

POLITICAL PROGRESS

*Advocacy in Action
Keeping Local Union Leadership Informed*

APRIL 2026

Sisters and Brothers,

The IBEW First District continues to strengthen its relationship with the federal government, with a clear focus on training, partnerships, and the future of electrical work in Canada. Our most recent visits have demonstrated a growing interest from government in understanding how *real* unions operate, train, and deliver results for workers and industry.

I am pleased to share an update on recent meetings.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LABOUR ENGAGES DIRECTLY WITH IBEW TRAINING CENTRES

In March, the Honourable John Zerucelli, Secretary of State for Labour, met with leadership and members at IBEW Local 2085's Training Centre. We discussed training opportunities tied to Union Training and Innovation Program (UTIP) funding, the value of union-led training centres and the long-term return they provide. Zerucelli spoke clearly about his government's strong commitment to supporting *real* union training centres, not *employer-driven* alternatives.

Local 2085 President and Director of Apprenticeship and Training, Warren Herntier led a hands-on tour of the facility, reinforcing our competitive advantage: IBEW training is built on skill, safety, and real job readiness. Brother Herntier even convinced the Secretary of State for Labour to try his hand at conduit bending. It turns out the Honourable John Zerucelli might make a good apprentice – either that, or IBEW instruction is just that good.

KEY UPDATES



**Labour Minister Engages
Directly with IBEW Training
Centres**



**A Front-Row View of Union-
Contractor Partnerships in
Action**



**Supporting
"Build Canada Strong"
the Right Way**



IVP Shewchuk and Secretary of State John Zerucelli joined Local 2085's Warren Herntier and Daemien Bernhard at IBEW Local 2085's Training Centre.

ACCESS OUR POLICY DOCUMENT ONLINE

SCAN ME





The Hon. Zerucelli (centre) is joined by Dalyce Bradshaw and Carey Kostyk from Valard and IBEW First District's Mike LeBlanc and Russ Shewchuk to discuss union-contractor partnerships.

The meeting opened the door for continued dialogue on how public funding can support programs that deliver proven results. IBEW training centres invest directly in people, and that investment shows up on jobsites across the country.

A FRONT-ROW VIEW OF UNION-CONTRACTOR PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

On March 27 in Toronto, the focus shifted to partnerships. The Hon. Zerucelli visited Valard, Canada's largest transmission contractor. Bringing together leadership from IBEW First District and Valard Construction, the Secretary of State learned more about the realities of large-scale transmission work.

Valard President Carey Kostyk and VP of Corporate Strategy Dalyce Bradshaw outlined the complexity of working in remote regions. They spoke about logistics, workforce planning, and coordination across provinces and territories. They also highlighted Indigenous training and community involvement as key parts of project success.

The visit provided a clear view of how unions and signatory contractors work together in practice. These relationships are built on shared responsibility: different priorities at times, but working in unison to keep projects moving forward, while ensuring safety and a high-quality output. Both

sides hold each other accountable.

This balance supports strong project outcomes. It ensures the right number of skilled workers are available when needed. It maintains safety on complex jobsites. It keeps quality high from start to finish.

The discussion made one thing clear: Strong partnerships between the union and contractors drive results. These projects require a workforce that can scale up and down, move where needed, and maintain high standards at every stage. IBEW members bring that flexibility and skill.



Secretary of State Zerucelli learns more about the realities of large-scale transmission work and the shared responsibilities between unions and our partner contractors.



Photo Credit: John Zerucelli/Facebook

Secretary of State for Labour John Zerucelli is joined by IBEW First District Representatives Mark Watson and Travis Merrett along with representatives from CBTU at the Build Canada Strong Federal-Provincial joint announcement in March.

Valard currently operates under IBEW agreements in British Columbia, Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. Work continues on the expansion of our relationship, including ongoing discussions tied to the Kivalliq Transmission Project connecting northern Manitoba to Iqaluit, Nunavut. This partnership continues to move forward with a shared focus on delivering major projects while keeping IBEW members front and centre.

SUPPORTING “BUILD CANADA STRONG” THE RIGHT WAY

Finally, IBEW Canada was present at the Federal-Provincial joint announcement in Etobicoke, Ontario detailing new measures to support housing and infrastructure within the province at the end of March. The plan, which includes removing the full 13 percent HST on new homes up to \$1.5 million and reducing development charges, is expected to create up to 21,000 skilled trades jobs.

The recently announced [Build Communities Strong Fund](#) adds further support at the municipal level, helping unlock projects that will require skilled IBEW members to deliver the electrical work safely and to a high standard.

For IBEW, the opportunity is clear: More housing and expanded infrastructure equates to more electrical work and a stronger demand for skilled electricians, electrical workers and apprentices. Further, it creates increased growth in our

Utilities and Telecommunications sectors and reinforces the need for continued investment in union training to meet increasing demands.

We are very encouraged and enthusiastic about these major investments into the infrastructure that will power our country and expand our market share and IBEW membership. We will remain actively engaged as these plans move forward and continue to share the perspective of our members and the work they do every day. Public investment must support fair wages, strong safety standards, and proper training. Projects must move forward with care, be built to last, and be completed without compromise on safety or quality.

IBEW First District will continue to push for clear conditions on publicly funded work. This includes support for local hiring, union standards, and apprenticeship opportunities. If public money is being spent, it must benefit Canadian workers and communities.

Thank you for your continued support.

In Solidarity,



RUSS SHEWCHUK

International Vice President
IBEW First District, Canada