



PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR HAIRDRESSING SERVICES IN NORTH AMERICA AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM OF SERVICES

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Abstract. *The growth of the hairdressing industry in North America required regulation and the establishment of professional standards for hairdressing services. The article examines the practice of regulating and standardizing hairdressing services in the United States and Canada. It studies the experience of standardizing the hairdressing profession, licensing, and registering specialists. It was found that in the United States, the standardization of hairdressing qualifications takes place at the state level, while in Canada, legislative requirements for the qualifications of specialists are established at the provincial level. Each US state has legislation requiring the creation of a Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, which regulates and sets standards for the provision of hairdressing services to ensure consumer protection. The experience of the Board (Bureau) of Barbering and Cosmetology in California, which determines training programs for hairdressers and sets specific requirements for educational institutions, is examined in detail. In Canada, professional standards are set by provincial regulatory bodies or offices for the training and development of hairdressers' qualifications, while voluntary standards for hairdressing services are set by self-regulating professional industry associations. In some Canadian provinces, the hairdressing and barbering professions are more strictly regulated (Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario), but in most provinces, certification, licensing, and registration are voluntary. The experience of the province of Ontario in shaping the legislative framework for the development of the skilled hairdressing profession, the activities of the Ontario Skilled Trades Agency to improve the training of hairdressers, the development of training standards and curricula, and the initiatives of the professional industry association, the Ontario Professional Hairdressers Association (OPHA), which supports the comprehensive development of hairdressing.*

Keywords: *professional standards, hairdressers, hairdressing services, hairdressing profession, hairdressing industry, regulation, standardization.*

Introduction

Over the past few years, the hairdressing industry has grown thanks to healthier economic conditions and increased consumer confidence. Households with higher incomes have turned hair care from an occasional indulgence into a regular part of their daily routine, stimulating consistent customer visits and encouraging salons to expand their offerings. Increased social media marketing and a focus on personalizing the salon experience have attracted new customers, particularly among young people and professionals seeking health-focused services. Investments in digital booking and engaging online content further support this trend, offering convenience to consumers in a market where customer loyalty is key. These trends have led to revenue growth at



a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.5% to approximately \$60.0 billion over the past five years, with a projected decline of 1.0% in 2025. Careful cost management is essential to maintaining profitability amid competitive and operational challenges.

Results

With the professional beauty market growing in terms of revenue in North America, the quality and professionalism of hairdressing services is becoming a new requirement among customers. The professional beauty market generated \$78.6 billion in revenue in 2024. The hair care segment generated the largest revenue [2]. Hair salons in the US and Canada are increasingly offering visitors personalized, unique services and a unique customer experience (Table 1). Competition in the beauty industry is an additional factor driving the need to improve professional standards for hairdressing services.

Legal and institutional conditions in North America regulate and define the principles of professional activity in the beauty industry. The main mechanisms for regulating the professional work of hairdressers include state licensing, certification, educational requirements for specialists in this field, as well as voluntary standards of professional associations. In the US and Canada, different approaches to regulating professional hairdressing services have been developed, which is due to the administrative structure and powers of local authorities.

In the US, the process of professional licensing of hairdressers is carried out at the state level by a licensing body. State boards of cosmetology and barbering are established as regulatory bodies in the states, which set requirements for the training and professional development of hairdressers. State boards regulate the conditions for obtaining a license, monitor professional standards for the provision of services, and may impose fines for disciplinary violations on specialists or establishments.

In California, the Board (Bureau) of Barbering and Cosmetology (BBC) has been established, whose main function is to protect consumer rights by regulating and licensing individuals who provide barbering services and barbershops. The Barbering and Cosmetology Act defines the protection of the public as a priority for the Bureau [9].



Table 1 - The market for hairdressing services in North America according to 2025 data

US market	Canadian market
<p>The hairdressing industry is growing due to an increase in household income Beauty salons are expanding their offerings amid growing visitor numbers Hairdressing services are more focused on safety and health Competitive and operational challenges drive the need for effective salon cost management Hair salons are “migrating” to fast-growing cities and densely populated areas Hair salon revenues are growing by an average of 5.5% annually</p>	<p>The hairdressing industry is developing amid growing competition and changing consumer preferences Trend toward expansion of hairdressing services Improvements in service delivery methods and tools Hairdressers provide a unique experience for customers and are located in densely populated urban areas Hairdressing salon revenues are growing by an average of 5.4% annually</p>

Source: summarized by the author based on [3; 4]

The Board of Barbering and Cosmetology supervises the activities of barbers in accordance with applicable law, ensuring that barbers have undergone special training and acquired the relevant knowledge to provide services that promote public safety. The Council for Hairdressing Services and Cosmetology determines training programs for hairdressers and sets specific requirements for educational institutions.

Table 2 - Number of licenses issued in California in 2024-2025

Type of license	1st quarter of 2024	2nd quarter of 2024	Q3 2024	4th quarter of 2024
Establishments	2213	1846	1651	2021
Hairdressers	1106	975	869	1013
Hairdressing students	374	347	296	416
Hairdresser-stylist	16	20	19	16
Total	3709	3188	2835	3466

Source: [8]

In Florida, the licensing authority is the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, which sets the training requirements for hairdressers. In Texas, regulatory functions are performed by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, which sets the basic training requirements for Class A hairdressers and



barbers.

Table 3 - Comparison of regulations governing hairdressing services in the US and Canada

Comparison feature	United States	Canada
Level of regulation	At the state level: each state establishes rules and professional standards (requirements) for the qualification and training of hairdressers	In the provinces, standards for the provision of hairdressing services are mainly set by self-regulatory organizations
Federal regulation of hairdressing services	There are no federal laws or standards for the provision of professional hairdressing services, nor are there any mandatory requirements for cosmetic products in the beauty industry	There is no general legislation defining standards for the provision of hairdressing services or mandatory legal requirements for the safety of cosmetic products
Main regulatory bodies	State councils in the field of hairdressing services and cosmetology	Certification or registration bodies in the provinces
Licensing	Licenses are mandatory for the provision of hairdressing services	Licenses are mandatory in some provinces, while in others only certification is required
Educational (professional) requirements for hairdressers	Mandatory number of training hours depending on the state	Mandatory educational requirements for hairdressers and possible educational programs
Professional associations	Industry associations that support and develop standards for hairdressing services	Associations and industry self-regulatory organizations in provinces that set standards for hairdressing services (Association supporting hairdressers in Manitoba, Beauty Council in Ontario, industry Association of Professional Hairdressers of Ontario (OPHA))

Each state in the US develops and approves a set of requirements and rules for hairdressers to pass exams to obtain a license and subsequently provide hairdressing services. In general, professionals must complete an approved number of training hours



in professional licensed salons and pass a qualifying exam. License renewal may require periodic training and refresher courses, depending on state requirements.

Table 4 - Regulation of the hairdressing and barbering professions in different provinces of Canada

Province	Regulated		Not regulated	
	Mandatory certification, licensing, and registration		Voluntary certification, licensing, and registration	No certification, licensing, or registration
	Exclusive right to practice and operate granted to certified individuals	Use of the title of hairdresser is permitted only to certified professionals	Use of the title of hairdresser is permitted but may be protected by law	No regulatory procedures
Alberta	+	-	-	-
British Columbia	-	-	+	-
Manitoba	+	+	-	-
New Brunswick	-	-	+	-
Newfoundland and Labrador	-	-	+	-
Nova Scotia	+	-	-	-
Northwest Territories	-	-	+	-
Nunavut	-	-	+	-
Ontario	+	-	-	-
Prince Edward Island	-	-	+	-
Quebec	-	-	+	-
Saskatchewan	-	-	+	-
Yukon	-	-	+	-

Source: [1]

Let's consider the practice of regulating hairdressers in Ontario, Canada's second largest province in terms of size and population. On January 1, 2022, the Building



Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021 (BOSTA) came into force in Ontario, establishing the legal framework for regulating skilled trades, including hairdressing. The Act provides for the creation of a state agency to oversee the certification of trades in Ontario (Skilled Trades Ontario, STO), as well as to monitor the training process for specialists. The Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development identifies and classifies professions, defines areas of professional practice, and approves institutions for training and professional practice. The Registrar of Skilled Trades Ontario is the authority responsible for issuing, renewing, extending, suspending, and revoking certificates of qualification and temporary certificates of qualification. The Ontario Registrar of Skilled Trades is also responsible for maintaining a public registry of apprentices and certificate holders in compulsory trades, establishing apprenticeship programs, establishing a compliance system, and ensuring enforcement [7].

The Ontario government created the Ontario Skilled Trades Agency to improve the training of skilled tradespeople, simplify service delivery, promote and market the trades, develop the latest training standards and curricula, and ensure a user-friendly experience for tradespeople. An independent board of directors leads the agency to implement the government's Skilled Trades Strategy to overcome the stigma surrounding the trades, simplify the system, and encourage employers to hire more apprentices.

The Ontario Skilled Trades Agency is responsible for training standards and skilled training and certification in Ontario, which includes: developing training programs, including training standards, curriculum standards, and certification exams; assessing the experience and qualifications of individuals who have not completed a training program in Ontario; issuing certificates of qualification for all professions with certification exams; renewing certificates of qualification for regulated professions; maintaining a Public Registry of individuals authorized to work in regulated professions; promoting inclusivity and diversity in professions and training; conducting research on professions and training.

Alongside government regulatory bodies in Canada, there are professional



industry associations for hairdressers that play an important role in setting professional standards for the provision of quality professional services. Professional associations in the hairdressing industry set voluntary standards and help shape the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of hairdressers.

The Ontario Professional Hairdressers Association (OPHA) is an industry organization that supports the comprehensive development of hairdressing by implementing measures for licensed hairdressers and registered hairdressing apprentices [5].

The Ontario Professional Hairdressers Association has received government funding to support mentors – teachers and students in the hairdressing industry. The new hairdressing skills development program is being implemented with the support of the Skills Development Fund, established by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development [6].

As part of the Ontario Professional Hairdressers Association, OPHA Connect has been created – a new online resource platform that will provide support to over 35,000 professionals in the province. The program consists of a series of online training modules that will help mentors, students, trainees, and employers complete the program to simplify the certification process. The goal of creating an online platform is to increase the coverage of specialists with educational resources [6]. After the challenges caused by restrictions in the hairdressing industry during the coronavirus pandemic, beauty salon and hairdressing salon owners welcome the initiative to create an online platform to support hairdressers and stylists with educational resources [6].

Conclusions

The growth of the hairdressing industry in North America required regulation and the establishment of professional standards for the provision of hairdressing services. The practice of regulating and standardizing the provision of hairdressing services in the US and Canada indicates fairly strict requirements for the qualifications of hairdressers, their certification, licensing, and registration. In the United States, the standardization of hairdressing qualifications takes place at the state level. Each state in the United States has legislation requiring the creation of a Board of Hairdressing



and Cosmetology, which regulates and sets standards for the provision of hairdressing services to ensure consumer protection. The experience of the Board (Bureau) of Barbering and Cosmetology in California demonstrates a high level of professionalism in determining training programs for hairdressers and establishing specific requirements for educational institutions. In Canada, provincial legislation sets out requirements for the qualifications of specialists, regulatory bodies have been established, and professional industry associations are in place, allowing for a more comprehensive development of the hairdressing profession. In Canada, professional standards are set by provincial regulatory bodies or offices for the training and development of hairdressing qualifications, while voluntary standards for the provision of hairdressing services are set by self-regulating professional industry associations. In some Canadian provinces, the hairdressing and barbering professions are more strictly regulated (Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario), but in most provinces, certification, licensing, and registration are voluntary.

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