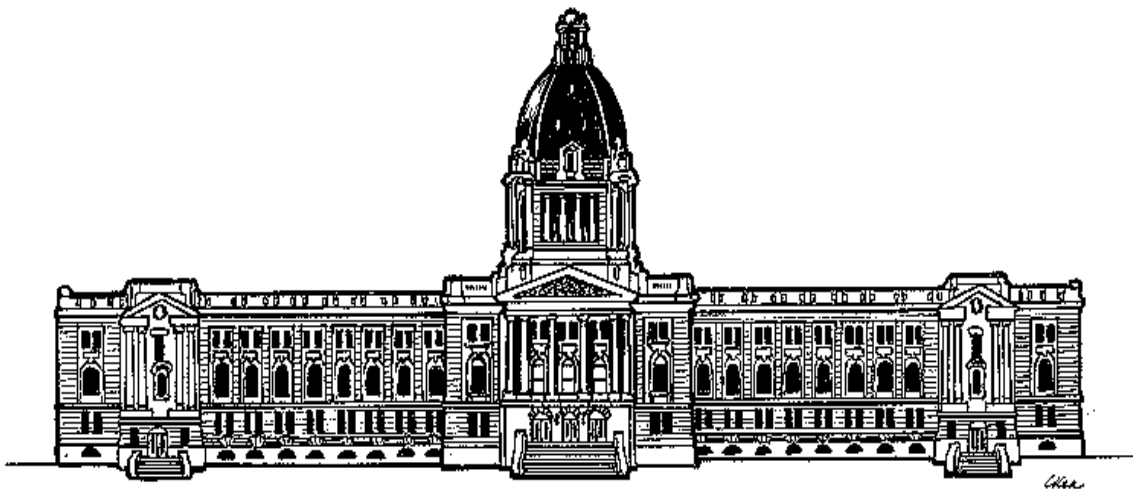




# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

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## STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

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Mr. Paul Merriman, Deputy Chair  
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Last Mountain-Touchwood

Mr. Warren Michelson  
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Rob Norris  
Saskatoon Greystone

Mr. Randy Weekes  
Biggar

Mr. Trent Wotherspoon  
Regina Rosemont

[The committee met at 08:01.]

**The Chair:** — Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Public Accounts. Today we are looking at the 2014 Provincial Auditor report volume 1, chapter 11, from Economy. Our members here today, we have Mr. Doke, Mr. Hart, Mr. Merriman, Mr. Michelson, Mr. Weekes, and today we have Mr. John Nilson substituting for Mr. Wotherspoon. Welcome, everybody. I'd like to welcome Lori Taylor and Alex Liu with the Provincial Comptroller's office. Thank you for being here today. Sorry, my apologies. I missed Mr. Norris here today, one of our members.

I'd like to introduce our Acting Provincial Auditor, Judy Ferguson. She will make a few remarks and then we will pass it off to the officials from Economy. Welcome to Mr. Laurie Pushor, and I'll let you take an opportunity here in a few minutes to introduce the officials with you today. But with that, I will pass it off to our Acting Provincial Auditor to get on with the business of the day.

### Economy

**Ms. Ferguson:** — Thank you, Madam Chair, committee members, officials, and government officials too. Today with me I have Mr. Kelly Deis. Kelly leads the work in the apprenticeship and trade certification. Behind him is Kim Lowe. Kim is our committee liaison, and caught in traffic is Michelle Lindenbach, who assisted on the work that's before us today here.

As was mentioned by Madam Chair, we are focusing on chapter 11 of our 2014 report volume 1. This chapter focuses on Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission on our audit enabling apprentices to achieve certification. It contains eight new recommendations for the committee's consideration. Mr. Deis here is going to provide an overview of the chapter and he's going to highlight each new recommendation and explain why we made the recommendation.

But before we get into that, I'd like to just take a moment to thank the officials, both in the ministry and the commission, for the excellent co-operation that we received during the course of this engagement. Kelly.

**Mr. Deis:** — Thank you, Ms. Ferguson. Training apprentices is important in Saskatchewan because of its current and projected shortage of workers in the skilled trades. Before I discuss the chapter, I just want to pause on a couple of key definitions.

What is an apprenticeship? It is an agreement between a person who wants to learn a trade, an apprentice, and an employer who needs a skilled worker.

The Red Seal or the interprovincial Red Seal program: this program establishes interprovincial standards for the skilled trades. It encourages harmonization of provincial and territorial apprenticeship training and certification programs by developing and maintaining interprovincial standards of qualification for Red Seal trades.

The commission's apprenticeship training and certification program is essential for preparing Saskatchewan apprentices to successfully achieve the requirements of the interprovincial Red Seal standardized final examinations for that trade.

Figure 2 on page 81 of chapter 11 provides a quick visual overview of how the apprentice program works. Between 2008 and 2013, the total number of apprentices registered with the commission increased from 8,130 to 10,023, an increase of about 23 per cent. At June 30th, 2013, the commission had registered 1,404 carpenters, 2,011 electricians, and 1,052 plumbing apprentices, and that represents about 45 per cent of registered apprentices in the province.

This chapter, which starts on page 79, reports the results of our audit regarding the effectiveness of the commission's processes to enable apprentices to achieve interprovincial standards Red Seal certifications that meet market demand. The audit focused on the processes for the electrician, carpentry, and plumbing trades. We concluded that for the 12-month period ended December 31st, 2013, the commission's apprenticeship and trade certification program had effective processes to enable apprentices to achieve interprovincial standards Red Seal certifications that meet market demand, except for as we reflect in our eight recommendations which I'll discuss in a few minutes.

In our first and second recommendations on page 84, we recommend that the commission firstly develop specific measureable, relevant, and reasonable targets for all performance measures to ensure strategies are achieved to support the apprenticeship and trade certification program and, secondly, document methodologies for determining the results of the apprenticeship and trade certification program.

We found that the commission has a board-approved five-year strategic plan. This plan identified its long-term direction and priorities for the administration of the apprenticeship and training certification program. The commission also develops an annual business plan which includes performance measures and targets. We expected performance measures and targets would be aligned with the goals set out in the strategic plan and be measureable and well defined. We found that the 2014 performance measures in the business plan did not address all the goals in the strategic plan. Also they did not indicate time parameters for completion, for example monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually. Only half of the goals had a measurable target. The targets were generic and difficult to measure. For example, leveraging partnerships, conducting consultations, or obtaining feedback.

In addition, the commission had not documented what each measure meant, set out what information it planned to use to calculate each measure, or how it planned to track and report them. Without specific, measureable, relevant, and reasonable targets and methodologies to support reporting, the commission will not be able to set priorities for and report successful achievement of its strategies.

In our third recommendation which is on page 87, we recommend that the commission formally require regular reporting of apprentices' on-the-job trade hours. To assess each

apprentice's competencies, the commission must verify skills development, including time worked on the job, completion of technical training, and formal examinations. Although not formally required, the commission expects apprentices to track the number of hours of on-the-job training and the scope of that work. The commission expects apprentices to report on that work every six months. We found that in 28 per cent of the files that we looked at, apprentices did not do so. If trade time is not reported on a regular basis, apprentices may not be scheduled for the next level of training or the commission may not be aware who has dropped out of the program.

Our fourth and fifth recommendations are related. In our fourth recommendation on page 88, we recommend that the commission implement a formal policy for industry inspections that requires the use of a risk assessment to decide which employers to inspect and how often. Also our fifth recommendation on page 89 recommends that the commission verify and document that employers receive an industry inspection as required.

The commission employs field consultants to conduct three types of work site inspections: scheduled industry inspections, random construction site inspections, and issue-driven, including complaints inspections. Figure 6 on pages 87 and 88 provides a brief description of each of these.

Each consultant is expected to inspect an average of 18 employers a month. And to do this they use scheduled industry inspections, and they also conduct, on top of this, 20 random construction site inspections each year. We found that 52 per cent of employers had not received a scheduled industry inspection in 2013. Some employers were inspected more than once a year, while others were not inspected at all during that same time frame.

Half the employers that were not inspected were considered to be home-based businesses, which the commission indicated were of a lower risk. However the commission had not documented or approved a risk assessment to assist in directing employer inspections nor had it documented a formal process to track which employers had been inspected.

In our sixth recommendation, also on page 89, we recommend the commission develop a formal process to ensure employers comply with *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Act, 1999* and *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Regulations, 2003*. For employers in compulsory trades, for example that would be electricians and plumbers, *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Act, 1999* requires apprentices to be registered in the apprenticeship program to work in that trade.

All employers are required to comply with the applicable apprentice-to-journeyman ratio as set out in *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Regulations, 2003*. When field consultants inspect employers, they are to compare the employer's apprentice-to-journeyman ratio to that required ratio and determine whether apprentices in compulsory trades are appropriately registered.

We found that in both compulsory and non-compulsory trades, the commission did not have evidence of its consultants

verifying these requirements. As a result, it does not have a formal process to track and know whether employees comply with the Act and the regulations. Not meeting the legislative requirements increases the risk that apprentices may not obtain sufficient training, which in turn may hinder their progress through their program.

In our seventh recommendation on page 89, we recommend that the commission follow its policy regarding timely completion of issue-driven inspections. The commission expects each field consultant to carry out issue-driven inspections within 30 days of the receipt of a complaint. We found that 27 per cent of these inspections did not meet that 30-day period. Timely resolution of complaints is important as these complaints may impact overall success of the apprentices.

In our eighth recommendation which is on page 93, we recommend that the commission's board require regular, formal, interim reports from management on progress towards achieving performance targets that support the apprenticeship and trade certification program. Although the commission has a strategic plan and performance measures, it does not regularly or formally report on these measures to the board, for example perhaps on a quarterly basis. Without timely, regular interim reporting to the board, the board may not have sufficient information about the progress towards achieving priorities and key strategies and what adjustments may be needed to achieve those performance targets. And that concludes our overview.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Deis. Mr. Pushor, if you would introduce your officials and if you could walk us through each recommendation, let us know where you're at, actions taken, planned actions, and timelines, that would be very helpful in guiding our discussion. So thank you.

**Mr. Pushor:** — Thanks. It's a pleasure to be here this morning. With me is Alastair MacFadden, the assistant deputy minister for the labour market development division in the Ministry of the Economy, and Darcy Smycniuk who is the executive director of the apprenticeship workforce and skills branch. I'll make a few brief opening remarks and then they are going to take you through each of the recommendations.

First of all, the government and the Ministry of the Economy very much agree with and support the need for due diligence in regard to how agencies are funded and the way that they are administered. To that end, in general we agree with all of the recommendations provided by the auditor's report and we will report the progress to date on taking steps to address them.

I would just say that apprenticeship training and the journeymen group across the province are a key part of our economy in the workforce of this province, and the commitment and the growth outlined and the commitment to continue to grow the number of people working in the trades is a key signal of just how important it is to this government and of course to this province.

The SATCC, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, has done a very good job, we think, of targeting their resources, most importantly about 75 per cent of their resources to actual training supports. An additional 20 per cent of their resources go to student supports, and the balance is used for other purposes. We think it's important to

try and keep focus on that energy and that discipline in terms of ensuring the dollars are flowing to where they'd most benefit the folks in the program.

In addition to that, we as a ministry, along with the SATCC, have been working on harmonization and mobility across the country for both apprentices and journeypersons, and that work continues on an ongoing basis. With that, I'll turn it over to Darcy and Alastair to give you recommendation-by-recommendation information.

[08:15]

**Mr. MacFadden:** — I'm Alastair MacFadden. I'm the ADM [assistant deputy minister] for labour market development. In terms of recommendation 1, as Laurie points out, like all of the recommendations the ministry certainly agrees that continuous improvement is required. The commission does track quantifiable performance measures including the number of registered apprentices, journeyperson certifications, seat purchases, the participation of under-represented groups, and the success rates on the interprovincial exams. That success rate on exams is about 75 per cent compared to about 68 per cent for apprenticeship systems in other provinces and territories. So the success rate is strong.

The senior management team at the commission and the commission board intend to review all performance measures and targets as a result of the advice and will begin that development in the 2015-16 business plan. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the measures and the targets are specific, measurable, relevant, and reasonable, and linked with the multi-year goals for the organization.

Recommendation 2 refers to documenting the methodology behind some of the metrics that are used. And again, the ministry agrees that continuous improvement is required here. As stated, not all methodologies used by the commission are documented in a comprehensive way.

As part of its review of performance measures, the commission senior management team and the board in development of the 2015-16 business plan will develop a performance measure reference table. And the reference table will include each performance measure's definition, purpose, measurement methodology, the data source, a target, and an explanation of the relevance of the target itself.

Recommendation 3 refers to the regular reporting of apprentices' on-the-job trade hours. This is a requirement that's formally stated in a number of documents including letters to apprentices, however the apprenticeship contract is something that could be amended to make this more explicit.

The commission plans to amend the current apprenticeship contract to specify and require regular reporting periods for trade time. Right now this requirement is identified in the apprentice responsibility bulletin that's sent to all new apprentices. It's also referenced in the letter from the commission verifying that the apprentice contract has been approved and that the person is registered.

The statement there says that it's very important that you

submit your trade experience. You will only receive credit for trade experience that is covered by fully completed, properly signed trade forms and a contract with that company. And then in bold, that letter says you are required to submit this verification of trade time to the office at least once during every six-month calendar period and the responsibility of providing the information is yours.

Again, this is something that needs to be emphasized in the actual apprenticeship contract. And the commission has agreed that it will make those adjustments, and the work will be completed in 2014-15.

Recommendation 4 recommends that the commission implement a formal policy for industry inspections that require the use of a risk assessment to decide which employers to inspect and how often.

The audit identifies that 16 field consultants conducted 3,800 industry inspections during the one-year period. This exceeded a stated goal for the commission which was 216 inspections per consultant. In that year they inspected 237 but, as recommended, the inspections should be scheduled based on a risk assessment to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the process.

The commission's in the process of developing methodology around a risk assessment to determine which employers should be inspected and the time frame for these inspections. The objective is to have specific time frames for higher risk trades, such as the compulsory trades and regulated trades mandating visits within specific time frames. The senior management is currently evaluating the availability and the quality of data sources that can be used to develop a risk assessment methodology. That would include things like municipal building permit data, for example. The risk assessment work is expected to be completed within 2014-15.

The management of the commission will develop policies and procedures to govern the documentation standards for inspections as well as regular verification and reporting of inspections. This work is also expected to be completed in 2014-15.

Recommendation 6 says that the commission should develop a formal process to ensure that employers comply with *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Act* and *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Regulations*. Here again, the Ministry of the Economy agrees. For employers in the compulsory trades, the Act requires apprentices to be registered in the apprenticeship program in order to work in that trade. As well, the employers are required to comply with the applicable apprentice-to-journeyperson ratio that's set out in those regulations.

The commission will review its processes to ensure the required ratios of journeypersons and apprentices are in place and documented. Additional processes will also be implemented to identify, document, and address any other issues around compliance. The commission will reassess the criteria determining the number of construction site visits and employer visits that will be performed in a one-year period to verify that employers are in compliance with the ratio. This is another area

where the work is expected to be completed in 2014-15.

Recommendation 7 is that the commission follow its policy regarding timely completion of issue-driven inspections.

The Ministry of the Economy agrees that improvement's required, and it is an internal issue to the commission. The commission expects its field consultants to carry out issue-driven inspections within 30 days of receiving a complaint or within 60 days if an extension is required. Eight out of 30 issue-driven inspections that were examined were not completed within the 30-day timeline. Six of those were resolved within 60 days, although a formal request for an extension was not made.

The commission is documenting its policies around issue-driven inspections. Management's developing and implementing a process for monitoring, to ensure that extensions are requested where required and appropriate, and this work will be completed in 2015-16.

Finally, recommendation 8 is that the board require regular, formal interim reports from management on the progress towards achieving performance targets that support the apprenticeship and trade certification program. The commission has a strategic plan and performance measures and, as noted in the audit findings, there's no regular, formal reporting currently in place on these measures to report to the board throughout the year.

The Ministry of the Economy would agree with the observation and recommendation and that continued regular reporting on performance measures is required. Management has started to report in-year progress on performance measures to the board. Management is also providing the board with an information item on year-to-date key indicators as well as historical trends.

The performance measures and targets that are included in that report include the number of training seats, the seat fill-rate, because there is an objective to ensure that training seats are occupied by apprentices as much as possible. It also refers to accurate financial reporting, Aboriginal participation in apprenticeship, consultations with industry, and training. Sixty per cent of apprentices are all reviewed at each board meeting.

The board packages are sent to the 20-member board prior to each meeting. These range from 100- to 400-page documents and include reports from the CEO [chief executive officer] as well as finance, governance, trade boards, trades and skill centres, and other committees. The package also outlines any changes to policies or processes, with background information, to ensure that members have a comprehensive understanding of the issues that they will be voting on. The CEO report at these board meetings includes an overview of all meetings and consultations that have taken place, interprovincial initiatives, and updates on training and certification statistics, as well as progress towards achieving targets.

Although the commission has prepared reporting to the board on an annual basis as well as ad hoc reporting throughout the year, it recognizes the need for more formal, regular reporting. Further improvements planned for the remainder of the year are to provide a summary table of all performance measures,

including year-to-date actuals and targets. And additionally, the reference table that's cited in recommendation 2 is expected to be provided by the end of this year, as I mentioned.

That's a quick run-through of eight recommendations and I'm, you know, happy to take further questions. But I think that the commission has shown a commitment to progress in all of these areas.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. MacFadden. I'd like to open up the floor for questions. Mr. Nilson.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Yes, thank you for that very thorough report. And it's clear that there are a number of tasks, so everybody's going to be busy this year to meet the comments of the Provincial Auditor.

It sounds a bit like maybe you don't have enough field consultants. Is that accurate or is it more how they're deployed? Perhaps you could talk a bit about that.

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The methodology around risk-based inspections will help to inform the adequacy of resourcing those field staff, and I think our first objective is to make sure we can meet our own standards using that approach.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. So there are in excess of 10,000 apprentices in the program, and then there's 16 people that are trying to monitor all of that.

**Mr. MacFadden:** — That's correct.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. What happens with out-of-province apprentices, people that are registered in the Red Seal program in another province who come to work here? How are they dealt with?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — Apprentices from a different province who happen to work in one of our four compulsory trades are required to be registered. That doesn't mean that they need to be registered in the province of Saskatchewan however. As long as they're registered with an apprenticeship system perhaps in their home province, then that meets those expectations.

**Mr. Nilson:** — And so is that part of the inspection process then to go and talk to people and make sure they are registered somewhere?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — That's correct. If you're in a compulsory trade, you do need to be registered.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. And so the process, as I understand it, is that they have a card or something that they have with them when they're at work, and that's basically how they prove that they're in the program. Is that correct?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — That is correct.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. Are there apprentices that are working in Saskatchewan that aren't registered when you do the inspections? Like is that what you report to the board when the field consultants go out to sites? I guess the question is, do you find people who aren't in compliance?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The recommendations, you know, I believe are clear in the fact that the reporting that happens to the board could be more specific. So that level of detail may not be discussed at the board level at this point, but the commission is working to improve that reporting.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. I recommend that that, you know, happen because . . . I don't know, I guess maybe I'll ask another question first. The whole Red Seal program is a national program in Canada. Who monitors the compliance with the Red Seal program?

[08:30]

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The Red Seal program is something that's monitored by the provinces and territories in collaboration with the Canadian directors of apprenticeship. The CCDA [Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship] is an organization that meets regularly throughout the year and maintains the testing requirements under the Red Seal.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Is there a concern around the recording of hours by apprentices that this may cause some difficulty in the transferability of a Red Seal obtained in Saskatchewan versus British Columbia or Alberta for example?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The mobility of people who have a Red Seal qualification is something that all provinces and territories have committed to under the Agreement on Internal Trade. So once you have passed that Red Seal exam, you're considered fully qualified in all jurisdictions because it's a common standard across the country.

**Mr. Nilson:** — So the qualification is only the exam, not the required hours that are reported in your province.

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The hours are necessary as part of apprenticeship training, so that intermediate standard where you're moving throughout apprenticeship. The Red Seal happens at . . . that defines journeyman status.

**Mr. Nilson:** — So the basic . . . my understanding would be then that some of the issues around the lack of evidence of the number of hours that people put in that's showing up in this report does not affect the ultimate Red Seal certification of an apprentice that passes the exam?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The reporting of hours is important for the apprentice to complete the requirements for each stage of apprenticeship training. It's also important to the commission so that it is aware of who's ready for the next level of in-class training. And it's a common concern across all apprenticeship systems in the country.

**Mr. Nilson:** — That's why I ask some of those questions. I was at a hearing like this in British Columbia on an exchange, and this became a major issue about which Red Seals from which provinces you could trust versus other ones. And so when I saw this report, I thought, oh that's what they're talking about is if they don't have evidence of people actually meeting all the standards, it becomes an issue for the acceptance of Red Seals from other provinces. And obviously we don't want that for our Saskatchewan apprentices. We want them to be fully qualified

and able to work wherever the work is.

One of the concerns that's been registered with our offices on the opposition caucus relates to sometimes there are situations where there are apprentices working, but there are no journeymen there to supervise them. And I assume that from what . . . the report here that's one of the most common complaints that forces an inspection. Can you talk a bit about how the commission responds to that type of a complaint? Because clearly that's a big issue if you have a lot of apprentices and nobody there to instruct them.

**Mr. MacFadden:** — In order to be a registered apprentice, you need to be linked with an employer and a journeyman, and the ratio of apprentices to journey people is identified in the regulations. The inspections are required to verify that those ratios are being met. So in instances where that takes place, the commission would be working with the employer to ensure that the commitments are being met by the employer.

**Mr. Nilson:** — And so, and that's what you're planning to report then to the commission, where now it appears the audit showed what, about a quarter of the situations were somewhat questionable? And I guess I raise that because once again that affects other provinces' perception of our Red Seal program if in fact some of the rules aren't being monitored properly.

**Mr. MacFadden:** — That's right.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Yes.

**Mr. MacFadden:** — As I pointed out, there's four compulsory trades where registration as an apprentice or Red Seal certification is required in Saskatchewan. So it's mandatory that workers in those four trades either be registered as an apprentice and working with a journeyman, or they be a journeyman themselves.

**Mr. Nilson:** — There are four trades. Is that about 50 per cent of the 10,000 people that are covered with that?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The number is 45 per cent.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Okay. Are the other trades that are involved, are they in the process of moving towards a national standard? Obviously fixing some of these issues that have been raised by the auditor will assist in having more I guess Red Seal programs in Saskatchewan?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — There are more Red Seals than just the compulsory trades. The compulsory trades are compulsory in the sense that you must be registered as an apprentice to be working in that occupation. The other apprenticeable trades that we have are also linked with Red Seal standards and Red Seal exams, but it's not compulsory that you be a registered apprentice in order to work in that occupation.

If an industry association or a group of employers determines that compulsory registration is important in terms of things like health and safety and quality control in that trade, then they could pursue compulsory designation for those occupations. At present there aren't industry groups that are looking for an expansion of compulsory trades in the province.

**Mr. Nilson:** — How does one apply for that type of certification?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The commission works directly with trade boards that consult with employer groups, and it's through those discussions that companies could express that interest.

**Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you. I don't think I have any further questions. Thank you for your comments, and I wish you all the best in working hard so the next time you're back before this committee you can get check marks in every area. So thanks.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Norris.

**Mr. Norris:** — Thanks very much. Gentlemen, thanks very much for being here today. The issue of First Nation, Métis, Aboriginal participation in the apprenticeship program has come up and I just wonder if you could offer us just a brief overview on what that looks like.

**Mr. MacFadden:** — There's targeted investment that takes place to support access and success while in apprenticeship training. But the other partnerships that take place with the commission include links with the Regina and Saskatoon trades and skills centres as well as SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] and its construction and careers sites. Those organizations, in partnership with the commission, allow people to get exposure to the trades. And they offer pre-trades programs that help people access careers in those fields and gain experience prior to registration as an apprentice.

We've had significant success with that approach to pre-trades training because it does give people career exposure. But it also helps them to qualify for an entry-level job which is necessary to be registered as an apprentice. The definition of an apprentice is not only are you registered, but you're working in the field.

**Mr. Norris:** — Great. And if I could, a follow-up connected to that in some ways. The youth apprenticeship program seems to be a vital component too. Can you just highlight a little bit of that, please?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — We have partnerships with high schools that allow young people to be exposed to the trades. And dual credit is sometimes something that is of interest to learners, so that when they graduate from high school they achieve some advanced standing if they're interested in a job in the apprenticeable trades. What's also available are a variety of scholarships to enhance the affordability of apprenticeship training too.

**Mr. Norris:** — Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** — Seeing no further questions, I actually from the Chair will ask a couple of questions. And when we're talking about under-represented groups in the trades, I'm wondering what kind of work you're doing around increasing the number of women in the trades and, as well, just a bit of a picture of what women's representation across the trades currently looks like.

**Mr. MacFadden:** — I don't have the data with me today to give you the specific information, but I can certainly tell you

that at the board level and in the commission itself there is a commitment to a representative workforce.

I'll just highlight a couple of things that take place. At the board level, there are a number of board members that are specifically identified as representatives from under-represented groups, and so that includes women in the trades. There's a representative. For persons with disabilities, there's a representative. There's also representatives on behalf of First Nations people and Métis people.

In terms of specific activities, board members are involved in supporting projects for women in the trades. There's an example in Saskatoon with the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], again, pre-trades program to help people gain their foothold in the occupation so that they can get that entry-level job and become registered.

There's also a significant commitment from the commission to support apprenticeship success for people who have disabilities. The commission works with the Ministry of the Economy to fund assessments that can help to diagnose whether a person has a learning disability so that their learning needs can be accommodated while they're in the classroom training portion of apprenticeship training.

They have also, since the time of the audit, been introducing programs like there's one called Accuplacer that allows the commission to identify a person's academic skills in terms of things like numeracy. And based on a person's performance on Accuplacer, they're able to come up with a customized learning plan that can help to accommodate a person's actual level of skill.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. With respect to the representative speaking about women in the trades, what kind of things are the representatives flagging for you in terms of barriers to becoming a tradesperson?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The core challenge that's been discussed at the board level that's common across all under-represented groups is that they are under-represented. And it's important that we develop welcoming workplaces that enable a diverse workforce and allow a person who might be the one person from that demographic group to feel supported in the workplace. And because you might be the one person who's female or you might be the one person with an Aboriginal background or the one person with a disability, that does appear to be one of the core challenges is the isolation that can take place at work.

**The Chair:** — And are there plans or strategies for improving that isolation in the workplace?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — I don't have that information with me today but, as I mentioned, it is a key priority for the board and for the commission itself and a key pillar of the labour market agenda for the province because our remaining available labour supply is populated heavily with under-represented groups, particularly in the trades.

**The Chair:** — Thank you for that. Are there any further questions? Mr. Michelson.



**Mr. Michelson:** — I was just wondering, how big is the board?

**Mr. MacFadden:** — There's 20. It's a 20-person board.

**Mr. Michelson:** — And where do they come from? Made up from different parts of the province, different sectors?

[08:45]

**Mr. MacFadden:** — The majority of board members are identified by industry and nominated by industry. And as I mentioned, there are some that specifically represent some under-represented groups. There's a variety of other board members, including myself. There's a representative who's there on behalf of Saskatchewan Polytechnic, and there is a mixture of organized labour and employers at that table.

**Mr. Michelson:** — Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Any further questions? Seeing none, I'm wondering what the committee's wishes are with respect to these recommendations. Mr. Merriman.

**Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And again, thank you to the auditor and your staff and the officials for coming in and giving us an update on the eight recommendations. And if I can, I would like to, for 2014 volume 1, recommendation 1 through 8, I would like to concur with the recommendation and note progress towards compliance on all eight inclusive.

**The Chair:** — Thank you. Mr. Merriman has moved that for the 2014 report volume 1, chapter 11 that this committee concur with the recommendations 1 through 8 and note progress to compliance. Is there any further discussion about that? No. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Well that is the last item of business on our agenda today. So would you like to make some final remarks? No. To the auditor? Okay. With that I guess could I have a motion to adjourn? Mr. Norris. Mr. Norris has moved adjournment. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. This committee will stand adjourned now until 10 o'clock on December 9th. With that, thank you to everybody for your time here today.

[The committee adjourned at 08:47.]