

SKILLS

A. Addressing Local Labour Market Needs through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program

Submitted by: The Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Co-Sponsored by Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Timmins Chamber of Commerce, North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce, and Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Employers across Ontario, but particularly in small cities of under 200,000 population and rural areas, are experiencing a shortage of qualified employees and a shrinking labour market. This challenge will continue to grow as existing workers retire.

Background

Many employers are already facing a shortage of qualified employees and communities are struggling with a shrinking labour market. According to research by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, finding someone with proper qualifications is the top challenge for businesses looking to recruit new staff.¹³²

One part of the solution to the skills shortage challenge is through progressive immigration policies and processes. The current Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) is one area where Ontario's policies put us at a disadvantage in attracting migrants to meet our labour market needs. The list of eligible professions is narrow and does not include many of the professions that are experiencing shortages such as plumbers, chefs, personal support workers, and truck drivers.

To add further challenges, the OINP requires employers to obtain a labour market impact assessment (LMIA) prior to offering a job to a recent migrant. This LMIA uses provincial information in determining whether a job can be offered to an immigrant. Employers in small and rural communities who are unable to attract Canadian citizens from major urban centres are often denied the opportunity to hire an immigrant because the LMIA data shows that sufficient Canadian citizens are available to fill the role but does not consider whether Canadian citizens are willing to relocate to that area.

A third area of concern is that the OINP does not allocate any of its 6,600 nominated spots to support regional immigration. Between 2011 and 2016 more than three-quarters of all immigrants to Ontario (both Federal & OINP) arrived in the Greater Toronto Area. The OINP would be best utilized by supporting the attraction efforts of communities outside of the GTA.

The Manitoba Immigrant Nomination Program demonstrates the efficacy of being flexible. It includes a much broader list of eligible professions, does not require a LMIA, and provides local communities the opportunity to nominate a certain number of migrants to address local labour shortages. This approach has seen positive results. Each year, some 15,000 immigrants arrive in Manitoba. According to provincial data, 90 percent of Manitoba nominees are employed within their first year and over 130,000 Provincial Nominees have landed since 1998 with a 90 percent retention rate.

The expansion of the list of in-demand jobs to include NOC skill level C, the elimination of the need for a labour market impact assessment for small and rural communities, and the allocation of a percentage of nominee spots by region would improve the ability of small and rural communities to address labour shortages through the OINP.

¹³² Ontario Chamber of Commerce. 2017. *Talent in Transition: Addressing the Skills Mismatch in Ontario*. <https://occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/Talent-in-Transition.pdf>.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement changes to the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program by:
 - a. expanding the list of eligible professions to include NOC skill level C positions that are in demand in each community;
 - b. allocating OINP spots on a regional basis to address labour market needs; and
 - c. working with the Federal Government to eliminate the requirement for a labour market impact assessment for OINP participants to be hired in Ontario communities with populations under 200,000.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

B. Address the Growing Labour Force Disconnect by Creating a Stronger Business/Commerce Curriculum

Submitted by: The Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce and Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The long-term competitiveness and productivity of the Ontario economy will largely depend on the skill level of our workforce. Financial literacy is in high demand by employers, however, the Government of Ontario has yet to introduce and mandate an essential financial literacy course in the secondary school curriculum to prepare students to make informed business decisions in the workforce.

Background

The new Ontario economy requires businesses to embrace innovation and seize opportunity to remain competitive. Innovation involves investing in technology or modifying the work process to do things more efficiently, requiring less labour for the same output. This can make it difficult for local manufacturing companies to compete with the labour rates of emerging economies. While the core business may remain in Ontario, much of the lower level work will be done abroad.

These trends will cause the new Ontario economy to require relatively fewer employees and more business owners. Many citizens, including people with non-traditional business backgrounds such as the trades, will need to run their own business.

Ontario's future economy will also require residents to be better money managers. Currently, middle- and high-income households are not saving enough for retirement, although most have the tools to do so, as noted by the government's 2014 Budget and Long-Term Report on the Economy.¹³³ Canadian household debt hit record levels in 2015 with roughly 80% of the population in debt.¹³⁴

Including a mandatory introduction to business and commerce course with financial literacy components as a compulsory credit to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma will provide all high school students with a basic understanding of how to run a business and manage household finances. Key concepts could include how the different forms of debt and investments work and how to construct a business plan and how to create a budget.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Create a mandatory grade ten Introduction to Business and Commerce course from existing business and family economics curriculum and designate it as a compulsory credit to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma.
2. Dedicate a specific section of the course to financial literacy. This would include but not be limited to personal and family budgeting, the value of credit, mortgages, insurance, debt management, and accountability to pay.

¹³³ Ontario Ministry of Finance. 2014. *Ontario's Long-Term Report on the Economy*. <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/ltr/2014/ltr2014.pdf>.

¹³⁴ Bank of Montreal. 2015. "The Canadian Debt Picture: Home and Auto Buying, Renovations and Education Top List of Household Debt Contributors." <https://newsroom.bmo.com/2015-08-12-The-Canadian-Debt-Picture-Home-and-Auto-Buying-Renovations-and-Education-Top-List-of-Household-Debt-Contributors>.

3. Promote in all school districts in the province, the Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM) program, a ministry-approved specialized program that allows students to focus their learning on a specific economic sector while meeting the requirements to graduate from secondary school.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

C. Improve Workforce Competitiveness for Rural Communities and Small Urban Centres by Creating a Flexible Apprenticeship Program

Submitted by: The Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. Co-Sponsored by: Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, Guelph Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Rural communities and small urban centers are under great pressure to attract and retain workforce talent. A flexible apprenticeship system is a way to meet that challenge and have a positive impact on Ontario's economic output.

Background

Expanding Ontario's skilled trades labour pool is critical to the continued transformation of Ontario's economy. Skilled trades are fundamental to creating value as a base for economic activity in all businesses in the province. However, some businesses in the skilled trades sector are at a disadvantage because of the reality of limited opportunities in the geographic region in which they operate. Discussion around rural and smaller urban center opportunities vs. larger urban center opportunities in the skilled trades sector has led to a general consensus that the need is simply different in the smaller urban centers and rural communities and the opportunity to take on more apprentices is reflective of a different workload and pace between smaller and larger communities.

In November 2018, the provincial government announced that all ratios for all trades would become 1:1 – one journey person to one apprentice. This 1:1 would apply across the board, so that a business with two journey persons could have two apprentices. This was not the case for many years and our Chamber membership recognizes and welcomes the government's stance as an important step forward to mitigating the skilled trades gap that currently exists.

That said, the reality is that the 1:1 ratio status is not the only solution. The apprenticeship system needs to continue to demonstrate flexibility, particularly for businesses in smaller urban and rural centers. Not only would this flexibility support employers but create more opportunity for the people of Ontario to live and work in their home communities.

In a previous policy resolution (Improve Workforce Competitiveness for Rural Communities and Small Urban Centres by creating a Flexible Apprenticeship Program, 2016), we suggested a pilot program for Ontario that mimics a program in Nova Scotia.

In Nova Scotia, where they have a 1:1 ratio, employers can apply for a ratio increase for the number of apprentices per journey person on a per project basis. A form is submitted online and reviewed by the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) based on the following criteria:

- Geographic location of the employer to determine if there is a limited capability to locate and employ journey persons;
- Steps undertaken by the employer to hire more journey persons;
- Whether the employer has previously requested ratio adjustments and has been denied such requests;
- Whether previous ratio adjustments were cancelled because of a violation in the terms and/or conditions;
- The availability of senior level apprentices (note: senior level refers to final level apprentices); and
- The attendance of registered apprentices in technical training.

This program has been in place for over a decade and the NSAA says it receives 40-50 requests per year. While the NSAA was unable to provide statistics on the program, they did say that ratio variances are generally approved.¹³⁵

Flexibility in the apprenticeship system is also evident in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland where there is a ratio of one journeyman to two apprentices to reflect demand; and as highlighted in the Tony Dean Review on the Ontario College of Trades, British Columbia has never had mandatory ratios.

As they did in 2016, employers in 2018 continued to identify workforce as the key to success. In the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2017 Business Confidence Survey, 77% of employers identified the ability to recruit and retain talent as being critical to their competitiveness.

Between the Dean Review and a Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development report in early 2018 on the apprenticeship system, there has been ongoing agreement between stakeholders that change is required.

Currently, apprentices need to rely on journeymen and employers to help them with their education and training, which in turn helps the apprentice to successfully write their Certificate of Qualification and to become certified in their trade. In smaller urban and rural communities where the pool of employers and journeymen is much smaller, having a flexible ratio system is critical to workforce development in the skilled trades, and to long term and sustainable economic growth across Ontario.

The proposed pilot project, based on the Nova Scotia model is an opportunity, in the short term, to gather data and assess the need of small and medium-sized employers in different regional and geographic areas of the province.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement a three-year pilot project that would allow small and medium-sized employers in rural communities and small urban centers across Ontario to apply for an apprenticeship ratio increase.
2. Compile and assess the data from the pilot project to inform future programming and policies.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

¹³⁵ Email correspondence with Kim Kennedy, Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency received December 16, 2018.

D. Addressing Ontario's Skills Gap at the Secondary School Level

Submitted by: The Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Huron Chamber of Commerce – Goderich, Central and North Huron, the Newmarket and Vaughan Chamber, the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, and the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

Issue

Widespread concerns have been expressed over the potential supply of workers in the trades. Currently, Ontario is facing a skills gap as the number of young tradespersons has dropped and fewer still are enrolling in college programs to replace an aging workforce.¹³⁶ With stigmas surrounding trades work and fewer secondary schools offering skilled workshop programs, Ontario is in need of a service skills strategy to promote career pathways in the skilled trades.

Background

Employing just over 925,000, the trades industry is one of Ontario's largest employers.¹³⁷ In the next few years, it is estimated that 60,000 workers will be required to replace those retiring, who will take essential technical, supervisory, and management skills with them. Furthermore, an additional 75,000 workers will be needed to fill positions related to new projects.¹³⁸ The construction and maintenance industry will also need to hire, train, and retain almost 103,900 additional workers as just over 90,000 of Ontario's current construction labour force are expected to retire.¹³⁹

Available work in support services levelled out in 2017, and unemployment rates in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction returned to historically low levels in 2017.¹⁴⁰ There will be a 47 percent gap for technical occupations, 56 percent for supervisors and foremen, 18 percent for skilled trades and 10 percent for production workers. The industry will need to hire roughly 18,000 people in these occupations from 2018 to 2027, but is only expected to secure 8,500 new entrants, leaving a total gap of 9,500 – meaning about half of all vacancies will go unfilled.¹⁴¹

However, enrollment trends are exacerbating this issue: Ontario's colleges are seeing a decline in enrollment in the trades as only 26 percent of young adults are considering a career in the skilled trades.¹⁴² There are stigmas that present barriers when attracting youth to the trades- the perception that the sector offers limited opportunities for learning, growth and social mobility impacts their decisions in choosing career pathways in the trades. Having long been perpetuated by parents, students are still adhering to a “university-first” culture much to the detriment of Ontario's economic requirements. Ontario needs tradespeople who can build, repair and maintain its infrastructure and systems.^{143 144}

Furthermore, enrolment in undergraduate mining engineering programs dropped 12 per cent between 2015 and 2016 – the largest decline of all engineering programs. The evidence shows that there are skills gaps in important areas of the economy, owing largely to changes to the province's industrial and technological

¹³⁶ <http://www.mining.com/mining-jobs-canada-go-begging-mihr-report/>

¹³⁷ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/labour-market-report-december-2018>

¹³⁸ https://www.rainbowschools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/SHSM_Construction.pdf

¹³⁹ Buildforce Canada, “Construction & Maintenance Looking Forward”, Jan. 2019

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.northernontariobusiness.com/industry-news/mining/thousands-of-mining-workers-needed-to-meet-demand-in-next-decade-report-1125120>

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² <http://rescon.com/reports/files/DAWSON-REPORT-OHBA-report.pdf>

¹⁴³ Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, “Making Apprenticeship a National Skills Priority”, Aug. 2018. http://caf-fca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/FINA_Aug2018.pdf

¹⁴⁴ https://www.collegeoftrades.ca/wp-content/uploads/Trades_Today_Spring_2016_Web_Final-2.pdf

profile. Moreover, given longer-term demographic trends, skills gaps will widen and labour shortages will continue to emerge.

That skills gap comes at a significant cost for Ontario, costing the provincial economy up to \$24.3 billion in forgone GDP and \$3.7 billion in provincial tax revenues- a result of too many young Ontarians being encouraged to pursue a university education over a career in the skilled trades.¹⁴⁵

The province cannot afford a failure to maximize its human capital potential through insufficient or poorly aligned training and education. Even with Ontarians' high level of post-secondary education, more is needed, along with better efforts to align skills development with skills requirements and encourage secondary school students to choose career pathways in the skilled trades. Failure to take action on skills gaps will have enormous impacts on the economy, firm performance, and economic well-being.

Historically, the Province has provided support to employers with internships for hiring secondary student through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund internship programs which was efficient in encouraging employers to help individuals build skills.¹⁴⁶

Ontario needs to act proactively to mitigate future labour market pressures. Generating new interest in the trades in Ontario is crucial, as an aging workforce looks to retirement.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Develop and implement strategies and initiatives that enhance exposure to the trades at the secondary school level.
2. Work with Ontario's employer community and post-secondary institutions to determine and promote in-demand skilled trades to secondary schools.
3. Develop trades camps for youth in partnership with secondary schools and local colleges to further enhance exposure to the trades.
4. Provide financial assistance and insurance for employers who take secondary school students on trades-related placements.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

¹⁴⁵ [https://www.collegesontario.org/Need to Make Skills Work Report June 2013.pdf](https://www.collegesontario.org/Need%20to%20Make%20Skills%20Work%20Report%20June%202013.pdf)

¹⁴⁶ Ontario College of Trades, "Trades Play a Leading Role", 2016

E. Keeping the Best Pieces of the Ontario College of Trades in the Wind Down

Submitted by: The Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Kingston Chamber of Commerce.

Issue

There were some pieces of the Ontario College of Trades that were working and should be kept as the program is repatriated to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Background

With the passing of Bill 47, the *Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018*, the call to wind down the Ontario College of Trades was made official. Since the College started operation in 2013, there has been concern from the skilled trades and the Chamber Network as to its true value to the employer, the trades, and the public.

That said, we have since learned that there were parts of the College that our Chamber members found useful to their business and to their customers, the people of Ontario.

One of these parts was the public registry. The registry that indicates whether or not the business or person is in good standing with their qualifications, how long they've been active and is reflective of all members in the compulsory and voluntary trades in Ontario.

"If keeping the registry helps increase the professionalism of the trades without driving the costs of being a tradesperson up then I am fully behind it."¹⁴⁷

"We often direct potential customers to the register as a way to confirm that our company was in good standing."¹⁴⁸

Both members also see it as a way to discourage the underground economy if set up in a way that is advantageous to tradespeople and not prohibitive, particularly around cost.

If promoting the skilled trades continues to be a mandate of the new regime then a public registry would go a long way toward fulfilling that mandate.

The second area that our members felt was a benefit to their profession was the commitment to reduce barriers for internationally qualified tradespeople to become qualified in Ontario. It is anticipated that most of Ontario's workforce of the future will be coming to our province through immigration channels. Creating clear pathways for assessing certification and capabilities in a timely manner will allow more new Canadians to work in the skilled trades economy sooner.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Keep the public registry for skilled tradespeople operational.
2. Create clear pathways for international and interprovincial skilled tradespeople to transition smoothly into the Ontario economy.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

¹⁴⁷ Email correspondence with Chamber Member on Monday, December 10, 2018.

¹⁴⁸ In-person meeting with Chamber Member on Monday, November 5, 2018

F. Strengthen Connectivity Between Businesses and Post-Secondary Institutions

Submitted by: The Whitby Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the Brock Board of Trade

Issue

Skills and workforce development remains a top issue for a thriving business climate. Ontario businesses require access to job ready and experienced graduates who meet their needs in order to scale up and grow. The provincial government can support stronger linkages between post-secondary institutions and businesses to ensure the supply of skilled employees meets the demand of businesses.

Background

Upon hire, small businesses require new graduates to have the right skills and experience in order to hit the ground running and to contribute to the business as quickly as possible. Ensuring students in college and university receive hands-on learning opportunities while still attending school presents a huge advantage to both parties and the economy as a whole.

Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) perceive barriers to providing these experiential learning opportunities to students, such as, costs of student compensation and training and other administrative and operational requirements.

As a result, these barriers limit the number of opportunities for experiential learning to be gained, thereby limiting the potential for businesses to have access to the experienced talent they otherwise could.

On the one hand, businesses benefit from new post-secondary graduates being adaptable and prepared for the unknown jobs of the future, and armed with a skillset that includes critical thinking, problem solving, communication and teamwork. These skills help workers thrive in changing environments and are seen as critical to success in any business.

A greater number of small businesses, in particular, stand to benefit from new thinking and ideas based on emerging research gained through deeper ties with post-secondary institutions. These initiatives also provide small businesses with access to high quality employees and strengthen their ability to recruit graduates equipped with the skills they are looking for.

On the other hand, a post-secondary education that offers both rigorous academic programs and hands-on experiential learning¹⁴⁹ has been proven to help develop the adaptable skills employers need. Eighty-six per cent of current students and recent graduates in Canada have said experiential learning led to an easier transition from post-secondary to a successful career.¹⁵⁰

While universities and colleges have developed vital services and programs to engage employers and students in experiential learning, providing an adequate supply of these opportunities to meet student demand is a continuing challenge.

That is why early and strong collaboration between post-secondary institutions and business will help ensure students graduate with the skills necessary for today's employers and the jobs of tomorrow.

¹⁴⁹ Experiential learning is when students learn by doing, using their theoretical knowledge in practical, real-life, or work-related situations. There are many types of experiential learning opportunities designed to give students practical skills, including co-ops, work placements and internships, as well as projects in which students work on finding solutions for employer or industry challenges.

¹⁵⁰ "Work Integrated Learning and Post-Secondary Education: What Students Think." Abacus Data, Fall 2016

Increasing the supply of experiential learning opportunities is also an opportunity for small businesses. Small businesses make up 98 per cent of total businesses and two-thirds of private sector employment in Ontario.¹⁵¹ Their involvement is particularly critical, as the SME category includes a growing number of start-ups arising from innovation and entrepreneurial activities across the province.

There is an opportunity for government to facilitate more linkages between small businesses and post-secondary institutions to create more hands-on learning opportunities for students.

This can be achieved by building upon existing programs that incentivize small businesses to hire students and recent graduates, as well as exploring new programs that encourage employers to work with universities and colleges to offer additional experiential learning initiatives.

There is also an opportunity for the government to prioritize the marketing of existing programs to employers to help raise awareness of these opportunities.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. In collaboration with small businesses and post-secondary institutions, explore new programs to incentivize greater employer participation in experiential learning initiatives, including, but not limited to, co-op education, work placements, internships, industry-recognized in-class projects, mentorship programs and incubators, accelerators and innovation hubs.
2. Expand the Co-operative Education Tax Credit.
3. Introduce a tax credit available to employers who hire graduates of co-operative education or equivalent programs that allows employers to claim a percentage of wages and salaries for the first year of full-time employment.
4. Direct business-facing Ministries to prioritize communicating new and existing opportunities to support experiential learning opportunities and the associated benefits.

Effective Date: May 4, 2019

Sunset Date: May 4, 2022

¹⁵¹ Statistics Canada. 2016. Key Small Business Statistics – June 2016.
http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/h_03018.html#figure2-1-1.

G. Improving Indigenous Education in Ontario

Submitted by: Timmins Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce and the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Workforce shortages are among the most significant challenges for Ontario businesses, and it is widely recognized that Canada's Indigenous people – the fastest-growing population in the country – must be a key component of Ontario's strategy. While educational attainment for Indigenous people has been on the rise, more must be done to ensure that all Ontarians have the education and training needed to succeed in a modern economy.

Background

This diverse population has typically had lower educational levels than the general population in Canada. Results indicate that, while on the positive side there are a greater number of highly educated Indigenous peoples, there is also a continuing gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Data also indicate that the proportion with less than high school education declined, which corresponds with a rise of those with a post-secondary education; the reverse was true in 1996. Despite these gains, however, the large and increasing absolute numbers of those without a high school education is alarming.¹⁵²

More must be done to close attainment gaps in Indigenous education: almost half of the Indigenous population of working age has some form of post-secondary qualification¹⁵³, as compared to the two-thirds of the non-Indigenous population of the same age.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, 10 percent of the working-age Indigenous population has a university degree, as compared to the non-Indigenous population's 26 percent.¹⁵⁵

Bridging this gap would have a considerable economic impact: if the education and labour market outcomes of Indigenous Canadians were to reach the level of the general population by 2026, government spending would drop by \$14.2 billion, while increasing Indigenous income by \$36.5 billion.¹⁵⁶

As the provincial government is responsible for education of the Indigenous population living off reserve, Ontario's efforts to address these responsibilities falls within the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. It allows for enhanced investment in and collaboration between the various components of the provincial education system serving Indigenous students. It also places much-needed emphasis on the unique learning styles and cultural perspectives of Aboriginal students in provincial curricula, assessment practices, and professional teacher development.

Another key element is the presence of nine Indigenous Institutes in Ontario, which represent vital stakeholders. These organizations deliver accredited post-secondary programs in partnership with colleges and universities through unique, culturally-sensitive delivery models that blend face-to-face learning with online courses and independent study.

¹⁵² Gordon, C. E., White, J. P. (2014). Indigenous Educational Attainment in Canada. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 5(3). Retrieved from: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/iipj/vol5/iss3/6> DOI: 10.18584/iipj.2014.5.3.6

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Statistics Canada, "Educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada", National Household Survey 2011

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Drummond, D., Sharpe, A., Murray, A., & Mask, N. (2017). *The Contribution of Aboriginal People to Future Labour Force Growth in Canada* (pp. 1–36). Ottawa, ON.

Despite their key role, they remain outside the Ontario post-secondary system. Unlike provincially accredited colleges, they do not receive government capital or operational funding, instead receiving only funding for program delivery. The 2015 Ontario budget temporarily sought to address this issue, with a three-year funding envelope and a commitment to develop a policy that permanently brings the Indigenous Institutes into the post-secondary system. Following through on this commitment is crucial, as it will bolster Indigenous Institutes' long-term sustainability.

In November 2017, the provincial government passed the Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017 that provided a funding mechanism for provincially funded Indigenous Institutes and incorporated them into the post-secondary system.¹⁵⁷ While this is encouraging, it is time for the government to act on these intentions and begin providing funding.

Further support must also be provided through better access to data. While national census data provides some perspective, there remains a significant lack of information about whether Indigenous post-secondary education and training needs are being met in Ontario.

Among other areas, there is insufficient data on issues such as enrolment, graduation rates, and program effectiveness – information which is required to establish baselines and measure progress on the academic achievement of Indigenous learners.¹⁵⁸

As Shawn Atleo, former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations states, “this work is simply too important to walk away and abandon our students to the next round of discussions, to tell them they will have to wait. We owe it to ourselves, our children and our nations to make our best efforts to achieve our lifelong goal of First Nations control of First Nations education.”¹⁵⁹

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

2. Strengthen implementation of the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework by allocating the financial resources necessary to ensure consistent funding of Framework priorities.
3. Fully implement Indigenous learner reporting mechanisms at both the system and institutional levels to allow for collection of the type of reliable data needed to set baselines and measure progress on academic achievement.
4. Act on commitments for working with Indigenous Institutes to develop a policy to sustainably deliver operational funding and incorporate them into the provincial post-secondary system.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

¹⁵⁷ Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017. (2018, November 19). Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17i34a>

¹⁵⁸ Council of Ministers of Education Canada, “Key Policies in Aboriginal Education: an Evidence-Based Approach”, 2013 http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/295/Key-Policy-Issues-in-Aboriginal-Education_EN.pdf

¹⁵⁹ Atleo, S. (2014, April 12). First Nations Education Act 'must act as a bridge'. CBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/shawn-atleo-first-nations-education-act-must-act-as-bridge-1.2607454>

H. Improve Early Childhood Educational Outcomes Through Expanded Education Opportunities, Targeted Programming, and Innovation in the Classroom

Submitted by: Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario's long-term economic success relies on the quality of its workforce.

There is a strong connection between early childhood development, educational outcomes and future success. Ontario's unreasonably high child developmental vulnerability rate will have a negative impact on our future labour supply, including skilled workforce shortages and ultimately a loss of economic potential. This is especially true for areas of Ontario that are faced with low growth rates, low immigration rates, and an aging workforce. It is imperative for the future of our province that every child is given the best opportunity to succeed.

Background

Education is a pathway to a successful and sustainable labour market career. "Over the next few years 70% of new and replacement jobs will demand post-secondary credentials, compared to 6% that will be available to individuals with less than high school education."¹⁶⁰

Research shows that children's development at age 5 is a strong predictor of adult health, education and social outcomes. Many later problems like school failure, anti-social behaviour, obesity, high blood pressure, depression, type-2 diabetes, can be traced back to early childhood.¹⁶¹

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a tool that gathers information about children's development in their early years (birth to age 5). The most recent provincial EDI collection (2017/18) shows that the developmental vulnerability rate amongst young children in Ontario is near 30 percent, as measured by one or more of the five developmental scales. This does not include children who have an identified special need. Research states that "[s]uch levels of vulnerability at school entry are at least five times higher than the rates of biological vulnerability that are detectable in the postnatal period".¹⁶² Especially concerning is the fact that the Ontario vulnerability rate is worsening rather than improving, having risen 2 percentage-points in the past ten years.

Drivers of vulnerability include socioeconomic adversity, physical issues like low birthweight, the lack of knowledge of an official language, increases in screen time and sedentary behaviour, limited opportunities to take on developmentally appropriate responsibility or self-care, inadequate sleep, inadequate nutrition, etc.¹⁶³

Children who are deemed vulnerable or at risk of being vulnerable on the EDI are less likely to achieve the provincial standards in the Grade 3 EQAO reading, writing and mathematics assessment than those with

¹⁶⁰ Lightman, E., Herd, D., Um, S. G., & Mitchell, A. (2009). Post-secondary education and social assistance in Ontario. *Canadian Social Work Review/Revue canadienne de service social*, 97-113.

¹⁶¹ Offord Centre for Child Studies. (2019). Retrieved from: <https://edi.offordcentre.com/about/what-is-the-edi/>

¹⁶² Kendall P.R.W. (2003) A Review of Infant Mortality in British Columbia: Opportunities for Prevention. Victoria, BC: Government of British Columbia, Office of the Provincial Health Officer in Kershaw, P., Warburton, B., Anderson, L., Hertzman, C., Irwin, L., & Forer, B. (2010). The Economic Costs of Early Vulnerability in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. 2010;101(Suppl. 3): S8-S12.

¹⁶³ Buote, D. (2015). Increasing Vulnerability in the Early Years: A Closer Look at Five North Shore Neighbourhoods. Retrieved from: <http://nscr.bc.ca/pdf/Increasing%20Early%20Years%20Vulnerability.pdf>.

higher EDI scores.¹⁶⁴ Their education trajectories are likely to be lower and these children will face more challenges as they grow. Many will remain behind their peers throughout life, be disruptive in school, fail to graduate and unable to fully contribute and participate in society¹⁶⁵ and may rely on the social system (such as Ontario Works) for financial support.

Overall, grade 3 EQAO data shows a decline in writing skills over the previous three years (from 73% in 2015/16 to 69% in 2018/19). Assessments in math were similar to writing. In Grade 3, 58% met the provincial math standard, a four percentage-point decrease from the average of the previous three years. If these trends continue unchecked, we should expect the number of students not meeting provincial standards in grade 6 to rise. We should also expect the number of children who are unprepared for high-school or post-secondary to rise over time.

There is a significant economic cost to vulnerability. A high vulnerability rate will dramatically deplete our future stock of human capital and will have a negative influence on the quality of our future labour market.¹⁶⁶ Canadian economic analyses reveal that this depletion will cause Canada to forgo 20% in GDP growth over the next 60 years. The economic value of this loss is equivalent to investing \$2.2 trillion to \$3.4 trillion today at a rate of 3.5% interest, even after paying for the social investment required to reduce vulnerability.¹⁶⁷

Although governments face fiscal constraints, policy-makers should prioritize initiatives with high economic and social returns, such as early childhood education.¹⁶⁸ There is a 7:1 return on investment for early childhood programming compared to a 1:1 payback for adult education.¹⁶⁹

There is evidence that the duration of early childhood education “is an important factor in boosting math scores, which in turn leads to higher future wages”.¹⁷⁰ With this in mind, the province should focus on expanding licensed early childhood education services in an affordable way which helps everyone equally regardless of their socio-economic situation.

For vulnerable children already in the school system, more targeted programming and an increase in teacher/student interaction time can help close the gap between them and their peers. Research shows that “appropriate supports and interventions during the primary school years will allow many children who were not on track in kindergarten to address early challenges and proceed on a positive academic trajectory”.¹⁷¹ For children who are significantly behind their peers, a combination of grade retention and targeted programming should be investigated as an option. Researchers/data analysts at the Ministry of Education should conduct a review of the educational outcomes of Ontario children who were retained to determine if grade retention has a positive long-lasting effect on struggling students.

Furthermore, many teachers indicate that only 49% of their time is spent in direct interaction with students, with “time” being the most important barrier to providing personalized learning.¹⁷² An innovative approach is

¹⁶⁴ Calman, R. C., & Crawford, P.J. (2013). Starting Early: Teaching, Learning and Assessment (pp. 1–37). Education Quality and Accountability Office.

¹⁶⁵ Calman, et al.

¹⁶⁶ Kershaw et al.

¹⁶⁷ Kershaw et al.

¹⁶⁸ Alexander, C., Beckman, K., Macdonald, A., Renner, C., & Stewart, M. Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care. Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2017.

¹⁶⁹ Pascal C.E. (2009). With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario. Toronto, ON: Queen’s Printer for Ontario.

¹⁷⁰ Alexander et al.

¹⁷¹ Calman, et al.

¹⁷² Bryant, J., Heitz, C., Sanghvi, S. & Wagle, D. (2020). How artificial intelligence will impact K-12 teachers. New York: McKinsey & Company. Retrieved from: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/how-artificial-intelligence-will-impact-k-12-teachers>.

to use automation technology to reduce time spent on preparation, administration, evaluation, and feedback, saving approximately 13 hours per week.¹⁷³ Teachers could redirect that time toward activities that lead to higher student outcomes such as instruction, engagement and coaching. Further investments in permanent teaching assistants may also help decrease the burden of preparation and administration work that teachers commonly face.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

3. Expand affordable early childhood education (i.e. licensed childcare) to include 3-year olds identified as developmentally vulnerable to reduce the number of these children in Ontario
4. Place a focus on catching up vulnerable (and at-risk of being vulnerable) children to their peers through targeted programming and early interventions
5. Identify communities/regions that have consistently higher child vulnerability rates than the Ontario average and increase their funding for targeted programming
6. Investigate the effectiveness of grade retention combined with targeted programming for children significantly behind their peers
7. Utilize automation technology in the classroom to reduce teacher preparation and administration time so they can spend more time directly interacting with students.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

¹⁷³ Bryant et al.

I. Improving Skilled Trades in the Secondary Schools

Submitted by: Mississauga Board of Trade

Issue

Many businesses cite lack of workers in the skilled trades to fill positions within their companies today and into the future. There is a general concern that young people are not getting encouragement and opportunity to participate and learn about skilled trades at an early age so they can give serious consideration to a career in the skilled trades while in high school.

Background

The Mississauga Board of Trade (MBOT) authored a report entitled “Review of Skilled Trades in the Secondary School System” which looked at the current state of skilled trades training and curriculum in high schools and made recommendations that can improve and support this going forward.

MBOT met with representatives of all four local school boards and teachers in the Regional Skilled Trades program and found great support and interest in supporting and expanding skilled trades courses in the secondary schools.

While the full report makes many recommendations, this resolution focuses on some key ones for the Ontario Government to consider. The full report is available at https://issuu.com/mbotontario/docs/mbot_skilltrade_report.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Allow for the engagement of outside skilled trade expertise to teach segments of classes where this involvement is either warranted or required. The School Boards should be able to compensate these instructors working along with the designated Teacher for the class.
2. Ensure that School Boards have the budget and resources to obtain the proper, up-to-date equipment to teach skilled trades. The Ministry should encourage companies to donate equipment to the schools and be eligible for a tax receipt for the donation.
3. Consider creating a tax credit for companies that accept students for co-op placements in their businesses.
4. Allow students to claim co-op work placements in the 40 hours of Community Service program.
5. Continually assess co-op placement programs to ensure the rapid pace of technological change and industry requirements is met.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

J. Investing in Ontario's International Undergraduate Student Entrepreneurs

Submitted by: Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Leamington Chamber of Commerce; Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce, Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario attracts an increasing number of international students each year. The Ministry of Advanced Education has estimated international students will account for 20 per cent of all Ontario post-secondary enrolments by 2022.¹ These students have an incredible impact on the local economy.

With an increasing talent shortage across the province coupled with a significant business succession issue, it is vital that international students are encouraged to remain in Ontario to continue their positive effect on the economy.

The Ontario Government can support international undergraduate student entrepreneurs by creating a nominee program to provide a more expedient pathway to permanent residency. Both Nova Scotia² and Saskatchewan³ have implemented such pathways in recent years.

Background

International student enrollment in Canada is on the rise. Since 2014 there has been a 73 per cent increase in enrolments bringing the 2018 total to 572,000.⁴ The total number of post-secondary international students in Canada as of December 31, 2018 was 435,415, a 17 per cent jump over 2017 (370,975).⁵ In 2017, Ontario hosted 48 per cent of the nation's international students.⁶

The positive impact of international students to the economy is remarkable. Approximately 170,000 jobs were created nationally as a result of international student spending in 2017.⁷ International students contributed \$21.6 billion to the Canadian economy in 2018 with international student tuition surpassing government grants as a revenue source for many colleges and universities across the province.^{8,9}

Some of these students come from entrepreneurial families who wish to expand their family business into Canada. Others may have the desire to purchase established businesses which would address the nation's growing business succession issue.¹⁰

Currently, international students must find an eligible work position before applying for permanent residence status.¹¹ This puts their entrepreneurial ambitions on hold. If they could commence their business plans after graduation, they would become not an employee, but an employer, boosting the local economy even further.

Needing to find employment often means these students move to larger city centers. When eligible, the majority will choose to start their new business in the city of their employment – not the city where they completed their studies leading to a huge economic loss for the smaller cities of Ontario.

Ontario does currently have an Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) in place but most international students will not meet the requirements of this program.¹²

Recommendation

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Emulate Nova Scotia's International Graduate Entrepreneur program that allows the Government of Ontario to nominate International students to start and operate their own company in Ontario and meet the eligibility requirements to apply for Permanent Residency.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

K. Maintaining Investment and Innovation in Ontario's Public Education System

Submitted by: Chamber of Commerce Brantford-Brant

Issue

The effectiveness of the education system is a priority for the future prosperity of the province and the active participation of all Ontarians in the workforce of the 21st century. That said, it must be efficient as well as effective. This requires strategic continued investment based on the value Ontarians can derive now and in the future.

Background

The Government of Ontario has initiated a process to reduce funding to the public education system based on two policy decisions:

An increase in average class size at the elementary and secondary level,

A requirement for all high school students to take several mandatory online courses, and

It is the responsibility of local school boards to manage the implementation of cost reductions to achieve compliance with reduced funding. It is of note that many Boards have identified certain innovative, specialty consulting positions (literacy and mathematics coaches for one, and guidance/pathways coordinators for another), and courses with small enrollments among the first wave of potential cost reductions. Increasing class sizes and mandating online learning can be particularly detrimental to students with special needs in education, a student population which has shown alarming growth, almost doubling since 2000.

It should also be noted that while online learning offers a marvelous opportunity to improve the efficiency of some learning situations, there is a proportion of the population that does not learn effectively in an online environment. Further, there are many areas in Ontario that do not have access to high speed internet, and many classrooms lacking the hardware required to offer online courses. There are also students who do not have access to a computer at home.

In the April 2019 publication "Accounting for Ontario's Debt", the Ontario Chamber of Commerce stated:

"Assessing when and whether to invest in needed infrastructure and services (such as transportation infrastructure, broadband internet, or skills development) the government must not only consider the present and future value of such an investment as dictated by interest rates, but the value Ontarians could derive from an investment now versus in the future."

"Local companies tend to derive great value from government initiatives that aim to develop Canadian and provincial economic opportunities both domestically and internationally, such as skills development and export programming. Raising taxes or implementing austerity measures to reduce Ontario's debt burden may, therefore, have the unintended effect of squandering current opportunity to grow Ontario's economy."

The OCC has steadfastly advocated for skills development including a policy paper in October 2006 "Retooling for a Prosperous Ontario, a global perspective on skilled trades" and continues to identify Skills and Workforce Development as one of its Key Issues, stating that "there are clear signs that some groups are being left behind, and that our training and education systems could do more to create a workforce suited for the 21st century."

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Re-orient its approach to education funding policies and practices to emphasize measurable return on investment in terms of improved student outcomes and financial performance, rather than a pure budgetary control emphasizing cost-reduction. This new approach should stimulate and reward innovations that result in more effective educational processes.
2. Establish a fund and a mechanism for benchmarking and communicating best educational practices on a provincial, national and international scale with the goal of ensuring that all school boards and all Ontarians are aware of advances that are leading to improved student outcomes.
3. Once innovations have been identified, tested, and proved, province-wide phase-in by stakeholders should be planned and implemented locally by teaching and administrative staff to account for differences due to geographic and socio-economic limitations.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

L. More systems needed in place to encourage women to pursue a career in skilled trades

Submitted by: Cambridge Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Guelph Chamber of Commerce

Issue

A severe and chronic shortage of skilled trade workers continues to dog the Ontario landscape, despite more than 30 years of ongoing discussion among business, education and government leaders on how to solve the problem.

While a strong focus remains on streamlining immigration policies to introduce some of the world's mostly highly skilled individuals into our labour force more seamlessly, the fact that an existing pool of potential talent already exists among Canada's female population remains virtually untapped unless the necessary encouragement and programming are provided.

Background

Ontario, and Canada in general, are dealing with a severe shortage of skilled trade workers. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that Ontario will face a shortage of 190,000 skilled workers by 2020. This number is expected to triple to 560,000 by 2030.¹⁷⁴

Left hidden among these staggering numbers is the fact less than 4% of all tradespeople in Canada are women. As outlined in a CBC report in June 2019, it was stated that a Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey indicated as of 2018 approximately 34,800 women were working in industrial, electrical and construction trades nationwide. This represents an increase of 200 women, just under 3.9%, compared to a decade earlier. However, during this same 10-year span there were 38,600 fewer people of the overall 934,000 that were working in trades in 2008.¹⁷⁵

As well, it's been noted in the first quarter of 2019 there were 60,170 job vacancies in Red Seal trades, an increase of 14 % from a year earlier, according to Statistics Canada's job vacancy and wage survey.¹⁷⁶

As for those currently rising through the training ranks, according to the Canada Labour Force Survey, only one in 10 apprentices in Canada are women and that most populate female-dominated programs such as hairstylist, esthetician, or early childhood education (which isn't considered a skilled trade in all provinces).¹⁷⁷

A 2019 report from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) praised Canada's economic immigration system and recommended streamlining and standardizing the ranking system for skilled workers coming into this country and abolishing the Federal Skilled Trades Program. However, it has been noted that while immigration accounted for 80% of our population growth there are projections indicating there are now only two workers ready to replace every skilled trade retiree in Canada by 2035 compared to seven that were in available in 1971.¹⁷⁸ This is another indication that filling the skilled trades gap must be accomplished using as many avenues as possible and creating awareness to encourage more

¹⁷⁴ 'Leading young people into skilled trades is paying off' – Aug. 1, 2019, PLANT (Advanced Canadian Manufacturing) <https://www.plant.ca/insights/leading-young-people-into-skilled-trades-is-paying-off/>

¹⁷⁵ 'Women are making inroads in the trades but still have a ways to go' – Jul. 23/ 2019 - CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/women-in-trades-1.5215384>

¹⁷⁶ 'Here's where Canadians are finding well-paying jobs in the trades' – July 12/2019 - CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canadian-tradespeople-1.5198394>

¹⁷⁷ 'Women are making inroads in the trades but still have a ways to go' – Jul. 23/ 2019 - CBC <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/women-in-trades-1.5215384>

¹⁷⁸ 'Canada must adapt quickly to attract skilled workers, immigration minister says' – Aug. 13/ 2019 – CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/economic-labour-migration-hussen-oecd-1.5244416>

young women about the benefits of pursuing a career in these fields. In 2019, the annual BDO Canada Affordability Index, which looks at how affordable life is in Canada, indicated that nearly 60% of women are living paycheque to paycheque.¹⁷⁹

Education is the key to raising this awareness. In effort to promote skilled trades to all secondary school students, the Ontario government has announced over the course of the last year it was investing approximately \$75 million in three programs: \$12.7 million for the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program; \$20.8 million in a pre-apprenticeship program; and \$52 million for the Specialist High Skills major program that has the potential to reach 54,000 students in 700 Ontario high schools through more than 2,100 programs.¹⁸⁰

As well, continued co-op programs in many secondary schools and having students from grades 7 to 12 participate in province-wide Skills Competitions organized by Skills Ontario and Skills Canada provide opportunities for them to experience the world of skilled trades over a period of a few days. Also, additional supports are provided by more localized initiatives such as Career Pathways, operated by the Career Education Council, which interactively assists Grade 8 students in Guelph by showcasing potential career paths, and the Business And Education Partnership of Waterloo Region which introduces secondary students to various careers through an assortment of programs.

In terms of ongoing education for younger students, in our area the Waterloo Region District School Board does provide tech rooms in some of its grades 7 and 8 schools centred on woodworking, while its counterpart the Waterloo Catholic District School Board provides STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) kits to assist students who show an interest in those areas. Additional skilled trades learning opportunities are provided by neighbouring boards, including the Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington Catholic District School Board.

In hopes of attracting more female students, one-day initiatives such as the annual Build A Dream event co-ordinated between four Waterloo Region school boards at Bingemans help promote the skilled trades to grades 7 to 12 girls and attracts at least 1,200 students. Also, Conestoga College's 'Jill of All Trades' event is held annually and gives approximately 200 grades 9 to 12 students from eight school boards the chance to get 'hands-on' experience under the guidance of female mentors in one day. Conestoga College, which in 2019 announced plans to consolidate its various trade schools after purchasing the former 250,000-square-foot Erwin Hymer plant in Cambridge, also provides 'Explore Your Future' days to give Grade 8 students the chance to tour and participate in hands-on activities in specific trades.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Ontario Government to:

- 1 Continue to market a career in skilled in trades as a viable employment option, and ensure intentional outreach is extended to girls and women.
- 2 Allow students graduating from high school with an interest in any skilled trade to apply to the college of their choice, regardless if they have found employment in the industry.

¹⁷⁹ 'Majority of women in Canada are living paycheque to paycheque' – Sept. 30/2019 – LowestRates.ca
<https://www.lowestrates.ca/news/women-canada-living-paycheque-to-paycheque-25809>

¹⁸⁰ 'Ontario takes action to address skilled trades shortage' – Jan. 10/2020 – Ontario Newsroom
<https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2020/01/ontario-takes-action-to-address-skilled-trades-shortage.html>; 'Ontario increasing investments in skilled trades' – Nov. 8/2019 – Ontario Newsroom.
<https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2019/11/ontario-increasing-investments-in-skilled-trades.html>

- 3 Consider working with industry and post-secondary institutions to offer more opportunities at colleges with skilled trades programs to host similar events modelled after Conestoga College's 'Jill of All Trades' in hopes of ensuring more high school students have the opportunity to experience skilled trades training.
- 4 Provide funding for child care expenses to allow women to transition to skilled trades.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

M. Re-Calibrating Primary and Secondary Education to Close the Skills Deficit

Submitted by: London Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario is facing a skills shortage crisis. While there are currently approximately 500K unemployed in Ontario¹⁸¹, there is a job vacancy rate of 3.3% or approximately 250K unfilled jobs.¹⁸² While retraining the unemployed and recruiting skilled foreign workers does help to relieve some of the deficit, it has proven not to be enough. And while these efforts are still very much needed to alleviate the current problem, the government should be looking to early childhood education to provide a more long-term solution to the future skills needs of the province.

Background

The skills gap crisis in Ontario is not new but it is getting worse. In 2013, the Conference Board of Canada reported that the skills gap was costing the Ontario economy \$24.3 billion in foregone GDP¹⁸³ and it projected that the problem would only get worse if action was not taken. In a more recent report by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, it was noted that “the skills mismatch is multi-faceted. We are confronted by a supply-demand mismatch driven in part by the decisions of students to pursue qualifications in fields with limited employment opportunities”.¹⁸⁴

In an effort to better understand which fields suffered the highest vacancy rates, Statistics Canada introduced a new quarterly Job Vacancy and Wage Survey in 2015.¹⁸⁵ This massive regular poll of 100,000 businesses – the largest business survey that Statscan conducts – drills deeply into the nature of unfilled jobs and wage offers, on a city-by-city and region-by-region basis.

While the federal government has been doing its part to relieve the skills gap by bringing in more economic immigrants, and the provincial government has been introducing new programs to encourage more young people to get into skilled trades¹⁸⁶, more needs to be done from an early age to ensure that children have exposure to a wide variety of career choices. Doing so will help not only to reduce future job vacancy rates, but future unemployment rates as well.

The Ministry of Education in Ontario did introduce a revised Career Studies Program in the fall of 2019 for secondary school students however, by the time a child reaches high-school there is a high likelihood that their career aspirations are already set.

As a recent article from Nesta (a registered education charity based in England and Wales) said: “*Children’s conceptions of who they are and what they could be are products of their wider socio-economic surroundings: influenced by social (who their families and friends are) and cultural capital (what they consider a reasonable and possible future to be)*”¹⁸⁷ Therefore

¹⁸¹ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/labour-market-report-november-2019>

¹⁸² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190920/dq190920b-eng.htm>

¹⁸³ <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=5563>

¹⁸⁴ <https://occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/Talent-in-Transition.pdf>

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/survey/business/5217>

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.chathamdailynews.ca/news/local-news/addressing-skilled-trades-gap-top-priority-for-monte-mcnaughton>

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/great-expectations/>

if children are not introduced to a variety of career options through the educational system, the choices will be limited by their own backgrounds, further exacerbating the skills gap crisis when these children graduate from high school or post-secondary school.

As an example of a best-practice that the Ontario Government might consider in introducing career options to children at a younger age, is the Primary Futures Program based in the United Kingdom.

In 2017, primary schools in the UK began to rethink how and when they should introduce career options to school age children. In a national campaign called Primary Futures¹⁸⁸, employer volunteers are available to visit schools and provide free voluntary support across a range of areas.

Activities that are included in the Primary Futures program may include:

1. Inviting volunteers from the world of work to visit and chat with children
2. Delivering career-related learning programmes that help children connect their subject learning to the opportunities now and in the future
3. Organising career-related learning trips e.g. to a workplace, business or university
4. Making good use of online learning materials in the classroom such as games, videos, role play, and individual/ group activities
5. Exploring the diverse routes adults have taken to get their current job e.g. vocational (Inc. apprenticeships), academic, starting their own business etc.

In order to address the skills gap in Ontario however it will not be enough for elementary schools to offer career studies in a number of different fields. Focussing on options that specifically target sectors where job vacancy rates are the highest may offer the best solutions.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement a Career Exploration Program in elementary schools that introduces children, parents, and educators to a wide range of career options based on the types of careers that are most likely to be needed by the time children in the program graduate high-school. Such programs should bring in special guests/volunteers from targeted sectors when possible and should also combat any gender stereotypes that may be associated with a given profession. Exposure to this programming could start as early as Grades 1 or 2 to students and parents.
2. Implement a Targeted Career Studies Program for children (starting at about Grade 5) who show particular aptitude in areas where job vacancy rates are expected to be most dire (e.g. manufacturing, skilled trades, agriculture). Programming should allow these children to fully explore career options and gain age-appropriate practical training in these sectors. To fill these programs, it may be necessary to bus these children to another school (possibly even a school from another board) in their district for half or full day each week.
3. Implement a Career Mentorship Program and co-op vocational training at the high-school level with particular focus on sectors of the economy where job vacancy rates are expected to be the highest. Mentors should be professionals from selected sectors – and ideally employers – who can provide

¹⁸⁸ <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/primary-futures-connecting-life-and-learning-in-uk-primary-education/>

advice to students on which courses they should be taking and which skills they should be developing. Educators and guidance counsellors must also be trained in this area.

4. Revise the secondary school curriculum to make mandatory taking at least one tech or trade course – similar to how students are required to take at least one arts course. Ensure that funding is course-neutral and that tech and trade courses have equivalent funding to other secondary school courses.
5. Review and revise all these programs as necessary based on current and projected job vacancy rates a minimum of every five years.

Effective Date: September 29, 2020

Sunset Date: September 29, 2023

N. Establishment of Small Vessel Marine Trades in Ontario to include Marine Electrician, Service Technician, and the overall expansion for Marine Training Certifications across Ontario

Submitted by: The Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce. Co-sponsored by: Quinte West Chamber of Commerce, Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce, Napanee and District Chamber of Commerce, 1000 Islands Gananoque Chamber of Commerce, and the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Ontario boasts many waterways, as such, there is a large and thriving marine industry in the province, but the industry lacks support, resources and safety regulation that is afforded to land-based vehicles. Although there are specific certifications for electrical, engine, etc. technicians for other industries, skilled trades for recreational boats apprenticeships are limited. Not only would the safety of residents and tourists on Ontario's waterways be improved, but also an increase in the current number of technicians and the creation of two new skilled trade designations would strengthen this industry to build the skilled workforce necessary to meet this sector's growing demands.

Background

Ontario has a thriving marine industry with dealerships, marinas, and is home to manufacturers of small vessels for both personal and commercial use. While construction standards exist (see TP1332E, TC), there is no standardization or oversight to ensure the safety of vessels on the water except as applies to their engines (Marine technician is effectively a mechanic trade - Trade Code 435B). As with Recreational Vehicles (RVs) on land, there is more to a boat than its engine, but unlike an RV, if there is a fire, leak, or other issue on a boat, it cannot as easily be moved to the side of the road for repair. Luckily, there are few major safety incidents involving small vessels, but many of the incidents and insurance claims are preventable by improving the general service technician and electrician standards (for construction and maintenance not related to engines). Through expanding marine apprenticeship opportunities, Ontario could lead the way for boating safety and supporting the marine industry.

Transport Canada recognizes training from the "American Boat & Yacht Council (ABYC), a non-profit, member organization that develops voluntary global safety standards for the design, construction, maintenance, and repair of recreational boats."¹⁸⁹ Courses offered by the ABYC are taught in Ontario by certified instructors, but these classes are not required for technicians to work in the recreational boat sector within the province.

Currently, Georgian College is the only post-secondary institution in Ontario that offers the Marine Engine Technician apprenticeship program. Boat dealership owners and staff are required to receive/attend mandatory training to sell specific companies' products, for example "Legend Boats".¹⁹⁰ But, not all boats are purchased new and serviced/repared at dealerships with company certified technicians, especially in emergency repair situations. With cars, all repair shops must have mandatory certified licenced repair personnel.

Recreational boating is an important past time and sector for Canada. According to Pat's Boating in Canada, "The Economic Impact of Recreational Boating in Canada Report' prepared by the National Marine Manufacturers Association Canada (NMMA) tells us that that about 12.4 million adult Canadians go boating every year. Recreational boating adds \$5.6 billion to Canada's GDP with over \$10 billion in revenues. About 75,000 Canadian are employed by the core of the recreational boating industry while boaters themselves

¹⁸⁹ <https://abycinc.org/page/About>

¹⁹⁰ <https://boatingindustry.com/top-100/2018/01/03/2017-best-in-class-best-training-benefits/>

spend \$1.4 billion annually in boat trips.”¹⁹¹ According to Rick Layzell, the CEO of Boating Ontario “47% of all boats sold in Canada are sold in Ontario”¹⁹²

Other mandatory certified skilled trades, such as electricians, millwrights, have specific training levels (year 1, year 2, etc.) pay scales that reflect this training ensuring standardization of knowledge and a path to completion. A clear-cut path with earning opportunities is used to attract talent to specific occupations. Work within the recreational boating industry’s ability to attract a skilled workforce is limited with only a handful of seats available in Midland Ontario, a location that is inconvenient to attend the required in-class training. According to Boating Ontario, over two-thirds marine technicians are offered year-round employment paying up to \$40 an hour. Although the industry works to promote these opportunities, many companies and individuals do not have access to local apprenticeship training. The current model assumes that people are purchasing new boats that can be serviced, winterized, and stored by local dealerships and marines. To attract talent interested in this industry with growing opportunities, Ontario needs to provide better access to apprenticeship training/certifications across the province.

To protect recreational boaters, the Canadian government has established training and guidelines for people to receive licenses. As boat safety for the operators is a priority, it is logical that the Ontario government would extend these standards to establish certifications under Skilled Trades in more than one location for those responsible for repairing recreational boats ensuring consumer safety.

Supporting organizations for this Policy Resolution include:

- Swiftsure Vessel Solutions, Ltd., Consecon, Ontario
- Hartzel Marine and Auto, Thorold, Ontario

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

- O.** Work with the marine industry, their associations, and post-secondary institutions to:
 - a. Review opportunities to expand marine apprenticeship training programs to meet the growing and changing needs of the sector.
 - b. Research American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) courses that are recognized by Transport Canada.
- P.** Develop programs for voluntary marine certifications to include small vessel technician and marine electrician through Ontario’s Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.
- Q.** Expand/improve access to marine apprenticeships across Ontario (technician, small vessel technician, and electrician).
- R.** Continue to work with industry and partners to develop and improve certifications as required.
- S.** Upon successful implementation of more marine certifications, work with other provinces to adopt similar programs to lead to these trades achieving the recognized certification/training standards.

Effective Date: May 5, 2021

Sunset Date: May 5, 2024

¹⁹¹ <https://boating.ncf.ca/stats.html#links>

¹⁹² <https://boating.ncf.ca/buyaboat.html#:~:text=%E2%80%9C47%25%20of%20all%20boats%20sold,Canada%20are%20sold%20in%20Ontario.%E2%80%9D>

O. Prevention - The Need for a Workplace Health and Safety Strategy to Support Small Business

Submitted by: London Chamber of Commerce

Issue

The Covid-19 Pandemic has created more awareness of the need for strong health and safety policies in the workplace yet research shows that small businesses having 1-19 employees are less likely to be aware of their responsibilities under Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* thus are less likely to adopt the necessary policies to create and maintain safe workplaces both now and in the event of future health calamities.

Background

Data compiled from workers' compensation boards across Canada showed that 951 provincially regulated workers were killed due to their work in 2017¹⁹³. In 2017, Ontario witnessed 59,529 lost time injuries, 76 injury related fatalities, and 215 people killed by occupational disease¹⁹⁴. Ontario workers and business owners share in the belief that the 7.2 million Ontarians that go to work each day expect, and have the right, to return home safely at the end of the day. Every injury and fatality in this province underscores a need for greater collaboration between government and private industry, particularly small business to educate and facilitate business owners to adopt and consistently deliver workplace health and safety programs.

It is a fact that a small business owner can incorporate, obtain access to capital, hire employees, pay taxes, operate, and never once hear of their workplace health and safety obligations under the *Act*. With small business owners likely being their own human resources department, there is no one, at any point from start-up to operation that will advise the owner of their duties and responsibilities under the *Act*¹⁹⁵.

With the staggering amount of administrative work placed on an entrepreneur, they may not realise they are not only an employer, but in some scenarios also a supervisor under the *Act*. A new business owner with a new workforce is not advised to ensure their employees are trained¹⁹⁶ on the core mandatory programs - *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), Workplace Violence and Harassment (WVH), worker awareness/supervisor competency (WA/SC), and WHMIS 2015 nor is that process in any way facilitated to ensure compliance. As the employer may also be the supervisor¹⁹⁷ in a start-up business, it is unlikely the owner/employer has any of the above qualifications, nor a proper understanding of what also being a supervisor entails under the *Act*. It is also unlikely that the small business owner has been notified that they face financial penalties or even criminal prosecution if one of their workers is injured or killed in an accident¹⁹⁸. Small business is clearly a prime area of focus for prevention in this province. With 73.4% of the small businesses in Canada

¹⁹³ Tucker, Sean, and Anya Keefe. *2019 Report on Work Fatality and Injury Rates in Canada*. N.p.: University of Regina, 2019. https://www.uregina.ca/business/faculty-staff/faculty/file_download/2019-Report-on-Workplace-Fatalities-and-Injuries.pdf.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. *Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety*. N.p.: Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, 2019. <https://www.ontario.ca/document/expert-advisory-panel-occupational-health-and-safety/small-business>.

¹⁹⁶ e-Laws. *Occupational Health and Safety Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.1*. N.p.: Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, 2020. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01#BK44>.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

having 1-9 employees¹⁹⁹, this is a market that is clearly underserved. Given Ontario alone makes up roughly 36% of all Canadian small businesses²⁰⁰, the figures speak for themselves. Now is the time to develop a full and comprehensive prevention strategy for small business that must not come with repercussions and costs, but rather with encouragement, education, and easy to use tools together with incentives and grants to comply.

Employers need their workforces healthy, and safe to operate efficiently. In fact healthy and safe workplaces are a real plus for recruitment and retention of employees. A London-Middlesex research study of employer needs found that 112 of the 302 survey respondents identified free health and safety training as being most useful to hire or rehire employees.²⁰¹ Employers recognize that working in a safe environment is key to returning people to the workforce.

While a small business should have an internal responsibility system and a health and safety management system to operate as safely as possible, it all starts with informing them of their obligations and facilitating access to easy to use and affordable tools that deliver the core mandatory programs (AODA, WVH, WHMIS 2015, WA/SC). Once the core four are in place, businesses can expand into other required training and will already have established an understanding of the steps and processes required to access that training. By working with approved, private-sector providers of Joint Health and Safety Committee Part I/II/e-learning, high-quality programs that already exist can be made readily accessible. An online resource should be integrated into the business registration process to help inform employers of their obligations under the Act while providing them access to courses which may be completed online by employees. Not unlike pilot programs currently underway, approved providers would receive a subsidy for each license used within the core programs.

The result is if a small business owner has ten employees, all are trained at no or little cost to the entrepreneur, and ten more Ontarians are now working safely. The modest cost to the Ministry to provide such training would be offset by savings from less claims to WSIB. Unlike the current \$3 million pilot programs²⁰², a business owner is in a place to ensure current employees complete the training paid for by the province. This is a clear win for small business, it is a clear win for approved providers (also small businesses), and a clear win for the MLTSD, as up to 25,000 workers are trained and have ongoing support without further MLTSD involvement and job seekers are more confident that small businesses will provide a safe workplace that they seek from employers. Sounds like a safe bet.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Promote and facilitate access to an online resource which informs small business owners of their rights and obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. This resource should be integrated into the business registration process.

¹⁹⁹ Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. *Key Small Business Statistics - January 2019*. N.p.: Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2019. https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/h_03090.html.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Adeyemo, Bashir et al. *Change Matters – Employer Needs Assessment for COVID-19 Recovery*. Workforce Planning and Development Board. 2020. <https://workforcedevelopment.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Employer-Needs-Assessment-For-COVID-19.pdf>

²⁰² Employment Ontario. *Health and Safety Training Pilot Program*. N.p.: Ministry of Labour, Training and skills development, 2020. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario>.

2. Through the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD), and in partnership with chambers of commerce and boards of trade throughout Ontario, and through approved third-party health and safety providers promote and provide subsidized information sessions to small business owners in order to inform them of their obligations under the *Act*, and provide them with tools and templates to assist in ensuring all workers have training on the core mandatory programs (*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), Workplace Violence and Harassment (WVH), worker awareness/supervisor competency (WA/SC), and WHMIS 2015).

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