



Building bright futures

POWERING UP THE FUTURE

2008 Labour Market Information Study



CANADA'S ELECTRICITY SECTOR IS ABOUT TO ENTER A PERIOD IN WHICH THERE WILL BE AN **INSUFFICIENT SUPPLY OF WORKERS TO MEET THAT GROWING DEMAND** WITHIN THE SECTOR. THE GAP BETWEEN SUPPLY OF WORKERS AND DEMAND WILL EXIST AT ALL LEVELS OF THE INDUSTRY, FROM ENGINEERS, THROUGH TECHNICIANS AND TECHNOLOGISTS, TO TRADES PEOPLE.

In 2008, employers reported:

132	unfilled vacancies for Managers and Supervisors (2.2%),
405	unfilled vacancies for Engineers, and Technicians/Technologists (3%), and
821	vacancies for Trades occupations (3.5%).

28.8%

The percentage of
the workforce retiring
between 2007 and 2012





THIS GAP IS THE RESULT OF FOUR FACTORS:

- 1 A significant proportion of the current workforce is retiring. (28.8 % will retire in the next four years.)
- 2 The supply of trained workers is decreasing.
- 3 Electricity employers face stiff hiring competition from employers in other sectors who want to attract the best trained workers.
- 4 There is a growing demand for electricity workers because:
 - the demand for electricity is growing (Canada exports huge amounts of electricity to the United States), and
 - the current electrical infrastructure is aging and needs to be replaced.

Ensuring an adequate supply of workers into the electricity sector is imperative on all levels of the Canadian economy.

Recognizing the impending gap between supply and demand of electricity workers, the Electricity Sector Council (ESC), in partnership with Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), commissioned a labour market information (LMI) study to better understand the problem. With the information from the study, the ESC and electricity sector employers and businesses can take appropriate action to mitigate the effects of worker shortages.



IN THE PAST THE ELECTRICITY SECTOR HAS ATTRACTED YOUNG TALENT AND, ONCE EMPLOYED, WORKERS TENDED TO REMAIN IN THE SECTOR THROUGHOUT THEIR CAREERS. TODAY THESE CONDITIONS ARE CHANGING. **COMPETITION FOR STAFF** COMES FROM BOTH WITHIN THE INDUSTRY AS WELL AS FROM ORGANIZATIONS OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRY. TALENTED YOUNGER WORKERS HAVE CONSIDERABLY MORE CAREER CHOICES.



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Retirement

- Employers estimate that 28.8% of the current electricity workforce will retire in the next four years.
- Employers have hired a significant number of new staff, nearly 900 staff in 2006, partly to replace the 2.4% of the industry that retired in that year. Nevertheless, 3.2% positions were still unfilled.
- The line of business most affected by retirement is transmission.
- The electricity sector as a whole is expecting retirements to double by 2009. It expects an increase of 160% by 2012.
- The retirement trend in the electricity sector is consistent with the trend in other trades sectors of the Canadian economy.
- In 2006, 33% of electricity employees (mostly in the trades) were eligible for partial pension. Employers will have to work hard to keep employees from taking early retirement.



EMPLOYERS COMPETE TO HIRE THE **BRIGHTEST AND BEST**. ELECTRICITY EMPLOYERS COMPETE WITH OTHER EMPLOYERS IN THE SECTOR AND WITH EMPLOYERS OUTSIDE THE SECTOR. SURVEY RESPONDENTS NOTED THAT CHIEF COMPETITORS WERE OTHER UTILITIES (77%), CONTRACTORS (33%) AND THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY (25%).

82.7%

Percentage who hired co-op students

63.2%

Percentage who hired interns

82.7%

Percentage who hired summer students

76.3%

Percentage who hired apprentices

Electrical Power Line and Cable Workers were the largest group of new hires in 2006.

The biggest group of new hires for large employers came from other sectors (38.1%). The biggest group for small and medium employers came from the electricity industry (48.8%).

Overall, 34.2% of new hires were from non-electricity related industries and 33.6% were from within the electricity sector.

Immigration

According to the 2006 Census there are 1,225 recent immigrants working in electricity sector. This is less than 1% of employment for recent immigrants.

The largest number of immigrant electricity workers are engineers, followed by technologists and technicians, then trades and non-support.

Immigration will be largest source of population growth through 2010 (68%).

Women and Aboriginal people are under-represented both as employees and as students in training programs.

16%


The percentage of women that are managers and supervisors

8%

The percentage of women that are engineers and technicians

2%

The percentage of women that are trade employees



INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF TRAINED GRADUATES WILL REQUIRE INCREASED COLLABORATION BETWEEN INDUSTRY, EMPLOYERS, AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

The electricity sector is not popular as a career choice among high school and post-secondary graduates.

- Universities report an enrolment decline in electricity related programs.
- Students are not attracted to the industry because it does not have a good public image. It is seen as dull and lacking in career opportunities.

However, colleges report that enrolment in electricity related programs are growing faster than in other programs. Apprenticeship training programs are also growing, especially in Tower Line Technician training.

Educational institutions report that industry engagement would be the most effective means of increasing the supply of trained graduates.

Increased collaboration is needed to develop programs for internationally trained workers. Educational institutions are well positioned to offer such training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 THE INDUSTRY **MUST**
TAKE ACTION INVOLVING
STAKEHOLDERS AT ALL
LEVELS. THE CHALLENGES GO
BEYOND HUMAN RESOURCES,
AND REQUIRE A **CHANGE OF**
CULTURAL ATTITUDES LEADING
TO A MORE HOLISTIC
APPROACH.



- 1** Within companies, identify people who are models or champions of change.
- 2** Communicate the findings of the current report to all industry stakeholders, including government, boards of directors, and labour leaders.
- 3** Develop an open dialogue among industry stakeholders to establish a 'best practices' for the industry.
- 4** Message businesses that their needs are not being met. Businesses need to know the impact of the human resource situation on their operating efficiency.
- 5** Bring human resource planners into developing the strategic corporate plan.
(Currently, there is disconnect between human resources and other corporate executives.)

2 THE MAIN HUMAN RESOURCE PRIORITY FOR THE SECTOR MUST BE TO **FILL THE SUPPLY - DEMAND GAP.**

- 1** Human resources must develop a plan to actively recruit (attract), train (develop), and retain workers. Human resources will require the support of the corporate executive, both financially and in practice.
- 2** Increase training capability and capacity, with the support of government and industry. Employers must incorporate training and mentoring (knowledge transfer) as an ongoing strategy.
- 3** Intensify messaging to government and industry to increase the number of postsecondary seats in electricity programs. Businesses and large corporations can play a role in funding these seats.
- 4** Industry should continually message government to allow more workers to enter Canada through the Provincial Nominee Program. Corporate partnerships and provincial industry representatives can have more influence on government if they work in collaboration.
- 5** Take advantage of the 'electrical family' of workers. Different electricity workers have different training programs, but they share much knowledge and have common skills. Therefore, with on-the-job training, these 'family members' can easily learn the skills required different jobs.
- 6** Modify recruitment and marketing strategies to target underrepresented groups such as women, aboriginal people, visible minority groups and immigrants. Industry and training institutions can develop targeted training courses to help these groups enter the sector.
- 7** Creatively market the industry to high school students. Peak their interest in the careers options within the electricity sector. Undertake similar campaigns in colleges and universities.