SMACNA-AB Member Update

Alberta Skilled Trades & Partnerships Industry Engagement Session

November 4, 2026

The Alberta Government's Skilled Trades and Partnerships Branch and the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades (ABST) provided an update on apprenticeship training, workforce development initiatives, industry partnerships, and upcoming program changes affecting Alberta's skilled trades system.

Key Takeaways for SMACNA-AB Members

Strong Demand for Skilled Trades Continues

The province continues to experience a significant shortage of skilled tradespeople. A Fall 2026 industry survey found:

- 74% of respondents believe the current availability of skilled trades workers is inadequate.
- 77% plan to hire and train more apprentices over the next one to three years.
- 72% expect to send more apprentices to technical training.
- 74% indicated that apprenticeship class availability directly impacts workforce planning decisions.

These findings reinforce the ongoing need for workforce development and investment in apprenticeships within Alberta's sheet metal, HVAC, and construction sectors.

Apprenticeship Training Funding

The Government of Alberta has committed:

- **$110 million** in 2026-27 apprenticeship training funding.
- **33,000 apprenticeship seats** delivered through post-secondary institutions.
- **$5 million** through the Union Apprenticeship Grant Program (UAGP).

Current apprenticeship seat fill rates are approximately 68%, with minimal waitlists reported across the province.

SMACNA-AB Member Update

Alberta Skilled Trades & Partnerships Industry Engagement Session

Federal "Team Canada Strong" Initiative

The federal government has launched the **Team Canada Strong** initiative, providing:

$8 billion nationally for apprenticeship and skilled trades.

A goal: train **100,000 new Red Seal tradespeople by 2030-31**.

- Funding opportunities including:
- Employer wage subsidies
- Youth placement programs
- Employment Insurance top-ups
- Apprentice continuation supports
- Red Seal completion bonuses
- Union Training & Innovation Program (UTIP) funding.

Alberta is currently negotiating its bilateral agreement and will continue discussions with industry regarding apprenticeship completion strategies.

My Skilled Trades Network (MySTN)

The My Skilled Trades Network continues to be the primary consultation channel for apprenticeship and trades-related policy development.

Current network statistics include:

- Over 1,433 members
- 88% certified journeypersons
- 73% hold a Red Seal endorsement
- 38% owners or managers
- 114 projects and 375 industry meetings completed in the past year.

SMACNA-AB members who want a stronger voice in apprenticeship and training decisions are encouraged to participate in MySTN consultations.

SMACNA-AB Member Update

Alberta Skilled Trades & Partnerships Industry Engagement Session

Apprenticeship Program Changes

Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic (RACM)

The RACM apprenticeship program is undergoing a general program update and will now include **Gasfitter-B certification content**, which may be of particular interest to HVAC employers and apprentices.

Gasfitter Program

The planned Gasfitter program update has been postponed from 2027 to **2029** due to technical and resource challenges.

Skills Canada Alberta Success

Skills Canada Alberta reported significant outreach and training achievements:

- Reached **47,492 students** across 167 Alberta communities.
- Delivered Try-A-Trade® programming to **25,000 students** in 290 schools.
- Welcomed more than **10,400 students** to Skill City events.
- Awarded **$90,000 in scholarships** to 75 students.
- Supported Alberta competitors who earned **2 Bronze Medals and 6 Medals for Excellence** at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026.

These initiatives continue to strengthen the future pipeline of skilled trades workers entering Alberta's workforce.

Compliance and Modernization Initiatives

The province is moving to a **risk-based compliance model**, focusing inspection resources on higher-risk employers, trades, and sponsorship situations rather than broad-based site visits. Approximately 10% of Alberta's 85,487 work locations currently receive visits.

The Apprenticeship System Modernization project will introduce:

- Enhanced online services
- Improved employer and sponsor portals
- Digital reporting tools
- Online examinations
- AI-supported assessment development
- Better workforce planning and training data.

What This Means for SMACNA-AB Members

For sheet metal and HVAC contractors, the overall message from government is clear:

- Alberta expects continued growth in demand for skilled trades workers.
- Employers are being encouraged to hire and train more apprentices.
- Significant provincial and federal funding is being directed toward apprenticeship and workforce development.
- RACM program updates and future modernization initiatives will continue to impact training delivery and certification processes.
- Industry participation through MySTN remains one of the most effective ways to influence apprenticeship training and skilled trades policy.