



Strategic Plan 2026 - 2029



Welcome from the CEO

As CEO of Skilled Trades Ontario, I am pleased to present our 2026-2029 Strategic Plan—a three-year plan that builds on strong momentum and provides a structured framework for the future of Ontario’s skilled trades.

Since our agency’s launch in 2022, we have strengthened our partnerships with government, industry experts, and educators. Together, we are reshaping Ontario’s apprenticeship system by improving access to important services and elevating awareness of the value and opportunities unique to the skilled trades.

In April 2025, Skilled Trades Ontario became the first point of contact for apprenticeship registration, completion, and certification. Since then, we have made significant strides to reduce barriers to prioritize responsiveness.

Building on that progress, we launched marketing and outreach initiatives, including our Apprenticeship Pays campaign and our continued partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) on the provincewide Level Up! career fairs.

These achievements ensure that Ontario’s skilled trades professionals are equipped with the skills, experience, and credentials to pursue rewarding and lifelong opportunities in our industry.

I am deeply grateful to our staff, industry partners, skilled trades professionals, and educators, whose expertise and collaboration were essential in shaping our second Strategic Plan.

Your unwavering support and insight are integral to creating a strong and thriving future for Ontario’s skilled trades professionals.

Candice White
CEO



Welcome from the Board Chair

The Strategic Plan reflects feedback we have received from individuals across our industry: the need for a modernized, accessible, and inclusive sector equipped to meet growing demand.

Ontario's skilled trades sector has reached a pivotal moment, with innovation and infrastructure growth driving an urgent need for a highly skilled workforce.

Over the next three years, we will focus on strengthening industry partnerships, improving access to services, expanding awareness, and building a resilient sector.

Our vision is clear—to deliver a skilled trades system that supports the individuals who power, build, and serve communities in Ontario. To realize this vision, we continue to collaborate closely with staff, industry partners, skilled trades professionals, and educators.

As we remain steadfast in our commitment to attract and retain the next generation of skilled trades professionals, I want to thank you for your ongoing support and collaboration.

Together, we will redefine the very landscape of Ontario's skilled trades for current and future generations.

Michael G. Sherrard
Board Chair





Introduction

Skilled Trades Ontario (STO) stands at an exciting juncture. Having established itself as Ontario's central authority for apprenticeship and certification, STO is launching into its next three years with enthusiasm, embracing its growing mandate and more determined than ever to make Ontario the place where skilled trades professionals thrive.

Skilled Trades Ontario (STO) 3-year Strategic Plan (2026-2029) is driven by a bold aspiration: to be Ontario's champion of the skilled trades - accelerating pathways to rewarding careers that power economic growth. Building on recent successes in promotion, online registration, exam administration, and modernized training standards, STO aims to accelerate career pathways for both well-represented and underrepresented groups. The plan prioritizes streamlining registration and certification, maintaining up-to-date training standards, working in alignment with industry partners to better understand labour market gaps and opportunities, addressing barriers for underrepresented groups, and deepening client engagement.

We commit to accountable and transparent governance, ensuring that our decisions, actions, and reporting uphold public confidence, reflect stakeholder input, and promote equity, inclusion, and continuous improvement across all aspects of our work. All of this is enabled by enhanced communications, strengthened IT capabilities, strategic partnerships, and a culture of transparency that measures and reports on progress.

This Strategic Plan outlines the objectives, key actions, and performance metrics that will guide STO's efforts over the next three years.

STO's Vision, Mission, and Values

Our Vision

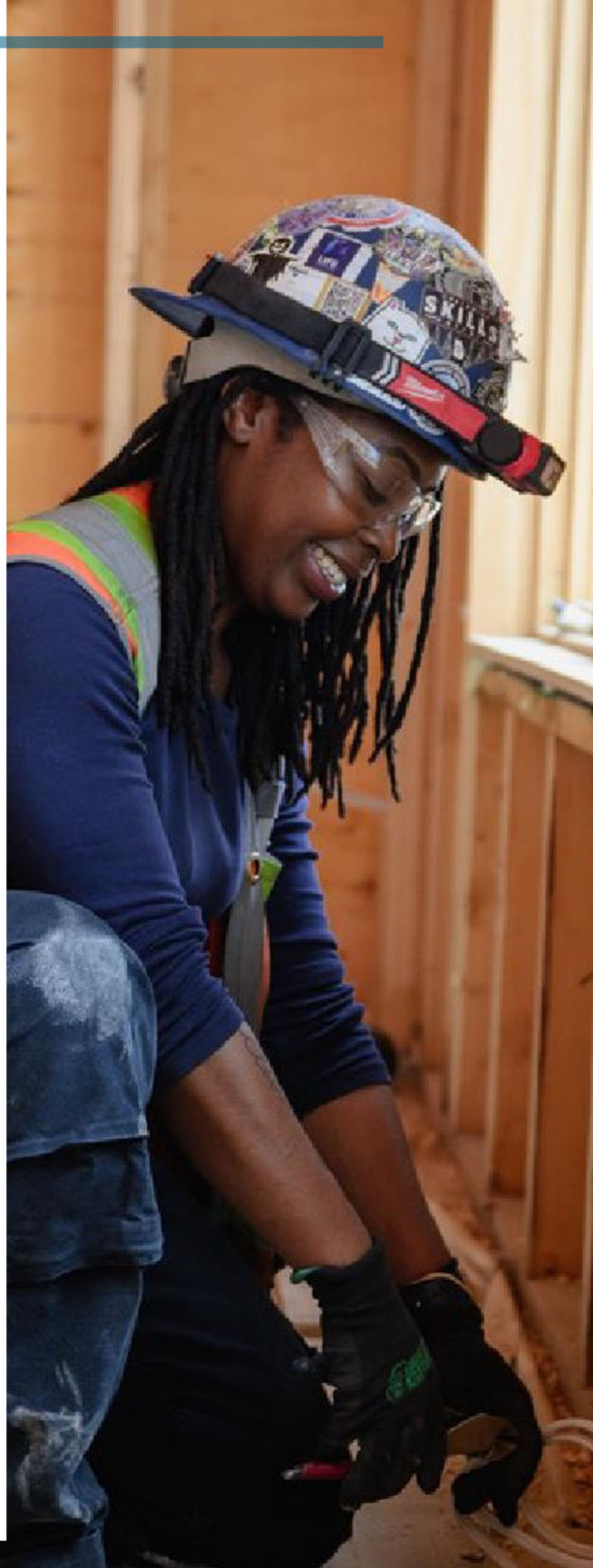
Make Ontario the place where skilled trades professionals thrive.

Our Mission

To support Ontario's economic success as the central authority responsible for establishing leading-edge standards in skilled trades to meet the opportunities of today and the challenges of tomorrow.

Our Values

- **Professional:** setting high standards for the trusted and valued skilled trades workforce
- **Accessible:** making the pathways into the skilled trades clear and straightforward for all
- **Agile:** providing leading-edge education and certification standards
- **Collaborative:** building strong partnerships with skilled trades professionals, employers, and training providers
- **Engaged:** being there for skilled trades professionals, where and when they need us





STO's Transition

Skilled Trades Ontario (STO) is a Crown agency established under the *Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021*, to evolve and strengthen Ontario's apprenticeship and skilled trades system. Governed by a Board of Directors and led by a Chief Executive Officer and Registrar, STO is accountable to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, which retains responsibility for regulatory policy and oversight.

Effective April 2, 2025, STO assumed statutory responsibility for key apprenticeship and certification functions, including registering training agreements, administering examinations, and issuing Certificates of Apprenticeship. This transition positioned STO as a point of contact for apprenticeship and certification services in Ontario.

With core responsibility consolidated and service continuity established, STO is moving from stabilization to maturity. This Strategic Plan sets a clear path forward; focusing on client-centered service delivery, system integrity, workforce alignment, and operational excellence, to support government priorities such as housing, infrastructure, and workforce development.

STO's History



Pre-BOSTA (Pre-2022)

Skilled Trades Ontario (STO) evolved from a model in which apprenticeship and certification were delivered directly within government.



STO Established (January 1, 2022)

Established under the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021 (BOSTA), STO began by building its governance framework, foundational systems, and core service functions, with an initial focus on organizational setup and operational readiness.



Transition (April 2, 2025)

Following the statutory transfer of apprenticeship registrations, examinations, and certificates of apprenticeship, STO became the province's primary service delivery organization, prioritizing continuity, risk management, and system stabilization.



Strategic Plan (2026-2029)

Today, STO is advancing from stabilization to maturity—driving aligned, client-focused service delivery, measurable results, and system-wide impact across Ontario's skilled trades system.

Advancing our mandate

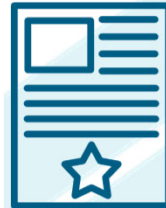
April 2, 2025, marked a fundamental shift in STO's role; from a developing organization to Ontario's primary apprenticeship and certification delivery body. With core responsibilities consolidated and early transition risks stabilized, STO is positioned to move beyond implementation and focus on outcomes.

Celebrating STO's Accomplishments from 2023–2026



23,297

Certificates of Qualification issued to completed apprentices who successfully passed their certifying exams.



60,750

Registered Training Agreements signed by first-time apprentices starting their journey in the trades.



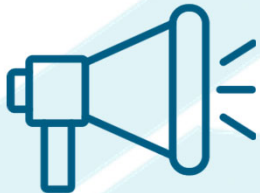
30,546

Certificates of Apprenticeship awarded to apprentices who completed their Ontario apprentice program.



20,832

Red Seal Endorsed Certificates of Qualification granted to apprentices who passed the Red Seal qualifying exam.



62M+

Views on first campaign under the new marketing strategy launched June 2025.



15,200+

Certifying exams administered since April 2025.



Our Winning Aspiration

Be Ontario's champion of the skilled trades – accelerating pathways to rewarding careers that power economic growth.

We will deliver on this aspiration through five strategic pillars:

- 1 Streamlined Registration and Certification
- 2 Excellence in Standards and Curriculum
- 3 Public Awareness and Promotion
- 4 Equity, Opportunity and Access
- 5 Engagement and Service Delivery

1

Streamlined Registration and Certification

STO is committed to delivering improved registration and certification services through a digital-first approach with clearly defined service standards, informed by engagement with stakeholders and insights from industry leaders.

STRATEGIC INTENT

STO is transitioning to a digitally enabled, focused regulator, where success is measured by speed, clarity, reliability, and ease of use across registration, assessment, and certification services.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Use digital tools supported by responsive and accessible client service, to deliver faster, simpler, and more reliable registration and certification services.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Improved portal usability
- Reduced number of days to complete registration
- Expanded exam access across the province
- Faster turnaround time for exam results
- Higher Certification of Qualification pass rates





2

Excellence in Standards and Curriculum

STO recognizes that relevant training standards, supported by continuous curriculum review, are central to improving completion, certification outcomes, and pass rates.

STRATEGIC INTENT

Continuous curriculum review and ensuring relevance in emerging industry trends are key drivers of workforce readiness.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Ensure training standards, exams, and credentials remain credible, current, and aligned with industry trends.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Clear alignment between updates to training standards and emerging trends
- Continued CCDA partnership to enhance program harmonization, consistency and quality
- Actions taken to improve interprovincial mobility for skilled trades workers
- Review and development of trades following a 5-year Development Roadmap



3

Public Awareness and Promotion

STO believes that communication is key to raising awareness, breaking stigma, and strengthening engagement with skilled trades among stakeholders and the broader public.

STRATEGIC INTENT

STO plays a leadership role in strengthening public confidence in the skilled trades system, positioning certification as a trusted mark of quality and promoting skilled trades as a viable, respected career pathway. This includes improving awareness of labour market data and skilled trades insights available through STO's Research Hub.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Build public trust, awareness, and demand for skilled trades careers and certification, and serve as a trusted source of skilled trades system data and insights to support workforce alignment.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Increased physical presence, visibility, and engagement across the province
- Targeted outreach activities that strengthen public awareness of STO initiatives, including marketing campaigns, Level UP!, and the Research Hub
- Establish baseline conversion rates for province-wide marketing campaigns
- Increased STO Research Hub visits, downloads, and citations
- Strengthened public confidence in certification, training, and skilled trades pathways as measured via surveys and/or polling
- Distribution of toolkits to employers
- Monitor social media audience growth, reach, and engagement rates across all platforms

4

Equity, Opportunity, and Access

STO supports equitable access to the skilled trades by enhancing credential recognition, enabling labour mobility, and creating inclusive pathways for Canadian Armed Forces families and social assistance participants.

STRATEGIC INTENT

STO is positioning Ontario as the fastest, fairest, and most accessible jurisdiction for skilled trades entry and mobility, ensuring underrepresented and mobile workers can enter, remain, and succeed in the system.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Address systemic barriers and stigma to promote equitable access to trades pathways.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Increased participation and completion rates for underrepresented groups
- Expedited international and interprovincial credential recognition process
- Roll-out of targeted support for internationally trained professionals, Canadian Armed Forces members and their spouses', and individuals from social assistance programs
- Refined Domestic Trades Equivalency Assessment (TEA) processes to achieve faster application processing times.
- Province-wide working groups advancing initiatives that support women and underrepresented groups



5

Engagement and Service Delivery

STO is committed to enhancing stakeholder engagement, strengthening governance, and achieving mature-state operational expectations.

STRATEGIC INTENT

STO is maturing as a Crown agency, with a strong emphasis on effective stakeholder engagement, accountable service delivery, transparent performance reporting, and financial discipline.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Refine our approach to engaging with clients, employers, and partners to improve service delivery and client satisfaction.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Establishment of Regional Hubs across the province, an employer support unit, and dedicated apprenticeship advisors
- Consistently meeting our service standards, including reduced call-centre wait times and timely email responses
- Improved client satisfaction measured through surveys and polling
- Strengthen relationships with current and prospective sponsors and employers through STO on the Road initiative
- Determine revenue growth opportunities





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www.skilledtradesontario.ca

