

JOBS, SKILLS AND EXPERTISE FOR LIFE



INTRODUCTION

Apprenticeship is an employment-based relationship, not just a program of study.

When jobs are lost—especially in manufacturing—that means apprenticeships are lost, making it even more difficult to get into an apprenticeship.

Even before the economic crisis hit in November 2008, over 400,000 manufacturing jobs had disappeared over the previous five years. When the crisis hit, another 400,000 jobs were lost in a matter of months.

Despite the jobs crisis, some are still propagating the myth that there is a widespread “skills shortage” in Ontario and Canada. No wonder people are frustrated when they can’t find an apprenticeship.

Far from a skills shortage, we have a jobs and opportunities shortage.

To be effective, any policy aimed at improving access to apprenticeship training in Ontario and Canada, must be informed by the urgent need to develop a good jobs for all strategy.

WHAT IS APPRENTICESHIP?

An authentic apprenticeship is a registered contract between an apprentice (worker) who wants to learn a trade and an employer who needs a skilled worker.

This contract involves a number of parties: the province, employers, apprentices, and joint union-employer apprenticeship committees.

The apprentice is hired by an employer or joint union/employer Apprenticeship Committee and learns their trade on the job from journeypersons (skilled trades’ workers who have completed the requirements of the trade and have been licensed accordingly).

Eighty to ninety percent of apprenticeship training is completed through paid employment under the supervision of skilled journeypersons who have the skills and expertise to pass on.

While there is some in-class training, such training usually takes place at a community college or a non-profit training centre run by construction unions and employers for a specific trade. This in-class portion is only a small fraction of authentic trades training, but it is crucial. It provides the theoretical basis for on-the-job learning.



Photo: Bill Burke/Page One Photography

WHAT IS APPRENTICESHIP? (CONTINUED)

Under an authentic model, apprentices are taught and supervised by licensed journeypersons over a period of anywhere from two to five years. This time-based model provides apprentices with the time and guidance to turn skills into real expertise. An authentic model allows apprentices to receive not only hands-on training, but also gain exposure to a wide range of time-tested knowledge—“tricks of the trade”—accumulated by the journeypersons who supervise.

Because the number (ratio) of journeypersons to apprentice is regulated, apprentices learn from a variety of mentors, receive vigilant supervision, learn on-the-job health and safety, and are trained to the highest industry standards.

Under authentic apprenticeship training models, the wages (and other employment standards) paid to apprentices are governed by legislation or collective agreements, usually pegged at a percentage of the wages earned by licensed journeypersons.

This ensures that apprentices are not exploited as cheap labour and allows them to earn a reasonable income for their work, pay taxes and contribute to society as a whole. As apprentices' level of expertise increases, so too do their earnings.

WHY DOES APPRENTICESHIP MATTER?

Apprenticeship matters to all of society because this is the process by which skills and expertise are passed on from one generation of journeypersons to another. Ensuring that new generations of workers are trained as journeypersons is a joint responsibility between employers, government and trade unions. Skilled trades form the basis of all work undertaken in society from plumbing to carpentry, from operating engineers to ironworkers, from electricians to mechanics, and beyond. Every building, house, school, hospital, or factory—and the equipment inside—must be made by skilled workers who should have the highest level of expertise to ensure public safety and quality products.

Moreover, the work undertaken by journeypersons is typically well-paying. Because the skills and expertise of an authentic trade can be put to use almost anywhere, journeypersons can work almost everywhere—even during the ups and downs of economic cycles.

TICKET TO RIDE: THE RED SEAL PROGRAM

The Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program (the Red Seal Program) was established more than 45 years ago to provide even greater ease of mobility for skilled workers throughout Canada. Approximately 49 trades are recognized as Red Seal trades. A Red Seal certificate means a journeyperson can go to work in most provinces in Canada without having to write an exam or acquire additional training. The Red Seal program is a voluntary program in which provinces recognize the highest standards of the trades. Achieving this level of certification allows journeypersons the maximum amount of flexibility in travel and employment opportunities.

AUTHENTIC APPRENTICESHIP MATTERS

Just like doctors need to know all aspects of the human body before they can specialize in one area, journeypersons need to know their trade inside and out before specializing.

This foundation allows journeypersons to adapt to—and sometimes even develop—new technology, and ensure that it is used effectively and safely. Crucially, having expertise in all aspects of their trade ensures that workers have access to a range of employment options, regardless of temporary trends within the labour market. 

DILUTION, DEREGULATION AND JUST-IN-TIME TRAINING



INTRODUCTION

Apprenticeship training in authentic (whole) trades is a crucial pillar of Ontario's post-secondary education system. It is the foundation of a skilled workforce that is productive, adaptable and secure.

But ever since the Ontario Conservatives' "Common Sense Revolution" of the mid-1990s, apprenticeship training in whole trades has been jeopardized.

REDUCING ACCESS

In the mid-1990s, the Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris cut funding from Ontario's public school system.

A consequence of these cuts was the virtual elimination of trades and shop training from elementary and secondary schools.

Today, fewer students under the age of 18 are getting exposure to the trades. Instead, those wanting to pursue the skilled trades too often must find other access to tools and trade labs.

Some are forced to pay thousands of dollars for "pre-apprenticeship" programs that used to be delivered in our public school system as part of a quality curriculum.

DISMANTLING AUTHENTIC TRADES

In 1998, the Conservative government dismantled the legislation that regulates apprenticeship training. Many traditional trades were brought under a new *Apprenticeship and Certification Act* (ACA) which dropped important regulations governing the employment and training of apprentices.



In some cases, the ratios of journeypersons to apprentices were reduced or eliminated. In practice, this meant less supervision for apprentices and less exposure to a variety of skilled journeypersons, diminishing the on-the-job learning aspect so critical to apprenticeship training.

In other cases, a narrow skill set that comprises only an aspect of a journeyperson's expertise was pulled out and reclassified as a trade unto itself. This way, employers can avoid hiring the properly skilled workers that regulations require. For example, the occupation of "Motor Inspector" was an industry-specific "trade" that was created to circumvent the requirement to hire a certified electrician.

Dismantling trades qualifications allows employers to pay workers less than what a qualified journeyperson would be paid. And since it takes less time and money to teach only a piece of a trade (as opposed to a whole trade), some employers—and governments—see this as a strategy to reduce training costs. But this is only true in the short term. When a plant closes, those workers with training in a whole trade have a much better chance of finding alternative employment. Workers who were only partially trained must often undergo additional re-training, adding costs for both the individual and the public. Such additional costs could be avoided had the workers received authentic apprenticeship training in the first place.

Concessions in authentic apprenticeship training standards come at a price for both workers individually and society as a whole; over time, the collective skills-base of the workforce is compromised.

TRADES ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The *Apprenticeship and Certification Act* (ACA) also dropped the requirement to have trades advisory committees. Historically, these trades advisory committees were made up of employers, unions and government representatives. These committees cooperatively reviewed the industry's training needs, developed training curriculum, and made a variety of mutually beneficial recommendations to government. As a result of the ACA, only 72 out of 137 designated trades have a respective advisory committee. (NOTE: Trades committees are still required for construction trades under the *Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act*.)

The absence of these committees means that the training associated with them is less accountable and less effective. Many of the protections that once existed for apprentices—including proper pay, health and safety training, and minimum ratios of journeypersons to apprentices—have been dropped under the ACA. Apprentices are at greater risk of exploitation, are less safe on the job and receive a diminished quality of on-the-job training.

APPRENTICESHIP AT RISK

By reducing training standards, workers are more vulnerable to changes in the labour market. For example, workers certified under the new “trade” of “hot tub installer” are much more at the mercy of the business cycle (where demand for hot tubs can fluctuate dramatically), whereas certified plumbers can count on a certain amount of demand, regardless of labour market changes.

Employers want only bare minimum training geared toward specific tasks demanded by the labour market at a particular moment. It is a version of “just-in-time” training to service a “just-in-time” production model.

A “just-in-time” training model means workers are compelled to be forever seeking the next trend in training, in order to get access to a new wave of niche jobs.

This undermines the foundation of our workforce, creates a market for private, *for-profit* training institutions and keeps workers in a permanent state of insecurity.

Some employers do not want to have to hire fully trained journeypersons to undertake specialized tasks that they argue could be done by others with less training. For example, the whole trade “Auto Technician” has been fragmented into the skill sets: “Alignment and Brakes Technician”; “Automotive Electronic Accessory Technician”; and “Auto Body Repairer”.

Other employers want to have access to the tax breaks offered by government to promote apprenticeship training, so they are keen to have any occupation designated a “trade”.

For example, there are now four so-called trades classifications for call centre employees, including: “Customer Care Agent”; “Inside Sales Agent”; “Technical Support Agent”; and “Network Technician”. These categories allow call centres to subsidize their payroll with tax credits earmarked for authentic apprenticeship training.

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS

There are many valuable occupations that require specialized training, and of course these occupations should be regulated and licensed.

However, skills sets that require only weeks of training should not be construed as authentic apprenticeship training.

Just as we understand that paralegals—however indispensable they are—are not the same thing as lawyers, we should apply the same standard to the skilled trades. After all, some apprenticeships take up to five years to complete—a full year longer than a standard, four-year university degree.

But where workers, especially youth, are seeking a meaningful career in the skilled trades, government, employers and labour must provide the highest standards of apprenticeship training, provide the best possible supports, and encourage apprentices to broaden and maximize their potential—not undercut it with false products and niche training. 

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING: MYTHS AND FACTS



INTRODUCTION

Canada has seen a massive decline of manufacturing jobs—about 400,000 jobs lost since 2003. This has meant a job shortage: not only for the existing workforce, but also for those who want to start an apprenticeship. Because an apprenticeship is an employment relationship (and not a classroom course), when there are fewer jobs, there are fewer apprenticeship opportunities.

The Ontario labour movement has been pushing provincial and federal governments to develop a comprehensive job strategy that could leverage public procurement to create good jobs locally. Unfortunately, the federal government has largely ignored the crisis while the Ontario government has responded inadequately.

Yet workers and families continue to be inundated with exaggerated notions of a “skills shortage” and become frustrated when they find it so difficult to get hired as an apprentice. The reality is that apprenticeships are scarce because good jobs are scarce. But with all the misinformation that exists, some confuse the symptoms with problem itself.

We want to set the record straight.

MYTH: RATIOS ARE A BARRIER TO CREATING APPRENTICESHIPS

The term “ratios” refers to the number of licensed journeypersons that must be present to supervise and mentor each registered apprentice. Journeypersons are responsible for training and supervising apprentices along with all the other work they are required to accomplish in their position. Because apprentices actually work on the job, a high degree of supervision is required to ensure the safety, not only of the apprentice, but of other workers and the public.



Photo: Bill Burke/Page One Photography

Every journeyperson excels in their work in different ways, and being supervised by more than one journeyperson means apprentices will have exposure to a variety of techniques and “tricks of the trade”.

Just as a high quality college or degree program provides more than one instructor or professor to cover off a broad range of subjects over a period of months and

years, so too does a high quality apprenticeship program require a minimum number of journeypersons to train, supervise and mentor each apprentice.

Ratios themselves are established by industry/advisory committees that are comprised of labour and management. Together, these committees make responsible recommendations to government to increase or decrease the minimum ratio of journeypersons to apprentices. Alternatively, ratios can be negotiated between the employer and the union and set out in a collective agreement.

Some small- and medium-sized employers find it difficult to sustain the staffing levels required to take on apprentices and some argue for reduced ratios.

(CONTINUED...)

RATIOS (CONTINUED)

However, rather than compromise the quality of training, the standards of health and safety for both workers and the public, and the quality of work performed and services rendered, the provincial and federal governments should be implementing measures that make it possible for small and medium sized enterprises to take on apprentices.

For instance, the Ontario labour movement has been encouraging employers—especially small and medium sized employers—to pool their training resources, either through a training levy or with other modest sized employers through a consortium.

MYTH: UNIONS KEEP APPRENTICES OUT

In order to start an authentic apprenticeship program, workers must find an employer or joint union/employer apprenticeship committee that is able to register them as apprentices. This partnership (sometimes known as “sponsorship” or “indentureship”) involves employers, unions, the provincial government, and apprentices.

Under an authentic apprenticeship model, securing this employment relationship is the first step for a worker who wants a career in the skilled trades. Unfortunately, with the rise of private, fee-based “pre-apprenticeship programs” many people are taking courses that they think are putting them on the path toward journeyman status.

Too often, this is not the case. Workers find they have spent time and paid money for a course labelled “apprenticeship” but in the end, they can’t get hired.

In the case of joint union/employer apprenticeship committees, the union and employer work together to ensure that the intake of apprentices entering matches the availability of indentureships. This is fair for those for all parties involved in apprenticeship.

Conversely, graduating a slew of workers from private, fee-based programs without taking into consideration the number of indentureships available, is an irresponsible money-grab.

MYTH: WE HAVE A SKILLS SHORTAGE - WE NEED FLEXIBILITY

There is little evidence to confirm that Ontario is suffering from a skills shortage. Tens of thousands of experienced workers have been laid-off as Ontario plants have closed. Many plants re-opened in countries where governments attract investment based on poor employment standards and low-wage workforces.

At the same time, under the banner of “addressing the skills shortage”, the federal government has allowed employers to hire temporary workers from abroad, at lower pay and with virtually no rights or benefits. Temporary foreign workers can be disposed of the moment an employer no longer needs them—or the moment they demand the same rights as other workers. Consequently, the incentives for employers to create good, long-term jobs here—or in any other country—are virtually non-existent.

Tool and Die making is a case in point. A recent provincial government report on manufacturing in Ontario claims there is a low supply of Tool and Die makers. The problem here is two-fold. First, most die making jobs have been off-shored so there are few jobs left in Ontario. Second, because of the first fact, most training facilities are not offering training or have even closed. The “low supply” of Die Makers is a symptom of the jobs or opportunities shortage.

Furthermore, there is growing corporate pressure to reduce training standards as a means of solving the so-called “skills shortage”. This would reduce the quality of the training itself, compromise worker and public safety, and contribute to the fragmentation of trades into narrow skill sets. While some employers may favour this approach, the labour movement is working hard to protect the public and workers from health and safety hazards and from redirecting workers’ potential into narrowly defined skill sets.

MYTH OF THE SKILLS SHORTAGE (CONTINUED)

The solution is not to reduce standards, but rather for government to develop a comprehensive good jobs strategy, nurture local economies, and stop the race to the bottom that is so engendered by corporate globalization.

MYTH: OYAP ADEQUATELY REPLACES TRADES TRAINING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Programs like the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) aim to have students reduce their school time to go onto job sites in the hope of gaining credits for an apprenticeship.

But without the intervention of unions like the Carpenters Local 27, too often kids in these programs receive neither adequate supervision nor genuine learning opportunities.

Unions like the Carpenters Local 27 have been able to bargain effective changes to the way the OYAP program works by incorporating union sensitive curriculum and rules that benefit the apprentice.

However, the best use of time and money are fully-funded and adequately-staffed shop classes in the schools, combined with high level math and sciences as part of a quality curriculum.

MYTH: YOUTH AREN'T CHOOSING THE TRADES

Unfortunately, the reality is a little more complicated. While it is true that less than 8 percent of the 5.25 million high school credits taken each year by students are in technical education, this is not just a reflection of family attitudes.

This is the very real consequence of the Ontario Conservatives' "Common Sense Revolution" that virtually eliminated shop classes from elementary and secondary schools.



Photo: Bill Burke/Page One Photography

Although some shop programs have been restored, much of the physical infrastructure that previously existed has been lost and many newer schools were built without the capacity to include shop and tech programs. The Harris blunder needs to be rectified much more quickly than is currently the case and significant funding must be restored to public elementary and secondary schools to make this happen.

It should also be noted that even without adequate support for trades within the public school system, demand for apprenticeships consistently exceeds the supply. If the Ontario government is serious about increasing the number of apprentices, and ensuring access for women, newcomers, first nation's communities, people with disabilities, and those from racialized communities, then job creation has to be the number one priority.

Raising expectations is important, but if available indentureships don't increase at the same time, then we build only frustration—not a skilled workforce.

MYTH: EMPLOYERS LOSE MONEY WHEN THEY HIRE APPRENTICES

A June 2006 paper released by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum examined 15 trade occupations and demonstrated that for every dollar invested in apprenticeship training there is an average \$1.38 return (excluding tax credits) for the employer.

A 2005 Ontario Chamber of Commerce report suggests that there is a 430 percent return on investment in apprenticeship.

Clearly, it makes economic sense to invest in apprenticeship training.

Unfortunately in Canada, employer investment in training is low and has been stagnant for a number of years. According to a 2006 report, in terms of the priority employers place on training, Canada slipped from 12th place in 2002 to 20th in 2004.

As a percentage of their overall payroll, Canadian firms' spending has been virtually stagnant at 1.57 percent in 2001 and 1.55 percent in 2003, compared to 1.9 percent and 2.34 percent in the US in those same years.

In this context, employers who do invest in apprenticeship training are subsidizing employers who are not. Some employers recruit journeypersons after a different employer has already absorbed the costs of the apprenticeship training.

This is known as "poaching". According to the Chamber of Commerce, retaining apprentices was identified by employers as one of the top three barriers to their investing in apprenticeship training.

When an employer loses a worker to poaching, the costs are enormous: the actual financial investment in training that is lost, plus the additional financial burden of paying wages above scale in order to keep their apprentices.

SOLUTIONS FOR ALL - A TRAINING LEVY

We need a government policy that ensures all employers contribute to apprenticeship training, and that they all reap the rewards of making this investment.

The Ontario Federation of Labour has been calling on the Ontario government to implement a minimum **training levy** for all employers. This fund would then be used to help small- and medium-sized employers hire apprentices and assist other employers to create high quality apprenticeship opportunities.

The proposal builds on a training levy model already in place in Quebec that has been credited, not only with increasing authentic apprenticeships, but also in improving workplace literacy and broadening the skills base of the workforce. 



Photo: Bill Burke/Page One Photography

WHEN IS APPRENTICESHIP NOT AN APPRENTICESHIP? ...



...WHEN IT'S A CO-OP PROGRAM

Co-op education is an excellent program in which students can alternate or coordinate their high school or post-secondary studies with a job in a field related to their academic or occupational objectives.

This program is predicated on an agreement between the school, community college or university to ensure that their course work allows for periods of paid or unpaid employment.

While this is a program that allows students to gain valuable work experience, it is not the same thing as an apprenticeship. Eighty to ninety percent of authentic apprenticeship training is paid employment in which the apprentice learns the trade under the supervision of licensed journeypersons. Authentic apprenticeship programs are time-based and can take between two and five years to complete.

The time-based aspect of this model allows the apprentice to turn basic skill and knowledge into real expertise and learn the “tricks of the trade” from qualified masters (journeypersons). While valuable in providing work experience for students, co-op programs are not regulated for minimum standards in supervision and training; consequently, the hours worked by a student do not contribute to the completion of an apprenticeship.

...WHEN IT'S A WORK-STUDY PROGRAM

A Work-Study Program is related to the Canada/Ontario student loan program and is available specifically to post-secondary students who receive student financial assistance while they are attending school full-time.

This program allows such students to work part-time on campus for a maximum of 18 weeks and earn up to \$5,000 over and above their student financial assistance allocation.

While this program can be a lifeline for students by providing additional funding for their studies and can sometimes provide students with valuable work experience, it is not an apprenticeship.

...WHEN IT'S A PLACEMENT PROGRAM

A placement program is usually understood as a plan in which individuals are placed into employment situations that are either paid or unpaid.

Some high school and post-secondary curricula include a “placement” portion in which a student is placed in a workplace that is of interest to the student for a limited number of hours each week.

Other placement programs involve partnerships between employers and job seekers where employers agree to accept qualified “placements” to help the individual acquire work experience relevant to their skills and educational background.

The employer is not obligated to provide any skills training above or beyond those currently possessed by the individual, though of course a certain amount of orientation is provided and an increase in practical skills can be one of the outcomes of a Placement Program.

In such programs, there are no requirements outside basic employment regulations to ensure the individual will be adequately supervised or that their skills will be enriched.

Nevertheless, for many individuals, this program is tremendously important in helping individuals reach their employment potential.



WHEN IS APPRENTICESHIP NOT AN APPRENTICESHIP?

...WHEN IT'S "PRE-APPRENTICESHIP"

Pre-apprenticeship programs are designed to help people get exposure to the trades and learn some new skills required to enter the apprenticeship system. Completing a "pre-apprenticeship" program does not guarantee access to or the availability of an authentic apprenticeship. Although many of these programs also include work placements, neither the placement nor the program is, in fact, an apprenticeship.

Unfortunately, because of the cuts to education funding implemented by the former Conservative government, the trades education that young people used to receive in elementary and secondary schools is too often not available.

As a consequence, many of those interested in pursuing a trade are forced to spend time and sometimes money on courses after they leave high school, before securing a job as an apprentice. This unnecessarily extends the time it takes for individuals to access authentic apprenticeship training and creates further barriers if tuition fees are also applied.

...WHEN IT'S A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Although there is a mentorship aspect to apprenticeship programs, mentorship programs are not at all the same as apprenticeship programs. Mentorship programs can take a variety of forms. They can be formal or informal and involve paid or unpaid work.

Typically, mentorship programs exist to provide a support network for individuals who may face challenges in finding and keeping employment. Mentorship programs play valuable roles in helping job seekers find employment and can provide supports for those who have already found work. Valuable as these are, they are not apprenticeship programs.

...WHEN IT'S NOT AN AUTHENTIC TRADE

Because employers are keen to get access to public funds and tax credits earmarked for apprenticeship training, many employers are calling on government to designate certain skill sets as trades, when in fact, such skill sets comprise only a portion of the skills involved in learning a whole trade.

Generally, such training programs are shorter than authentic apprenticeship programs (which usually take two to five years to complete) and there is often no formal theoretical training. Formal theoretical training typically comprises between 10 and 20 percent of an authentic apprenticeship, and provides the foundational principles for on-the-job training.

When whole trades are dismantled into narrow skill sets, employers are able to water down the pay and benefits of all workers by hiring people with less training to do the work that should be undertaken by qualified journeymen. This also has negative consequences for worker and public safety and the quality of the work performed. For example, employers attempt to designate the occupation of "Motor Inspector" under the *Apprenticeship and Certification Act (ACA)*.

This was a company-specific "trade" that was created to circumvent the requirement to hire a certified electrician. Company specific trades—or niche trades—eliminate labour mobility since the methods of operation at one company are usually very different than another. A skill set based on the unique needs of one company usually do not satisfy the needs of another.

Misrepresenting authentic trades does a disservice to the workers who believe they are gaining access to a reliable trade that offers good pay, steady employment and transferability. By allowing employers and corporations to create "niche", "designer", or "boutique" trades—suited specifically to the needs of one company—workers lose the mobility, stability and flexibility associated with authentic trades.

When a plant closes, those workers with training in a whole trade have a much better chance of finding alternative employment. Those workers who were only partially trained must often undergo additional re-training, adding costs for both the individual and the public. Such additional costs could be avoided had the workers received authentic apprenticeship training in the first place.

Concessions in authentic apprenticeship training standards come at a price for workers and society. Poor quality training and low standards undermine the development of a skilled workforce that has the knowledge base and expertise to adapt to ever-changing economic cycles. 

APPRENTICESHIP: SOLUTIONS FOR LIFE



A COMPREHENSIVE JOBS STRATEGY

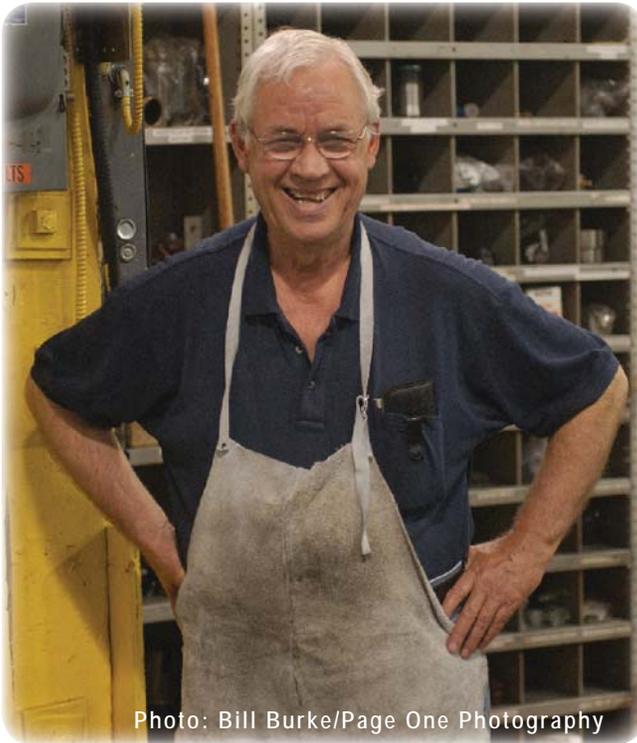


Photo: Bill Burke/Page One Photography

Across Canada, over 400,000 decent jobs have disappeared between 2003 and 2008. In July 2008, 55,000 jobs disappeared in one month—the largest monthly decline since the early 1990s. Yet in the face of this crisis, the federal and provincial governments have offered virtually no leadership. Federal and provincial strategies have largely focussed on transferring public money to corporations through tax cuts and other subsidies. Rarely are these strategies tied to the creation of long-term sustainable jobs.

The sheer scale of the job loss translates into a loss of apprenticeship opportunities for younger workers. Federal and provincial governments have to step up to the plate and develop a real vision to grow Canada's and Ontario's economy in a manner that creates jobs and apprenticeship opportunities, and that nurtures local economies.

A jobs strategy would include:

- Levering more value-added and manufacturing jobs from resource industries;
- Implementing procurement strategies so that public money is invested locally in good, safe environmentally sustainable jobs;
- Expanding worker-oriented education and training, including authentic apprenticeships in whole trades, as well as skills upgrading, literacy and second language programs;
- Creating a provincial training levy so that all employers, no matter their size, can invest in the highest quality apprenticeship training.

RESTORE AUTHENTIC APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING IN WHOLE TRADES

All authentic apprenticeship training in whole trades must be restored to the *Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act* (TQAA). Those occupations that require some specialized training, but not to the extent demanded by authentic apprenticeship programs, can be governed by separate legislation.

In addition, more trades must be designated as “compulsory”, meaning that only those holding recognized certificates of qualification under the *Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act (ACA)* would be allowed to perform the work of a journeyperson. This would result in greater numbers of apprentices completing their program, better safeguards for apprentices, better enforcement of health and safety and training standards, high quality production and ultimately a highly trained and productive workforce.

IMPLEMENT A TRAINING LEVY

Despite enormous returns on investment, many employers do not invest adequately in apprenticeship training. Instead, they poach qualified journeypersons from other employers—or even from other countries under the federal temporary foreign worker program. This kind of poaching puts other employers and other countries at a disadvantage as they lose the benefits of their investment in skilled workers.

Some small and medium sized employers would like to invest in apprenticeship training, but they do not have the capacity to provide the high quality training demanded by authentic apprenticeship training models.

Both of these situations could be resolved if the Ontario government would follow the lead of Quebec and implement a provincial training levy for all employers in Ontario. The levy would require only those employers who are not already investing adequately in training, to do so. And by pooling training resources small- and medium-sized employers could finally benefit from the returns associated with hiring apprentices. Moreover, by insisting on a basic minimum level of employer investment in training, the playing field would be levelled between those who currently train, and those who do not.

In Quebec, where most employers are asked to contribute approximately one percent of payroll to a training fund, there is evidence that such a training levy has markedly improved apprenticeship training and contributed to a significant improvement in literacy and language skills among the broader Quebec workforce. There is no reason why Ontario could not adopt a similar model.

ADEQUATELY FUND OUR ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY AND POST-SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Provincial and federal governments must do more to restore a quality curriculum, rebuild infrastructure, and increasing staffing levels. Colleges must also be adequately funded and staffed to provide the in-class portions of authentic apprenticeship programs. Tuition fees for in-class apprenticeship training should be eliminated, as should all college and university fees.

A PERMANENT LABOUR MARKET PARTNERS FORUM

Finally, we need a place where we can bring labour, employers and government together to make coherent recommendations on the needs of the labour market. At present, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities governs apprenticeship training, but it works largely in isolation from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Given that apprenticeship training cannot flourish without the existence of apprenticeship jobs, this dualism within government must be overcome.

A permanent national and provincial forum for labour, employers and representatives of a variety of relevant government ministries, would be a vehicle for developing a pro-active strategy to create sustainable jobs and build a workforce that is genuinely skilled, adaptable and ready for the challenges of the 21st century. 