

# A Smart Choice

MERIT members describe their experience  
with the MERIT BENEFIT PLAN



Saskatchewan is built on MERIT

# Introduction

**“Over 300 open shop construction companies in Saskatchewan are members of MERIT Contractors Association. Under the MERIT Benefit Plan, these members receive excellent coverage for their employees, including medical, dental, vision, prescription, life insurance, long-term disability and even travel insurance and counseling support.”**

– KAREN LOW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The MERIT Benefit Plan also provides other important benefits, such as

- portability of the plan among MERIT employers
- an hour bank system which allows employees to bank hours during busy months to be used for coverage during layoff or slower months
- full refund of tuition fees for employees attending apprenticeship training
- hundreds of vendor discounts
- Gold Seal accredited training programs at a discounted rate
- advocacy with all levels of government

The MERIT Benefit Plan not only provides premium coverage for employees, but also is easy and convenient for employers to implement and operate. A dedicated call centre is available for support for both employers and employees.

Here you will find written testimonials from a few of our members on how the MERIT plan has met their needs, while providing their employees with excellent coverage.

For more information on the MERIT Benefit Plan, please visit [www.meritsask.com](http://www.meritsask.com) or contact:

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# About the MERIT Benefit Plan

## CONTRACTOR #1:



We joined MERIT when our general contracting business was fairly new. We had started without a benefit plan but quickly learned that we needed one to be competitive with our compensation package. We joined MERIT because they had an excellent plan, the cost was reasonable and the premiums were relatively stable. One of our owners had been with a plan a few years back that saw huge increases each year so we knew we had to choose carefully.

The costs over the past two years we've been on the plan have been very stable, increasing by about 5% per year. We've been very happy with the coverage and the support from the call centre has been an important resource for our employees.

<b>2013 RATE</b>	\$ .84 per hour	5% increase
<b>2014 RATE</b>	\$ .90 per hour	6.7% increase
<b>2015 RATE</b>	\$ .94 per hour	4.5% increase
<b>2016 RATE</b>	\$ .99 per hour	5.3% increase

One of the biggest unexpected benefits has been the training programs. Our employees are very skilled tradespeople but as we grew, we realized we needed to provide them with some management skills. The MERIT training programs were excellent for that and gave our employees the chance to get to know others from the industry. With the discount for members we estimate we saved over \$3000 in the last two years on training.”

# About the MERIT Benefit Plan

## CONTRACTOR #2:



As a heavy construction company we are challenged by the seasonal nature of our business. On our old plan, when we laid people off in the fall, we paid their benefit plan premiums over the winter if they had been with us for more than five years. The rest of them were on their own.

The hour bank concept of the MERIT plan has worked out well for us. Most of our field staff work about 220 hours or more a month from April to November. That means they are able to bank enough hours to keep them in benefits over the winter. If they don't have enough hours, they always have the choice of paying for the plan themselves at a very reasonable cost.

	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR
<b>HOURS WORKED</b>	220	240	240	240	240	240	240	220	0	0	0	0
<b>HOURS BANKED</b>	70	90	90	90	90	90	90	70	0	0	0	0
<b>HOURLY BANK BALANCE</b>	70	160	250	340	430	520	610	680	530	380	230	80
<b>IN BENEFIT</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

We really feel that this system is much more fair for our employees. It has also reduced our administration time and our actual out of pocket costs over the winter have declined dramatically. That works well since our cash flow is also quite a bit less too.”

# About the MERIT Benefit Plan

**CONTRACTOR #3:**



When our company joined MERIT eight years ago we knew it was the right choice of benefit plan. We made the decision to get more involved in the association and five years ago I joined their Board of Directors.

I can honestly say that the connections and networks I made through MERIT have been a significant factor in our success. As a plumbing sub-contractor, I was able to personally meet and talk with our province's largest and most influential general contractors. Those personal relationships ended up translating into business relationships.

I have no way of quantifying the value of my involvement with MERIT, but I do know that it's been a very profitable relationship for our company."

# About the MERIT Benefit Plan

## CONTRACTOR #4:



I own a good-sized electrical contracting business. We employ 45 journeymen and apprentices, and another eight people that work behind the scenes in the office. I joined the MERIT program about two years ago. I joined initially because the premiums were about the same as my old plan, but the coverage was much better. I think it's important to give my employees the best coverage possible without breaking the bank. But I soon learned that there was much more to the MERIT program.

Being a contractor, numbers are important to me. Here's what the difference worked out to from an accounting perspective:

	OLD PLAN	MERIT PLAN
<b>Total monthly premiums for Field Employees</b>	<b>\$7,580</b> Avg \$168.44/person	<b>\$7,191</b> Avg \$159.80/person
<b>Total monthly premiums for Office Employees</b>	<b>\$2,360</b> Avg \$295/person	<b>\$2,128</b> Avg \$266/person
<b>TOTAL MONTHLY PREMIUMS</b>	<b>\$9,940</b>	<b>\$9,319</b>
<b>Annual Savings</b>		<b>\$7,452</b>
<b>Tuition Refunds for Apprentices</b>		<b>\$6,400</b>
<b>Reduced Fees for MERIT Training Programs</b>		<b>\$1,200</b>
<b>Rebate of Membership Fees</b>		<b>\$6,885</b>
<b>Total Annual Savings by Moving to MERIT</b>		<b>\$21,937</b>

Some things you can't put a price on. Now I have better coverage for my people, and they can bank their hours to keep their benefits when they are laid off or at school. Plus, I use it as a hiring tool because so many of the electrical companies I compete with are also with MERIT. When I hire new people, they know they can carry their plan with them."