

Incentives on Ice

With over 750 apprentices in collision repair, some worrying items are on the horizon in Ontario.

By John Norris

For Ontario collision shops, the outcomes of government incentives to hire and to support the training of apprentices are becoming difficult to forecast. Last year, the previous Ontario government announced a new series of grants and incentives to replace the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit program. This new initiative is called GAGE (Graduated Apprenticeship Grant for Employers).

The total amount you can receive, including bonuses, is \$19,200. You get a payment each time your apprentice successfully completes a level of training, and when they receive their Certificate of Apprenticeship or Certificate of Qualification. Payments will begin to be issued as early as spring 2019. You also get a bonus at each milestone if your apprentice is from an underrepresented group.

Payments are as follows:

- * Level 1 –\$2,500 (plus \$500 bonus, if applicable)
- * Level 2 –\$2,500 (plus \$500 bonus, if applicable)
- * Level 3 –\$3,500 (plus \$500 bonus, if applicable)
- * Level 4 –\$3,500 (plus \$500 bonus, if applicable)
- * Certificate of Apprenticeship / Certificate of Qualification –\$4,700 (plus \$500 bonus, if applicable)

There are further incentives available if you are hiring a female apprentice.

When the new Doug Ford-led Conservative government took office, they ordered a review of all grant programs. During this review, payments for this new program were suspended, so shops that had hired an apprentice with the understanding of grant provisions became no longer eligible.

Also delayed were pre-apprenticeship programs that helped generate some 22-44 new students each year into the industry. These programs normally are announced in November. As I write this, we are now into spring of the following year, and still no announcement has been made regarding the status of these programs.

Shops worry that other grants and incentives featured on the industry web site, ciia.com are also a subject to change. CIIA will continue to track developments and will post any changes or announcements. Hopefully a program re-instatement for grants as the province makes its decisions.

Another concern, although not new, is Ontario Regulation 274, which obligates a school principal to hire the teacher with the most seniority, not the best skills.

In one example in Hamilton, a qualified autobody teacher retired and was replaced with the english/math teacher. Within two weeks all students had left the class as the teacher was unprepared for the subject matter. Within a few weeks, all the shop equipment, including the hoist disappeared. Regulation that forces the most senior teacher into the role of the auto body teacher position and not an auto body trained and licensed technician is not in the best interests of the class and certainly discourages students from entering this skilled trade