

## **ISSUE 2 (MAY 2020): EDUCATION AND THE SKILLED TRADES**

With fewer youth learning the skills required to replace an aging generation of soon-to-be-retired tradespeople, critical shortages in skilled trades workers is on the horizon while these careers grow more complex. As automation, instrumentation, electronics and new energy systems become ubiquitous in our lives, many of the traditional trades such as construction, transportation and manufacturing are now intertwined with the technology and thus require new, more sophisticated skills. Despite the fact that skilled trades provide steady, well-compensated employment, there remains a deeply entrenched perception that pursuing a trade is a secondary career path far less desirable than attending university – even as increasing numbers of university grads find themselves struggling with precarious employment.

In this issue, *Education Canada* looks at the role our public schools do, could, and/or should play in exposing students to these career pathways, preparing them for future labour market needs, and facilitating their transition to trades training. Are students given adequate experiential learning opportunities to consider trades, adequate opportunity to learn about them, and adequate support in negotiating entry to post-secondary programs and apprenticeships that will take them there? How can we shift the narrative, counter the stigma and articulate the value of skilled trades to youth and their parents? How does our education system embrace the multiple roles of fostering the skills and knowledge students require to become informed, active, citizens of the world, and also preparing them to meet the workforce needs of tomorrow?

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