

**Title:** Ontario Government Drops the College of Trades

Provincial government announces intention to change Ontario's skilled trades and apprenticeship system.

by John Norris

The government of Ontario recently announced it will be winding down the Ontario College of Trades and introduced legislation to achieve that. As of this writing, no firm timelines or direction on how this will proceed have been made available.

On October 23, 2018, legislation was introduced as Bill 47 proposing the following changes:

- Setting the journeyperson to apprentice ratios to one-to-one
- Establishing a moratorium on trade classification and reclassification
- Abolishing the Ontario College of Trades (College), by repealing the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, on a future date to be proclaimed.

(Note: the journeyperson ratio for autobody does not exist and trade classification changes have yet to be introduced for autobody.)

Should the proposed legislation pass, the College will work with the government to support an orderly transition of key functions in the coming months and will provide input on creating a stronger skilled trades system in Ontario.

In the meantime, the College will continue to collect membership fees and deliver key services until further notice, including:

- Issuing or renewing Certificates of Qualification and other credentials
- Verifying credentials on worksites for compulsory trades
- Undertaking trade equivalency assessments

The Ontario College of Trades (the College) is an industry-driven, professional regulatory body that protects the public by regulating and promoting the skilled trades.

One of the main responsibilities of the College is to ensure that individuals performing the skills of compulsory trades have the training and certification required to legally practise this trade in Ontario.

The College puts the decision-making in the hands of those that are directly impacted by those decisions.

The College is also responsible for:

- Issuing certificates of qualification and statements of membership
- Establishing apprenticeship programs and other training programs
- Maintaining a public registry of its members
- The process for determining appropriate apprentice to journey person ratios
- The process for trade classification reviews
- Establishing the scope of practice for trades

For the trade of Auto Body Collision Damage Repairer, a compulsory trade in Ontario, the actions taken by the government are unclear. Government has not announced how the work the College was doing will be handled. The industry trade board will continue to meet as an industry board, not as a College board.

The College has undertaken compliance and enforcement duties. With that soon gone, who will handle this? Many shops worry with no one checking on trades licensing or schooling, many shops will find ways to "race to the bottom". A licensed, \$28 per hour tech can be replaced with an unskilled \$15 per hour bumper or fender parts remover. If no one is checking, why would a shop send staff to apprentice schooling? Smaller sub-trades within autobody may disappear.

One bright spot may be the discussion happening now to set up an "Authority" that inspects shops for compliance and equipment/training competence with the proviso that only shops that meet that minimum standard can be paid by an insurer. This would have an immediate impact on raising the bar in training and skills and provide a clear benefit to shops that were "doing things right." Backyard, illegal shops would have significant difficulty operating under this scenario, but will be provided with incentive to legitimize.