages/salaries for small businesses was also enhanced from 30 per cent to 45 per cent.

Quebec

- In Quebec, there is follow-up by Emploi-Quebec officers to help apprentices keep on track and stick with their apprenticeships.

79 Information provided by the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities. Focus Group session, November 30, 2009.
Appendix B: Initiatives to Enhance Completion

Saskatchewan

- The Graduate Retention Program (GRP) provides a rebate of up to $20,000 of tuition fees paid by graduates who live in Saskatchewan and who file a Saskatchewan income tax return. To be eligible:
  - Individuals must live in or move to Saskatchewan
  - Programs must be equivalent to at least six months of full-time study from an eligible institution
  - Programs must result in a certificate, diploma, or undergraduate degree; or, provide journeyperson certification.

Newfoundland and Labrador

- All registered apprentices have their technical training paid for. There is no cost to apprentices for tuition or books.
- There is co-joint agreement with Alberta for apprentices to remain registered in Newfoundland and Labrador. This allows apprentices to get work experience, but to retain their status, to complete their technical training in Newfoundland and Labrador, and to receive the education subsidy.

Prince Edward Island

- Presently there are no tuition fees required for training in Prince Edward Island. Based on need, student grants and loans may be available to apprentices while attending technical training.

New Brunswick

- The “Screening for Success” program helps apprentices identify any learning challenges so they can receive the appropriate help.

Nova Scotia

- The province has Apprenticeship Progression and Completion Awards.
- To help apprentices successfully complete their apprenticeship studies, the apprenticeship division introduced several new learning options which include the development of a learning plan, an informal assessment, access to learning supports, math refresher and document use refresher programs, as well as an additional review course to help prepare a study plan for the certification exam.
- As a part of its Aboriginal Apprenticeship Strategy, the province, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Aboriginal community, the Aboriginal Human Resource Council of Canada, and Service Canada, supports Nova Scotia Aboriginal apprentices throughout their journey from apprenticeship to trades certification.

Yukon

- Yukon apprentices do not pay for tuition during the technical training component of their training. They can also get help when completing their technical training via allowances for books, dependent care, commuting, living away from home and maintaining a second residence, and travel support.

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Industry Initiatives

Many industry and union programs have been introduced to encourage completion. To enhance the quality of workplace learning, industry organizations have created or are creating mentoring programs. It is hoped that if mentoring on worksites can be improved, apprentices will be more engaged and will want to stay in an apprenticeship. In order to avoid apprentices leaving due to an inability to find work, one industry organization is sponsoring apprentices and helping them connect with employers who need apprentices. Industry organizations are also keeping track of the apprentices’ progress so preventative measures can be taken if the apprentices need it. This type of individualized support may support completion.

Construction Sector Council81

The Construction Sector Council has developed a guide on mentoring that is available on their website. The materials promote mentoring and clarify the responsibilities and expectations of the mentor and the apprentice. The mentoring guide includes handbooks, presentations, and videos.

CSTEC Apprenticeship Program82

The Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC) and the steel industry, created the “CSTEC Apprenticeship Program”. The program is a response to the economic challenges that limit apprenticeship training among small-and medium-sized manufacturers. CSTEC developed the Hamilton Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Consortium (HSTAC) in July 2009 to help with apprenticeship training and completion.

HSTAC acts as a sponsor when registering students for seven industrial trades. Under the program, apprentices can move from employer to employer and do not have to register again. Registering students is intended to encourage employers to participate since they are more likely to offer work placements to an already-registered apprentice. In addition to a mentoring program under development, students provide their email address during registration so they can keep in contact with HSTAC. HSTAC helps individuals connect with an employer. HSTAC also monitors apprentice’ progress. It is hoped this assistance will keep apprentices working and engaged.

Union Locals

Locals across the country provide support to their apprentices by helping them with administrative requirements and reminding them of important deadlines and test dates. Examination preparation is also made available. This individualized support helps apprentices stay on track.
