

Make tax time easier by having the right tools on your tool belt

As a skilled tradesperson, quality is your "trade" mark. You strive to be the best and take pride in your workmanship. You have the qualifications and the skills, but do you have the tools necessary to file your tax return?

Speaking of tools, if you bought new ones for work this year, you may be able to claim the tradesperson's tools deduction, a deduction of up to \$500. You will need your employer to certify the tools were bought by you, for you, to be used directly in your work, to claim the deduction. You may also be able to get a rebate on the goods and services tax/harmonized sales tax (GST/HST) you paid. For more information on deducting the cost of eligible tools, go to www.cra.gc.ca/trades.

If you pay dues for membership in a trade union, hold on to your receipt! You may be able to deduct the amount paid on your tax return, including any GST/HST you paid as part of your dues. Find out more by searching **Annual union, professional or like dues** on the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) website.

If you're self-employed, you may also be able to deduct other reasonable expenses you paid to earn income—including vehicle expenses, supplies needed to complete a job, and office space expenses. Have you converted part of your garage into a workspace for your business? When you use part of your home for business, you may be able to deduct a portion of your maintenance costs such as heat, home insurance, electricity, cleaning materials, and more. To find out more, go to www.cra.gc.ca/smallbusiness and select Business expenses.

Employers can benefit too! If your business hires a qualified apprentice working in an approved Red Seal trade, you may qualify to claim the apprenticeship job creation tax credit. This non-refundable investment tax credit is equal to the lesser of \$2,000 or 10 percent of the eligible apprentices' salaries or wages. Don't need to use the whole credit amount this year? Carry the unused amount back three years or carry it forward up to 20 years! For more information on the Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit and other investment tax credits, go to www.cra.gc.ca/smallbusiness and select **investment tax credit**.

Most Canadian income tax and benefit returns for 2015 are due on April 30, 2016. However, since this date is a Saturday, the CRA will consider your return as filed on time and your payment to be made on time if it receives your submission or it is postmarked by midnight on May 2, 2016. Self-employed individuals and their spouses or common-law partners have until

June 15, 2016, to file their income tax and benefit returns, but any balance owing is still due no later than May 2, 2016.

Filing electronically with NETFILE is easy, secure and allows the CRA to process your return much faster. If you use NETFILE and are expecting a refund, your money can be directly deposited in your account in as little as eight business days (weeks faster than if you filed on paper). For a list of software and web applications, including some that are free for everyone, go to www.cra.gc.ca/netfilessoftware. Also, new this year, the CRA's Auto-fill my return service is available through some certified software. This secure service automatically fills in certain parts of your income tax and benefit return. To use the Auto-fill my return service, you must be fully registered for My Account at www.cra.gc.ca/myaccount.

You can deal with many of your tax matters online, and at your convenience, by using **My Account or My Business Account**, which are both available at www.cra.gc.ca/electronicsservices. Change your return, track your refund, change your address, and much more, all with a few clicks of a mouse. With so many services available online, it's easy to stay on top of your tax affairs year-round. You can also choose to receive your notice of assessment online, so you can view your mail when it's convenient for you. On the go? Get the MyCRA mobile app and access key portions of your tax information wherever you are, from your mobile device.

Even with all of your training and credentials, it's still important to be vigilant. If your clients suggest you do a job "under-the-table" know that by accepting cash and avoiding taxes, you are putting yourself at risk. If you are caught evading taxes, you may face fines, penalties, or even jail time.

Under-the-table deals undermine the integrity of Canada's tax system and deprive Canadians of funds for vital programs that benefit everyone, including children and seniors. For more about the underground economy, go to www.cra.gc.ca/undergroundeconomy.

If you have ever made a mistake or omission and would like to correct your tax affairs, you can find more information about the CRA's Voluntary Disclosures Program at www.cra.gc.ca/voluntarydisclosures.

To find out more about deductions and tax credits for employed tradespersons, go to www.cra.gc.ca/trades.

You can also stay on top of the latest CRA news or tax tips by following @CanRevAgency on Twitter.