



July 25, 2017

## **North – South Ironworker Mobility Update**

**Dear Members;**

**Since fall of 2016, the offices of the Ironworker’s International General President, General Secretary and the Canadian Director have been working with various immigration authorities to actively pursue work opportunities for Canadian ironworkers with our U.S. locals and contractors who are experiencing skilled ironworker shortages.**

**The H-2B Temporary Worker program allows United States employers who meet specific regulatory requirements to bring Canadians to the United States to fill temporary jobs. To date this process has proven to be a complicated and rigorous journey that has not resulted in any opportunities or successes toward our goal.**

**For example, in the state of Michigan, three union contractors from the Great Lakes District Council were willing to apply for H-2B visas with assistance from the International.**

**Upon consulting with the legal immigration counsel on both sides of the border, it became clear that through the current H-2B temporary visa process it would take up to ten months to have the visas approved.**

**Clearly by the time ten months had elapsed, the contractors’ window for recruiting ironworkers would have passed. This most certainly would be the case with other contractors in a similar situation.**

**For reasons outlined above it is evident the H-2B work visa process has stalled out further attempts.**

**Our focus is now on the two governments opening up the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which operates outside the H-2B program.**

**NAFTA does not currently recognize skilled trades as part of the agreement. However, there exists a clause under ‘technical skills’ that potentially could be amended to accommodate skilled trades such as the skilled ironworker.**

**An authority on the NAFTA has approached our General President to act on the Internationals' behalf to propose changes to the Agreement that would include a skilled trades section that would apply to the ironworkers.**

**That said, the construction building trades leadership in both the U.S. and Canada are now taking a vested interest on retaining the same expert authority that has approached the Ironworkers International.**

**Therefore, the General President upon consultation with the General Secretary and Canadian Director have agreed that there is no point in duplicating the proposal efforts when the NAFTA Agreement opens for negotiation in August of 2017.**

**It must be also noted that the International has and will continue to stay in contact with how the Building Trades are progressing with negotiations. If it appears the Building Trades are holding the Ironworkers back on their goal, we will not hesitate to move forward on our own.**

**We recognize the goal of north – south mobility has not been achieved to date, but it has not been without effort, and we are still pursuing the goal.**

**We thank you for your kind attention to the update and will convey further information once the NAFTA agreement negotiations commence and or conclude.**

**Darrell LaBoucan  
GVP / Executive Director of Canadian Affairs  
Ironworkers International**