

Thirteen registers. One worker.

The Council harmonised the standard. A certificate of qualification — Red Seal endorsement and all — still proves itself inside the jurisdiction that issued it and nowhere else. This briefing sets out what a verifiable digital credential is, what it would take to make trade certification checkable across Canada, and how the governance would have to work for jurisdictions to trust it.

Prepared by We Know Training Inc. at the invitation of Skilled Trades Ontario, for tabling with the Council. Nothing here is settled, and it is circulated at a stage where the design can still change.

Making a Red Seal endorsement checkable in seconds, anywhere.

The Council harmonised the standard. A group of credentialing bodies is now building the layer that lets a certificate prove itself outside the jurisdiction that issued it — and the criteria are still open.

Why we are raising it now. A founding cohort of credentialing and safety organisations has convened around the W3C Verifiable Credentials standard to build a shared trust layer for occupational credentials — the Canadian Credential Trust Alliance. Its standards and accreditation criteria are being written now, and nothing is settled: criteria can be shaped while they are being drafted, not afterwards.

Two developments sit in the background, and are set out on page 06 — Team Canada Strong, which ties \$6 billion over five years to cutting time to Red Seal certification by half through digitising the programme, and statutory clocks on recognition decisions that were previously unhurried. Whether either is a live pressure for the Council is its own judgement.

What Red Seal already solves

A common standard and a common examination, developed with industry and agreed by every jurisdiction, and an endorsement signalling the holder was measured against it. Red Seal trades account for roughly 80% of apprentices in Canada. That is a real achievement, and nothing here proposes to change it.

What it does not solve

Harmonising a standard is not verifying an instrument. Red Seal tells a receiving jurisdiction what a certificate means. It gives no one a fast way to confirm that this particular certificate is real, current and not suspended. An endorsement on paper is as forgeable as anything else on paper — and it is the most worthwhile thing in the system to forge. Coverage is also partial: more than 300 trades are designated across Canada and Red Seal covers a subset.

What a verifiable credential changes. A credential issued to the W3C standard is cryptographically signed, held by the worker on their own device, and checkable in seconds by anyone with a legitimate reason — without contacting the issuer, and without a central database of holders. It fails verification the moment it is altered. The standard is mature and in production internationally — the open question in Canada is governance, not technology.

What is proposed. A pan-Canadian trust network governed by an independent not-for-profit accountable to its members — the Canadian Credential Trust Alliance — which accredits issuers and maintains the trust registry. Each jurisdiction remains the issuer of its own credentials and the sole authority over what it issues, to whom and on what terms. Existing registers continue unchanged: a verification layer over jurisdictional authority, not a replacement.

The invitation. Not a procurement, and nothing binding on any jurisdiction.

Learn more first

The pages that follow set out the problem, the standard and the governance in full.

Join as a founding member

The cohort is open to jurisdictions alongside the bodies already convened.

Founding members write the rules

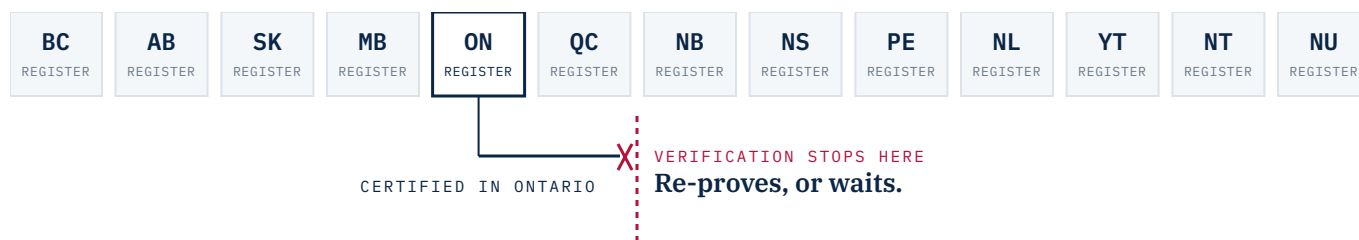
Criteria are being drafted now. Founding members set them; later entrants receive them.

Disclosure. We Know Training Inc. prepared this paper at the invitation of Skilled Trades Ontario. We Know Training is a partner in Oliu™ Partnership Corp., the planned operator of the network, and would be a commercial participant in it — which is why the Alliance, and not the operator, holds the standards, the criteria and the trust registry, and can replace the operator.

Where a certificate stops being useful.

Every jurisdiction owns the same three things inside its own borders: the standard a trade is measured against, the exam that decides who is certified, and the certificate itself. That is exactly why proof stops at the line.

TODAY • THIRTEEN SEPARATE REGISTERS



WITH A TRUST LAYER • THE SAME THIRTEEN ISSUERS



The same Ontario certificate, verified in seconds anywhere — by employers, sites and regulators alike. The thirteen registers do not go away and are not merged. What changes is that a certificate can prove itself outside the jurisdiction that issued it, without anyone querying a national database of who holds what.

WHO CURRENTLY ABSORBS THE COST

The worker

Re-proves experience already proven once, and waits — often while turning down work they are qualified to do.

The receiving jurisdiction

Spends staff hours per file on equivalency and status checks, against a statutory clock that does not move.

The employer

Takes a card at face value, or does without the worker. Neither is a good answer on a site with safety obligations.

None of these three is positioned to fix it alone, which is the argument for treating it as a Council-level question.

What Red Seal already does, and what it was never built to do.

This is the first objection any Council member should raise, so it is worth answering first. Red Seal solved the hardest problem in Canadian trades certification — a different problem from the one described here.

The standard

A national occupational standard for each Red Seal trade, developed with industry and agreed by every jurisdiction.

The examination

A common interprovincial examination measuring candidates against that standard, wherever they sit it.

The endorsement

A mark on a certificate of qualification confirming the holder met the national standard. Red Seal trades cover roughly 80% of apprentices in Canada.

QUESTIONS ASKED AT A GATE, A JOB SITE OR AN INTAKE DESK

THE QUESTION	WHAT ANSWERS IT TODAY	ANSWERED
Is this trade measured against a national standard?	The Red Seal endorsement.	• YES
Was this person examined against that standard?	The Red Seal endorsement.	• YES
Is this certificate genuine?	Inspection of a piece of paper or a PDF, by eye.	• NO
Is it still current — not expired, suspended or revoked?	The issuing jurisdiction's public register, where one exists and the trade is compulsory.	• PARTLY
Is the person presenting it the person named on it?	Nothing. A register lookup confirms a record exists.	• NO
Can I get an answer in minutes, from outside the issuing jurisdiction?	A request to the issuing authority, inside its business hours.	• PARTLY
Does any of the above work for a designated trade outside Red Seal?	Whatever the issuing jurisdiction happens to publish.	• NO

Red Seal made the endorsement worth having. That is precisely what makes a forged one worth producing — and on paper, a forgery is effectively impossible to catch.

More than 300 trades are designated across Canada and Red Seal covers a subset. Outside that subset there is no national instrument at all — the part of the problem the Council is best placed to see whole.

What a verifiable credential is.

A verifiable credential is the digital form of a certificate, with one difference that matters: it is signed by the issuer so it cannot be altered undetected, and anyone can confirm that signature without contacting the issuer.

The standard. Verifiable Credentials is a published W3C standard — the same standards body behind the technologies the web itself runs on. It is production-mature and deployed internationally in education, healthcare and border contexts. Adopting it is not a bet on a vendor's format.

The issuer

Grants the credential, and decides what is issued, to whom, and on what terms. For a certificate of qualification that is the certifying body, and it stays that way.

The holder

Keeps the credential in a wallet on their own phone, unlocked the same way as banking. They control when it is shared, and with whom.

The verifier

An employer, site supervisor or regulator with a legitimate need gets a yes or no in seconds, without calling the issuer.

What the verifier sees. Only what is needed. A credential can prove that its holder is certified in a trade and current, without disclosing anything else on the record — the way a passport check confirms a right to enter without handing over a life history. Revocation and suspension are reflected, so a withdrawn certificate stops verifying.

What does not exist. There is no central database of credentials, and the network operator cannot observe who is verifying what. Those are properties of how the standard works rather than policy commitments made by an operator, which is why they can be relied on.

A paper certificate or a PDF can be altered, and there is often no fast way to tell a real one from a forged one. A verifiable credential fails verification the moment it is tampered with.

What stays with the issuing jurisdiction.

This is the first question a certifying body asks, and it should be. The answers below are design constraints rather than assurances, and any network worth joining should be judged on whether it holds to them.

01 You remain the issuer.

The credential is issued under your authority. You decide what is issued, to whom, on what terms, and what it says.

02 You can revoke and suspend.

Status changes are reflected in verification. A credential you withdraw stops verifying.

03 Your public register stays your public register.

The network is a verification layer over your authority, not a replacement for it, and not a second source of truth.

04 No central database of holders.

Nobody, including the operator, assembles a national list of who holds what.

05 The operator cannot watch.

Who verifies which credential, and when, is not visible to the network operator.

06 The verifier gets proof, not personal data.

The minimum needed to answer the question asked.

07 Nothing is compelled.

Participation is per-issuer. A jurisdiction that joins for one trade is not committed to any other.

Designed to sit alongside provincial identity work

Several provinces are building foundational digital-identity wallets. A credential trust network for occupational certification is a different layer and is designed to work with those wallets rather than compete with them — the credential proves a qualification, not an identity.

The clocks that changed.

JUN 2025

One Canadian Economy Act receives Royal Assent, including the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act.

JAN 2026

Federal labour-mobility provisions in force. Federal barriers to recognition are removed, so a provincial credential is recognised for federally regulated work. It does not compel jurisdictions to recognise one another — that remains a matter for us.

JAN 2026

Ontario's deemed-certification regulation in force. Notice of receipt within ten business days, a non-renewable six-month deemed period during which the applicant may work, and a decision within thirty calendar days. Other jurisdictions are moving in the same direction.

APR 2026

Team Canada Strong — a federal commitment of \$6 billion over five years toward 80,000 to 100,000 new Red Seal trades workers within five years, with a stated goal of cutting time to certification by half by digitising the Red Seal Program: online exams, digital logbooks, secure credentials, and a single national registered apprenticeship number.

The operational consequence. Statutory clocks convert verification from an administrative task into a constraint. Confirming equivalency and status for an out-of-jurisdiction applicant can take hours of staff time per file, and the volume is rising while the time allowed falls. That arithmetic does not improve by adding reviewers.

The strategic consequence. Federal money is now explicitly attached to digital credentialing. Whoever can demonstrate the capability will shape how it is spent. Jurisdictions that arrive with a shared position will do better than jurisdictions arriving one at a time.

The technology question is settled. What is not settled is who governs the trust — and that is a question for this Council rather than for a vendor.

Trust is the product, so trust is governed separately.

A network that a single company controls is a network no regulator should join. The structure below exists to make capture by any one vendor structurally impossible, including by us.

MEMBERS

The credentialing organisations

Govern, and are accountable to their members. Jurisdictional authorities, safety associations, professional bodies.



APPOINT AND DIRECT

INDEPENDENT NOT-FOR-PROFIT

Canadian Credential Trust Alliance

Owns the standards, the accreditation criteria and the trust registry. Not owned by any operator.



CONTRACTS, REVIEWS, HOLDS TERMINATION RIGHTS OVER

OPERATOR

Oliu™ Partnership Corp.

Runs the infrastructure under contract, and can be replaced without the network being rebuilt.

The network survives the operator by design. If the operator fails, is acquired, or performs badly, the Alliance terminates and appoints another. Members keep their credentials, their standards and their registry.

A founding cohort has convened

Safety associations, professional certification bodies and training providers, exploring the Alliance and its standards together. Nothing is settled; they chose to shape it early.

Engaged with DIACC and the Digital Governance Standards Institute, and invited to speak in the Senate during the Canada–EU discussion on interoperable credentials.

What we are actually asking.

Nothing binding, and nothing that commits a jurisdiction to a supplier. Three questions that are better answered together than thirteen times separately.

Is portability a Council-level question?

If credential verification across jurisdictional lines is a shared problem, it likely wants a shared answer rather than thirteen bilateral ones.

Who should govern the trust?

The technology is settled and the governance is not. If jurisdictions do not shape the accreditation criteria, someone else will.

What would a jurisdiction need to see?

Tell us the conditions under which a certifying body could participate. Those conditions are more useful to us than agreement.

Is a scoped trial worth running?

One jurisdiction, one trade, real credentials, real verification, with the results shared with the Council whichever way they go.

About We Know Training

We Know Training Inc. is a Canadian training company headquartered in Edmonton, delivering regulated training and certification preparation across safety, professional licensing and the skilled trades. We are a partner in Oliu™ Partnership Corp., the planned operator of the network, and would be a commercial participant in it — which is why the governance structure above places the standards, the accreditation criteria and the registry outside any operator's control, with the Alliance able to replace the operator.

Our other product line, ReadyEngine™, is a learning platform used in regulated licensing. It is not the subject of this briefing and is mentioned only as company background.