



January 28, 2020

Letters to the Editor  
The National Post  
365 Bloor St. East, 3rd Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4W 3L4

To the Editor:

Re: "Let the markets handle the skilled-trades labour shortage" (Jan. 24)

I must take issue with the author's criticism of the Ontario government's active promotion of skilled trades apprenticeships for young people.

We are indeed facing a shortage of skilled tradespeople, as baby boomers — well trained and well paid — are retiring from industry.

Leaving aside Mr Lau's inapt and cynical comparison of skilled workers to oranges and pears, it seems he would "just...let the markets work," and have them replaced by unapprenticed, semi-skilled, low-paid workers, in another example of the "race to the bottom" in both skills and wages.

My organization assists armed forces veterans in transitioning into the skilled trades. We have no intention of sending these people into inadequately trained jobs where they can be exploited by employers favouring cheap labour over fully qualified workers. Our veterans deserve a better future, and so do our youth.

Labour Minister Monte McNaughton should be applauded for encouraging young people to enter the skilled trades through proper apprenticeships.

Engaging skilled workers in industry requires regulation, certification, intensive training, and licensing. It requires a tripartite partnership of government, organized labour, and industry, for the sake of safety, quality, and fair compensation.

Reaching out to youth, who may otherwise be unfamiliar with apprenticeship opportunities — and the "fruit"-ful jobs they promise — is a good move by this government.

Skilled labour isn't cheap, and cheap labour isn't skilled.

Sincerely,

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