

# Bill 61 The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act

April 8, 2021



## **Bill 61: *The Apprenticeship and Certification Amendment Act***

The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) is Manitoba's central labour body, representing the interests of more than 100,000 unionized workers in our province. We are very disappointed with Bill 61 and this government's overall approach to apprenticeship, including health and safety protections and opportunities for good, family supporting jobs. This bill seeks to limit stakeholder voices and enhance the powers of government, centralizing decision making and oversight of the apprentice system in the hands of the Minister. This is especially concerning because this Minister's track record has been to chip away at protections and opportunities for home grown apprentices, making it less appealing to stay and develop their skills and make their livelihood here in Manitoba.

Over the past six months the Minister responsible for Apprenticeship Manitoba has significantly weakened health and safety protections for apprentices by increasing ratios to reduce training and health and safety supervision, going so far as to allow some employers to have employers working alone, with only phone access to a journeyperson supervisor. These changes are at odds with the common sense understanding that employers have a responsibility to protect and educate young workers as they develop their knowledge and skills in and around dangerous worksites and equipment. Some 80% of apprenticeship is learning on the job and removing direct one-to-one supervision and mentorship, we fear, will only lead to more injuries and deaths for Manitoba's young workers.

This government also moved quickly this winter to repeal The Apprenticeship Opportunity Act that guaranteed apprentices position employment on public contracts ensuring that there was opportunity to work, learn and make a livelihood here in Manitoba. In repealing this bill this government directly contradicts any support Bill 61 purports to have for Manitoba's apprenticeship system, for apprentices themselves or Manitoba's construction industry.

Bill 61 looks to continue this trend of destabilization by centralizing its decision-making ability in the hands of the Minister and limiting stakeholder input or participation. The bill both gives authority to the Minister to designate and certify new trades, cut the number of members on the apprenticeship board while also eliminating provincial advisory committees in favor of industry sector-only or ad hoc committees. This means lessening community voices at the board level, while at the same time giving a smaller group, greater power to designate the make-up of new committees with greater authority.

Provincial Advisory Committees were mandated to have a balance of employee and employer representatives. Your new system has no such requirement and can leave out and silence worker voices. Provincial Advisory Committees are made up of employee and employer representatives with an interest and expertise in the trade or designated occupation. Your new model allows several trades or occupations to be bundled together, the only requirement being they enable parties to provide input into changes the committee plans.

These changes signal that the apprenticeship system in Manitoba will be less open to all stakeholders with a potential for less transparency in decision making and the setting standards.

Manitoba's apprentices will play a vital role in Manitoba's economic recovery. They are the future that will literally rebuild our province once the pandemic is over. Investing in a strong apprenticeship system that creates skilled apprentices will benefit of our whole province.

Unfortunately the actions of this government say they believe otherwise. Bill 61 only helps weaken an apprenticeship system that should be expanded and strengthened. At best this bill is a missed opportunity to invest in apprenticeship in Manitoba and at worst it will be contributing factor in stemming the development of apprentices and home grown, skilled labour in Manitoba.

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