



## RESOURCE TRAINING ORGANIZATION

### IE Review

Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010 10:00 AM-3:00 PM (PST)  
Coast Airport Hotel, Vancouver

### Minutes

<b>Present:</b>	Steve Birch	Brian Shale	Ed Jarvis
	Bob Hughf	Ted Martin	Robert Scales
	Bob Kapphahn	Kyle Muir	Tom Newell
	Mark Valenta	Bruce Reeds	Kevin Szol
	Brendan Singbeil	Colin Wong	Larry Doskoch
	Doug MacLaren	Doug Davidson	Lee Middleton
	Jim Light	Jim Barazzuol	Marc Desmond
	Peter Poeschek	Terry Scott	Rob Thompson
	Luciano Dalla Lana	Mark Merlo	Richard Bryson

#### 1. Welcome

We have brought everyone together to the review where the IE program came from, where it is today and where it is headed. How do we measure up to the original tenants? Are they still important and if so, are they achievable? There are huge costs associated with this program so industry wants to make sure the training the apprentices are receiving is excellent.

Introductions were completed.

#### 2. History of the Industrial Electrician (IE) Apprenticeship Program (Larry Doskoch)

Larry went through a powerpoint presentation that highlighted the history of the Industrial Electrician program from its conception in 2003 to its implementation in fall of 2007.

#### 3. Costs associated with the IE Program (Doug MacLaren)

Since 2005, approximately \$1.5 million dollars of taxpayers' money has been spent on developing and maintaining the IE program. This figure does not take into consideration the many hours contributed by industry and training providers. Industry contribution is estimated to be between \$3-4 million. TRU developed the curriculum for the IE program at their own cost and have generously shared it with training providers such as College of the Rockies and North Island College.

Training providers are reimbursed between \$30-40,000 per IE intake.

The figures from ITA show that there are currently 151 IE apprentices registered in the system. In reality, the number is probably closer to 120 active IE apprentices in the system. As it stands right now, the program is not attracting the numbers it requires to remain viable. It is estimated that it would require approximately 100 apprentices registering each year to keep the program vibrant. There is currently one apprentice registered for 2010 and the year before there were 26.

The number of people attending the assessor courses has diminished as well, with only 4 people attending the last course.

With cuts to the RTO budget, we are going to have to look at ways to make this trade more attractive to apprentices and industry and find a way to fill the seats. If we are not able to do this it would be very difficult to justify continuing to spend over 10% of the RTO's entire budget on this one trade.

To ensure the survival of the IE trade we will have to consider some cost recovery options, examine the possibility of making the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years of the IE program common with the CE program, and find a way to get the unions and some major employers, like DND, BC Hydro and BC Ferries, to embrace the trade.

It is essential that we create an industry working group to look into and fix this problem and it has to be done this fiscal year.

#### **4. Implementation of the IE Program – fall 2007**

The industrial electrician program was implemented in the fall of 2007 with Level 1 classes facilitated at North Island College and Thompson Rivers University.

The first assessor course was conducted In Prince George.

#### **5. Highlights of the IE Program, fall 2007 to present**

- i) Transfer of Construction Electrician (CE) apprentices to the IE program

As the program stands right now the first two years of the CE and IE program are similar, though not identical, from a theory point of view. CE is currently the biggest trade in BC with approximately 5000 apprentices registered. At present, we allow 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year CE apprentices to transfer directly into the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the IE program. The original intent was only to allow this transfer from CE to IE to occur for the first 3 to 4 years to get the system rolling. The idea was that the door would be closed on this option once all the IE apprentices had moved through the 4 year program. This does not seem to match with reality as students are being told to go to their local colleges for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year CE and then transfer to IE after their second year.

While they are similar, they are not currently the same program, so those students transferring into 3<sup>rd</sup> year IE from 2<sup>nd</sup> year CE are missing the code instruction that is being taught in 2<sup>nd</sup> year IE.

One solution might be to require a mandatory challenge of all theoretical content for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year for those transferring in from CE. Another solution would be to merge the CE and IE programs into a common 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year at which point they

choose which stream they wish to follow. In Nova Scotia, the IE numbers went up a lot when they switched to this system. HITAC said that there was recognition during the development process that there could be alignment between the CE and IE programs but at that point it was a timing issue so they went ahead with the separate IE stream.

ii) RTO Website

The RTO website is up and running and we have recently completed a youth oriented website called Tradesrock.com. Apprentices can download both the IE logbook and the IE HR toolkit from the RTO website and link directly to ITA program information. The youth website has testimonials from Industrial Electricians, lifestyle information, industry information etc.

iii) The Human Resources Tool Kit

This guide provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the HR department, Apprentices, Assessor and Supervisor. RTO does not currently have the resources to do a face to face session with each employer and their apprentices so this toolkit is a resource that can help clarify the process for those stakeholders involved in the development of an IE apprentice.

iv) Industrial Electrician Blog on the RTO website

One of the recommendations brought up by HITAC was that there should be a website portal for Certified Assessors to develop networking, promote best practices and standards, and share general information and concerns. Such a thing does already exist in the form of a blog on the RTO website. Our challenge now will be to get that information out there and get the assessors to start using it on a regular basis.

v) Cost Recovery Pilots

a. Independent Workplace Assessor (IWA)

RTO are currently working on developing Independent Workplace Assessors for the review of IE apprentices who do not have access to Assessors within their sponsor company. Per diem and travel costs are paid by the employer.

There are currently two IWAs and a pilot has been completed with Celgar. The pilot was not successful as scheduling was a logistical nightmare. For this to work there needs to be a high level of structure and the employer has to ensure that the apprentice is not expected to perform his/her operational responsibilities on the day of his/her assessment.

The IWA has to be a highly skilled individual. There also has to be a high level of involvement from the supervisor and journeyman assigned to that apprentice.

b. Assessor courses delivered on site

As mentioned, attendance at assessor training courses is dropping. It is becoming far too expensive to run a two day course for 4 people. One option that RTO is looking at is doing assessor courses on site and charging the employer for the trainer's time and travel expenses. RTO has already run a couple of courses on site and the feedback he received seemed positive.

Another option would be to run assessor courses online but some people feel that what is currently provided is not enough when you consider that, in most

cases, you are teaching someone who has never instructed or marked and trying to turn them into an assessor in two days. Those in this school of thought would like to see a 2<sup>nd</sup> level assessor course added which would focus on coaching and mentoring the apprentice. It was mentioned that the OLA (Open Learning Agency) used to offer a program called Coaching and Mentoring Apprentices so there are probably good resources out there that would just need to be resurrected and tweaked.

We also have to ensure that assessors are clear on what the parameters are for signing someone off on their competencies. It would also be great if an assessor was able to provide a training outline to the supervisor and act as a connect between the journeyman and the apprentice.

## 6. Ideas for going forward

### i) Logbook changes

The general consensus seemed to be that the logbook was very intimidating for apprentices. Apprentices seem to be at their wit's end as to how to get through the logbook.

Lee Middleton said that there is significant room for streamlining the log book so that it becomes a facilitator for learning instead of a roadblock. New Zealand's version of the logbook does not have the technical complexity of our logbook and it would not meet the needs of industry.

It was recommended that a logbook review committee be set up to determine whether it needs to be completely reworked or tweaked. HITAC suggested that the committee be comprised of Certified Assessors from around the province. The idea would be to reduce redundant material and look at developing a checklist format as opposed to the diary format it is currently in.

Another suggestion was that better trained assessors would be able to coach apprentices through the log book.

Finally, there was some discussion as to whether, using the MAP system, there was a way to develop an IE without going through the log book.

### ii) Time constraints for apprentices and assessors

It was felt that the IE program was built for somewhat 'super' apprentices who were self-motivated self-starters with a strong work ethic. The reality is that this is not always the case. This program is driven by the apprentice and a lot of apprentices are finding it very overwhelming and confusing. They complain that they don't have time to complete the logbooks so some employers are providing time, during the workday, for them to work on their logbooks. Some find the logbook very intimidating and are not clear on what is expected of them during the competency assessments.

Teck has determined what a good performance during a competency evaluation looks like and what constitutes a good assessment. They have set the expectation with their assessors and then let the apprentices know what is expected of them. The plan is then given to the supervisors so they know which competencies the apprentice is expected to complete. They all meet on a monthly basis to see whether or not the apprentice is meeting the competencies and, if not, why and does

he/she need to be moved. The company needs to ensure that the journeyman that is assigned to the apprentice has the skills required to train the apprentice.

Employers need to understand the level of time and funding that is required to support this program and maintain the level of competency that industry has requested.

HITAC suggested that mandatory completion of all work based competencies that do not require the Level 4 theory be completed prior to the start of their level 4 schooling. The goal would be to decrease the possibility of an Apprentice falling behind on the logbook and holding up their certification.

iii) On-line Assessor courses

This was discussed as part of the on-site Assessor course discussion.

iv) Competency Assessment Centre in lieu of workplace competency assessment

This would be a large warehouse type shop complete with the latest in electrical equipment for competency assessment. This could be on campus at TRU or completely separate off campus.

BCIT currently has an apprenticeship centre for heavy duty mechanics built by Volvo Mack. BCIT now has two streams for those apprentices. They can complete their apprenticeship the traditional way or choose to specialize in Volvo Mack equipment and do their practical training at this apprenticeship centre. Nova Scotia currently uses a centre like this for their smaller and medium sized employers.

Apprentices could be assessed on all their competencies at the centre or only on those not taught at their sponsor's worksite. It would not be mandatory but would be up to the employer. The IE program would have multiple assessment pathways (MAP) and this option would be one pathway the apprentice could take. There would have to be an employer agreement with the apprentice once a path is chosen. It would be imperative that no path of least resistance existed. Both paths would have to be equivalent to maintain the integrity of the program. There would also have to be some mechanisms in place to ensure that the standards were extremely high to ensure that industry was still paying for top quality candidates.

It would also necessitate exact simulations of the workplace because people react differently when death is a very real possibility.

To create your assessor group you could leverage knowledge from both industry and training providers. RTO would have to have final control over the centre and funding would most likely have to come from industry. It was felt that this would be a sellable idea to industry.

It was noted that money for such a centre would not be available from government. Costs and funding models must be seriously researched.

v) Final signoff of logbook competencies

There was a lot of confusion surrounding this topic as people did not seem to be clear on the process. Some were sending the originals in to ITA, some to RTO,

some were remaining with the employer. It was explained that the employer and the apprentice need to keep the records and then a letter of attestation goes in to ITA. Direct Access currently enables ITA customer service to check off the competencies in the system. The vision is to have full data entry on line for apprentices and assessors.

The original concept included a moderator but that did not happen and there are simply not enough resources to enable us to look at all the assessments.

- vi) Workplace competency evaluation of Construction Electrician apprentices transferring to IE

Not discussed.

- vii) Theory Competency Curriculum changes

There did not seem to be any major concerns with the current curriculum.

- viii) More training providers in other areas of the province

It was agreed that this option cannot be considered until we find a way to increase our current numbers in the IE program.

## 7. Open Discussion

It is incumbent on industry to require this level of expertise in our workforce. TECK will be putting the IE upgrade program on the training plan for new hires. TECK is hoping that this has the same effect as a condition of employment. Industry requires qualified people and the status quo is not good enough.

Nothing has come out of this meeting today that says the program is not worth saving. It is very important to industry that we maintain this level of competency. The IE program should be a challenge or a stretch for the apprentices because the goal was to create highly skilled individuals.

There was strong support for RTO. Industry is not happy that ITA seems to have become bigger at the expense of the ITOs. This was not the original plan and there should be no watering down of RTO's direction and influence. What does RTO require in the way of resources and what does RTO need from industry?

There will be an event at TRU marking the graduation of the first 4<sup>th</sup> year IE apprentices. Employers with apprentices in 4<sup>th</sup> year will be contacted so that they can participate. This could be a powerful branding opportunity for the IE program. There was some concern over what's going to happen to those 16 apprentices when they finish their theory but still have to sort out all their competencies before being recognized as an IE journeyman and receiving a pay raise.

TRU is currently running the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of the IE program. They have consistently supported the program and they are providing what industry wanted. The logbook was put together really fast and was never vetted by the SME group which, in hindsight, could have probably headed off 80-90% of the problems.

The IE program requires a large time commitment from the employer. If a company is not prepared to live up to the time commitment then it is fraught with problems. This program will not survive without love. It has done remarkably well considering the limited resources. Those employers that train apprentices well will continue to do so but there is no consistency with regards to standards.

As long as employers continue to hire CE's there is no necessity to train as an industrial electrician. It is irrational to think that there is not a section of CE employers that could not see a clear benefit to hiring IE's. We need to get large employers like DND on board with the IE program. They currently have to train their CE journeymen so that they can acquire the IE skills that are required for their environment. We also need to convince unions like IBEW of the benefits of the IE program. They are reluctant to support the program because they fear that if industry starts slumping their members are not going to be able to find work in the construction trades.

The dialogue that took place today is encouraging. There is concern over building up the assessors' skill sets and improving the logbooks. There also needs to be more guidance in the process and the crossovers between CE and IE need to be solved. There should be a standing committee in place for IE that is always tweaking and making sure things are working and making it better.

**Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.**