

OPEN SHOP



OPEN DIALOGUE

ALL NEW! QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO. 2 ~ FALL 2016

Celebrating Employee Excellence

Merit Contractors Association is pleased to hold our first ever employee awards night on Tuesday April 4, 2017 in conjunction with our Annual General Meeting. Award categories include:

- Outstanding Employee;
- Outstanding Apprentice;
- Outstanding Site Supervisor;
- Outstanding Office Employee.

Details on the rewards, criteria and the nomination process will be on our website soon. This is a great opportunity to celebrate and reward excellence within your company.

Renovations

We have extended our lease and are now upgrading our office and training room to enable us to provide improved service to our members. The renovation is almost complete. We would like to thank Roger Brodeur of Renovations Plus for their excellent work on the project. We will be happy to get back to normal in the next few weeks.

Merit is part of a Canada-wide network of open-shop associations. MERIT Canada provides a voice for contractors at the national level in Ottawa.



MERIT

CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA

Benefits Built In



Merit Manitoba will be holding our first annual golf tournament on June 21, 2017 at Elmhurst golf course. We are looking forward to a fun day of golfing and networking. Save the date and look for further details in the New Year.

We were pleased to be a hole sponsor in the Electrical Contractors Association golf tournament on August 25, 2016. Golfers enjoyed our game of hockey on the golf course to win entries into our draw for Jets tickets. Congratulations to Michael Dottavio on winning the Jets tickets.

Merit Contractors Association (Alberta) Celebrating 30 years.

Representatives from Merit Manitoba joined colleagues from across the country to attend the gala and awards night celebrating Merit Alberta's 30th year anniversary. The evening was a good opportunity to network and celebrate the history and longevity of the open shop industry in Canada.



2017 Benefit Rates

The annual review of the Merit Contractors Association Benefit Plan has been completed. Rate letters from Mercon Benefits have been sent.

This year's renewal proved to be a challenging one. Over the past year, utilization of the plan has risen. This, combined with increased premiums required by insurers, has placed significant pressure on the plan. The increased utilization and costs, in conjunction with a soft economy, are affecting benefit plans across the country and the Merit Plan is not immune. Plans within the construction industry in particular are implementing dramatic premium increases and/or reductions in coverage in an effort to remain sustainable.

Because of the past year's experience, rates will increase for 2017. However, due to the significant size of the Merit Plan, Mercon Benefits have been able to secure the most favourable rates possible from our benefit providers and *no reductions in coverage are being implemented*. The Merit Plan maintains a low administrative cost structure, allowing it to remain very competitive in the marketplace unlike many other plans. Due to the rate increase, no benefit enhancements will be implemented for the coming year.

Questions regarding rates should be directed to Mercon Benefits Services.

Merit Manitoba - Wage and Compensation Survey

Merit Manitoba conducted a wage and compensation survey of our members during the summer, 2016. Between August 2nd and September 2nd, 2016 a total of 77 respondents participated in the online survey. The response rate is 28.5%. This is considered to be a good response rate given the timing of the survey and the fact that this is the first one we have conducted.

Some key findings include:

Wage expectations for the next 12 months are anticipated to hold relatively steady with an average expected wage increase of 1.85% for field staff;

Members are mixed about the future of the Manitoba economy and the construction industry specifically. Approximately one quarter expect the provincial economy to decrease while another quarter expects it to increase. Outlook for the construction industry is slightly lower with one third expecting it to decrease, and one quarter anticipating it will increase;

Respondents are divided about the future of their work. Specifically, about 3 in 10 believe their volume of work will expand in the next year and a similar proportion believe it will decrease.

The full report is available on request and will soon be available on our new member portal that we are developing on our website.



Training and Education Calendar

Due to our office renovations limited training is being offered in the Fall, 2016. We recently started a Lean Construction course. This is being offered over five Tuesdays in the month of November. During our first class we did a draw for Jets tickets. Congratulations to the lucky winner, Dustin Brown, HP Builders. Our Gold Seal Courses which will be offered in early 2017 include:

Contract Law: February 1, 2, 3

Estimating: March 1,2,3

Project Planning and Cost Control: April 26, 27, 28.

All of the above courses offer 5 credits towards Gold Seal certification. Other Gold Seal courses that will be offered but dates have not yet been determined include:

Supervisor Training; Blueprint Reading; Principles of Construction Management and Confined Spaces.

Please let us know if you would have a need for any courses that are not currently being offered. We welcome your input into our course offerings.

Our Take on Bill 7

While the Federal Government moves to get rid of secret ballot vote for union certification the Manitoba Progressive Conservative government is taking steps to bring Manitoba in line with the other six provinces who currently employ secret ballot votes for union certification.

Under the current system implemented by the former NDP government, union organizers have to get support from 65% of workers in order to force a vote on union certification. That vote is then held by secret ballot. If a majority of those who vote, support joining the union, then certification proceeds. We believe that the current card check system is ripe for intimidation and manipulation and fully support the governments move to reinstate a secret ballot vote in Manitoba. As is the case with any other election, the decision to join a union is a personal one that should be free from intimidation by union organizers or employers. This can only be guaranteed by a secret ballot vote. In a poll conducted by NRG Research Group for Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba in January 2016, 71% of all respondents agreed that secret ballot voting should be used in all cases prior to union certification. Workers should be able to cast a vote on the future of their workplace free from intimidation and this is not the case under the current system in Manitoba.

Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba congratulates the Progressive Conservative government for moving quickly on their promise to restore fairness and balance in the labour relations community in Manitoba.



COSC 2017 Save the Date May 7-9, 2017 Whistler, BC

Whistler, BC is the 2017 destination for our exclusive Open Shop Leaders Forum where executives from the Open Shop community from across Canada will be gathering from May 7 - 9. The forum offers an exciting program that will focus on key construction industry issues and facilitate dialogue with industry leaders and delegates. The Open Shop Leaders Forum offers many opportunities to network, discover emerging industry trends, and hear from renowned speakers from the industry. We look forward to seeing you there!

To get further details on the forum and to register, visit the conference website at www.openshopforum.ca

Apprenticeship

Merit Contractors Association of Manitoba is extremely dismayed at the Federal government's 2016 federal budget announcement to invest \$85.4 million for union-based apprenticeship training initiatives. We believe this plan fails to recognize the realities of construction sector employment today and will undermine the existing industry-led system, implemented in conjunction with public colleges and training institutions.

Our primary concern is that the vast majority of the construction sector in Manitoba and across Canada is in the open shop sector. Because of different philosophies, open shop contractors are not likely to support sending their employees to union-based training programs, which have become de facto recruitment facilities. As a

result, this funding will benefit a very small percentage of employees in the industry and it is the apprentices that will suffer the consequences of this new training regime. We believe that using public money to support such a small portion of the industry is not fiscally prudent or responsible.

If funding is available, initiatives such as harmonization of the curriculum is a far better use of money. It benefits all apprentices regardless of union affiliation, and builds the strength and sustainability of our trades sector over the long term. Harmonization would allow apprentices to move seamlessly throughout Canada as each region has fluctuating labor requirements.

The proposal also raises questions of fairness, as it picks private union training centers over broadly supported public institutions when it

comes to the disbursement of public money, and threatens to fragment the entire apprenticeship system and undermine its neutrality. The current system of training in Manitoba which is primarily delivered through publicly funded institutions and on the job training is working well. The focus is on learning the trade rather than differing labor philosophies. Maintaining an unbiased learning experience for apprentices is an important component of successful education. Ironically, the tax dollars that will be used to fund these training centers come from the very contractors that will be shut out of this training which is neither fair or reasonable.

If you have questions re: the Association's efforts to advocate on your behalf on this issue do not hesitate to contact us.

We want OPEN DIALOGUE with you. Send us your feedback or questions:

204.888.6202
204.888.6204
www.meritmb.com

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SUBSCRIBE TO RECEIVE
OUR E-NEWS:
vofficer@meritmb.com



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112-131 Provencher Boulevard • Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada • R2H 0G2