

Access to jobs for Internationally-trained tradespeople

Dear Ana,

Currently I am taking ESL classes and working about 30 hours a week in something that is not my field, and I hope that soon I can work as an electrician. I have a diploma as an electrician and about 15 years of experience from my home country. I see openings in the trade and I have applied to some of these positions and I don't even get a response.

**Talking to my classmates, and some of them are in similar situation, I learned that in order to work as an electrician I have to get a license. I have spoken to my ESL teacher and she referred me to the apprenticeship office. People have told me all kinds of information, and now I don't know what to do or where to start and sometimes I feel like giving up. Can you please, give me simple and clear information as to what are the steps that I need to take so that I can get my license? Thank you very much.
Viktor K.**

Hi Viktor,

It is always good to talk to people in order to gather information and to find out as much as you can; however, it can sometimes be overwhelming and confusing. This is not an easy question, which means that there isn't an easy answer, but I will try to make it as simple and clear as possible. First, you need to go to the source, which means that you need to contact the Ministry of Education and Training, Colleges and Universities, the Apprenticeship Office. The Toronto District Office is at 625 Church Street, First Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 2B5 or call at General Inquiries at (416) 326-5800, Front Desk at (416) 326-5775 fax number is (416) 326-5799 and the web site is www.edu.gov.on.ca

Viktor, please remember that each country has its own system regarding trade regulations. In Ontario, you need to have a Certificate

of Qualification, sometimes referred to as a license, and it can be obtained at the Apprenticeship Office mentioned above.

Let me explain what an apprenticeship is. An apprenticeship is a hands-on training program for people who want to work in a skilled trade. An employer provides about ninety per cent of the apprenticeship training in the workplace. The remainder involves classroom instruction, which is usually given at a local community college, or provided through another approved training organization. As an electrician, there are three categories, and they are construction and maintenance, domestic and rural and industrial electrician. Each of them requires different hours of on-the-job training. Because you are a tradesperson, the licensing process may be slightly different, as you will have to provide the documentation necessary to support your qualifications as a tradesperson.

You have indicated that you have the academic background and work experience, so first contact the Apprenticeship Office and speak with a training consultant regarding your situation. Depending on your situation, you will be instructed as to what steps to take.

At this point, you may ask yourself, how do I apply for a Certificate of Qualification? As I mentioned above, to be employed in certain skilled trades, workers must have this certificate, which states that they have passed the provincial qualification exam that assesses their knowledge of their skilled trade.

You will need proof that you are experienced in a trade by bringing one of the following documents:

- 1. A letter from current or past employers, written on company letterhead, which gives the company name and address, exact dates of employment, number of hours worked, position, title and a complete description of job duties, or**
- 2. A letter from a union, on union letterhead, giving the same information, or**
- 3. Apprenticeship documents from another province or country specifying the duration of the apprenticeship, or**
- 4. If you cannot provide any of the above, a letter listing current and past employers, exact dates of employment, number of hours worked, position, title and a complete description of duties.**

This letter, called a Statutory Declaration or an Affidavit, is a sworn statement of fact. A lawyer, notary public or any other commissioner of oaths must sign it. Many legal aid and community agencies provide this service. Please remember that this documentation has to be provided in English. Some community services will translate these documents for a small fee; however, you can also access private services and the fees vary.

In your case, the process may be a little easier because you have the documentation to prove that you are an electrician.

Consultants evaluate the evidence in these documents to determine whether applicants are eligible to write the exam. If you are eligible and meet the Ontario standard, you will be granted a temporary licence through the Apprenticeship Office. This temporary licence will allow you to work as an assistant with a tradesperson while you prepare to write the exam. A tradesperson, or journeyman, is someone who has the licence to work in a particular trade. Community colleges offer courses in specific trades that will prepare you to write the exam.

Before you can write the provincial qualification exam, you must register at the Apprenticeship Office, and you will have to pay fees for certain services. There is a fee of \$100 to write the exam. To pass the exam you need a score of 70%, and on the day of the exam, you have to produce a picture ID such as driver's license, health card or passport and a valid SIN card.

Viktor, there is a lot more information that I could give, but I don't want to overwhelm you even more. For further details and specifics, please contact the Apprenticeship Office and speak with a training consultant. I strongly recommend that you visit the Ministry web site as it provides all the information you need.

I hope that this information is simple and clear and that it helps you to get started with your career planning, and let me know how thing turn out.

Good luck to you and take a look at additional resources provided in this issue of Learning Curves.

Ana.

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Source: Ministry of Education Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

For further research contact: www.training.com the Interactive Training Inventory, an information web site on training opportunities. www.possibilitiesproject.com tips on researching the education or training that is right for your needs.