

The SEALS OF Approval

For tradespeople wanting to reach their full potential, the Red, Blue and Gold Seal programs can take them all the way to the top.

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THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS bursting with leaders who are highly skilled in their trades. These leaders come in all shapes and sizes and have taken Alberta to the top of the construction industry. So what's the secret to Alberta's success? Two words: life-long learning. Education and training does not stop once you've become a journeyman, not in Alberta anyway. Furthering your knowledge in order to move up in the industry and lead a team on the field is becoming commonplace. More and more journeymen, foremen, superintendents and estimators are attaining recognition of their experience and education. Within Canada, three endorsement/certification programs exist to provide these present and future leaders with the skills they require. The Red, Blue and Gold Seal certification programs are gaining recognition in the industry and have become a benchmark for many construction workers to reach.

Alberta had 160,000 people working in the industry last summer. According to the Government of Alberta, Alberta is the world's fourth largest natural gas producer and the 18th largest producer of crude oil. The province supplies 65% of Canada's energy and has been a North American economic hot spot for 30 years. Alberta has nearly \$60 billion worth of major and mega-projects underway or being planned, \$40 billion of which are in the oil, gas, oilsands, chemical/petrochemical and related industries.

Though a myriad of factors are involved, Alberta's highly skilled tradespeople will play a major role in bringing these projects in, on time and on budget. While there have recently been

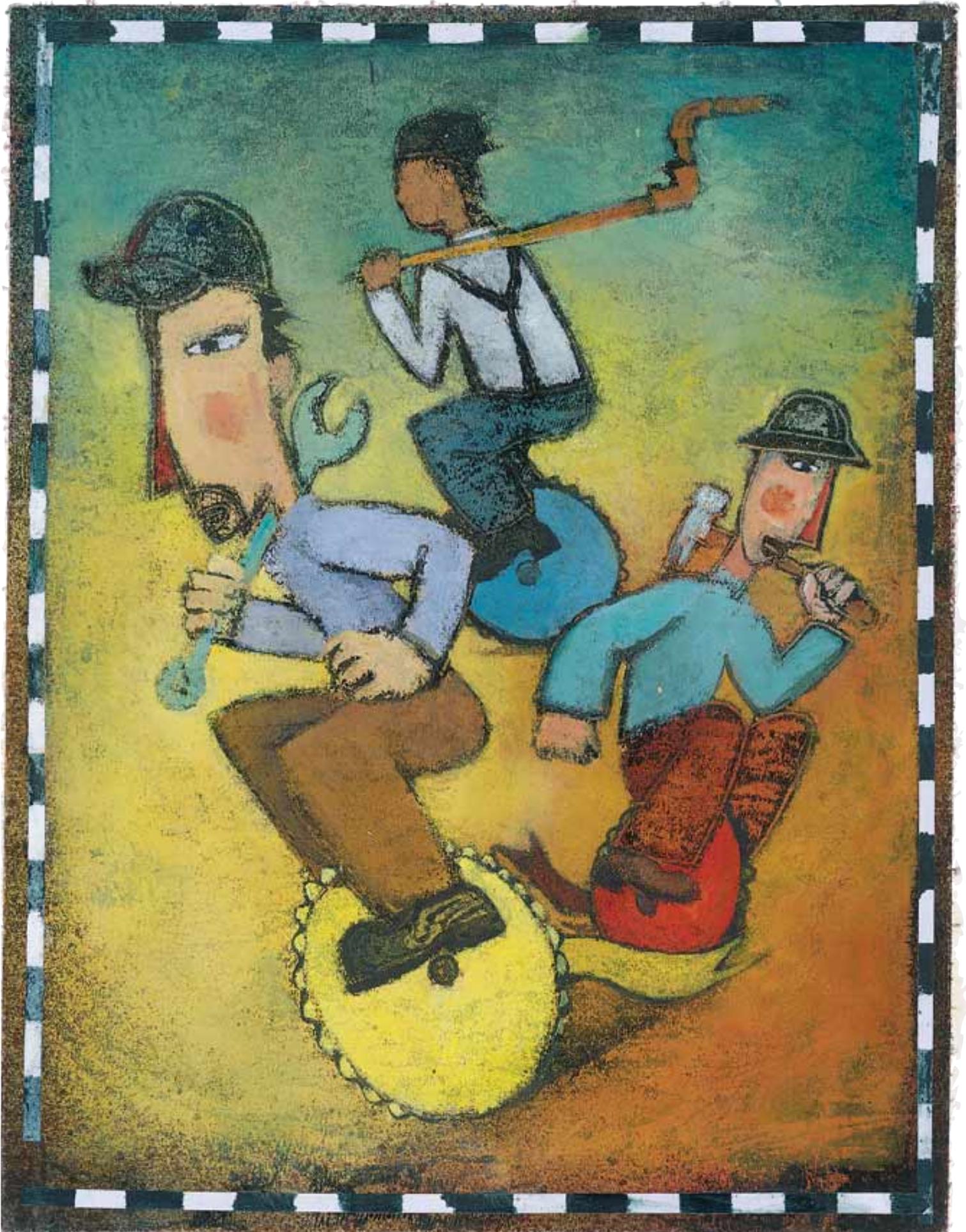
some setbacks, Alberta's construction workforce is second to none when it comes to being progressive and responsive to the demands of the industry. This results in solid growth and allows Albertans to shine as leaders in the industry.

Red Seal

THE INTERPROVINCIAL (Red Seal) program gives Albertans official recognition of their skills and the opportunity to use those skills in other provinces and internationally. Obtaining a Red Seal allows qualified tradespeople to practice in any province or territory in Canada where the trade is designated without having to write further examinations. The program is administered in each province and territory under the guidance of the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA).

"The CCDA has invested a great deal of energy in recent years improving the reliability of the Red Seal exams, standards setting, data collection and records management of the Red Seal program," says Shirley Dul, Executive Director, Apprenticeship and Industry Training, Alberta Learning. "With the improved records management, National Occupational Analysis and examinations, the Red Seal program will be able to provide more reliable information and increased credibility to industry."

The National Occupational Analysis is used as a base document for the development of inter-provincial standard examinations and provinces and territories are encouraged to use it for curriculum development. To date, there are 45 trades included in the Red Seal program on a national basis, including bricklayer, cook, ironworker,



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painter and many others. A complete list is available on the Red Seal website (www.red-seal.ca). Apprentices who have completed their training and are certified journeymen are able to obtain a Red Seal endorsement on their Certificates of Qualification and Apprenticeship by successfully completing an Interprovincial Standards Examination.

Many Alberta certified journeymen are highly sought after in other provinces because they possess a Red Seal.

"In Alberta, all completing apprentices in Red Seal trades are encouraged to achieve the Red Seal. The Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board encourages this practice, to ensure high participation rates and ready access to a supply of skilled workers by industry," says Dul.

Moving to another province is not unusual and the Red Seal designation allows any skilled worker flexibility and mobility, not to mention the assurance needed to gain employment in other parts of Canada. In addition, many countries recognize the qualifications of an Alberta certified tradesperson who has a Red Seal. By taking the time to earn this credential, these highly skilled tradespeople are increasing their chances of promotion, gaining more responsibility and enhancing the growth of their company.

Blue Seal

THE ACHIEVEMENT IN Business Competencies Program, also known as the Blue Seal program, was developed by the Alberta Appren-

ticeship and Industry Training Board to encourage the study of business practices by individuals who are certified in an Alberta-designated trade or occupation. Alberta's private sector has set the standards for training and certification in more than 50 trades and crafts, including carpenter, electrician, heavy equipment technician, machinist, plumber, roofer, welder and many others. All 50 recognized trades can be found listed on www.tradesecrets.org. Alberta currently has 35,000 registrants participating in an apprenticeship program.

The Blue Seal certification is awarded on completion of formal study of one or more established business topics such as supervision, administration, project management and labour relations. The areas of study are practical and meet the specific needs of the contractor.

"The principles of each of the business disciplines apply to most situations we encounter in our daily and our personal lives. Business learning provides a foundation that is qualitative, in the sense of thought processes, and quantitative, in respect to the application of learned strategies, tactics and actions," says Darren Hutton, Manager, IPS, with Apprenticeship and Industry Training.

Gaining the business perspective is highly sought after and many institutions in Alberta are offering the Blue Seal program to meet this demand. Options available to certified tradespeople seeking business training and a Blue Seal include the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) in Edmonton, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary and Athabasca University. Other business programs are being reviewed and recognized as the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board becomes aware of them.

The knowledge gained through the Blue Seal program is put into practice immediately upon leaving the classroom. "Employers recognize that knowledge acquired from such effort enhances the ability of employees to fulfill immediate and future responsibilities in a dynamic and competitive environment," says Hutton.

Gold Seal

BUT IT'S NOT JUST journeymen who take cer-



The Road to Success

Amongst the long list of daily responsibilities under which we all operate, it's not always easy to find the time to squeeze in further training. But the effort is worth it. By taking any of the three seal programs offered in the province, the tradesperson is well on his way to a long and meaningful career.

By heading to Merit's website, tradespeople can find more information on the Seal programs, their history, education and training and obtain contact information on each certification program.

Lonnie Merrill is the job supervisor at Armada Electrical Ltd in Edmonton. The 35-year-old has worked off and on there since he was 15 and in a full-time capacity for 10 years. Lonnie attended the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and is a certified journeyman electrician. He received his Red Seal Certification in 1991 and is taking courses through Merit Contractors Association that will count towards his Gold Seal certification. To date, he has taken the Supervisor Training Program (STP) as well as the Planning & Scheduling course and in the near future hopes to complete the Advanced Supervisor Training Program and the Risk Management course.

"I've taken these courses not only to help myself in my job capacity, but to help my fellow workers out as well. The skills I take from these training courses allow me to run a smoother business. We're more organized and we stay on time for work projects," says Merrill.

Merrill encourages anyone to take the courses offered at Merit whether they want to pursue Gold Seal certification or are simply looking to increase their skill set. "I found the courses extremely helpful and I would recommend them to anyone who's interested."

10 Useful Websites:

These sites give more detail about the Blue, Red and Gold Seal programs. They provide information on how and where tradesmen can get certified.

www.meritalberta.com

www.alis.gov.ab.ca

www.cca-acc.com/goldseal/index.htm

www.tradesecrets.org

www.red-seal.ca

www.skillscanada.com

http://realm.net/opportunityknocks

www.nait.ab.ca

www.sait.ab.ca

www.athabascau.ca

tification programs. Supervisors, project managers and superintendents are participating in the Gold Seal program to increase their knowledge and making themselves valuable business leaders at the job site. The CCA Gold Seal program is a national certification program for construction managers and estimators. Canada-wide, it is gaining in

popularity as more and more industry leaders learn the value of the Gold Seal.

“The continuing success of the Gold Seal certification program confirms the association’s underlying belief that there is a significant desire in the management ranks to raise the professional image of the industry, says Dennis Ryan, Project Manager for the

Gold Seal certification program. “Having construction management skills in estimating and project supervision and management recognized on a national basis is an important step.”

Achieving certification is based on education, experience and the ability to satisfy the rigorous standards of the program and could mean successful completion of a Gold Seal exam. Just as the Red Seal allows greater mobility, the Gold Seal also enhances the mobility and professional development of construction managers.

The Construction Management Institute, of which CCA is a founding member, originally created the Gold Seal initiative. The program was primarily designed to advance the demand and supply of construction management educational courses. The value of obtaining the Gold Seal certificate is obvious to the individual and the contractor. Equally important, for the buyer of construction services, it provides the assurance they need that the job will be done properly and professionally.

“In a competitive industry such as construction where the ease of entry permits wide fluctuations in construction capability and quality, the Gold Seal certificate is regarded by building professionals as an important tool in distinguishing skills and competencies,” says Ryan.

According to the CCA, there have been more than 5,500 individuals certified under the Gold Seal program. Many more have started by taking courses that are accredited towards a Gold Seal certificate. In Alberta, open shop contractors have the opportunity to take Gold Seal accredited courses directly through Merit Contractors Association. Merit offers courses in the Supervisory Training Program as well as the Advanced Supervisory Training Program that are part of the Gold Seal Program. Some of the topics include: Effective Communication, Negotiating Skills, Productivity and Quality, Coaching Skills, Labour Law and Conflict Management. Other courses that Merit provides for Gold Seal credits include: Risk Management and Planning & Scheduling. The complete list as well as the date and times the courses are offered is available on Merit’s website at www.meritalberta.com. 

What employers need to know about Alberta’s new workplace safety rules.

Alberta is taking action to ensure all workplaces are safe. Our latest step is the adoption of a new *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code*. The new Code will make workplace safety rules more responsive and help to reduce workplace injuries.

As an employer, it is your responsibility to ensure that your company is in compliance by **April 30, 2004**.

Failure to comply can result in fines up to \$500,000 and a six-month imprisonment.

To obtain your copy of the new OHS Code for \$64.95 + GST, contact the Queen’s Printer:

- online at www.gov.ab.ca/qp
- by faxing toll-free at 310-0000, then dialing (780) 452-0668
- by phoning toll-free at 310-0000, then dialing (780) 427-4952

Alberta