



IN-DEMAND SKILLED TRADES PROJECT

Highlights of Findings

November 2020

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Background

This document provides a qualitative summary of employers' views of skilled trades positions that were reported in-demand in Ontario, based on the key themes and ideas that emerged from In-Demand Skilled Trades Project that Local Boards and Local Employment Planning Councils (LEPCs) submitted to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development in January 2020.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, several reports identified challenges that employers in Ontario and Canada are facing in filling positions in the skilled trades. For example, a 2018 survey conducted for the Manpower Group found that 41% of Canadian employers cannot find the skills they need, with skilled trades workers identified as the hardest positions to fill.

The Ministry included the In-Demand Skilled Trades Project as a 2019-20 Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) requirement for then 18 Local Boards and eight LEPCs. The LEPC pilots have since ended and the eight agencies are now Local Boards.

In June 2019, the Local Boards and LEPCs agreed to undertake the following in their 2019-20 TPAs as part of the In-Demand Skilled Trades Project:

- Identify which jobs in the skilled trades, if any, are hardest for employers to fill in the geographical area served by the local network and produce a list of in-demand trades based on quantitative and qualitative analysis;
- Examine whether local employers are experiencing issues in recruiting, training and retaining apprentices and tradespeople;
- Identify issues affecting employers' recruitment and training of apprentices and skilled tradespeople;
- Examine how local employers are addressing the demand for workers in the skilled trades;
- Obtain employers' experiences and perspectives on apprenticeship training;
- Submit a plan to the Ministry outlining their approach for completing the project;
- Report back to the Ministry by January 15, 2020 on the evidence gathered on a list of engagement questions that were provided by the Ministry.

The Ministry provided written guidelines to Local Boards and LEPCs in June 2019 to clarify the requirements of the In-Demand Skilled Trades Project, including what is meant by terms such as the skilled trades, in-demand trades and labour shortages and other requirements.

The In-Demand Skilled Trades Project guidelines document defined the skilled trades as the apprenticeable trades that are prescribed under the Ontario College of Trades

and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. There were 156 skilled trades in Ontario when the project commenced, which can be categorized into the four sectors (construction, industrial, motive power and service) found on the [Ontario College of Trades website \(https://www.collegeoftrades.ca/\)](https://www.collegeoftrades.ca/). As of March 2020, there are 144 trades as 12 were delisted in the summer of 2019.

The labelling of a trade as being “in-demand” is a relative concept. There may be strong demand for workers across a wide range of trades, but a list of “in-demand” trades is usually a small number (e.g., Top 10 or Top 20). An employer, for example, may deem a trade as being “in-demand” if it is particularly important or integral to their business and if the existence of vacancies significantly impacts the employer in question

The Ministry held information sessions with Local Boards and LEPCs in July 2019 on the project’s guidelines and reporting requirements prior to the start of the project. The project guidelines stressed the need for employer engagement, but it was up to agencies to define the partnerships and engagement methods that best suited their communities.

The evidence collected from the project was intended to help inform how government, industry and local communities could work together to increase the talent pipeline for the skilled trades and to help inform steps to modernize and transform Ontario's skilled trades and apprenticeship system.

The findings from the project were to be made available by Local Boards and LEPCs through their websites and to key community stakeholders such as service providers, employers and levels of government and the public.

The In-Demand Skilled Trades Project results are based on evidence that was gathered by Local Boards and LEPCs primarily in fall 2019 and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project’s findings may not reflect the current labour market conditions as capacity pressures and labour shortages have eased significantly in many sectors. However, many skilled trades workers were deemed as in demand by employers (e.g., automotive service technician, carpenter, electrician, machinist, millwright and tractor-trailer commercial driver) are needed in all economic environments.

The Ministry received Project Engagement Plans from the Local Boards and LEPCs late-July 2019 and approved them mid-August 2019. The Engagement Plans explained the agencies approach for completing the project, including the types and number of engagements that would be held with employers, as well the number of employers and sector that would be represented. Ministry regional staff remained engaged with the Local Boards and LEPCs, including attending focus meeting and managing the TPAs.

Highlights

The Ministry received the In-Demand Skilled Trades Project results in mid-January 2020, reflecting local employers' experiences and perspectives on the skilled trades that are most in-demand in the local area and related insights on issues affecting the skilled trades.

The project's results suggest that the Local Boards and LEPCs engaged with almost 2,000 employers that rely on skilled tradespeople through in-person meetings (e.g., facilitated discussions, one-on-one meetings, focus groups and forums) and hundreds of surveys to obtain feedback on:

- Jobs in the skilled trades that are hardest for employers to fill in the geographical areas served by the local network;
- Recruitment and training practices that they use for hard-to-fill positions; and
- How to improve the apprenticeship system.

The In-Demand Skilled Trades Project aimed to gather insights on the labour market conditions for the skilled trades through engagement with employers. In a qualitative sense, this was largely accomplished, even though there are challenges with generalizing the findings regionally due differences such as methodology in how each local board and LEPC conducted its project.

The Local Boards and LEPCs leveraged previously completed occupational analysis and reports and analyzed various labour market data sources such as the 2016 Census, the Labour Force Survey and jobs postings to inform these engagements.

Many of the Local Boards and LEPCs used existing relationships and built partnerships with employers, business associations, economic development offices, school boards, training providers, etc., to identify companies that employ skilled tradespeople, undertake promotional activities related to the project and to conduct both online and telephone surveys. This outreach is a good example of the agencies working together with community stakeholders to identify specific labour market needs such as hiring and training challenges in the skilled trades.

A few of the agencies in the Eastern (e.g., Local Board for Renfrew and Lanark Counties and the Ottawa Employment Hub Local Employment Planning Council and Western regions, for example, used similar data collection methods and a regional approach to their projects.

Some Local Boards and LEPCs identified challenges in recruiting local employers to participate in interviews and engagement meetings, as small- and medium-sized employers were typically very busy. Some of the surveys and in-person meetings conducted by the groups often represented small number of employers in many communities and are not comparable to each other due to different methodologies or issues reported.

The key themes or ideas that emerged from the evidence that the Local Boards and LEPCs submitted to the Ministry from their engagement with employers follow. The results are not meant to represent the position or opinions of the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, the Ontario government, nor the official position of any staff members

Skilled trades that are hardest for organizations to fill and why

LEPCs and Local Boards reported that employers commonly identified the following skilled trades as in-demand. Details by Local Boards and LEPCs area are provided in Appendix A:

- Automotive service technician (motive power)
- Carpenter (construction)
- Electrician (construction, industrial, unspecified)
- General machinist (industrial)
- Millwright (construction, industrial, unspecified)
- Plumber (construction)
- Sheet metal worker (construction)
- Tractor-trailer commercial driver (motive power)
- Truck and coach technician (motive power)
- Welder (industrial)

Most Local Boards and LEPCs did not quantify the number of vacancies related to in-demand trades as this was not a project requirement. Some took a forward-looking approach to in-demand reporting by identifying trades that will be hard to fill in the next five years. These instances are flagged in Appendix A. Trade names and job titles reported by Local Boards and LEPCs have been matched to the In-Demand Skilled Trades list in Appendix A.

The reasons for difficulty in filling vacancies varied. Employers' reasons for their recruitment difficulties included a short supply of skilled workers, lack of interest in the trades and high training costs, especially for small and medium-sized companies.

In October 2020, the top-ten online skilled trades-related job postingsⁱ in Ontario included automotive service technician, carpenter and tractor-trailer commercial driver, which were also commonly as in-demand by Local Boards and LEPCs in their submissions to the Ministry.

All of the remaining trades listed above, except truck and coach technician, were captured in the top-twenty online skilled trades-related job postings in October. In October, the number of skilled trades-related job postings in Ontario (7,029) was 7.4% below February's level.

Organizations' recruitment methods for hard-to-fill skilled trades

Employers indicated using a variety of recruitment methods to recruit skilled tradespeople for positions that are hardest for employers to fill. The recruitment methods most frequently mentioned are listed below.

- Online – On-line job boards, Kijiji, social media, etc.
- Employment/recruitment agencies
- Educational Institutions/Programs – Local colleges, secondary schools (including co-op and OYAP programs)
- Word-of-mouth
- Local newspapers/radio advertisements
- Job fairs

Most of these methods did not appear to directly address the supply challenges being encountered by employers, including a short supply of skilled workers and a lack of interest in the trade, particularly among young people.

Employers' suggestions for things that they could do to increase the number of apprentices and journeypersons in in-demand trades

Employers identified several ideas to increase the number of apprentices and journeypersons for in-demand trades. Most of the suggestions put forward appear to address overcoming the supply challenges of finding qualified candidates and include the following themes:

- **Employment/Training** – Hire and train more apprentices, improve the working conditions in the industry and focus on what the company has to offer to potential qualified skilled trade workers/apprentices in comparison to what the employer needs.
- **Financial Support/Incentives** – Contribute financially to support apprentices when attending the classroom portion of their training.
- **Promotion/Engagement** – Promote the skilled trades through own channels, become more involved with high schools and colleges and work with local Indigenous communities.
- **Other** – Look outside of the county for workers and organize transportation, housing and other support for such workers.

Employers' suggestions to Ontario government to increase the number of apprentices and journeypersons in in-demand trades

The actions employers suggested for the Ontario government could do to increase the number of apprentices and journeypersons available for in-demand trades were like those directed at themselves. However, context was sometimes different.

- **Employment/Training** – Shorten apprenticeship training duration, break up in-school training into shorter periods. Help employers and workers, especially during registration.
- **Financial Support/Incentives** – Provide more financial support to apprentices and incentives to employers, especially small businesses.
- **Promotion/Engagement** – Promote the skilled trades as career and through the educational system, especially in high school.
- **Other** – Simplify registration process and exams. Change training ratios.

Conclusions

The In-demand Skilled Trades Project is a useful example of how Local Boards, employers and other stakeholders in communities across the province can work together to identify specific labour market needs such as hiring and training challenges in the skilled trades.

The information reported was gathered by Local Boards and LEPCs in their catchment areas, primarily in fall 2019 and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The information reported, therefore, might not reflect the current conditions. However, many skilled trades workers are needed in all economic environments and most of top online skilled trades-related job postings in October were commonly identified as in-demand by Local Boards and LEPCs identified in their reports to the Ministry.

Employers identified ideas to inform how government, industry and local communities can work together to increase the number of apprentices and journeypersons for in-demand trades, including a call for more employers to hire and train apprentices, promote the skilled trades through their business channels and provide financial support to apprentices when attending the classroom portion of their training.

The suggestions from employers about the things that the Ontario government could do to increase the number of apprentices and skilled trades people in demand included shortening the apprenticeship training duration, promoting the skilled trades as career through the educational system, especially in high school, and helping employers and workers, especially during registration.

The insights reflect the perspective of hundred of employers who participated in the project. While there are challenges with generalizing the findings regionally, provincially and locally, in many instances, the ideas revealed in the project provide useful context to inform steps to modernize and transform Ontario's apprenticeship and skilled trades system.

The project aimed to gather insights on the labour market conditions for the skilled trades through engagement with employers, as local shortages and mismatches can be missed by national- or provincial-level indicators data sets. In a qualitative sense, this was largely accomplished.

Appendix A – List of Reported In-Demand Trades by Geography

List of In-Demand Trades Reported by Employers																										
Trade Name	Eastern						Northern						Western						Central							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Construction	■		■			■																				■
Brick and Stone Mason	■			■									■						■							
Cement (Concrete) Finisher											■								■							
Construction Boilermaker	■																					■				
Construction Craft Worker				■	■						■								■							
Construction Millwright																■			■				■			
Drywall Finisher and Plasterer	■			■													■									
Drywall, Acoustic and Lathing Applicator	■																									
Electrician - Construction and Maintenance	■			■			*		■		■					■		■		■					■	
Floor Covering Installer	■																									
General Carpenter	■		■	■		■	*	■	■	■	■	■			■		■	■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Hazardous Materials Worker													■													
Heavy Equipment Operator - Dozer	■																									
Heavy Equipment Operator - Excavator	■																									
Heavy Equipment Operator - Tractor Loader Backhoe	■																									
Hoisting Engineer — Mobile Crane Operator 1				■																						
Industrial Mechanic Millwright			■			■	*		■					■		■	■	■		■	■		■	■		■
Painter and Decorator - Commercial and Residential				■					■						■											
Painter and Decorator - Industrial																										
Plumber	■		■	■			*	■	■	■	■		■		■	■				■	■		■	■		■
Precast Concrete Finisher	■																						■			
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Systems Mechanic	■			■		■			■	■				■											■	
Residential Air Conditioning Systems Mechanic	■		■					■		■					■											
Roofer									■								■									
Sheet Metal Worker	■		■	■		■		■			■		■	■			■					■		■		
Steamfitter	■		■	■			*	■		■					■	■			■				■			■
Terrazzo, Tile and Marble Setter	■																									
Industrial																										
Cabinetmaker	■												■							■						
Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Programmer																		■	■	■				■		■
Elevating Devices Mechanic																							■			
General Machinist	■		■		■			■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■			■	■	■	■	■	■	■

List of In-Demand Trades Reported by Employers

Trade Name	Eastern						Northern						Western						Central							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Hydraulic/Pneumatic Mechanic																										
Industrial Electrician							*																			
Instrumentation and Control Technician																										
Metal Fabricator (Fitter)																										
Mold Designer																										
Mold Maker																										
Powerline Technician																										
Tool and Die Maker																										
Tool and Gauge Inspector																										
Tractor-Trailer Commercial Driver							*																			
Welder							*																			
Motive Power																										
Auto Body and Collision Damage Repairer																										
Auto Body Repairer							*																			
Automotive Painter																										
Automotive Service Technician																										
Heavy Duty Equipment Technician																										
Marine Engine Technician																										
Motorcycle technician																										
Small Engine Technician																										
Truck and Coach Technician							*																			
Service																										
Agricultural Dairy Herdsperson																										
Appliance Service Technician																										
Arborist																										
Assistant Cook																										
Baker																										
Chef																										
Child and Youth Worker																										
Child Development Practitioner																										
Cook																										
Hairstylist																										

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Horticultural Technician																										
IT Network Technician																										
Parts Technician																										
Retail Meat Cutter																										
Unspecified																										
Millwright (unspecified)																										
Electrician (unspecified)																										
Heavy Equipment Operator (unspecified)																										
Hoisting Engineer (unspecified)																										

Note: Asterix indicates expected demand within five years, as reported by the Local Board

List of LEPCs and Local Boards by Region			
Eastern Region	Northern Region	Western Region	Central Region
1. Eastern Workforce Innovation Board (LB)	7. Algoma Workforce Investment Corp. (LB)	13. Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board (LEPC)	22. Durham Workforce Authority (LEPC)
2. Centre for Workforce Development (LB)	8. Far Northeast Training Board (LEPC)	14. Four County Labour Market Planning (Bruce-Grey) (LB)	23. Peel-Halton Workforce Development Group (LEPC)
3. Eastern Ontario Training Board (LB)	9. The labour Market Group (Nipissing/Parry Sound) (LB)	15. Chatham-Kent Workforce Planning Board (LB)	24. Simcoe-Muskoka workforce Development Group (LB)
4. Labour Market Group of Renfrew Lanark Counties (LB)	10. Northwest Training and Adjustment Board (LB)	16. Workforce Planning Board Grand Erie (LB)	25. Toronto Workforce Innovation Group (LB)
5. Ottawa (Algonquin) Employment Hub (LEPC)	11. North Superior Workforce Planning Board (LEPC)	17. Workforce Planning Hamilton (LB)	26. Workforce Planning Board of York Region (LB)
6. Workforce Dev. Board (Peterborough) (LEPC)	12. Workforce Planning Sudbury/Manitoulin (LB)	18. Niagara Workforce Board (LB)	
		19. Sarnia Lambton Workforce Development Board (LB)	
		20. Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin (LB)	
		21. Workforce Windsor-Essex (LEPC)	

¹ Source: Burning Glass Technology Labour Insights (Data retrieved by Ministry on November 3, 2020)