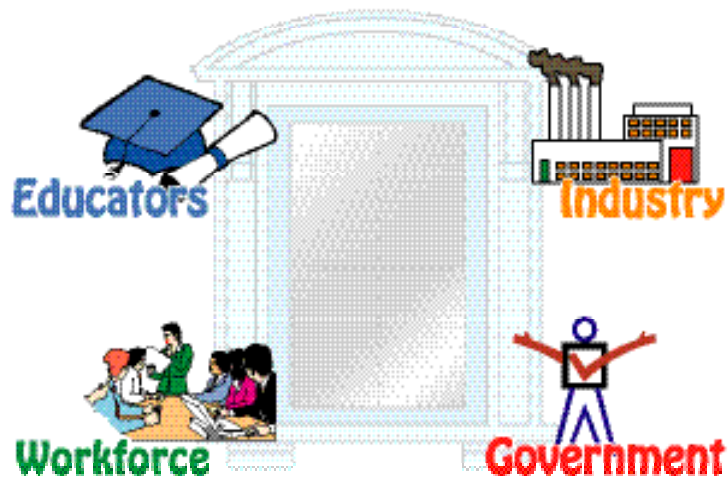


# THE SIX-YEAR WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY



A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

TO OUR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, GROWTH & DIVERSITY

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THE BRANTFORD CENTRE  
WHERE THE COMMUNITY IS NOT JUST A PLACE, BUT A PARTNER

Dedicated to post secondary education in our community, The Brantford Centre is a partnership among; the City of Brantford, Grand Valley Educational Society, Mohawk College and Wilfrid Laurier University.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is anticipated that within the next six years there will be massive retirements due to the aging labour force (baby boomers). This mass departure of employees will add to shortages already evident in many sectors and covering a diverse range of occupations.

One cannot deny the value of a trained and ready workforce—a catalyst to economic development and growth—a foundation to a strong local economy—a driving force to a healthy mix of economic diversity.

This is a golden window of opportunity for industry and educators to work together and be proactive at creating and maintaining a highly skilled workforce. A workforce that will have the experience and expertise to be successful in adapting to the global “knowledge based” economy and be the forerunners in advanced manufacturing concepts and practices.

Since post secondary education first made its appearance in Brantford (Mohawk College, 1970) there has been an evolution that has incorporated a strong university presence (Laurier Brantford, 1999). The Brantford Centre is the culmination of strong community support, collaboration and partnership towards an academic centre of excellence.

This report highlights the advantages and identified need to a blend of academics with industry demands to allow us to meet the challenges faced by business today—benefits that go beyond a trained workforce and expand into benefits for our community.

The Brantford Centre is a centre of opportunity! Opportunities that will assist in;

- Providing another dimension to the spirit of Brantford and acting as a catalyst in the transformation and diversification of the image of our downtown and city as a whole
- Enhancing the established identities of excellence of both Mohawk College and Laurier Brantford and assisting in a heightened level of recognition and prestige that will attract, develop and retain the best talent
- Propelling economic development. Universities and colleges provide areas with stable buying power and are a key attractor for new business as employers look to capitalize on the availability of graduates and a skilled and motivated workforce
- Increasing lifetime productivity by providing students with the ability to simultaneously obtain a degree and diploma—a perfect blend of practical application with competency proficiency
- Proactively addressing our skill shortages and working together towards solving a myriad of long standing challenges, including job hopping, “poaching” employees from competitors, addressing knowledge-based activities while still recognizing the stability of processing and manufacturing

It is through collaboration that we can implement solutions that will exploit our opportunities, identify priorities and diminish potential threats and challenges. It is the very nature of our interdependence that will be the driving force to our success. By working together we can implement an innovative and proactive approach that will;

- Enhance and centralize our ability to identify workforce challenges and support skills development
- Identify mechanisms that will allow the Brantford Centre to be a true representation of collaboration between post secondary educators and business and industry

This is an investment—it is about recognizing the value of investing in ourselves. It is about viewing training and education as a solid solution and competitive advantage. Education paves the way to;

- good jobs
- new business opportunities
- new investment

A portion of this report is dedicated to summarizing what is already “known” in our local community regarding skill shortages and employer needs. From universal skills highlighting communication, information management, personal management and teamwork through to sector specific and skilled trades the challenges have been, for the most part, clearly identified—now is the time for solutions.

We look forward to your assistance in making this collaborative approach a reality. It is our firm belief that, given the opportunity, this community has all the elements to set a standard that other communities will want to emulate.

Your participation, feedback and input are critical—if you would like additional information or would like to participate in employer advisory groups, please do not hesitate to contact the Project Facilitator, Kathryn Creeden, at our office.

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## A PROJECT OF OPPORTUNITY—THE BRANTFORD CENTRE

In any unique and innovative project, there is always an opportunity to improve, and enhance what we are already doing exceptionally well. Through the Brantford Centre Project, we have been able to identify some key opportunities that we believe tap into this golden window of opportunity!

The opportunity to ***provide another dimension to the spirit of Brantford...***

- Our goal is to be a catalyst in the evolution and transformation of Brantford. To assist in growing from a very traditional manufacturing enterprise to a more diversified structure—a structure which will focus on information, communication and a knowledge-based economy coupled with advanced manufacturing concepts and practises.



- ↓ Brantford is redefining and diversifying its image and the Brantford Centre will play a key role in this evolution
- ↓ Brantford is still exploring the many avenues of diversification. The area is still “young” and many opportunities have not yet been explored or perhaps even envisioned
- ↓ Part of Brantford's “uniqueness” is the heritage associated with the architecture of our older buildings. The Brantford Centre is focused on the rehabilitation of these older buildings, which is generally less expensive, uses more local resources, creates local jobs, minimizes the creation of construction waste and increases surrounding property values. To date, the downtown campus has enhanced the irreplaceable quality that exists in the architecture of these buildings, and preserved the visually rich and aesthetically pleasing atmosphere

The opportunity to ***increase lifetime productivity...***

- This initiative goes beyond the development of Brantford and surrounding area. It provides a critical focus on benefits and opportunities for our workforce
  - ↓ The Brantford centre will be able to provide area employers with a readily available, flexible and highly valued source of labour (full and part time) that will be able to meet recruiting demands in addition to special or short term project requirements
  - ↓ The unique transferability of credits and the ability to simultaneously obtain a degree and diploma will provide students with both short term (immediate skill) and long term (competency skill) investments. This combination of degree and diploma will provide a perfect blend of practical application coupled with competency proficiency

The opportunity to enhance ***established identities of excellence...***

- Both Mohawk College and Laurier University have an established reputation of excellence. The Brantford Centre Project will capitalize on this solid foundation and establish an academic centre that will strive for a heightened level of recognition and prestige on a local, national and international basis.



Consider the following key benefits:

- ↓ Provides the local population more choices in pursuing postsecondary education (from high school to adult learner)
- ↓ An impressive IDENTITY OF EXCELLENCE attracts students provincially, nationally and internationally
- ↓ A solid student and graduate base from programmes of excellence, will attract new business to the area, based on the accessibility and availability of a high quality talent pool



- ↓ As the Brantford Centre is forged from a community alliance, the academic centre will continue to establish and maintain significant linkages with various groups, organizations and businesses within the City of Brantford, Brant County and surrounding areas. These alliances and partnerships will facilitate the continued focus of developing our intellectual resources to their full potential

The opportunity to ***propel economic development...***

- In a highly competitive and global market, we should be concerned with the economic development of our city, our county and our individual businesses. The innovative programming and educational opportunities provided to students will allow both Mohawk College and Laurier University to attract, develop and retain the best talent. This in turn, drives a strong economy through;
  - ↓ Drawing in students from an international pool, expanding our multi-cultural base and resulting in both direct and indirect expenditures by these students
  - ↓ An increase in the student base that will result in increases in facilities, faculty and staff, all of which add to our economic prosperity
  - ↓ Statistics clearly indicate that universities and colleges provide areas with stable buying power
  - ↓ Through knowledge and innovation based learning, post secondary education is a catalyst to industry, and the key to success is to identify the most effective way to blend academics with industry demands
  - ↓ By closely aligning itself with the private sector, the Brantford Centre will effectively compete for revenue key to their sustainability
  - ↓ The Brantford Centre will be a key attractor for new business to the area, as employers will want to capitalize on the availability of graduates and our skilled and motivated labour force. This combination of availability and skills is a principal determinant of economic prosperity



## THE VISION

The vision is simple—to assist employers by providing a well trained and skilled workforce! It is vital that we acknowledge that everyone (government, educators, industry and the workforce) is closely linked and interdependent. It is this very interdependence that is the driving force behind embracing a truly integrated and collaborative approach.

## THE MISSION—COLLABORATION

The mission is to form a collaborative group of stakeholders that will integrate industry technical and knowledge-based requirements with education. The information provided by the stakeholders will be directed to a centralized point of access that will facilitate and coordinate:

- Information gained from skills surveys and advisory groups that identify general and industry/sector specific skill gaps
- Advisory committees with representation from industry and education to develop and/or enhance long or short term training solutions to address these skill gaps and training needs—for today and for tomorrow!

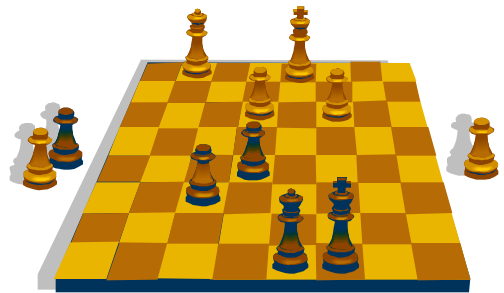
It is through collaboration that solutions can be identified and implemented. It is to our advantage to exploit this Window of Opportunity and bring together key players who will commit to actively contributing to the partnership. Each stakeholder will bring a unique insight into this collaborative approach;

- Business which brings the knowledge of skills and knowledge requirements and provides jobs and training for workers
- Public educators who are aware of skill requirements and respond to them
- Individuals who invest in education and skills throughout their lives

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The goal will be to address, simultaneously, strategic directions that will allow us to set a proactive standard. Brantford has already been used as a benchmark by numerous other cities as a result of our innovative plans and strategies. Our goal is to build on this momentum and innovation by;

- Enhancing and centralizing our ability to identify workforce challenges and supporting skills development
- Enhancing our ability to address those workforce challenges and taking full advantage of all opportunities
- Supporting and recognizing the unique needs and requirements of various sectors and/or occupations
- Identifying mechanisms that will allow the Brantford Centre to be a true representation of collaboration between post secondary educators and business and industry



The window of opportunity encourages us to be proactive—to ensure our continued economic and social growth—to partner ourselves and align our activities towards common interests and goals regarding training, education, recruitment and retention.



Over the years surveys have been completed to identify the skill deficiencies in our local workforce. Evolution has been from strong “skill based” requirements to levels which have a higher focus on “competency based” requirements. Recently completed surveys presented no real surprises; we have a shortage of skilled talent; we need to build on both skills and competencies and we need to do so in a proactive and realistic manner.

Collectively we can be successful in:

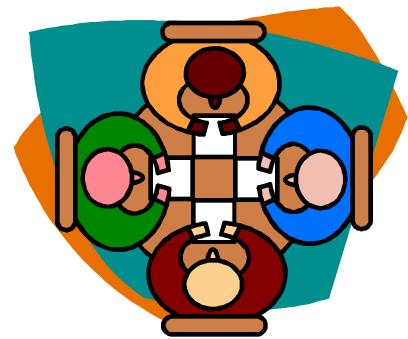
- Identifying skill sets that employers need
- Implementing plans to accommodate and provide the critical skill sets
- Building links between employers and educators
- Assisting employers in enhancing their recruiting options

### THE WORKING PLAN

To be successful we require strong leaders from:

- Business
- Education
- Labour
- Community agencies

to become involved and committed to our individual and collective growth.



As leaders, our goal is to identify, develop and put into place mechanisms and action plans that are viable, realistic and sustainable—to break the trend of a single focus on short term activities and expand our visions and our energies into addressing long term training and skill strategies.

We have identified three key activities that will help us begin the process of developing and establishing our strategies. Consider the following:

#### 1. Identify the skill gaps:

- Often skill gaps are industry or occupation specific and can exist in both;
  - (a) general groupings or competency based groupings (for example general manufacturing practises including Good Manufacturing Practises, Occupational Health and Safety, ISO)
  - (b) industry specific (for example HACCP, MRP, Customer Service)

#### 2. Review our Skills Shortage – Quality versus Quantity

- In reviewing skill shortages, a consideration must be given to the TYPE of shortage:
  - (a) Quantitative – where there is a distinct lack of candidates
  - (b) Qualitative – where the candidates lack the skills to fill the requirements

### 3. Implement action plans to address those skill gaps that include all stakeholders from business through to educators:

- A strong collaborative approach, for both general and industry specific requirements, that will ensure that local educators are aware of and sensitive and responsive to the training needs
- The potential of industry specific projects/initiatives that will provide “just in time” training for an existing workforce in addition to new hires
- Assist employers with re-skilling their existing workforce and help them take full advantage of the skill sets that already exist in their workforce
- Plans and activities need to be accessible and provide assistance to not only the large companies in major industry sectors, but also small to medium size companies which represent over 60% of growth in Ontario
- A portion of this plan should address the anticipated influx of foreign trained professionals. Industry and educators cooperatively can review and consider improving the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition service. Employers can provide valuable insight and assist in the re-evaluation of the requirements and process involved in accessing formal and informal learning from education, training, life and work experience

#### DIMINISHING THE “TALENT WARS”

By proactively addressing our skill shortages we can work towards solving a myriad of long standing challenges:



- An expanded talent pool will reduce the tendency of employers to actively recruit qualified employees away from their competitors, resulting in less “job hopping” by individuals from one employer to another
  - Job hopping and “poaching” from competitors often results in salaries / compensation increasing to levels that are simply not sustainable by employers
- 
- Jobs for life are a thing of the past, and how people prepare for work has changed substantially. Individuals will require different tools and services at different points in their career to help them make successful transitions throughout their employment
  - The talent focus should address the need for skills in a global, knowledge based economy while maintaining a healthy balance of focus on skilled labour. Companies in general need to react to an intensification of knowledge-based activities, while still recognizing the stability of processing/manufacturing occupations
  - To work together with industry to be proactive in leveraging existing human resources and identify and capitalize on opportunities. This includes issues such as in-house training, recruitment, retention and recruiting/training of foreign workers

## THE INVESTMENT

Technology and knowledge are now key factors of production. With increased mobility of information and the global work force, knowledge and expertise can be transported instantaneously around the world, and any advantage gained by one company can be eliminated by competitive improvements overnight. The only comparative advantage a company will enjoy will be its process of innovation—combining market and technology know-how with the creative talents of knowledge workers to solve a constant stream of competitive problems.



This is an investment—one that requires full cooperation from everyone—public sector, private sector, educators, employment supports. We must first recognize the value of investing in ourselves, before we can be successful in investing in our people.

The modern workplace means a focus on continuous learning (education and ongoing training). It is about training and retraining as an investment versus a cost—employees are viewed as a key resource not a cost of production.

All the indicators are there that this is the perfect opportunity! From educators (The Rae Commission on Post Secondary Education) to industry (i.e. City of Brantford Economic Development), the commitment and intent for change and collaboration are evident!

## INVESTING FOR PROSPERITY<sup>1</sup>

Productivity continues to be the source of our prosperity gap. The taskforce on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress did two years of in-depth research and concluded it is because of Ontario's investment patterns that we often come up short. In the balance between investment and consumption, Ontario citizens, businesses and governments collectively direct less towards investment. This second annual report's main conclusion is that Ontarians are not investing enough of today's wealth for tomorrow's prosperity. We stop investing for the long term and instead increase our current consumption. Overall, Ontario is trading off spending more today rather than investing enough for tomorrow's prosperity.

The terms used by economic commentators today—competitiveness, productivity, prosperity and innovation—are highly interrelated and in, some sense, interchangeable. Ontario's economy does well on these fronts. Our products and services are competitive worldwide. We are among the most productive regions in the world—we have innovative products and processes!

Ontario's economy ranked among the strongest of comparable regions in the world. If treated as a country, Ontario continues to stand second only to the United States in GDP per capita among countries with at least half Ontario's population.

However, Ontario's economy continues to be slightly less capable of creating jobs for its residents seeking work. This under performance in employment accounts for a major factor in the prosperity gap.

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<sup>1</sup> Second Annual Report, November 2003 - Task force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress

## INVESTING FOR PROSPERITY—EDUCATION

Lower education achievements weaken our productivity! Most economists agree that the level of education attained across the workforce is an important determinant of the quality of an economy's human capital. David Ladler stated "to the extent that a more educated and better trained labour force is able to produce more output because it embodies more human capital, the proportion of the economy's labour force that has received higher education affects the level of the economy's productivity as measured by output per person-hour of work".

Economic studies also repeatedly indicate that individual earnings increase with the level of education. Ontario's under performance in education, aimed at post secondary levels, translates into a negative impact on GDP per capita.

As compared to peer groups

- We under invest in education as students move through the system
- We under invest in machinery & equipment
- We attract highly skilled immigrants, but under invest in ways to maximize their contribution to Ontario's prosperity

The increased availability of skilled workers, research and managers is a critical benefit of post-secondary education for business. The ideas that spill out of post-secondary education improve and create product, service and processes and lead to new companies and whole new industries.

The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation reported that 50 percent of Canadian students, who scored in the top 40 percent on standard achievements tests, do not attend post-secondary school. This study also indicated that it was students' attitude—not financial barriers that dissuaded them from attaining higher levels of education (77% of respondents listed a non-financial reason).

Developing skills is a lifelong process. People enter the labour force with a "stock" of knowledge acquired through their formal education; then over their working lives, they maintain and upgrade their initial stock with a "flow" of training, reinforced by practical experience. In the same way that continuous investment is needed to replace depreciated plant and equipment and meet new production requirements, continuous investment in training is needed to maintain and upgrade human capital.

## INVESTING FOR PROSPERITY—IMMIGRATION

We are becoming a home for many highly educated immigrants. The task force observed, however, that a large number are underemployed or even unemployed.

Statistics Canada data indicates that:

- Over 60 percent of recent immigrants are trained as professionals or skilled trades
- 26.8% of Ontario residents were born outside Canada
- A higher percentage of immigrants (versus Canadian born) have post secondary education
- 41% of recent immigrants (2000) held a university degree compared to only 20% of native-born Canadians

## UNIVER-SKILLS

Universal skills are identified as skills you need to enter, stay in and progress in the world of work—whether you work on your own or as part of a team<sup>2</sup>. These skills are often categorized as follows;

### *Fundamental Skills*

- Communication
- Ability to manage information
- Ability to use numbers
- Ability to think and solve problems

### *Personal Management Skills*

- Demonstrate Positive Attitudes and Behaviours
- Be responsible
- Be adaptable
- Learn continuously
- Work safely

### *Teamwork Skills*

- Work with others
- Participants in projects and tasks

## ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Human Resource and Skills Development Canada compiled a list of 9 essential skills defined as everyday skills<sup>3</sup> that enable people to: Perform the tasks required by their occupation and other activities of daily life; Learn other skills that build from this foundation of knowledge; Enhance their ability to adapt to workplace change

- Reading text
- Document use
- Writing
- Numeracy
- Oral communication
- Thinking skills including
  - Problem solving
  - Decision making
  - Critical thinking
  - Job task planning and organizing
  - Significant use of memory
  - Finding information
- Working with others
- Computer use
- Continuous learning

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<sup>2</sup> Employability Skills 2000+, The Conference Board of Canada

<sup>3</sup> HRSDC Essential Skills

## ESSENTIAL SKILLS DETAILED DESCRIPTORS

- Reading text
  - Refers to reading and comprehending material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs. It includes; forms and labels; print and non-print media, paragraph length text in charts, tables and graphs
- Document use
  - Refers to tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics (i.e. line, colour, shape) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement
  - Includes, print and non-print media, reading/interpreting and writing/completing/producing of documents simultaneously
- Writing
  - Refers to writing texts and writing in documents, non paper based writing
- Numeracy
  - Refers to the workers use of numbers and being required to think in quantitative terms
- Oral communication
  - Pertains primarily to the use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information by workers in an occupational group
- Thinking skills including
  - Problem solving
    - Involves problems that require solutions. Probable causes are eliminated until the correct one is identified and remedied. Primarily involves mechanical challenges, people or situations.
  - Decision making
    - Occurs during problem solving, but not all decision making is part of problem solving. For example choose from a list of options (to purchase) is not problem solving
  - Critical thinking
  - Job task planning and organizing
    - Workers plan an organize their own tasks
  - Significant use of memory
  - Finding information
    - The ability to source information from a variety of sources including; text, people, computerize databases of information systems
- Working with others
  - The ability to work with others to carry out their tasks
- Computer use
  - The variety and complexity of computer use within their occupation
- Continuous learning
  - The requirements for workers to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge.

## HISTORICAL REVIEW – ONTARIO BUDGET <sup>4</sup>

Since the 1998 release of The Ontario Budget Papers there has been a strong focus on how to improve Ontario's training capacity and shorten the response time for developing necessary skills. The challenge has been for educators and trainers to respond quickly to what employers have said about shortages of people with the skills they need today and for the economic success of tomorrow. In short how do we keep Ontario competitive in a new and emerging global economy?

The Budget Papers openly acknowledged that people with strategic skills are critical to economic growth and jobs in Ontario. The rapid growth and evolution in all sectors created jobs that expanded our definition and understanding of what strategic skills truly mean for our economy and prosperity. Over the past decade, high technology and knowledge intensive industries have led job creation in Ontario (two thirds of net job creation has been in these sectors).

The summary on strategic skills indicated that people with these strategic and critical talents:

- Are able to meet the demand of new technology; such as software development, biotechnology of computer aided manufacturing
- Are essential to exploring opportunities for economic growth in any sector, and might include tool and die makers in manufacturing, master chefs in the hospitality industry, or highly trained "help desk" staff in the telecommunications industry
- Create additional spin-off jobs, for example, design engineers develop a product, which then requires manufacturing, marketing, sales and distribution workers to bring it to the customer

The Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association (APMA) indicated that the main challenge facing the industry is the serious shortage of trained technical workers, including engineers, quality control workers, and tool and die makers.

**"the most important resource which many companies consider when making investment decisions is the availability of skilled labour".**

1997 Goldfarb study on international investors

The conclusion—shortages of employees with the right skills can:

- stunt economic growth, affecting the success of businesses and their capacity to provide jobs for youth and the unemployed
- result in lost business opportunities at home and abroad
- discourage new investment

Education paves the way to:

- good jobs (since 1990, all new jobs, on a net basis, have gone to those with higher education and expanded job skills)
- new business opportunities
- new investment
- economic growth and prosperity

<sup>4</sup> 1998 Ontario Budget Paper



## A LOCAL “SNAPSHOT”—WHAT ARE OUR POTENTIAL STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES <sup>5</sup>

In 2001 the Economic Development Department of the City of Brantford completed an employer retention survey to identify key barriers experienced by area employers.

### Demographics

The study was able to identify that over 70% of full time employees work in four major sectors; Miscellaneous manufacturing, Primary/fabricated metal, Service to industry and Chemical/petroleum/rubber/plastics.

The majority of these employers were small to medium size firms with the bulk of their workforce living in the City of Brantford or in Brant County;

- 66% of employers employed 50 or fewer employees in Brantford
- over 77% of Brant County firms employed 50 or fewer employees
- 11% of Brantford firms employed more than 100 full time employees
- 7.7% of Brant County firms employed more than 100 full time employees
- Over 70% of employees live in the City of Brantford or Brant County

### Dominant Sectors

The dominant sectors in Brantford were miscellaneous manufacturing and service to industry sectors, whereas Brant County had the highest percentage in food products with strong representation in the publishing/printing/signage sector and stone/clay/glass/concrete sector.

### Major Identified Weaknesses

Major weaknesses that were identified by respondents to the survey included;

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| ▪ Brantford downtown area                       | (21.0%) |
| ▪ Availability of qualified labour              | (14.2%) |
| ▪ Lack of available labour                      | (1.8%)  |
| ▪ Work ethic of the labour force                | (1.4%)  |
| ▪ Trouble attracting professionals and managers | (1.4%)  |
| ▪ Lack of skills training                       | (1.1%)  |

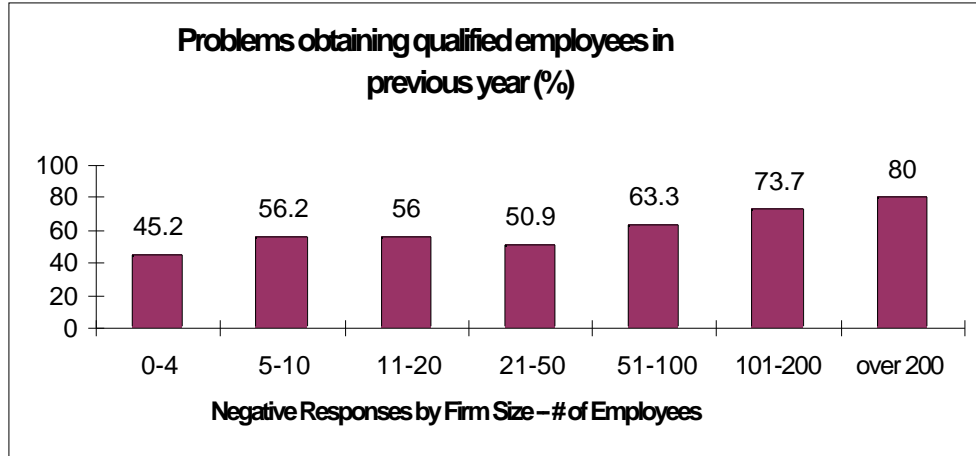
27.7% of firms indicated that a key issue that may cause their firm to move away from the area is the lack of skilled labour. When these same firms were asked to comment on what would help them stay in Brantford/Brant County; a common response was “more skilled labour”.

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<sup>5</sup> 2001 Employer Retention Study, Economic Development Department – City of Brantford

### Problems Obtaining Qualified Employees

55.9% of firms responding indicated that obtaining qualified employees was an issue and the main problem securing qualified employees has been due, most often, to lack of trained/skilled applicants (41.6%). Other factors identified were; work ethic of applicants (25%), literacy/math skills of applicant (5.3%) and lack of computer skills (1.8%)



### Local Training Availability

24.2% of firms mentioned that some of the training they require is not available in Brantford or Brant County OR if it is available, is not provided at a suitable time for their staff. Skilled trades were the largest group identifying the required training was not available in the area (51%). However, also identified were more general and far ranging training including: Health and Safety; ISO; Quality Assurance.

### Would You Locate In Brantford?

Firms were also asked “if you were starting your business now, would you locate in Brantford”. 50.5% of the respondents indicated a solid yes—the negative responses by firm size, were varied but did focus in three primary sectors.

#### No Responses by Firm Size

200+ employees	60%
101-200 employees	68.4%
5-10 employees	60.4%

#### No Responses by Sector

Food Products	60%
Miscellaneous manufacturing	63.6%
Publishing, printing / signage	66.6%

The reasons the firms provided for not starting up in Brantford today were, in order;

- Access to customers/market
- High taxes/overhead costs
- Lack of skilled labour
- City politics
- Access to service/suppliers
- Business climate
- Lack of industrial base
- Work ethic of employees

## A “SECTOR SPECIFIC” VIEW OF SKILL SHORTAGES<sup>6</sup>

In October, 2004 the Economic Development Department, City of Brantford commissioned a food industry project for Brantford / Brant to more accurately identify the challenges that this particular sector, which is experiencing growth, is encountering.

Recruitment, labour supply and demand and applicant suitability ranked high in the challenges faced by this industry. The key identified challenges were:

- Recruitment and high turnover (23% - 130% turnover rate)
- Declining general labour supply
- Increasing general labour demand (@ 450 – 750 new general labourers needed for food sector in 2004 and another 600-700 for 2006 as a direct result of new food processing businesses locating to the Brantford area)
- Suitability of applicants (students not furthering their education in skilled trades, colleges and universities)

This report was an excellent example of how individual sectors require a combination of skills and training that are both generic in nature (the skill is applicable to numerous positions and industries) and sector specific (skill is unique to the sector). The critical areas of training identified in the report were:

- Hygiene and sanitation for food safety
- Knowledge and experience in quality control, distribution, manufacturing
- Individuals must be able to comprehend and follow ever-changing instruction
- Recording of documentation precisely (quality systems)
- Problem solving
- Mathematical abilities (operations and maintenance of equipment)
- Mechanical abilities (operations and maintenance of equipment)
- Easily trainable and flexible (job rotation to avoid repetitive strain)
- Trades training with a focus on refrigeration and pump equipment; industrial electricians who also possess refrigeration tickets

When identifying the challenges associated with the suitability of the candidates applying for positions the key areas identified were (1) Unqualified people who don't have the ability to handle physical conditions, have unrelated job experience, or no exposure to a manufacturing setting and (2) Lack of distribution knowledge and experience.

However, this sector took an additional critical step and identified solutions that would assist in addressing the skill shortages they were experiencing:

- Work in collaboration with educators and community agencies to incorporate appropriate training (GMP, HACCP, Occupational Health & Safety)
- Coordinate new employee training (GMP, HACCP, Occupational Health & Safety)
- Divide the food industry into product categories that would assist with the appropriate mandated training (i.e. GMP for pharmaceuticals, food producers)
- Have educators work as a catalyst to ensure appropriate industry training needs are being met

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<sup>6</sup> 2004 Food Sector Project, Economic Development – City of Brantford

## GRAND ERIE TRAINING AND ADJUSTMENT BOARD (GETAB)<sup>7</sup>

Released in September 2004 the Trends Opportunities and Priorities report by the Grand Erie Training and Adjustment Board summarized findings that “reflected the opinions and knowledge of local stakeholders and provided genuine, local solutions to the issues and needs identified”. The TOP report highlighted issues including; the aging workforce, skill shortages, skilled trades, youth, equity groups and rural communities. The findings presented are a culmination of information sourced through Brantford-Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties—the result—a comprehensive summary of what should be in place to enhance our economic prosperity!

### Brantford-Brant TOP 3 Trends and Issues

- Skills Gaps and Shortages
  - The demands of a knowledge-based economy require a more technically skilled workforce. There is a need in Brantford-Brant to have a clear picture of industry requirements in order to identify the skills and education required
- The Aging Workforce
  - The cohort of workers aged 45+ is increasing. There is a need to ensure that workplace environments adapt to the needs of older workers and a need to ensure a transfer of knowledge to younger workers
- Youth Employment
  - Youth in Brantford-Brant continue to experience high levels of unemployment. There is a need to build connections between employers, youth and education to ensure that youth have the necessary workplace skills and opportunity to access the workforce

### Norfolk County TOP 3 Trends and Issues

- Skills Gaps and Shortages
  - Global competition, technology, environmental and government regulation require increased skills, training and education for all industry sectors (agriculture, tourism, retail, health manufacturing). There is a need to assist industry and education develop business retention, training and education strategies in response to skill gaps and shortages
- The Aging Workforce
  - The population of Norfolk County is older relative to the province as a whole (30+% of the population is in the 45+ cohort). There is a need to transfer the skills and knowledge of experienced workers to younger workers within the area
- Youth Employment
  - Youth out-migration of post-secondary graduates and high unemployment rates continue. There is a need to develop employment opportunities that allow young people to be independent, contributing members of the community

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<sup>7</sup> GETAB September 2004 Report – Labour Market Review

## Haldimand County TOP 3 Trends and Issues

- Skills Gaps and Shortages
  - The demands of a knowledge-based economy require a more technically skilled workforce. There is a need in Haldimand County to assist industry to develop appropriate skill-based screening tools to assess potential employees from the local labour force
  
- The Aging Workforce
  - The 45+ cohort is increasing. As older workers/job seekers seek to upgrade their technical training there is a need to increase access/opportunities for alternative training methods in rural areas where transportation and numbers limit classroom learning
  
- Youth Employment
  - Haldimand identified out-migration of Youth who do not return after college/university and high levels of unemployment an issue. There is a need to provide youth with opportunities for work place learning and education upgrading within rural communities

## GETAB ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN 2002-2003<sup>8</sup>

Compiled in 2002-2003 by the Grand Erie Training and Adjustment Board, the purpose of the environmental scan was to “identify broad issues, needs, challenges, and opportunities that may influence decisions in the future...and assist with information needed for planning and identifying priorities for human resources planning, developing strategies for human resources investment and to facilitate discussion among stakeholders who have an interest in workforce training and development”.

This report references information from Human Resources Development Canada which continues to reinforce previously identified challenges for doing business in the region;

- Difficulty obtaining skilled/qualified employees
- High taxes
- Local government
- Planning and cooperation
- Access routes to customers

12 key issues previously identified in 2000 (executive summary report) and 2001 (environmental scan) continue to be top priorities and have not been totally resolved. Issues such as; promoting apprenticeships, literacy, employability skills, basic adult education, job to job transition for the unemployed, school to work transitions for youth, labour market transition of members of equity groups and partnerships in training.

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<sup>8</sup> GETAB Environmental Scan 2002-2003

## Labour Market Review – Sector Consultations

The Labour Market Review component of the report released by GETAB in 2004 went into more “sector specific detail” concerning challenges and opportunities faced by employers in the Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk areas. The summaries reflected for each sector reinforced (again) the need for competencies that spanned numerous positions and industries, in addition to sector specific skill requirements.

### Wholesale, Distribution & Warehousing

Have experienced a transition towards higher skill requirements for all levels of employees that need to include a strong focus on:

- Teams
- Customers and customer service
- Communications
- Problem solving
- Project management
- Familiarity with computer technology
- Adaptability and flexibility
- Literacy

### Manufacturing

- Grade 12 is minimum standard
- Manufacturing workforce will need to upgrade their skills regularly
- Identified need for diploma levels of certification for manufacturing with emphasis on lean manufacturing

### Trades

- High skill shortages still exist in metal working trades
- Problems include: too rigid curriculum, shortage of qualified technical teachers, general shortage of money for equipment
- Companies are promoting from within and training their own employees
- Training is accomplished through various methods from in-house training to apprenticeship/internship through to temporary hires and outsourcing

### Sector Concerns and Comments

During the sector audits, the report was able to summarize and highlight key concerns in addition to comments represented from a variety of sectors:

#### *Collaboration*

- There is an identified need to increase partnership and collaboration between school systems and industry and to get unions on board with co-op training
- Educators, industry and unions need to identify and implement a coordinated approach to solutions

## Sector Concerns and Comments cont'd

### *Workforce Training*

- Once employees are trained, they will leave for high paying wages. Training or developing the expertise and proficiency of workers is time consuming and costly. Some companies have little or restricted access to and/or few resources to commit to training
- Training for trades needs to be more hands on, in a “show me, do it” type of training program. Apprenticeships take the employee off the job for school training for long periods at a time. Ideally training should mimic a work day, for example, work four days and attend school one day
- Clerical workers are increasingly required to manage greater responsibilities. Firms require clerical workers who are well educated, familiar with computer technology, adaptable and able to problem solve. Workers require a strong combination and balance of employability skills, especially customer service and communication
- The manufacturing workforce will need to upgrade their skills regularly

### *Training Availability*

- Require diploma levels of certification for manufacturing with emphasis on lean manufacturing practises
- Shortage of qualified technical teachers
- Shortage of money for equipment



## BRANT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT GROUP<sup>9</sup>

In December, 2004 the Brant Skills Development Group released a summary report on “The Shortage of Skilled Labour in Brantford and Brant County.” The goal of the survey was to identify any major issues that could impact the availability of tradesmen and contribute to future shortages of apprentices and skilled labour in Brantford and Brant County. The report was designed to collect specific data that would help to better understand the current and future needs of the local labour market and determine the availability of trades and labour within the community to meet those needs. The following represents key highlights of information presented in the report.

### *Skills Availability*

- Employers intend to replace most employees retiring from the trades or skilled occupation within two years. 68 companies (of the 102 surveyed) reported they are already experiencing difficulty in finding skilled help and 29 employers stated they are even having trouble finding suitable entry-level employees
- 39% of the employers surveyed said they now need specific skills (previously not needed) to support their operation
- Many companies stated they would need to send skilled employees for upgrade training within two years
- Considering the strength of the current economy and low unemployment rate for skilled labour, employers are suspicious of the quality of any tradesman who is not already working
- Most employers indicated they preferred to hire apprentices from within, as they were already aware of the employees’ characteristics and work ethic. Also, these employees usually make very good apprentices and employers have no difficulty in filling apprenticeship openings from within their current workforce
- In reference to offshore immigration as a resource, Prior Learning Assessment was an identified issue. The summary reported the following “sometimes encounter already licensed tradesmen, who must write the Ontario inter-provincial test to obtain a Canadian licence. Ontario would consider past schooling completed by apprentices, if verified training was completed. Ontario system is competency based and apprentice would have to register as a new apprentice regardless of hours already spent working in trade”

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<sup>9</sup> Brant Skills Development Group – The shortage of Skilled Labour in Brantford and Brant County, Summary Report, December, 2004

### *Employer Satisfaction*

- Employer satisfaction ratings are lower for tradesmen in contrast to apprentices. The primary issues impacting their respective satisfaction levels were; poor attitude and resistance to change, licensed but still lacking in skill, and very limited selection to choose from
- Employer concerns highlighted two basic issues: the lack of quality candidates as the major issue, followed by obsolete curriculum and equipment used for apprenticeship training at college
- A need for additional funding to cover the cost of training apprentices was identified by 28% of employers
- Although aware of funding programs, many employers have not used them due to not having the time to deal with the “red tape” and not having the time to learn how to utilize the programs effectively

### *Available Training*

- All companies reported no problem in finding any needed training for their employees. The lack of available training for apprentices within their geographic work area, however, is a serious issue with employers and apprentices
- The only training resource available to several companies that have bought hi-tech machines, is to send their operators to the respective machine manufacturer / designer for training
- Apprentices typically leave the apprenticeship program due to lack of commitment (57%), moving to another company (19%), higher wages (14%), school attendance (10%)



Reference Materials

**BHN HRCC Report – 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2004**

By: Brant Haldimand-Norfolk Labour Market Information Service Human Resource Centre of Canada

**GETAB**

Environmental Scan 2002 – 2003

A profile of the labour market in the Grand Erie Training and Adjustment Board

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