



**A Canadian New Deal  
For COVID-19 Recovery**

**Presented by  
Canada's Building Trades Unions**

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**72 Chamberlain, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 1V9**

**Canada's Building Trades Unions' is composed of the following International Craft Unions:**

International Association of Heat and Frost **Insulators** and Allied Workers/Association internationale des poseurs d'isolants

International Brotherhood of **Boilermakers**, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers /Fraternité internationale des chaudronniers, constructeurs de navire en fer, forgerons, forgeurs et aides

International Union of **Bricklayers** and Allied Craftworkers /Union internationale des briqueteurs et métiers connexes

United Brotherhood of **Carpenters** and Joiners of America/Fraternité unie des charpentiers et menuisiers d'Amérique

International Brotherhood of **Electrical Workers** / Fraternité internationale des ouvriers en électricité

International Union of **Elevator Constructors** /Union internationale des constructeurs d'ascenseurs

International Union of **Operating Engineers** / Union internationale des opérateurs-ingénieurs

International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing **Iron Workers**/ Association internationale des travailleurs en ponts, en fer structural, ornemental et renforcement ferrailleurs

**Labourers'** International Union of North America / Union internationale des journaliers d'Amérique du Nord

International Union of **Painters** and Allied Trades/ Fraternité internationale des peintres et métiers connexes

Operative **Plasterers'** and Cement Masons' International Association of the United States and Canada Association internationale des ouvriers plâtriers, cimentiers applicateurs et tireurs de joints

**Sheet Metal**, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers / Association internationale des travailleurs du métal en feuilles

International Brotherhood of **Teamsters**, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers of America / Fraternité international d'Amériques des camionneurs, chauffeurs, préposés d'entrepôts et aides

United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the **Plumbing** and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada / Association unie des compagnons et apprentis de l'industrie de la plomberie et de la tuyauterie des États-Unis et du Canada

## FIVE PILLARS OF A CANADIAN NEW DEAL

Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU) represents all the International Unions that have jurisdiction in the construction, maintenance and fabrication portions of Canada's construction industry. Our members work in every Canadian province and territory, and every Canadian city, town and village. Our more than 500,000 highly skilled, highly trained members are employed constructing everything from a utility box through to the largest structures in Canada. Our members construct and shape the skylines of Canada—we are the men and women that build roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, pipelines, power plants, solar and wind farms, and so much more. We are part of an industry that impacts over 14% of Canada's GDP. As Canada's middle class, our hard-working members are the drivers of the country's economy.

Canada is facing unprecedented health, social and economic challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. CBTU is committed to continue working on building the critical infrastructure necessary to keep Canadians healthy and the Canadian economy strong as our nation weathers this crisis. We believe the upkeep, maintenance, and construction of critical infrastructure must continue and grow to face the increasing demands of Canadians and Canadian businesses. We recognize the urgency for municipalities in building and maintaining facilities and infrastructure, such as hospitals, roads, pipelines, and power generation, which are nearing or could near capacity as Canada adjusts to the changes taken during this crisis and prepares for the future.

In order to maintain the ever-increasing and important demand for critical infrastructure, and to ensure Canada's economy can recover quickly in a way that is successful, this paper outlines what we believe are the five key priorities – or pillars – for Canada and its construction sector as the country moves forward:

1. **Pillar One: Building a Stronger Canada.** Canada has the opportunity to utilize our highly skilled and trained workforce to help grow and build an even stronger Canada as the country works to recover from the COVID-19 crisis. This can be achieved with an emphasis on large shovel ready projects, and by focusing on projects that employ lots of different skill sets.
2. **Pillar Two: Ensuring Community Benefits.** Canada must ensure that projects benefit local communities, marginalized groups and apprentices and all Canadians by adopting Community Benefits Agreements on federally-funded infrastructure projects. The federal government is in the unique position to lead on this matter to ensure all Canadians benefit from these projects.

3. **Pillar Three: Training Canada's Future Workforce.** Canada must meet the growing demand for labour by providing support and assistance to the institutions and projects that Canadian apprentices rely on for their apprenticeships, in the classroom and on the job.
4. **Pillar Four: Investing in Critical Infrastructure.** With a prepared shovel-ready list of projects, Canada has the opportunity to invest in the essential infrastructure that keeps Canada, Canadians and our economy functioning and productive, and our nation strong and prosperous.
5. **Pillar Five: Raising the Bar on Health and Safety.** Canada must keep Canadian tradespeople and all Canadian communities safe, as we continue to promote and raise the bar on safer workplaces now and into the future.

With these measures in place, we can succeed and bring about a new deal for Canada built on investments in infrastructure and training with a commitment to our health and safety and support for our communities.

## **PILLAR ONE: BUILDING A STRONGER CANADA**

As mentioned, the overall construction industry in Canada represents over 14% of the country's GDP which translates to nearly \$300 billion in the construction sector in Canada. Nearly 8% or 1 in every 13 Canadians work directly in Canada's construction sector. Our members – Canadian tradespeople – are vital to the building and maintaining of Canadian infrastructure. In order to keep up with the ever increasing and important demand for critical infrastructure, and to ensure Canada's economy can recover following the end of the COVID-19 crisis, our highly trained and skilled tradespeople must be utilized to construct and maintain infrastructure while keeping health and safety at the forefront.

Our members are hardworking skilled tradespeople who add much to the building and maintenance of the country and who are the backbone of the middle class. Canadian tradespeople have dedicated their careers to work in the trades and provide for their families and their communities. They are the highly skilled, highly trained men and women who are relied upon when disasters strike to support first responders in rescue, cleanup, and rebuilding. When we build and maintain Canada's infrastructure, we build it right, build it safe, and build to last.

Canada has the opportunity to set a new vision for building a stronger, better and safer country. The federal government must look beyond the list of projects in Infrastructure Canada's Funding

Programs (ICFP), although these projects should continue to be funded. The Government of Canada's vision must be tied to the development and construction of large projects that are shovel ready. Large scale projects employ the greatest number of tradespeople from a variety of fields, providing an avenue for workers within the trades to utilize and further develop their skills and training.

These larger projects allow for the training of apprentices and improvements to communities through indirect and direct benefits. The boost local communities receive from large scale projects helps them to become resilient and less vulnerable to crises, in the present and in the future. Workers benefit from gaining lifelong skills that they may not achieve working quick, small jobs that fail to challenge their capabilities. If Canada is to grow and prosper out of this current crisis, it must think big.

The federal government can take a leadership role in ensuring that large scale projects are built, and that they are built right, especially if the government is committing significant funding to those projects. Provinces will find it hard to reject projects that benefit Canadians and give back to the communities within the province that would otherwise depend upon the province to support them, especially if the government also funds ICFP projects. By taking the lead on building a stronger Canada through investing in major projects and community benefits, the federal government can instill its own rules and ensure that projects meet and exceed the demands placed upon them.

It is our highly trained and skilled men and women who guarantee that projects meet and exceed any and all health and safety standards and protocols, and are built on time and on budget. Canada has the opportunity to utilize our skilled workforce to help grow and build an even stronger Canada as the country works to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **PILLAR TWO: ENSURING COMMUNITY BENEFITS**

With this bold vision from Pillar One, Canada has the opportunity to embody progressive practices in the engagement of local communities, marginalized groups, and those impacted by infrastructure projects in the building, maintenance, and monitoring of those projects. We recognize that, when local communities have a role in the planning and building of a project, they are more invested in it and more likely to realize its positive "nation building" benefits. This is why we support and champion Community Benefits Agreements, and advocate for their inclusion on projects.

Community Benefits Agreements support the hiring and training of local workers and underrepresented groups, including women and Indigenous peoples. They often contain provisions that enable apprenticeships, guarantee prevailing wages, establish grounds for workplace development initiatives, provide funding and economic support for impacted communities, and set forth goals for minority, women, and local job hiring. These workers benefit with a legacy of experience, skills training and employability as a result of the use of such agreements.

For the project, Community Benefits Agreements ensure that they are built on time, but also with careful consideration of standards – including environmental, labour, and safety standards – which may be overlooked by projects that do not have an agreement. They go above and beyond just compliance to standards; they encourage and often require standards to be exceeded. These factors are critical for projects that are in the national interest; ensuring that projects meet and exceed the expectations placed upon them at approval reinforces the public trust that the project is beneficial and worth doing. Projects that suffer from delays, and/or which lack careful consideration of standards often get plagued in controversy, and end up under constant review and reconsideration.

For the workforce, Community Benefits Agreements provide safeguards for employment and financial stability; they reduce problems that may arise out of the workplace: issues with working conditions, underpayment, and disputes. For the worker, they set out their benefits, and make their employment conditions clear prior to employment. Additionally, they include provisions that encourage and enhance local hires and the participation of underrepresented groups in the construction industry: Indigenous people, women, new Canadians, and young people.

By mandating the involvement of these groups, Community Benefits Agreements provide an avenue for their advancement, usually through required recruitment, apprenticeship and training programs. For instance, the agreement for Enbridge Line 3's replacement pipeline provided for the inclusion of local First Nations workers on the project. These workers received training that has allowed them to find meaningful employment on other construction projects, as well. Such agreements ensure that projects meet and often exceed the social, economic, and environmental demands placed on them, which is vital to any plan for Canada's post-pandemic economic recovery.

Public opinion on Community Benefits Agreements is high across the country. According to a survey conducted by Earncliffe, women, young people, Canadians within the middle class, and progressive voters all view these agreements very favourably. If the federal government is to be a majority investor or sole investor in certain infrastructure projects, insisting on Community

Benefits Agreements as a way of achieving the government's goals and ensuring that the projects are built on time and on budget with the most highly trained and skilled workforce is preferable. Infrastructure projects must have a meaningful impact on society, and these agreements are the way to leave a positive legacy for Canadians.

## **PILLAR THREE: TRAINING CANADA'S FUTURE WORKFORCE**

Although our industry has been a leading source of employment growth in Canada for more than a decade, there is a need to recruit and train more workers to meet future demand. This demand is exacerbated by the growing rate of retirement for workers – between now and 2029 at least 21% of all current workers will retire. The ability to fill this gap and meet demands depends on the availability of workers with portable experience, skills and qualifications in their trades.

A commitment towards a post-economic recovery for Canada hinges on the continued training and hiring of workers. Our skilled tradespeople are second-to-none in their field, but the growth of Canada's workforce depends upon continued investments in training workers, and a focus on providing support and assistance to the institutions and projects that Canadian tradespeople rely on for their learning, in the classroom and on the job. The infrastructure for providing training exists in Canada – through the many training centres provided by our affiliates – but without ongoing support by government and employers our industry suffers. Historically, the larger the construction project the more opportunities for apprentices to learn their crafts and obtain the hours to become journeypersons.

COVID-19 has placed additional constraints on training; with many schools including training centres currently closed nationwide, and projects being slowed or halted, fewer tradespeople have the opportunity to develop and enhance their skills. Training is our priority and must be a priority for Canada's future; Canada's workforce and the success of its economy depend on it. Training can be done safely, in classrooms and on jobsites, with proper COVID-19 health procedures in place. It is only a matter of will, not capability, that leads to the choice not to pursue measures that support the continued training of the next generation of Canadian tradespeople.

A focus on apprenticeships is key to training Canada's future workforce. Apprenticeship training combines on-the-job training with theoretical and practical technical training. The apprentice spends most of their time learning the knowledge and skills of the trade on the job, while earning a wage. Apprenticeship matters to all of society because this is the process by which skills and expertise are passed on from one generation of journeypersons to another.

Ensuring that new generations of workers are trained as journeypersons is a joint responsibility between employers, government and trade unions. Skilled trades form the basis of all work undertaken in society. Every building, house, school, hospital, or factory—and the equipment inside—must be made by skilled workers who should have the highest level of expertise to ensure public safety and quality products. Because the skills and expertise of an authentic trade can be put to use almost anywhere, journeypersons can work almost everywhere—even during the ups and downs of economic cycles, such as the crisis we are currently facing due to COVID-19.

## **PILLAR FOUR: INVESTING IN CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

From coast to coast to coast, Canadian tradespeople build and maintain the critical infrastructure that provides for the health and safety of Canadians, supplies and distributes our natural resources, and ensures that supply lines continue to provide essential services. This essential infrastructure keeps Canada and Canadians functioning and productive.

Critical infrastructure includes the hospitals, mines, hydro dams, pipelines, transmission lines, and more, that help service Canadians, both during this crisis and after it. It includes green infrastructure, through nuclear power plants, as well as solar and wind farms and so much more, which provide much needed energy while also fighting climate change.

As more Canadians work from home and rely on utilities to service their homes, energy infrastructure must be maintained and capacity must grow. At a time when Canada is made vulnerable as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's crucial that our power grid remains safe and can meet increasing demand, now and after the pandemic is over.

Canada's supply chains service Canadians as they weather through the COVID-19 pandemic. Transport infrastructure and networks – our roads, highways, bridges, ports, railways, public transit and distribution centers – all provide the means for essential goods and services to reach Canadians. Without this critical transport infrastructure, our supply lines in Canada would come to a halt. As Canada looks to economically recover from COVID-19, there is an opportunity for the federal government to take a leadership role in investing and securing Canada's critical infrastructure, and this current situation shows the urgent need to maintain and build this critical infrastructure.

It is important, too, to consider assistance for cities and municipalities across the country that are struggling with infrastructure deficits. Much of Canada's critical infrastructure lies within the cities and municipalities where Canadians live and work. Whether it is through an existing program or through a new program, the federal government must take all steps necessary to



provide flexibility for cities and municipalities that need additional help to support much needed critical infrastructure for their communities. At present, existing rules also do not provide enough relief for cities seeking assistance as a result of unexpected disruptions and setbacks on their projects. With the federal government's support, Canada's cities, towns and villages will be able to overcome their infrastructure deficits and do their part to help Canada recover from this crisis.

The construction and maintenance of critical infrastructure should not just be done to meet the needs of the present COVID-19 pandemic, but must also recognize the need to "future proof" the fundamental facilities and systems we rely on. Canada has the opportunity to ensure that as the country moves forward and grows once this crisis ends, we will be able to adapt to any similar challenge in the years ahead. Canadian tradespeople are the linchpin to all of this work. Our members are committed to build the critical infrastructure Canada needs, and to do so with the most capable workforce in Canada and with proper enforcement of health and safety protocols.

## **PILLAR FIVE: RAISING THE BAR ON HEALTH & SAFETY**

As Canada manages through the COVID-19 crisis, and prepares for its post-pandemic future, we need to keep Canadian tradespeople working in an environment where it is safe according to guidance from applicable government and health authorities. Our tradespeople must be assured that they and their families will be protected if they choose to work on construction projects during this time and as Canada recovers from this crisis. They are trained to handle situations that require the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and in environments working with hazardous waste and other materials. Canadian tradespeople uphold best practices in workplace hygiene and safety. Thereby, protecting all Canadians in general.

Our best practices are guided by health professionals and our expert knowledge of our industry. We work with employers to ensure that procedures are in place, and that they adhere to appropriate health protocols. We strongly believe in the requirement of proper plans and procedures for each jobsite. We have been at the forefront of pushing for stronger health and safety policies when new hazards present themselves on the job, and we are taking the steps to do the same to protect our members and the public from COVID-19, our most recent workplace hazard. The health and safety of Canadian tradespeople must be paramount: on the job, at home, and if sick and requiring their entitlements through workers' compensation insurance and other measures.

Additionally, we believe it would be proactive to priority test all workers performing essential services, including workers in the trades. When testing resources become more widely available, testing workers in all essential services would prevent infections and limit the spread of COVID-

19; this would more fully allow these essential workers to be available and productive. Our affiliate unions are well placed to offer resources such as union halls to conduct such testing and staff to assist in the testing process.

CBTU takes seriously public health and the need to take steps to stop the continued spread of COVID-19. We recognize that a post-pandemic Canadian world will require constant vigilance and strict adherence to health and safety standards. Upholding health and safety on worksites is our duty, and as Canadian tradespeople we are acutely aware of the consequences of a lack of proper health and safety measures on jobsites and what it can mean for Canadian workers and the public.

We have championed in the past measures to enhance and protect workers and the public on jobsites, and for us the need to do so in light of this pandemic is no different. We believe that with proper health and safety plans and procedures, Canadian tradespeople can build and maintain the vital infrastructure Canada needs during this crisis and following it. Above all, we must keep Canadian tradespeople and communities safe, as we continue to promote and raise the bar on safer workplaces now and into the future.

## **CONCLUSION**

COVID-19 will not be the last challenge that Canada faces, and so the country must be prepared and ready when that time comes again. Continued investments in critical infrastructure are necessary if Canada is to grow its economy and keep its people – and our members – safe, healthy and prosperous.

CBTU is committed to partner with provincial and federal governments, as well as employers and industry stakeholders to ensure that Canada builds the critical infrastructure it needs to recover and grow from this crisis. As part of that goal, we've attached a list of shovel-ready projects that can serve the needs of boosting Canada's post-economic recovery through investments in infrastructure, both in the short-term and in the long-term.

It is not enough for Canada to focus only on short-term goals without consideration of long-term gains; infrastructure should not just serve the immediate needs of Canadians in the present, but must serve as the economic catalyst the country needs for its future. An investment in major projects, which supports tradespeople and communities, must be the direction Canada takes as we move forward to restore the economy and build a better, stronger Canada for all Canadians.