25 Years of Certifying Skilled Tradespeople and Delivering Apprenticeship Training with Sask Apprenticeship

For the past 25 years, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC) has been shaping Saskatchewan's workforce by administering quality apprenticeship training and certifying skilled tradespeople. Among those skilled tradespeople is Avery Dunn, who achieved her Red Seal certification as a journeyperson Construction Electrician at the end of 2023.

Dunn's journey began with an unexpected pivot. While she originally wanted to be a singer, after she had a child, Dunn decided she needed a job "close to home and something reliable." Her dad suggested she consider the trades. "He told me the trades are always there, they're always needed," she says. "I thought, 'really, why not?'" In the fall of 2019, she registered as an apprentice with Asiil Enterprises Ltd. in Prince Albert.

Throughout her apprenticeship, Avery thrived thanks to the guidance of supportive colleagues. She fondly recalls working under her company's longest-serving employee, who mentored her for three years before his retirement. "He had so much patience with me and believed in my potential," she says. "That confidence he had in me made me feel like I was worth it."

Avery has since carried forward the spirit of mentorship. Early in her career, she was the only woman on her team. "I was crossing my fingers and hoping I'd get to work with another woman one day," she said.

When another woman did join their team, Dunn embraced the role of mentor. "When I met her, I knew I needed to welcome her in because she belongs here, and I don't want her to feel like she doesn't," she says. "She needs to be comfortable, and I knew I had to take her under my wing because I wanted her to feel totally welcome."

Dunn's kindness and mentorship have paid off. "She's flourished, and she's comfortable with all of our [staff]. It just makes me so happy that I feel like we are going in such a good direction."

Avery's apprenticeship journey is one of many success stories from tradespeople who have benefitted from Saskatchewan's apprenticeship system. While the SATCC officially marked 25 years as a Commission in 2024, the roots of apprenticeship in the province run much deeper.

In 1944, Saskatchewan introduced a formal system of training for journeypersons to pass along their knowledge and skills, designating a total of 13 apprenticeship trades. Initially, there was little or no technical training outside of the workplace. The institutional training element came in the 1960s. By the early 90s, responsibility for apprenticeship was scattered across several provincial government departments. Then, in 1999, at the request of industry, Saskatchewan passed a new apprenticeship act, overhauling the system and formalizing industry leadership, which led to the creation of the SATCC.

Today, there are more than 6,700 apprentices across over 40 designated trades in Saskatchewan. The SATCC has played a pivotal role in developing an accessible and responsive apprenticeship training and certification system that meets the evolving needs of the province's industries.