



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a Community Benefits Agreement?

There are many different types of CBAs. Generally, a CBA is an agreement that sets out hiring provisions on publicly funded infrastructure projects. Typically, there will be provisions for hiring qualified local workers first as well as underrepresented groups, including Indigenous Peoples, apprentices and women in trades. In B.C., the CBA framework announced by the provincial government includes all these things as well as provisions for union wages, and assurances that there will be no work stoppages (strikes, lockouts) for the duration of construction.

### Are CBAs a new concept?

No. CBAs have been used throughout North America for 20 years. The City of Los Angeles has seen a number of successful CBAs.

### I heard CBAs shut out non-union contractors. Is that true?

No. Non-union and union contractors both bid on the project. The only requirement is adhering to the provisions of the CBA, which may include provisions to pay union wages for the duration of the project.

### How can CBAs ensure projects are completed on time and on budget?

CBAs ensure wage predictability and eliminate the

risk of work stoppages. In addition, investments in worker safety and training are proven to increase productivity. CBAs also enjoy increased transparency and accountability because these provisions are known.

### Why can't contractors hire whoever they want and pay whatever they want?

Unless provisions are made for local hiring and union wages, unscrupulous contractors could hire workers from outside of B.C. and perhaps even outside of Canada, as we saw with construction of the Canada Line. In that case, workers were brought in from Latin America and paid \$3.89 per hour. Even at Site C, 20 per cent of workers are not from B.C. Preference for hiring should be given to qualified local workers first, at a salary that allows them to support their families and invest in their own community.

### Why should preference be given to Indigenous communities and women in trades? The qualified candidate should just get the job.

Only qualified workers would be hired. However, among those qualified workers, provisions would be written into a CBA that assign practical ratios to hiring women in trades and Indigenous workers, both

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of whom are currently underrepresented in the trades. This will allow B.C. to meet its commitment to address the looming skilled trades shortage, while providing opportunities for groups who have traditionally not accessed these careers.

### Why do we need hiring provisions for apprentices?

BC is facing a skilled trades shortage and will need to hire thousands of new apprentices in the next few years. CBAs that include worker apprenticeship ratios help meet that need, while leaving a legacy of workforce experience and employability.

### Why does it matter if local workers are hired first?

Hiring locally means the investment in infrastructure stays in the community, which provides a community benefit to the local economy and revitalizes job creation. Local workers are proud to build their own community.

### Why do workers have to join a Building Trades union?

Building Trades Union contracts ensure workers have fair and equal access to training and that workers doing the same job at the same level are paid the same. They also ensure there are no strikes and no lockouts for the duration of a project. In addition, any pension contributions are immediately vested. And because BTU collective agreements are publicly available, bids are more competitive.

### Do CBAs cost more compared to non-CBA projects?

Every project is different. However, research indicates that CBAs are actually less expensive. They are subject to strict timelines and they prohibit work stoppages that might otherwise cause delays. In addition, when qualified local workers are given preference, tax revenue stays in the local community. Here is a snapshot of some high-profile infrastructure projects built without CBAs, which have never been used in B.C.

- The Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre, which was initially built under a public-private partnership (PPP) before it failed, went almost \$400 million over its original \$495 million budget.
- The Port Mann Bridge replacement cost \$2.974 billion, which was \$572 million more than the original estimate.
- The roof on BC Place Stadium was budgeted at \$100-\$150 million and came in at \$563 million.
- Site C was budgeted at \$8.335 billion and will cost in excess of \$10 billion.

### I work hard for my money. Why would I support something that could cost more?

The B.C. government has stated that using a CBA could cost four to seven per cent more to allow for the increased employment of apprentices. However, even if they have a greater cost on the face, they abide community interests, such as opportunities for qualified local workers, Indigenous groups, women in trades and apprentices. In addition, hiring local workers means tax dollars stay in the community, and the community is richer through a legacy of education and experience.

## Join Us!

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