

In a major study of the collision repair industry in Canada, conducted as a "snapshot" of the industry in the year 2000, the federal Human Resources Development Canada and the Automotive Industries Association of Canada identified the need for 18-19,000 new employees. This increase would address the aging of the current employees reaching retirement and provide needed new technological skills for the repair of more complex vehicles. The structural and body repair of a newer vehicle is a highly-skilled trade with math and sciences being important educational backgrounds along with a desire for professional results and an accomplished artistic bias for excellent paint refinishing.

The study was the impetus for the creation of the Canadian Collision Industry Forum (CCIF), to create a national voice for the industry and address the issues raised in the study, in particular, the Attraction and Retention of Employees. Chairing this national committee is John Norris, Executive Director of the Hamilton District Autobody Repair Association (HARA).

Their first project was the creation of a bilingual cd-rom "Art of Earning- High Tech Careers in the Collision Repair Industry". Useful in school presentations and to attract new hires, this industry promotional tool has already been sent out to 2200 job development agencies, apprenticeship offices, school boards and shops for their eager use. Featuring the new technologies, before and after pictures of damaged vehicles, interviews with current apprentices and identifying the

problem-solving attitudes needed in new employees, the cd-rom is a great opportunity to show young people a good career with a great future.

Working with government and Industry-Education Councils, the industry has:

Offered a successful Career Day for the industry in Toronto in September of 2003, with over 20 busloads of interested future employees attending, some from schools a 5-hour drive away. Over 1000 students and 60 educators and job development agency personnel received packages of information to use to assist young people in defining their career

A Toyota Fourrunner was awarded to the school that brought the largest number of students to the event. Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School in Simcoe with 139 students attending won the vehicle, courtesy of PPG Canada Inc. and Toyota Canada Inc.

A Local Industry Committee was set up in Toronto, with a kick-off event that attracted close to 80 shop owners, to sponsor young people for an eight week apprenticeship training offering followed by a possible JobConnect wage subsidy to hiring shops. This is an exciting new opportunity to link young people and employers.

Tours of the college's training facilities were arranged for local job development agencies to acquaint them with industry requirements. Actual shop tours were arranged to allow for first hand experience for those counselors.

Working with agencies such as local Industry-Education Councils, the industry has access to listings of wages subsidy and grant information to reduce the risks and costs to employers of new hires, [www.apprenticesearch.com](http://www.apprenticesearch.com) and [www.skilledtrades.ca](http://www.skilledtrades.ca) assistance, including “Steps to a Collision repair Apprenticeship” and the planned “Job Seeker” brochures for this industry.

The industry has helped with others to secure funds for auto body training labs at Mohawk College and Niagara College to add to classroom capacity in the province and continues to attend job fairs especially at secondary schools to highlight our career opportunities.

The trade association has co-sponsored or supported a Youth Internship Program and pre-apprenticeship and Help for Laid-off Apprenticeships programs. It promotes provincial opportunities for skills updating.

Every Monday, the industry web site at [www.ciia.com](http://www.ciia.com) sends teachers, educators and job development agencies across the province, a listing of shops looking for workers and skilled employees.

Still more can be done to encourage employers to hire and to convince young people that repairing vehicles is a good career with a great future.