



Finding the right people remains number one priority for Canadian businesses

Ottawa, November 26, 2013 – One year after the Prime Minister of Canada said skills shortages are the biggest challenge facing the country, the business community continues to identify the skills gap as the most pressing issue.

“Competition to find and hire highly qualified and skilled professionals is intense, according to our members,” says Perrin Beatty, President and CEO, Canadian Chamber of Commerce. “Employers and policy-makers must keep focusing on skills if we are to avoid current and expected shortages from threatening our growth.”

While some argue that the skills gap is not real, Canadian business representing all sectors and all regions of the country continue to highlight that they cannot find the right people to fill the vacancies and help grow their business. The problem is real.

Below, the Canadian Chamber and its members present a snapshot of where the gaps are widest.

Natural resources:

The oil and gas industry contends with growing competition for workers with the same skill sets from other industries, primarily mining, forestry and manufacturing. In addition, like mining, even qualified Canadians often prefer not to work in a remote location or on rotation, according to surveys of petroleum sector employers.

“Today, the oil and natural gas industry supports over 550,000 jobs across Canada and that is expected to grow to an annual average of one million over the next decade. Ensuring we have the right people with the right skills is critical to delivering projects on time and on budget,” says David Collyer, President of the **Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers**. “Labour shortages are an issue shared with other industries across Canada, and we need to continue to work collectively to ensure the necessary labour force growth.”

“Industry context is essential to understanding the skills shortages,” says Pierre Gratton, President of the **Mining Association of Canada**. “Sweeping claims about shortages across the whole economy can misrepresent important industry-specific trends and regional labour market pressures and shortages.”

Forest product companies across the country are reporting an increasing difficulty in attracting skilled workers. “The forest products industry has set a goal under Vision2020 of recruiting at least 60,000 workers by the end of the decade,” says David Lindsay, the President and CEO of the

Forest Products Association of Canada. “This is going to be an on-going challenge for our sector at all skill levels.”

Construction:

At present, the construction trades are experiencing tight labour market conditions in Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan. Over the next few years, several large projects in Atlantic Canada will generate significant employment in construction and construction-related trades. Growth in Northern Ontario, the Greater Toronto area and Northern B.C. will increase the demands for labour over the medium term.

“Over the next eight years, the construction industry will need to replace 210,000 retiring workers and add an additional 42,000 to keep pace with rising demand,” says Michael Atkinson of the **Canadian Construction Association.** “Of the total requirement for 252,000 workers, about 152,000 will come from current domestic sources, meaning the remaining 100,000 will have to come from outside the industry, or possibly from outside the country.”

Information Technology:

“The skills shortage in the ICT sector is a reality today,” says Karna Gupta, President of the **Information Technology Association of Canada.** The industry’s unemployment rate is less than 3%, which is statistically viewed as full employment, he adds. By 2016, over 100,000 ICT jobs will need to be filled in Canada.

Services:

The challenges are not limited to highly qualified talent and skilled labour.

“There is a problem with semi-skilled positions as well,” says Tony Pollard, **President of the Hotel Association of Canada.** The lodging industry is facing shortages in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador. Hospitality is not a minimum wage industry; in Alberta, for example, average wages are well above minimum wage, before adding gratuities, benefits or bonuses.

“Trucking driving is another occupation where shortages could reach 33,000 or 14% of the entire truck-driving population within seven years,” says David Bradley, President and CEO of the **Canadian Trucking Alliance.**

Industries are addressing their workforce challenges. Among the initiatives, they are attracting more young people and under-represented groups to certain occupations. By working with educational institutions, they are looking to increase the supply of new entrants into their fields. Training and retention efforts are also critical responses, as employers cope with gaps in their workforces.

The Canadian Chamber is joined in this statement by the following national organizations:

Associated Equipment Distributors
Association of Canadian Community Colleges

Association of Consulting Engineering Companies - Canada
Canadian Association of Chemical Distributors
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
Canadian Construction Association
Canadian Propane Association
Canadian Shipowners Association
Canadian Trucking Alliance
Engineers Canada
Forest Products Association of Canada
Hotel Association of Canada
Information Technology Association of Canada
Mining Association of Canada
Polytechnics Canada
Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is the vital connection between business and the federal government. It helps shape public policy and decision-making to the benefit of businesses, communities and families across Canada with a network of over 450 chambers of commerce and boards of trade, representing some 200,000 businesses of all sizes in all sectors of the economy and in all regions. News and information are available at Chamber.ca or follow us on Twitter [@CdnChamberofCom](https://twitter.com/CdnChamberofCom).

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