

July 21, 2015

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: [Peter.B.Kelly@state.ma.us](mailto:Peter.B.Kelly@state.ma.us)

Peter B Kelly, Executive Director  
Board of State Examiners of Sheet Metal Workers  
1000 Washington Street, Suite 710  
Boston, Massachusetts 02118-6100

Dear Director Kelly and Members of the Board,

Let me start by thanking you for having us at the Listening Session on July 20, 2015. Many tough issues were discussed. I wish you and the Board the best on sorting out these conflicts.

I'd like to take this opportunity to clarify a few discrepancies and misunderstandings that appears to be a great divide between Merit Shops and our Union counterparts. We are not as far apart as some may believe.

First of all, one speaker insinuated the Merit Shops are and have always been against licensing. I for one, was on the Fair Licensing Committee during the licensing process. We weren't trying to stop licensing, but we wanted representation. Today, some companies are still skeptical and have an animosity because of how the original board was constructed and felt they were imposing their policies onto us. This is especially true with smaller residential companies who felt they were treated as an afterthought by a group who never worked nor understood residential. Hopefully this animosity will fade away by working together with the new Sheet Metal Board.

Another misunderstanding is ratios. Ratios are not necessary bad, even at 3-1. I personally believe that both sides, pro and con, don't have a good understanding of ratios.

One side feels that ratios are necessary for safety and training. I believe this is incorrect. A 1-1 ratio has always been the landmark for a safe and efficient way to train. There is no proof to suggest otherwise.

The other side feel ratios are an unnecessary burden; a regulation imposed on them when they can't even find enough journeymen for starters. Many still feel ratios and long apprenticeship programs hinders their companies from growing and increases their costs.

I feel that ratios and for that matter, the long 5 year apprenticeships, are from basic Economics 101, supply and demand. Both tools can control the amount and time it takes to produce additional journeymen in the industry. At the Listening Session yesterday, speaker Ed Foley brought up a good point. In the past Unions had a 5-1, or even a 6-1 ratios. Ratios change to control the amount of Journeymen we have in the marketplace so as not have too few nor so

many that their value diminishes. This is not be a bad thing if it's done properly and fairly controlled.

Unions, to their advantage, have been training for years. Their ratios are business as usual. They have a stable workforce in place. But, since the original Sheet Metal Board set the rules based on their perspective, Merit Shops were left to fend for themselves under their ratios.

In the past, Merit Shops had Vocational Schools to train their apprentices. This is where we originally got some of our best journeyman. When many Vocational Schools closed down their Sheet Metal shops before the recession, we were left with very little, if any, classroom training. The Gould Institute has filled this void so we could start to rebuild a new workforce. This will take time, but 5 years is too long. As we stated, Merit Shops have lost many journeyman during the recession. Also many have retired and approx. 60% will retire in the next 10 years. We are in a labor crisis. We need to accelerate the training process and find ways to get those who left sheet metal work back in with a quick refresher course so they will be able to pass a licensing test.

We don't claim to have all the answers, but we are asking the Board to consider our submitted changes. Hopefully, these changes, temporary or not, will be the spark to get more Contractors to join us and discover the benefits of having a well trained workforce. The goal is to get more, if not all, to participate as quickly as possible. Only then will the regulations work for all.

Thank you,

Massachusetts Sheet Metal Contractors Roundtable  
Roger M Auger, Chairman, SMCR  
ControAir Systems, Inc.  
25 Ray Avenue  
Burlington, MA 01803

Ph: 781-365-0222  
Cell: 617-212-6147