

# 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Industry Meeting and Awards Breakfast

## Modernization in Action

### Summary Report

November 2, 2023



## Annual Industry Meeting

Each year, the Apprenticeship Board facilitates an industry meeting in accordance with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency's (NSAA) Operating Charter. The Annual Industry Meeting (AIM) provides an opportunity for employer and industry associations, union organizations, equity-deserving groups, and education and training partners to have meaningful discussions and hear diverse perspectives on ways to improve the apprenticeship and trades training system in Nova Scotia.

The central theme for the 2023 Annual Industry Meeting and Awards Breakfast was Modernization in Action, underscoring the importance of cultivating an innovative

apprenticeship training and certification system that meets the evolving needs of the province's growing economy. A spotlight was placed on government's recent announcement to invest in the skilled trades through actions aimed at expediting the advancement and modernization of the apprenticeship and trades qualification system.

During the AIM, the Apprenticeship Awards of Excellence were presented, the NSAA CEO presented an overview of the Agency's 2022-23 year in review, and a facilitated group session focused on industry's role in achieving a modern apprenticeship system.





## Apprenticeship Awards of Excellence

The **Apprenticeship Ally Award of Excellence** recognizes the valuable contributions made to increase equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in the apprenticeship system.

Joy St. Germain was the successful recipient of the Apprenticeship Ally Award of Excellence. Joy was nominated by Stephane LeBlanc, Marine Superintendent at A.F. Theriault & Son Ltd. Joy is a certified Boatbuilder and is employed by A.F. Theriault & Son Ltd. as Fiberglass Supervisor. Joy was the first woman to become a supervisor and is a role model for women in the workplace. Joy has encouraged equity, diversity and inclusion with mentoring and integrating international employees and others into the workplace. Congratulations Joy!

The **Apprenticeship Award of Excellence** recognizes the valuable contributions made to encourage apprentices through their journey to certification.

Mathias Probst was the successful recipient of the Apprenticeship Award of Excellence. Mathias was nominated by Darlene Grant Fiander, President of the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia. Mathias is a certified Red Seal Cook who has also achieved the Atlantic Trades Business Seal. Mathias is the Executive Chef at The Carleton and has demonstrated outstanding leadership in mentoring new Chefs. Chef Mathias takes an innovative approach to mentoring and establishes standards that appeal to new apprentices, resulting in higher retention rates in the workplace. Chef Mathias is an immigrant to Canada who has a unique perspective on the value and richness of a diverse workforce and believes in the potential of any apprentice that wants to achieve success. Chef Mathias has been an outstanding ambassador for the *Serve It Up!* Culinary Program and brings a fresh perspective around youth engagement. Congratulations Mathias!



(L-R) Trent Sohlt, Apprenticeship Board Chair; Joy St. Germain; Nicole Johnson-Morrison, ADM; Michelle Bussey, NSAA CEO



(L-R) Trent Sohlt, Apprenticeship Board Chair; Mathias Probst; Nicole Johnson-Morrison, ADM; Michelle Bussey, NSAA CEO



## Modernization – Actions to accelerate the growth of skilled trades in Nova Scotia

Michelle Bussey was appointed in July 2023 as the new Chief Executive Officer with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency. Based on the October 19, 2023, announcement of an investment of \$100M over three years by the provincial government, the CEO gave an overview of Modernization and outlined the actions of the Agency to:

- make it easier to enter the skilled trades.
- provide supports for people entering the skilled trades.
- have the highest completion rates in the country.
- increase the skilled trades workforce by building capacity.
- accelerate skilled trades training.
- change the way we connect and respond to industry.
- become the skilled trades leader in Canada.

To seek insights from industry and apprenticeship partners about their role in achieving a modernized apprenticeship system, Lisa Frizzell, Senior Education Strategist at NSAA, followed the CEO presentation with a facilitated group session. Dialogue and discussion focused on the themes of: 1) Retention, 2) Industry Engagement, and 3) Enhancements.

### RETENTION

The first discussion theme focused on supports for retention. Participants were encouraged to identify their role in providing supports to apprentices to foster a positive learning experience throughout their apprenticeship journey, leading to the achievement of trade certification.

The following categories reflect the discussions on supports for retention and highlight various strategies and considerations that employers, community partners and training providers could implement to help enhance apprentice retention and success:

- **Learning and Training:** offering apprenticeship onboarding and orientation, providing a better scope of trade to support increased pass rates, incorporating different ways of learning at the workplace and in technical training, and offering an online suite of trade-specific practice exams.

- **Mentorship and Support:** incorporating dedicated workplace mentors, encouraging mentoring as part of the workplace, and identifying and addressing personal challenges.
- **Communication:** establishing ongoing check-ins with apprentices and journeypersons, providing clear information regarding incentives and supports, and using inclusive language.
- **Technical Training Support:** addressing exam anxiety and offering pre-exam sessions and accommodations.
- **Collaboration and Engagement:** working closely with Industry Training Consultants, collaborating with sector councils and community organizations, and offering teambuilding opportunities at the workplace.
- **Financial Considerations:** employers offering competitive wages, compensating journeypersons for mentoring, and offering support for continuous education.
- **Welcoming Workplaces:** modeling inclusive behaviour from the top down, offering cultural awareness and welcoming workplace training, acknowledgement of cultural practices, and ensuring building facilities are accommodating for all workers.



## INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

Participants were encouraged to identify ways of engagement that would work for small, medium and large employers. The following actions were put forward to assist NSAA in fostering greater collaboration and buy-in from employers, employees and training providers:

- **Strengthening Industry Connections:** setting up meetings with education partners, holding monthly meetings for better connection, offering flexibility to small and large businesses, and offering rural services that address unique needs.
- **Enhanced Communications and Collaboration:** fostering two-way communication, having more frequent worksite visits by Industry Training Consultants (ITC), instructors meeting with employers directly, and providing clear, informative, and user-friendly online information.
- **Communication Channels:** holding early morning meetings, increasing social media presence, using surveys and apps for engaging apprentices with industry, and offering opportunities for virtual calls with ITCs.
- **Technical Integration for Connectivity:** creating a portal for employers to access apprenticeship information and connect with NSAA, creating an alumni page and database for certified trades professionals, creating a database of mentors, and sharing best practices.
- **Engagement Initiatives:** hosting quarterly, after hours virtual sessions, establishing sector committees and employee groups, and hosting lunch and learn sessions.

## ENHANCED ACTIONS

The third theme of discussion focused on how the actions announced to grow the skilled trades in Nova Scotia could be enhanced and the role industry could play in their implementation. Participants stressed the importance of NSAA clearly defining the span of control, as this will be needed to encourage effective management and leadership of the actions identified, and recommended assessing the implemented changes after one or two years, advocating for the collection and analysis of data to measure their effectiveness.



In terms of communication strategies, participants proposed the establishment of a dedicated communication channel to keep employers informed about modernization efforts, including actions taken, results achieved, and detailed procedural information. Participants emphasized the need for a clear point of contact for addressing questions and suggested the need for continuous conversations as the actions are further developed and implemented.

When asked how they could contribute to enhancing and implementing the presented actions, active participation was emphasized, with participants expressing a commitment to providing input, guidance, and dedicating time to ensure meaningful engagement in the process.

In conclusion, the facilitated discussion hosted by NSAA proved to be a dynamic forum that brought together employer and industry associations, union organizations, equity-deserving groups and training partners. The collaborative atmosphere during the discussions allowed participants to share valuable insights, innovative ideas, and best practices, while using a solutions-focused approach.

## Event Evaluation

There were 114 participants, consisting of industry and equity partners, training providers and NSAA staff, who attended the Annual Industry Meeting. An electronic survey was conducted to gather feedback and 33 participants responded. The overall feedback of the event was extremely positive, and everyone agreed that it was well organized and executed. The participants enjoyed the opportunity to network and had engaging round table discussions during the interactive facilitated session. The significant takeaways for the participants were networking and collaboration, and the new funding supports.





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