

# CONSULTATION PAPER

## **Proposal Summary:**

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services is seeking input on the development of a continuing education framework for licensed master electricians that, if approved by the government, would become a mandatory regulatory requirement for master electrician licensure in Ontario.

In the 2020 Value-for-Money Audit of the Electrical Safety Authority, the Auditor General of Ontario recommended implementing a continuing education requirement for master electricians to enhance public electrical safety.

The Auditor General found that while some licensed electrical contractors voluntarily offer training to their electricians, this training is not mandated or accredited by the Electrical Safety Authority and varies among contractors. Most contractors do not offer any electrical safety training programs. This creates varying degrees of knowledge among master electricians.

The Auditor General noted that having a standard and mandatory continuing education program will help ensure that master electricians working in Ontario are consistently up-to-date on changes to the Ontario Electrical Safety Code, ensure that Ontario is aligned with similar practices in other jurisdictions, and assure consumers that electrical work conducted in the province is compliant and safe. The ministry is looking for stakeholder feedback on the development of a continuing education framework that meets these objectives.

## **Background Information:**

In Ontario, electrical contractors are required to either be a master electrician or employ at least one designated master electrician. This is because master electricians in Ontario are responsible for the planning and supervising of electrical work for contractors. Due to this responsibility, master electricians are extensively tested on their knowledge of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code and other essential skills prior to the issuance of their license. This ensures electricians providing electrical work meet a standard level of expertise and know how to engage in compliant and safe work. However, even though the Ontario Electrical Safety Code is updated every three years, master electricians are not tested on their knowledge as the Code changes and evolves.

The provinces of Alberta and Quebec have implemented continuing education requirements for master electricians. In British Columbia, continuing education requirements have also been implemented for field safety representatives, who share similar responsibilities to Ontario master electricians.

## **Proposal Details:**

With input from the Electrical Safety Authority, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services has drafted this proposal for the purposes of stakeholder feedback and is interested in receiving input on the following areas of a potential mandatory continuing education framework for master electricians:

### **1. Course Content**

A phased approach to implementing a mandatory continuing education program is being considered.

Phase 1 would establish a mandatory continuing education course on the Ontario Electrical Safety Code as an element of master electrician licence renewal. This would involve introducing a course that would be taken once every three years that would focus on changes to the requirements contained within the Ontario Electrical Safety Code. This Code is typically updated every three years and sets out how electrical work should be safely conducted within the province. It is expected that this would be a half day course that could be taken in person or virtually. The course would include a knowledge test element (i.e., a short test) to ensure understanding of the content. Master electricians would be required to pass the knowledge test element in order to receive the continuing education credit.

Phase 2 would include the rollout of a set number of additional mandatory elective courses that may include subjects such as technical skills, workplace health and safety, and business administration. Elective courses would be chosen by master electricians based on their experience and speciality. Phase 2 would not be implemented until all licensed master electricians have completed at least one continuing education cycle under Phase 1.

The Electrical Safety Authority estimates that the implementation of Phase 1 would occur in 2023 and that Phase 2 implementation would occur no earlier than 2026.

### ***What the ministry would like to know from stakeholders:***

- a) What are your thoughts on the proposed phased approach to implementing a continuing education framework in Ontario?
- b) What are your comments regarding the proposed Ontario Electrical Safety Code update course? Do you think there are other topics related to the Code or work of master electricians that should also be included?
- c) Do you have any suggestions on what specific elective courses should be provided in Phase 2? What is an appropriate number of elective courses master electricians should be required to take in addition to the Ontario Electrical Safety Code update course? What is an appropriate length for elective courses?

- d) Should master electricians have the option to self-study as an alternative to taking a course covering updates on the Ontario Electrical Safety Code?

## **2. Delivery Model**

A hybrid delivery model is being considered for the initial delivery of this mandatory continuing education framework. Initially, courses would be developed and delivered by the Electrical Safety Authority. Under this proposal, authorized third-party organizations may begin offering courses shortly after implementation. As the continuing education framework matures, the delivery of courses would transition to a third-party delivery model. Under a third-party delivery model, authorized third-party organization will continue to deliver courses, but the Electrical Safety Authority will not. Course delivery will only be provided by authorized third-parties.

### ***What the ministry would like to know from stakeholders:***

- a) What are your comments regarding the proposed delivery model for continuing education courses (i.e., it is proposed ESA would deliver the courses in the short term and then slowly transition to third-party delivery as the program matures)?
- b) Under a third-party model, are there specific criteria you think an authorized body should meet as a continuing education provider?
- c) Do you have any suggestions on third-party organizations that would be best suited to deliver continuing education courses (e.g., standards organizations, Ontario private career colleges)?
- d) What monitoring and reporting measures should the Electrical Safety Authority use to ensure third-party providers deliver technically accurate and professionally delivered courses?
- e) What measures should be used to gauge when the framework is mature enough where the Electrical Safety Authority should stop providing courses and rely solely on authorized third parties?

## **3. Frequency of Continuing Education**

It is proposed that master electricians take continuing education courses every three years to align with the Ontario Electrical Safety Code update cycle. This would ensure that master electricians maintain up-to-date knowledge on changes to the Code.

As continuing education will be a requirement for master electrician licensure, the Electrical Safety Authority intends to change the licence eligibility cycle for master electricians from a 5-year to a 3-year cycle to align with the continuing education cycle. It is anticipated that annual license fees would not change.

***What the ministry would like to know from stakeholders:***

- a) Is the proposed three-year continuing education cycle and its alignment with the Code and updated license renewal cycle appropriate?

**4. Estimated Costs**

According to initial cost estimates by the Electrical Safety Authority, the mandatory Ontario Electrical Safety Code course (Phase 1) would cost master electricians between \$199- \$499. The range reflects the estimated difference in cost between virtual and in person courses, as well as courses administered by the Electrical Safety Authority versus third-party providers. Based on the proposed frequency of the courses, master electricians would be required to pay this amount every three years.

Courses contemplated in Phase 2 are anticipated to have less direct costs for master electricians. However, the implementation of elective courses will also require more time from master electricians in order to complete continuing education requirements.

***What the ministry would like to know from stakeholders:***

- a) Do you have any comments on the estimated costs for master electricians to take the Ontario Electrical Safety Code update course?

**Feedback:**

The ministry is seeking general feedback on the proposed continuing education framework along with stakeholders' responses to the ministry's questions. The public is invited to provide comments and suggest improvements to the proposed framework and any input is welcomed and appreciated. All comments received may be considered during government decision making. The feedback received will help inform the development of the continuing education framework for master electricians. We invite you to answer the questions regarding the proposed continuing education program and share your comments for ministry consideration by April 28, 2022.

**Privacy Statement**

The collection by the ministry of any information, including personal information, as part of this consultation process is for the purposes of considering whether to develop, or developing, proposals for legislative and/or regulatory amendments as authorized by Part VIII of the Electricity Act, 1998, SO 1998, c 15, Sched A. The collection of this information is necessary for the development of potential proposals for changes to address the issues described in this document. Please note that unless otherwise agreed to by the ministry, if you are participating in this consultation process on behalf of an organization, or as an individual who has indicated an affiliation with an organization, the feedback provided will be considered public information and may be

used to assist in developing statutory or regulatory proposals. As such, this information may be disclosed to various stakeholders for that purpose.

If you are participating in this consultation process as an individual, and do not indicate an affiliation with an organization, your feedback will not be considered public information unless you expressly request otherwise, but your feedback may be used by the ministry to assist in developing the potential proposals for changes under Part VIII of the Electricity Act, 1998.

If you have questions about the collection, use and disclosure of personal information in relation to this initiative, you may contact [consumerpolicy@ontario.ca](mailto:consumerpolicy@ontario.ca)