

LOCAL BOARD ENVIRONMENTAL SCANS

PROVINCIAL SUMMARY 2002/03

September 2002

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INTRODUCTION

This report is based on a compilation of information collected and compiled by 22 Local Training Boards across Ontario. It represents a variety of data collection methods and sources. Some information is quantitative as in survey and study findings; while other information is qualitative or anecdotal gathered through town hall meetings, sector meetings, and other events in the community. This means that in some cases the information will be well substantiated through traditional research and in other instances may reflect the opinions of only a few community representatives. But regardless of how the information was gathered, the resulting environmental scans were validated by representatives of the local board areas giving a level of credibility to the information. As such, this report provides general information on the issues, needs and trends as identified by individuals and organizations at the local level.

Objectives

This report was prepared to:

- Provide a summary of training and employment themes across Ontario;
- Identify skill shortages regionally and provincially; and
- Identify training needs regionally and provincially.

About the Report

The issues have been grouped into categories that are defined below to enable the reader to find specific information easily.

Category	Definition
Apprenticeship	Issues related to skill shortages in the apprenticeable occupations, the apprenticeship system, training, promotion/marketing of the program, and funding for apprenticeship.
Economic Development	Issues related to planned proactive sector growth in local areas.
Literacy, Basic, Employability, and Language Skills	Issues related to the need for literacy and basic skills in the labour force.
Programs and Services	Issues identified relating to the delivery and funding of government programs and services.
School-to-work	Issues related to linking education to employment through the provision of work experience opportunities for students and the development of curriculum that helps prepare students for employment.

Category	Definition
Sectors	Training and employment issues specific to individual sectors.
Special Needs Groups	Issues related to the training and employment needs of special needs groups including self-employed, women, Francophones, persons with disabilities, immigrants and visible minorities.
Occupational Shortages	A compilation of identified occupational shortages.
Training Needs	A compilation of identified training needs.

Purpose of Environmental Scans

The purpose of the Local Board environmental scans is twofold: to form the basis of the local area planning process in which the community develops local solutions to local needs; and to make information available to the governments (federal, provincial, municipal) that may be useful in the delivery of programs and services.

This year's environmental scanning process was an update of the previous year's information. The Local Boards were required to identify changes to previously documented needs as well as any new emerging training or employment issues.

Environmental Scan Methodology

Each Local Board employed a variety of qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods to update the environmental scan information. These included:

- Literature review of reports, studies etc. released subsequent to the previous environmental scan;
- Local HRCC labour market information;
- Town hall meetings and focus groups with community representatives; and
- Primary research commissioned by the Local Boards.

Environmental Scan Validation Process

All Local Board environmental scans were validated with the community using a variety of different methods. In some cases validation meetings were held and in others validation surveys were distributed by mail or online. This process provides an opportunity for the community to comment on the accuracy and completeness of the information. We can therefore assume that the information

is a reasonably accurate reflection of the employment and training issues in the Local Board areas.

LABOUR MARKET OVERVIEW

For much of the province, 2001 was a year characterized by a downturn in the economy and the events of September 11th. Some areas were impacted more severely than others with the major effects being felt in Southern Ontario. Those areas with a diversified economic base were better able to cope with the slowing in the automotive sector. The negative impact of these two factors (economic downturn and September 11th) were reflected in higher rates of unemployment and job losses. The Northern areas did not appear to feel the direct effects to the same extent. The signs are that the economy is bouncing back as most areas report improvements in 2002.

LABOUR FORCE ACTIVITY

In the large majority of Local Board areas unemployment rates were higher in 2002 compared to 2001. Again some areas in the North saw unemployment rates drop or remain stable. Although the economy has started to turnaround in 2002, the improvement did not immediately translate into higher employment with unemployment rates languishing at the higher levels. Some of those areas that reported unemployment rates for the second quarter of 2002, were starting to see small declines. In those areas that reported unemployment rates for youth, the levels were higher than the general labour force and also were on the rise.

HOW ARE SECTORS FARING?

Generally:

- Manufacturing had suffered during the downturn;
- The dot.com sector experienced job losses due to a rationalizing of the IT sector;
- Construction continued to be strong;
- Retail experienced some losses and is recovering;
- Biotechnology, and telecommunication technology (e.g. call centres) are optimistic;
- Hospitality and tourism experienced a small decline and is improving;
- Agriculture continues to undergo change resulting in reduced employment;
- Information, culture and recreation as well as education are growing; and
- Health care continues to be faced with increasing demand and stretched resources.

KEY LABOUR MARKET ISSUES

For the most part, the labour market issues identified in the Local Board Environmental Scans last year continue to be relevant and in fact have been exacerbated by the poor economic performance in 2001. This is not surprising given the complexity and long-term nature of the issues emerging from the environmental scans. As in past years, there are subtle shifts in emphasis and additions to the broad issues that help to further understand the nature of the problem.

APPRENTICESHIP

Issues related to apprenticeship figured prominently in 16 of the 22 environmental scans. Many of the same issues identified in previous years continue to be relevant today. The continued importance of apprenticeship is being driven by current and pending skill shortages. The issues identified can be grouped into four categories:

1. Employer Involvement
2. Recruitment
3. Apprenticeship System
4. Apprenticeship Training

1. Employer Involvement:

Much was said in this year's environmental scans about the involvement of employers in apprenticeship. Clearly employers are key to the apprenticeship system as the on-the-job training provider. They should also be instrumental in identifying where the expansion of apprenticeship programs is needed.

Employers are also a key element of the training of apprentices with between 70 – 90% of the training taking place on the job. The environmental scans point out that employers are hesitant to participate in apprenticeship. This is largely due to the cost and time involved in training apprentices. This issue is compounded by the fact that apprentices are often lured away by larger employers who can offer higher pay levels. If the apprentice leaves during the apprenticeship period, the employer loses any investment made in that person. Lack of employer participation is a significant issue in light of the need to increase the number of apprentices to meet the demand for skilled workers.

2. Recruitment:

Once again, driven by current or pending skill shortages, recruitment of new apprentices is an issue. The environmental scans highlight the need for more outreach to young people and parents. Both parents and young people need to understand the career opportunities in the apprenticeable occupations. Some felt there is ample marketing material but it needs to be made available

to those who influence career choices and potential recruits. There is a call for a coordinated marketing strategy and some are looking to government to provide a provincial marketing strategy. Part of raising awareness is exposure to these occupations in the school system. Many would like to see the high school shop classes brought back.

3. Apprenticeship System:

A few environmental scans identified the need for an increased presence of the apprenticeship office to help address skill shortages in the area. The apprenticeship offices need labour market information to assist them in delivering their services. The specific information needed includes:

- Changes in skill sets, clusters, trades and sectors; and
- Numbers and names of new employers.

4. Apprenticeship Training:

Ontario needs to promote universal, portable apprenticeships using flexible delivery methods to make this form of training easily accessible.

Two local board areas indicated that there are insufficient apprenticeship opportunities available in their communities.

One board suggested that providing pre-apprenticeship training on a part-time basis would make it more accessible for employed and unemployed individuals.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development was mentioned in the issues of 13 local board environmental scans. This was a particularly important issue in the north. The key issue for the north is the need to attract new business to create jobs. While at the same time recognizing that many new jobs come from existing businesses so it is also important to pay attention to retention and expansion. Quality web-based labour market information is seen to be a necessary tool to support efforts to attract new business.

Many of the issues related to the impact of the available labour supply on an area's ability to attract new business and industry. In this context the out migration of youth and skilled people some areas experience poses a barrier to attracting new business. Areas have recognized the need to develop options that will enhance chances of retaining youth and attracting new residents and workers to the area.

The growing population in some areas of Ontario is placing increasing pressures on the municipalities for services such as health care and transportation. Those areas that are attracting seniors are feeling this pressure more acutely. These

pressures call for a stronger culture of innovation committed to the development and implementation of new ideas.

Public transportation was identified as a barrier to participation in education and employment in several areas of the province. Although not a labour market issue, it is mentioned here in the context of economic development as a factor that could restrict the growth of business and industry in an area.

A common theme is the need for regional government within local board areas to work together, sharing information and coordinating activities.

LITERACY, BASIC, EMPLOYABILITY, AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

In this report, issues related to literacy, basic, employability, and language skills have been grouped together. In this years documents, literacy, basic, employability, and language skills were present in 19 of the 22 issues summaries. In many instances these skills were identified as the entry level skill sets required by employers. In some instances this grouping also included computer literacy. The lack of these skills was clearly seen to be a barrier to employment. The increasing importance of these skills, and the demand for programs and services is being driven by a few key factors:

- Growth in service sector jobs;
- Growing sophistication of machinery, manufacturing techniques, and technology in production jobs and skilled trades;
- The introduction of Grade 10 literacy testing; and
- “Credential creep” (increasing credential requirements in many occupations).

With respect to literacy training programs, there is a need for current and reliable information on literacy needs on which literacy community planners should develop plans of action. Activities should be coordinated amongst literacy providers.

The following suggestions were offered with respect to literacy training:

- More readily available literacy training for both employed and unemployed individuals;
- Further define literacy focusing on literacy needs for business and industry;
- Market the benefits of higher literacy levels;
- Lack of incentives to encourage workers to upgrade their literacy skills;
- Increase the number of high school graduates in literacy programs; and
- Need for more French literacy services for Francophones.

Concern was expressed about decreased access to adult high school programming. In some areas adult education, literacy and basic skills

programming are inadequate to meet demand. Basic skills upgrading for at risk youth was identified as a training gap.

Some parts of central Ontario are experiencing long waiting lists for ESL training. ESL training must include conversational, occupation specific terminology, and advanced levels to meet the needs of newcomers.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Issues related to programs and services were identified in 13 of the environmental scans. The comments can be grouped into five categories:

1. Coordination
2. Awareness
3. Innovation
4. Support
5. Eligibility

Coordination:

More integration and information sharing among agencies that fund and those who deliver training and adjustment programs would help provide seamless service at the local level. Enhanced community strategic planning would better enable funding agencies to incorporate input on local training needs in their business decision making.

Some areas would like to see more coordination of client assessments, referrals, and general programs and services among community service agencies and stakeholders to enable adequate access to training and employment programs. The feeling is that people get discouraged and give up when they must go from agency to agency for service.

Awareness:

Although work has been done to make information on programs and services available and accessible, there is still the sense that the community has limited awareness of available programs and services in some areas. Information on programs and services targeting specific groups such as newcomers, persons with disabilities, and youth need to be enhanced, coordinated, and integrated.

Innovation:

Innovative ways to encourage the delivery of apprenticeships, employability skills training and school to work transition programs are needed. More flexible delivery methods and customized programming is needed for traditional and distance learners. This is particularly true for geographically remote areas to improve access.

Support:

Several environmental scans pointed out the need for adequate support services such as daycare, transportation, and financial assistance to make training programs more accessible. Additional support services need to be made available for those people not on government assistance. Program funding that is dependent on meeting target numbers means small communities may receive reduced funding because it is not always possible to meet the targets.

Eligibility:

The environmental scans reflect a concern for those who are not eligible for programs and services or are restricted in accessing the programs such as:

- Non-union employees lacking an organizing body to act on their behalf to access adjustment services when employers downsize.
- Individuals who are not eligible for programs such as targeted wage subsidy, graduate alliance program, internships, may be disadvantaged as employers tend to favour those who are eligible.
- People not eligible for programs such as EI, Job Connect, or Ontario Works.

SCHOOL-TO-WORK

School to work transition was identified as an issue in 10 of the 22 environmental scans. Much is still being said about the need for more co-op opportunities in a wide variety of sectors. All seem to see the value of co-op experience and as such see that more needs to be done to increase and expand the involvement of employers and unions. Employers need to see the connection between training students (e.g. OYAP, co-op) and the benefit to their business. Coordination among educational institutions seeking co-op and apprenticeship placements could result in more willing employers and more placement opportunities.

There is concern that the new provincial curriculum may result in a higher number of young people not completing high school. There is a need for programs/ supports for students having difficulty. With Grade 12 as the minimum accepted by many employers access for adult students to programs to obtain high school credits is becoming more acute.

Skill demands are rising and some students are graduating from secondary school without acceptable employability skills. There is a need to facilitate improved communication and partnerships between education/training facilities, industry, and community partners to address education/training gaps.

Attitudes, practices, and services in many high schools tend to favour the needs of academic students and ignore the needs of workbound students. There needs to be alternate accreditation programs to reward students who will not receive

their OSSDS. In addition, a seamless pathway for workbound students between high school, OYAP/co-op programs, college apprenticeships and the workplace is needed.

Areas where youth out migration is an issue require localized LMI on current and future jobs and trends in an attempt to inform young people about local opportunities.

SECTORS

Sector specific issues were identified in 7 of the 22 environmental scans.

Agriculture:

Agriculture figured prominently in some environmental scans. Although not always a major employer, the Agricultural sector is nonetheless an important economic sector. Agriculture suffers from some of the same issues faced by the construction sector. It is not seen as an attractive sector to young people and is facing challenges in recruiting new workers.

The sentiment is that there is a need to support a strong local agriculture base and to address training needs. The skills required by the sector are changing as farm operations become larger and more specialized. This has created a stronger need for business skills as well as those directly related to agriculture. Given the location of agriculture in the rural areas of Ontario, new strategies are required to make training accessible. The nature of the business also limits accessibility of training so it is important to find ways to fit training into an agricultural schedule. Information about training programs needs to be made available along with more contemporary marketing approaches.

Health Care:

Health care was universally mentioned. The sector continues to be challenged by human resource issues. Many areas have conducted studies of this sector and are now starting to understand skill changes that will be required. First and foremost this sector is facing significant skill shortages in many health care professions. In addition the sector is facing increasing credentials and this is creating a need for training and upgrading programs. In this year Telehealth emerged as a new aspect of health care which is creating new skill requirements.

Information Technology/Telecommunication:

Employment in Information Technology suffered slightly in this past year with the downturn in the sector. However, IT is still a significant source of employment and a growth area.

Education:

As with other sectors, the educational sector is signaling issues related to the loss of skills due to attrition. All levels of education are forecasting significant retirements of teachers over the coming years.

SPECIAL NEEDS GROUPS

Issues related to special needs groups figured prominently in 19 of the environmental scans.

Persons With Disabilities:

The message is that persons with disabilities continue to face barriers to full participation in training and employment. Programs and services do not always recognize the need for longer interventions. There is a need for individual client centred direction with respect to training programs. Funding for employment training must be coordinated and directed towards individualized support. Some feel that the current outcome-based funding models encourage “creaming”.

Some of the barriers to full participation identified include:

- Little in the way of programs and course content for use on computers and as a consequence PWDs are not benefiting from individual training.
- Transportation limitations.
- Lack of accommodation in training programs and in the workplace.
- Employers lack of awareness and misperceptions of ability.
- Lack of focus on employment and skills training for this group
- High cost of upgrading computer technology and assistive devices.
- Disincentives to self employment.
- CPP restrictions.

There are still issues with respect to the availability of quantitative data on persons with disabilities.

Newcomers:

As the labour market continues to tighten and labour shortages emerge, more reliance will be placed on finding the skilled workers required through immigration. Currently many newcomers to Canada are unemployed or underemployed because their skills are not being recognized or they lack Canadian experience. Immigrant women face multiple barriers including Canadian work experience, fluency in spoken English and popular software, and access to childcare. The environmental scans are pointing to the need to find ways to match the skills of new immigrants to job opportunities. Employers need help assessing

experience and training acquired in other countries. The recognition of foreign trained professionals' credentials needs to be facilitated.

Although ESL programs are available, there appears to be a need for more advanced language training and occupation specific language training.

Youth:

Employment issues for youth persist as demonstrated by unemployment rates higher than the overall labour force in many parts of the province. It is anticipated that this will be exacerbated by the double cohort as more young people try to enter post-secondary and can't, or head directly for the workforce. The double cohort will not only put pressure on the post-secondary education system but will also put pressure on the employment market. With an anticipated large percentage of secondary students not enrolling in or completing college or university education it will be increasingly important to continue to enhance and develop credible career alternatives for these young people.

In addition, the expectation is that there will be larger numbers of youth dropping out of high school because of changes to the curriculum. Some environmental scans are already identifying issues related to the difficulty placing high risk youth in employment because of their reluctance to take lower wages.

Youth out-migration is another issue faced by some areas of the province, particularly more remote areas such as the north or rural communities. Young people leave in search of education and employment opportunities and this depletes the local labour force.

Many are observing that entry-level requirements are increasing and there appears to be a mismatch between what employers are looking for and what youth are offering. This is particularly true of employability skills. A few environmental scans suggest the need for enhanced employer incentives to encourage them to hire and train youth.

All of the above is placing more emphasis on the need for credible information on the full range of career opportunities including knowledge of the specific technical skills required, importance of soft skills, realities of the workplace, and importance of understanding the labour market.

Women:

In the period covered by this round of environmental scans, the economy had taken a downward direction. During that time women appeared to be more negatively impacted by adjustments in the labour market than were men. Women continue to face barriers to full participation in part due to:

- Barriers to women entering skilled trades;
- Single mothers needing retraining and academic/vocational assessments;
- Need for safe family friendly workplaces;
- Women generally having lower math skills and IT knowledge;
- Extended leave e.g. maternity, resulting in women losing their skill level; and
- Lack of affordable, accessible daycare.

Some environmental scans are calling for unique models of training and services for women, support for business networking opportunities, and a commitment in terms of coordination and funding for programs and services for women.

Francophones:

Issues related to Francophones continue to focus around the lack of available programs and services in French including adult education and literacy services.

Experienced Workers:

According to the environmental scans, experienced workers are faced with unique impediments to moving from unemployment to employment. Many of the challenges relate to the rising job entry-level requirements including Grade 12 and computer skills. Accessible training and adjustment programs for employed and unemployed individuals is seen to be needed to address this issue.

The other issue facing experienced workers is age discrimination. Many feel that employers are more interested in hiring younger people although this contradicts the views expressed around youth.

Aboriginal People:

Some felt that Aboriginal youth have limited access to work placements and job opportunities.

Overall, the feeling expressed in the environmental scans is that systemic and attitudinal barriers are major issues of concern to those who are traditionally marginalized. These are the people most vulnerable in the labour market. The belief is that more in-depth attention is needed along with improved access to information.

OCCUPATIONAL/SKILL SHORTAGES

Evidence of skill shortages is not clear to everyone. There are some who feel it may not be as critical or imminent as others. However, the majority of environmental scans have identified skill shortages and these are listed below.

OCCUPATIONS	OCCUPATIONAL SHORTAGES																		
	LOCAL BOARDS																		
	1	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	19	20	21	23	24	25	
Auto Service Technicians		*																	
Boring Mill Set Operators													*						
Brazer			*	*															
Breeding Attendants													*						
Bricklayers			*	*	*														
Cabinet Makers					*														
Call Centre Nurses		*																	
Carpenters					*														
Chefs					*														
Child and Youth Workers							*												
CNC Machinists													*						
Construction Project Managers			*																
Crane Operators																	*		
Data Administration Analyst			*	*															
Data Processors							*												
Database Administrator		*	*	*															
Dental Hygienists							*												
Early Childhood Educators							*												
Electricians					*												*		
Emergency Medical Care Workers																		*	*
Engine Lathe Set Up Operators													*						
Engineers					*														
Entry Level Office Help							*												
Farm Staff (equine)													*						
Farriers													*						
Finishing Trades					*														
General Machinist		*	*	*			*		*				*						
Grading Technicians					*														
Grooms													*						
Health Care aides									*										
Heavy Equipment Mechanic					*														
Heavy Equipment Operators		*																	
High Pressure Welder				*															
Home Care Attendants					*		*												
Housekeeping													*						

OCCUPATIONAL SHORTAGES																			
OCCUPATIONS	LOCAL BOARDS																		
	1	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	19	20	21	23	24	25	
Industrial Electrician		*	*	*															
Information Security				*															
Instrumentation Mechanic Technician			*	*															
IS Business Analyst/Consultant		*	*	*															
IT Project Managers		*	*	*															
Kitchen Help							*												
Laboratory Technologist		*	*																
LAN/WAN				*															
Lift Truck Operator			*	*															
Long-haul Driver			*	*															
Machine Operators					*														
Machining and Tooling Inspectors													*						
Managers			*																
Mechanics																	*		
Metal Workers		*																	
Metal Working Machine Operators													*						
Millwright		*	*	*					*								*		
Mouldmakers							*		*										
Occupational Therapists		*	*				*		*										
Oncology Related Occupations									*										
Painters					*														
Paper Hangers					*														
Paramedics					*							*							
Personal Support Workers					*	*			*										
Pharmacists						*		*	*										
Physicians		*	*		*			*	*									*	*
Physiotherapists		*	*			*			*										
Plumbers		*															*		
Press/Machine Operators		*																	
Radiology (X-ray Technicians)		*	*																
Receptionists							*												
Registered Nurses		*	*		*	*		*	*									*	*
Registered Practical Nurses							*		*										
Renovation Trades					*														
Restaurant Help													*						
Retail and Hospitality Managers							*												
Roofers					*														
Sales and Marketing							*												
Skilled Construction Trades				*			*	*					*						

OCCUPATIONAL SHORTAGES																			
OCCUPATIONS	LOCAL BOARDS																		
	1	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	19	20	21	23	24	25	
Skilled High-Pressure Welder			*																
Software Engineer		*	*	*			*												
Speech Pathologists		*	*			*													
Sprinkler Mechanics			*																
SQL				*															
Surgeons								*											
Teachers						*	*	*					*						
Technology Workers								*											
Tile Setters					*														
Tool & Die maker			*	*			*		*				*						
Trim Carpenters					*														
Vice-Principals						*													
Welder/Fitter			*	*															

TRAINING NEEDS

The environmental scans contained some general suggestions regarding support needed to improve access to training including:

- Funding for training in areas of skill shortages;
- Access to broad bandwidth, educating the public about the value of bandwidth service, and affordable connectivity to bandwidth service;
- Exploration of alternative delivery methods to address the challenges of delivering training in small rural communities and other small volume areas;
- Accessible training for employed people; and
- Available supports including income, childcare, transportation, and part-time programs.

TRAINING CULTURE

Issues related to creating a training culture were identified in 16 of the 22 environmental scans. It would appear from the issues that Ontario does not yet have a training culture. The benefits of life-long learning and training are not promoted and valued enough. Communities are looking for better and more coordinated efforts towards community planning in the areas of education and training. There is a need to increase partnerships in workforce development. Employers, government, and training providers need to work closely together to ensure required training is available. Efforts should be focused on increasing awareness of training and partnership opportunities for small to medium sized businesses. Training costs should be shared by government, employers, and

employees. In particular, where changes in government legislation necessitate skill upgrading, the training should be in part supported by government.

There are still many barriers to participating in training including:

- Cost;
- Transportation;
- Decreased access to funding;
- Increased waiting time for what training funding there is; and
- Affordable daycare.

Employers are not yet fully engaged in training. On-the-job training is often viewed as a short-term cost rather than a long-term benefit by employers. Some employers are reluctant to offer additional workplace training to their experienced employees. Smaller companies are hesitant to train because there is the possibility that larger companies will lure the employee away meaning the small employer loses his/her investment. Employers need to be encouraged to invest more in training perhaps through the use of concrete and easily accessible incentives to help reduce their barriers with respect to training.

New and innovative ways of delivering training need to be explored to minimize existing barriers and make training a more accessible and cost effective means of meeting labour force demands for skilled workers.

CONCLUSION

In 2001, much of the province was feeling the impact of a downturn in the economy and the aftermath of September 11th. The information in the environmental scans did show the economy beginning to turn around again in 2002.

Issues identified in previous years continue to resonate in the communities represented by the Local Boards. The complexity of these issues will necessitate long-term strategies to resolve. The importance of developing and maintaining a skilled labour force is clearly understood at the local level and the issues reflect the need to ensure accessibility for all citizens to programs and services that support full participation in training and employment. Given the nature of the issues identified, we might expect to see greater attention paid to the involvement of employers in the development of skills through apprenticeships, co-op opportunities, and on-the-job training as the Local Boards move forward to the area planning process. It is also anticipated that as the labour force continues to age, and skill shortages become more acute, that there will be greater emphasis placed on ensuring Ontario maximizes the full labour pool including those currently facing specific barriers to participation. Lastly, the communities will be focusing on the double cohort and the anticipated demands this will create for post-secondary institutions and the labour market.