

**Summary of Selected Recommendations
to Address Labour and Skills Shortages in Toronto**

**Help Wanted—Confronting Labour and Skills Shortages in Toronto
Seventh Annual ICE Network Meeting
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Background—Labour and Skills Shortages in Toronto

The first study of its kind to examine labour force supply and demand at the city-region scale, the *Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan* offers in-depth analysis into labour force needs in the Toronto region over the next decade.

Labour Shortages Predicted Over the Next Ten Years

The *Labour Force Readiness Plan* forecasts labour shortages in the Toronto region over the next ten years: “By 2010, it is forecast that employment will grow [by 400,000 jobs] to just over 3 million, representing a 13% increase over the 10 year period 2000-2010. However, the highest growth rate is expected to occur between 2001 and 2008, with a slowdown after 2008 due mainly to the baby boom generation leaving the workforce at that time.”¹

Baby Boomers Will Likely Retire Over the Next Decade

The report also notes that “the Toronto region is expected to lose a major share of its existing workforce by 2010 as a result of the impact of the aging baby boom bulge. With approximately a third of the current workforce in the 45-64 age bracket, the replacement of the existing workforce will be a critical issue over the next 10 years.”²

Immigration Will Play a Critical Role in Maintaining Toronto’s Workforce

With the low birthrate and high retirement rate of the existing Toronto (and Canadian) population, it is clear that immigration will play an increasingly critical role in maintaining our workforce over the next decade and beyond. It is predicted that “by 2011, immigration will account for *all* net labour growth in Canada.”³ For Toronto, where the 2001 Census indicates that approximately 50% of the city’s population was born outside the country, the importance of immigrants to both the Toronto and national economies cannot be overstated.

Skills Shortages are Anticipated to Increase in Toronto

Accompanying the predicted labour shortages, skills shortages are also anticipated in Toronto over the next decade. As Naomi Alboim suggests, “labour shortages in Canada, for the most part, are also skills shortages. That is, the majority of new jobs being created and those employment opportunities made available through labour force attrition require high levels of skills and knowledge.”⁴ The *Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan* concurs with this analysis.

Skills Shortages are Anticipated at All Education Levels

As a result of a combination of the high rate of retirement of experienced workers along with an increasingly competitive global economy, the Plan forecasts skills shortages across all skill

¹ *Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan: Overview* (City of Toronto, 2003), p. 8.

² *Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan: Overview* (City of Toronto, 2003), p. 9.

³ Human Resources Development Canada, “Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians,” (Hull: Government of Canada, 2002), p. 8 (original emphasis).

⁴ Naomi Alboim and the Maytree Foundation, “Fulfilling the Promise: Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Canadian Economy,” p. 9.

levels (low, intermediate and high). “While demand across the highest skill requirement (occupations requiring university education) is expected to have the highest percentage increase, the largest absolute increase in demand will occur in occupations requiring community college or apprenticeship training, or a high school diploma.... This highlights the importance of non-university acquired skills in the future growth of Toronto’s labour market.”⁵

⁵ *Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan: Overview* (City of Toronto, 2003), p. 48.

Selected Recommendations to Address Labour and Skills Shortages in Toronto

Immigrant-Related Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Negotiate a Coordination Framework on Immigration and Settlement

The City, federal and provincial governments develop a memorandum of understanding to be signed by the Mayor and the federal and provincial Ministers of Citizenship and Immigration. Such an MOU would recognize the principle of Toronto's participation in discussions about immigration and settlement policies and programs that affect the City of Toronto and facilitate a mutually agreeable format and process.

Recommendation 2: Expand ESL and STIC Adult Education Courses

Expand English as a Second Language (ESL) as well as Sector Terminology, Information & Counseling (STIC) adult education courses through the school boards and community-based training providers so that every newcomer has access to appropriate programs and services. In order to be effective, such programs must be on-going, financially accessible, offered both during the day and in the evening, and must include supports like income replacement and childcare.

Recommendation 3: Increase Support for Bridging Programs

Increase support for the Access to Professions and Trades (APT) Unit's bridging programs to accommodate more occupations and trades, and to accommodate more immigrants. In order to be effective, such programs must be on-going, financially accessible, offered both during the day and in the evening, and must include supports like income replacement and childcare.

Recommendation 4: Promote the Use of Credential Evaluation Services

Heighten awareness and promote the use of credential evaluation services by private and public sector employers (including the City of Toronto), educational institutions, and immigrants and newcomers themselves. In addition, increase the recognition by private and public sector employers of evaluated credentials, and use credential evaluation as a mechanism to determine the skills of immigrants and newcomers in hiring processes.

Recommendation 5: Position the City of Toronto as a Model for the Use of Credential Evaluation in Hiring and Brand Toronto as an "Employer of Choice" for Immigrants

Position the City of Toronto as a model for the use and promotion of credential evaluation in hiring, including the City's agencies, boards and commissions (ABCs). Brand the City of Toronto as an "Employer of Choice" for immigrants through the development and implementation of human resource programs that are supportive of newcomers (for example, through the development of new and expansion of existing programs like workplace placements, mentoring, credential recognition, and non-biased hiring procedures).

Recommendation 6: Support and Implement the City of Toronto's Mentoring Program

Divisions and departments within the City of Toronto actively support and implement the City's new mentoring program for immigrants and, once successfully implemented, highlight the program as a best practice for employers.

Recommendation 7: Expand Student Loan and Grant Programs

Expand provincial and federal student loan and grant programs to allow for more flexibility around part-time studies for people seeking to increase their labour market participation or for immigrants to gain credential recognition in their fields of training.

Recommendation 8: Include Training, Upgrading and Bridging Programs and Services in Settlement

Encourage Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to ensure that settlement programs and services in Toronto include training, upgrading and bridging programs and services to help newcomers make the transition into meaningful work.

Recommendation 9: Continue to Support the Integration of Immigrants into Toronto's Labour Force

Continue to support efforts to work towards the smooth integration of immigrants and their skills into Toronto's labour force.

Youth-Related Recommendations

Recommendation 10: Ensure that High School is a Minimum Standard for All

Provide youth with incentives to complete high school, and ensure that opportunities to complete grade twelve are made available to every adult in Toronto.

Recommendation 11: Target Apprenticeship Outreach to Non-Traditional Groups

On an industry-by-industry basis, develop information packages on apprenticeship and the skilled trades targeted specifically at youth, women, Aboriginal people and persons with disabilities and provide these packages to guidance councillors, career councillors, social services caseworkers, and others. In addition, establish pre-apprenticeship programs targeted at these groups in particular to provide them with the background necessary to succeed.

Recommendation 12: Increase Public Funding to Colleges and Universities

The federal and provincial governments reinvest in colleges and universities in the recognition that a strong publicly funded post-secondary educational system is critical to our global economic competitiveness.

Business-Related Recommendations

Recommendation 13: Create a Business Case for Investment in Training

The City of Toronto Economic Development Division partner with the Toronto Board of Trade, Toronto region chambers of commerce, and other relevant and interested stakeholders to develop action plans and policy directions that will encourage Toronto region businesses to invest in the skills development of their workforce.

Recommendation 14: Implement a Tax Credit for SMEs for Training Costs

Provide a training incentive to small and medium business enterprises (SMEs) in Toronto through the implementation of a tax credit for training.

Training-Related Recommendations

Recommendation 15: Negotiate a Coordination Framework on a Labour Market Development Agreement

The City, federal and provincial governments develop a memorandum of understanding to be signed by the Mayor and the federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD) and the provincial Minister of Training, College and Universities (MTCU). Such an MOU would recognize the principle of Toronto's participation in discussions about a Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) that affects the City of Toronto and facilitate a mutually agreeable format and process.

Recommendation 16: Develop and Implement an Integrated Labour Force Development System

Establish a tripartite committee comprised of the three orders of government (municipal, provincial and federal) and charge it with altering the approach to labour force development in Toronto, with the aim of developing a more integrated, holistic system including the following components:

- Labour Market Information
- Career/Employment Counselling and Support
- Pre-Employment Services
- Skills Training, Upgrading, and Re-Training
- Recognizing Prior Learning
- Job Matching Services⁶

Recommendation 17: Commit to a Zero Tolerance Policy on Illiteracy

The federal, provincial and municipal governments commit the necessary resources to literacy and numeracy programs and services so that Toronto can boast the highest literacy rate in the world.

⁶ These six components of an integrated labour force development system are outlined in Ursule Critoph Consulting, "Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan: An Integrated Labour Force Development System for Toronto—A Conceptual Framework, Report #6," pp. 17-22.

Recommendation 18: Ensure Access to Training for Unemployed People

Improve and expand the eligibility of unemployed people to access training opportunities through such programs as the federal Employment Insurance Skills Development Employment Benefit and the provincial Ontario Works program, and ensure that these opportunities are accompanied by necessary supports like childcare.

Recommendation 19: Establish an Association of Toronto Training and Education Networks

The City of Toronto Economic Development Division, in collaboration with the Ontario Competitive City Regions (OCCR), host a round table involving executive-level representation from Toronto region universities and colleges to establish a Toronto-wide “Knowledge Network.” Such a group would consider ways of growing the entire skills and education sector within Toronto, as well as branding Toronto both nationally and internationally as a global knowledge centre, including the development of a Knowledge Network web site.

Other Recommendations

Recommendation 20: Communicate the Findings of the Labour Force Readiness Plan

Communicate the Plan’s findings by:

- Holding a high-level conference in Toronto to disseminate the study’s findings to the academic, community-based, government and business sectors; and discuss issues of the model, methodology, usefulness, transferability, and best practices related to labour force readiness plans;
- Presenting findings at national and international conferences and symposia, emphasizing the Plan’s unique people-centred model of economic development;
- Posting the reports to the City of Toronto’s web site, including enhancements to the site that highlight the strengths of the labour force in Toronto; and
- Marketing the strength of Toronto’s labour force internationally to attract firms looking for skilled labour.

Recommendation 21: Position Toronto as the Best Place in the World to Live, Work and Invest for Global Knowledge Workers

Emphasizing Toronto as a centre of diversity, creativity, and innovation, celebrate Toronto both locally and internationally as a vibrant, exciting, liveable city that is the best place in the world to live, work and invest. In concert with the City of Toronto’s Branding Strategy, highlight Toronto as a premier location for global knowledge workers, emphasizing Toronto’s unique assets as a diverse, cosmopolitan, safe place to live and work.

Recommendation 22: Broker a New Deal for Toronto

Support the City of Toronto in its efforts to achieve a new relationship with the other orders of government that will provide the City with the powers and resources to match its responsibilities, address its residents’ priorities and invest in quality of life, environmental sustainability and economic growth.