



Champions of Ontario Labour Market Solutions

TRENDS, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES REPORTS

PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW

2005/2006

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INTRODUCTION

This document is based on information compiled from the 2004-05 and 2005-06 Trends, Opportunities and Priorities (TOP) Reports (48 reports in total) prepared by Local Boards across Ontario. You may access and/or download individual TOP reports from the Local Boards' provincial Web site at www.localboards.on.ca.

In areas where there are no Local Boards (Ottawa-Carleton; Windsor-Essex; Algonquin-Lanark-Renfrew; and Algoma District) other organizations were approached to produce a TOP Report.

The TOP Reports represent a variety of data and information 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 consultations, sector meetings and other community events. This means that in some cases, the information will be well substantiated through traditional research while in other instances, it may reflect the opinions of only a few community representatives.

But more importantly, the contents of the TOP Reports are based on labour market challenges identified by individuals and organizations at the local level and subsequently validated by key labour market stakeholders in each Local Board area. Their valuable input brings a certain level of credibility to the issues raised in the TOP reports.

This overview report focuses on the trends and issues identified in the 2005-06 TOP Reports, pointing out any changes from 2004-05 and identifying common themes on a regional and provincial basis.

TOP Reports

The Local Boards across Ontario engage their communities in a local planning process on an annual basis. Community partners and stakeholders participate in inter-active planning activities led by the Local Boards. The results positively impact labour force development at the community level. The Trends, Opportunities and Priorities (TOP) process may be slightly different in each Local Board area to reflect the unique characteristics of the regions within Ontario. However, there are common elements of the TOP process that are applied consistently in each Local Board area and these include:

- Development of a comprehensive Census Profile for each Local Board area based on the latest Census information. The Profiles are produced once every 4 years and serve as an ongoing reference document until

- new Census information becomes available from Statistics Canada (next census year is in 2006);
- Research that identifies labour market challenges and opportunities in the Local Board area;
 - Preparation of a TOP community consultation document used to identify issues and priorities from community leaders, stakeholders and the business sector;
 - Development of an action plan outlining local partners' interest and/or commitment to take action on these issues;
 - Release of an annual TOP report that reflects the communities' labour market development plan for the next year.

The Trends, Opportunities and Priorities (TOP) Reports are considered a key community resource to help local labour market partners (e.g. service providers, education & training institutions, labour groups, business and industry leaders, local government representatives, etc.) coordinate their efforts and resources in order to respond more quickly and effectively to labour market development challenges.

REGIONAL TRENDS

This section provides an overview of the most significant trends mentioned in the TOP Reports. These trends have been summarized on a regional basis: Northern Ontario, Central Ontario, Southwestern Ontario and Eastern Ontario (see **Appendix A** for a detailed breakdown of geographical areas included in each region).

In the context of this report, the word “trends” refers to specific labour market conditions and/or observations that are supported by local labour market information sources.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

The most significant trends impacting the North are:

- Need for regional economic diversification
- Youth out-migration
- Construction boom
- Skill shortages
- Forestry sector shutdowns and layoffs
- Pressure on resource based economy
- Poor economy
- Declining population
- Shrinking job market

CENTRAL ONTARIO

The most significant trends impacting the Central region are:

- Immigrants having difficulty finding jobs commensurate with skills and training
- High youth unemployment
- Affordable housing and transportation impact efficiency of labour market
- Shortage of skilled trades and apprenticeship opportunities
- Aging workforce

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

The most significant trends impacting the Southwest are:

- Transfer of jobs to the service sector from goods producing sector
- Increased aging of the regional population
- Modest growth in population
- Educational attainment lagging Ontario
- Increasing labour market demand for a highly skilled workforce
- Increased focus on regional economic development
- High youth out-migration
- Lack of equity group labour market participation
- Rural areas have problems attracting and retaining skilled workers
- Shortage of skilled trades people at the same time as there is an increasing demand for skilled trades people
- Third largest immigrant receiving community in Canada
- Youth unemployment and attachment to labour market challenge
- Employers demanding higher skills/education for positions at all levels of the organization
- Small and medium sized enterprises concerned about attracting and keeping workers

EASTERN ONTARIO

The most significant trends impacting the East are:

- Skill requirements and shortages
- Access to employment programs and services in rural communities
- Marginalized labour force
- Out-migration of youth
- Aging population
- Emerging opportunities for rural economic development
- Significant number of labour force participants without post-secondary education
- Continued low literacy and soft skills

COMMON ISSUES

Issues describe how the trends are impacting the community and for which stakeholders. Most regions are grappling with many of the same issues. In this section, issues that are common to a large percentage of Local Board areas are presented.

Although these issues are highlighted separately, it should be noted that in practice, many of are interrelated. In some cases one issue may be the cause of another one emerging as important. For example, the aging workforce is in part responsible for some skill shortages. Skill shortages in turn raise the importance of fully utilizing all labour pools (e.g. Women, Aboriginals, New Canadians, Youth, Persons with Disabilities). The most common issues encountered in the TOP reports are generally associated with the categories listed below which are in turn explained in more detail in this section:

- Aging workforce;
- Skill shortages;
- Integration of equity groups;
- Apprenticeship;
- Essential Skills;
- Recruitment and retention;
- Youth;
- Small and medium sized enterprises.

Aging workforce

Most areas of the province are grappling with the impacts of an aging workforce and this in many instances is driving skill shortages currently, or signalling the potential for skill shortages in the near future. Many areas point to the fact that the population is older on average than the population of Ontario. As the baby boomers retire from the labour force, many areas are concerned about the loss of knowledge and experience and the negative affect this will have on the region's ability to build and sustain the competitive workforce needed for a global economy. In many areas the aging workforce is combined with an overall declining population. This trend is characterized by significant increases in the 45 + age group and either decline or minimal growth in the youth cohort.

This pervasive issue requires organizations to proactively plan recruitment, retention and employment transitioning strategies. In fact in many instances recruitment of people from other areas is required just to maintain the status quo. Without targeted awareness and recruitment strategies, to those sectors and

occupations most impacted by the aging phenomenon, the shortages have the potential to negatively impact economic and social stability.

Skill shortages

Skill shortages are in part an off-shoot of the aging population and in some sectors are exacerbated by increased demand (e.g. construction). In some Local Board areas they are seeing this issue compounded by youth out-migration or workers commuting to employment in adjacent areas (e.g. Greater Toronto Area). Employers are experiencing difficulty finding, attracting and retaining workers with the required skill sets. The more commonly identified specific skill shortages identified are listed below

Health Care:

Health care across the province is experiencing shortages in many skill areas. Demand for skilled health care workers will continue to increase, driven by an aging population and expansion of health care facilities, as well as retirement in an aging workforce. Shortages can result in reduced levels of patient care and longer wait times for some procedures, as well as fatigue and burnout among overworked staff. There are enhanced challenges in attracting some healthcare workers to rural areas. The connections between employers and education need to be developed and expanded to facilitate Health Human Resources planning.

Specific Shortages Identified:

- Nurses
- Family Physicians
- Technologists
- Home care health care providers

Skilled Trades:

Local employers continue to experience shortages of various skilled trades people and new apprentices in both manufacturing and construction sectors, which affect their short and long term business goals. These shortages are attributed to the aging workforce, increased demand, and the lack of interest in skilled trades by young people. In many areas the local labour pool is already inadequate to meet demand. In other areas the shortage is anticipated in the near future. Meeting replacement demand alone is seen as a challenge by some. This does not address the needs that may arise from increased demand.

Service:

In areas experiencing significant population growth, the services sectors are under major pressures. Some areas are experiencing shortages in hospitality/tourism and retail sectors.

Technology, fast paced change and global competition are creating a demand for a more highly skilled labour force to meet the needs of an emerging knowledge based economy. A growing skills gap is creating occupational shortages for companies and reduced employment opportunities for lower skilled workers.

There is an identified need to develop local programs and services that can provide training and skill development for key occupations and move toward a coordinated strategy for the range of occupations in which employers are experiencing current gaps.

Specific Shortages Identified:

- front line cooks
- chefs
- food preparation workers
- senior finance and accounting professionals

Agriculture:

The agricultural sector is experiencing difficulties finding skilled, experienced agricultural workers. This is in part due to the out-migration of youth and also to the lack of interest in these occupations amongst youth.

Integration of equity groups

Labour force equity groups form a large, untapped pool of labour. Most of the Local Board areas have highlighted the issues related to equity groups. They point out the existence of barriers (e.g. transportation, affordable childcare, and skills development, etc.) to equity groups being integrated into the workplace which is resulting in a loss of potential labour for the areas. They point out the need to create a process to maximize the utilization of available skills within such labour force groups as youth, women, persons with disabilities, new Canadians, and foreign trained professionals. Coordinated efforts need to be continued to raise the profile of equity group members as valuable, contributing members of the local workforce.

Several equity groups within many areas are experiencing higher unemployment rates. Marginalized labour force groups are experiencing barriers in finding employment and being integrated into the labour force. When many groups within the labour force have lower performance in the labour market, there is a

negative impact on the overall labour market and the economy. The result for the individuals is often devastating (inadequate incomes, lack of meaningful work, fewer opportunities) and the impact on the local economy is one of decreased competitiveness (with other similar jurisdictions), a less vibrant local economy, and greater strain on government services and resources.

New Canadians:

New Canadians are fundamental to the economy of many regions. However, employers have difficulty integrating the skills of immigrants and other Canadians of diverse backgrounds. Immigrants who wish to participate in the labour force at a level commensurate with their education and experience are too often unsuccessful in doing so.

Immigrants and visible minorities continue to be underemployed and unemployed. Many communities are increasingly dependent on this diverse workforce for its economic success and vibrancy. It is necessary to create a greater awareness of the skills, abilities and training of immigrants and visible minorities in the community.

Although Canada attracts a significant number of new immigrants, some feel we are at risk of losing our most skilled immigrants to the US, where a less regulatory environment allows them to pursue career opportunities that leverage education or experience obtained elsewhere.

Persons With Disabilities:

Barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from integrating into the workforce continue to result in an increased under-utilization of the labour force. There are many obstacles to participation in the community for persons with disabilities that limit meaningful contribution to the community and building their self esteem and employability skills. Current funding for employment support programs dictates that success for all participants including programs supporting persons with disabilities is measured in terms of paid employment. This acts as a barrier to their participation in the community. Employment opportunities and income and employment support services must be communicated more effectively to jobseekers with disabilities. Greater efforts must be made to market these jobseekers to employers. There is a need for more education of employers as to the different disabilities experienced by people as well as the employment needs of persons with disabilities in maintaining employment.

Women:

In some areas women have a lower participation rate and a higher unemployment rate when compared to the general population, are lower paid and are under represented in the skilled trades and technical occupations, and

over represented in the administrative and business occupations, clerical and health support services. Women continue to be primarily responsible for unpaid work and are faced with the lack of access to quality, reliable, affordable child care services. There is a serious lack of information on training, employment, self-employment, and education services available for women and in particular, there is a need to promote skills development and skills opportunities.

Devaluing the contribution of women to the labour market and limiting their access to employment opportunities will have a long-term negative impact on women, their families, and the economy.

There is a need to address the specific training and labour market needs of women including promoting education and training in non-traditional employment which could work to address differences in income between males and females as well as address skills shortages in specific areas in the labour market.

Francophones:

A few Local Boards report that Francophones have lower education levels, lower labour force participation rates, lower educational attainment, and higher high school drop out rates than the labour force as a whole. The unemployment levels may in fact be artificially low as many Francophones do not disclose their mother tongue when establishing an employment insurance claim or seeking other services as this could delay support. In some areas there are few language and skills development programs available in French.

Aboriginal People:

The educational attainment levels of Aboriginals continue to lag those of the overall population. While some communities in Ontario are experiencing a decline in population, Aboriginal communities are growing at a significantly faster rate. The Aboriginal population is younger than that of the overall population. The average income of many individuals in Aboriginal communities is lower than the provincial average. Youth in Northern Ontario's Aboriginal communities have especially low rates of labour force involvement and demand for Essential Skills training, pre-apprenticeship training, upgrading, and sustainable employment opportunities is growing. Innovative solutions and collaborative projects need to be identified.

Apprenticeship

Industry must be encouraged to offer additional entry level apprenticeship opportunities to youth and adult beginners. Youth in particular need exposure to the skilled trades at an early age and need to be better informed of career opportunities and the apprenticeship process. They also need to understand the basic skills expected by industry to succeed in the trades and receive support to

develop these basic skills. Barriers for adults are financial (starting at beginner pay levels), and lack of understanding of the skilled trades.

The difficulty in finding accurate appropriate information on apprenticeship programs leads to shortages in skilled trades people.

Employers' needs are not being met resulting in:

- Lack of planning for future shortages;
- Lack of support of the apprenticeship system;
- Lack of employers willing to training;
- Number of people leaving the trades.

There is currently a proliferation of websites on apprenticeship careers in skilled trades and subsidy opportunities. As people are attracted to the trades, the number of employers engaged in supporting and offering apprenticeship training must be increased.

In spite of efforts to improve the image of apprenticeship, a negative perception regarding apprenticeship as a viable skills development option continues to exist.

Small businesses are often unable to meet the journeyperson to apprentice ratios that are required, thereby causing a significant barrier to recruiting new apprentices.

Essential skills

Essential skills are the minimum transferable skills a person needs to function at work, home and in the community. These skills are needed to different degrees in virtually all jobs and are critical to accessing higher learning and skills training, including apprenticeship, and to acquiring and keeping employment. Low literacy skills have an impact on people's ability to support themselves and their family and can be a barrier to having a high skilled productive workforce and strong thriving communities.

The issue of the lack of basic skills, or essential skills and literacy was prominent in the TOP Reports. Some pointed out that many of today's youth are lacking the essential skills such as literacy skills, mathematics skills and computer skills that employers require which is contributing to a high youth unemployment rate.

Too many people are entering the workforce or are already in the workforce and do not have the employability skills or skills to sustain employment resulting in:

- Employers emphasizing credentials rather than skill sets;
- Employees not able to effectively compete for jobs;
- Inability to benefit fully from available training programs;
- Reduced employer competitiveness;
- Shortage of skilled employees;

- Decreased worker productivity.

There are very limited training opportunities for adults with basic or level one, literacy skills. Local service providers involved in literacy and adult education require more relevant, current curriculum material that will improve the linkage between skills being taught and the workplace requirements of various occupations and industries in the local labour market. Improving the links will assist clients in their employment and training goals while providing a better “match” to entry-level positions of employers who are seeking workers with some “specific” and “generalized” skill sets.

Youth

Issues related to youth continued to figure prominently in the TOP Reports. The ‘echo’ generation (children of the baby boomers) now entering the labour force, together with recent changes in Ontario’s education system, have resulted in an increase in youth currently looking for employment and a relatively high unemployment rate among youth aged 15-24. However by 2011, once the bulk of this group moves through the entry level workforce, there will not be enough young people to meet anticipated labour force growth demands.

Youth face significant barriers to labour market participation:

- A lack of employment opportunities prevents youth from developing the skills and knowledge needed for today’s workplace and contributes to occupational and skill shortages within all industry sectors;
- Inadequate employment related information and programs for youth;
- Number of youth leaving school is increasing due to Board of Education’s zero tolerance policy and a more rigorous curriculum. These youth lack the necessary skills to get employment;
- Inadequate occupational information;
- Many ‘at risk’ youth are not aware of the variety of community programs available to assist them in acquiring relevant skills or work experience to gain or maintain long-term employment. This fact perpetuates the cycle of youth reverting to low-paid and short-term employment in an increasingly competitive and highly skilled labour market;
- Counsellors and their clients (youth and adult) need to be aware of the local opportunities and the essential skills required for growth occupations in environmental fields. Many of these opportunities have a college pathway that is currently not fully used;
- For non-traditional learners a more strident secondary school curriculum and testing requirements may mean a grade 12 diploma is beyond their grasp;
- Lack of transportation is a problem in rural communities;
- Lack of clarity in determining employment goals;
- Feeling of disenfranchisement from the workforce;
- Rising tuition costs and a reluctance to assume heavy education debt without firm career goals and confidence of meaningful employment.

Youth out-migration

In some areas of the province, youth out-migration is a significant issue and has a negative impact on the local labour force. Youth continue to leave some areas in search of expanded employment and education/training opportunities. There is a need to continue with strategies to retain area youth – providing options for youth, workers for employers and contributing to demographic health.

Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SME)

A few Local Boards identified issues related to small and medium sized enterprises. Specifically, the issues relate to:

- Small businesses having difficulty attracting skilled employees because of their inability to pay and compete for experienced/ skilled labour;
- SMEs do not have the dollars, time and people to address workforce planning and development issues thus threatening the SME's viability and limiting growth;
- A large percentage of small to medium enterprises are not training beyond orientation.

Rural needs

Issues specific to rural areas figured prominently in TOP Reports where there are significant rural communities within the Local Board area. The specific issues are listed below:

- Rural communities are undergoing significant change to their economies and labour force as a result of the declining agriculture and primary industry sectors. Business owners and workers from these sectors are experiencing difficulty transitioning to new industry sectors or businesses as a result of skill shortages or mismatches;
- There is a need to provide access to employment programs and services to rural residents in order to help improve their employment opportunities;
- There is a need to improve employment opportunities in rural communities;
- Rural communities continue to face barriers to employment development;
- Typically, the economy is less diversified, employment opportunities more restricted, telecommunications technology often lags, and the capacity to affect change limited by reduced resources/tax base, compared to urban environments;
- Transportation in rural parts of the region is a challenge for those seeking employment, training and cooperative education opportunities;
- There are inadequate job opportunities in rural communities.

There is an urgent need to build partnerships, share resources and support local initiatives to sustain and grow employment opportunities if we want to maintain the economic viability of rural communities.

Economic restructuring

There are four key issues that relate to the local economies:

- Transition from one type of economic activity to another;
- The need for diversification;
- Loss of a significant industry;
- Lack of economic growth.

Transitioning from One Type of Economic Activity to Another:

Some areas are experiencing a transitioning economy which has resulted in an increase in workers experiencing a shift from one employer/sector to another. There is a need to develop a targeted support system to assist this population and maximize their labour force participation across sectors where the job opportunities exist.

The Need for Diversification:

Many areas are reliant on one or two key industries and recognize that greater diversification is required to sustain the economy of the area. Where there are a limited number of industries represented it can result in less stable local employment and a more vulnerable economy because local businesses are susceptible to negative economic factors beyond the Local Board boundaries.

Jobs and economic activity associated with manufacturing products from raw materials are lost from an economy if the value added processes associated with that activity are performed somewhere else. For example, the north produces a great deal of raw and semi processed materials from mining, forestry, and agricultural activity. However residents point out that many of these products leave the area and are processed into higher value goods elsewhere. This means that the benefits of employment in manufacturing, management, engineering and technical services type jobs, among others – typically highly skilled, high income jobs, associated with the ‘knowledge economy’ - accrue to the economies of communities outside the area.

The growth of knowledge based industries is vital to the growth and development of the northern economy. Research has shown that communities that remain focused solely on the basic natural resources economy have difficulties competing and surviving in the global economy. Knowledge based clusters in health, forestry, mining and environment are keys to expanding economic development.

Loss of Significant Industry:

The Forestry sector is one of the key economic engines of northern Ontario's economy. The industry has been described as one in crisis because it is no longer competitive due to production costs, the rising Canadian dollar and the still unresolved US softwood dispute. Direct job losses in the north will be in the thousands. The economic impact of this crisis affects all businesses in the communities. Without the right policies in place the trend toward out migration of industry, jobs and prosperity will continue.

Lack of Economic Growth:

There is a need to support economic/business development initiatives that help create jobs, and to build linkages between economic developers and work force developers to maximize the benefits of supply/demand partnerships. Focus on regional economic development is growing in some areas. Full community economic and social capacity has remained underdeveloped because of the lack of regional level economic development strategies. While it continues to be important to attract new businesses to create jobs, eighty percent of new jobs in the private sector are created by existing businesses. Therefore, business retention and expansion is also key to local employment growth.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

A comparison of the 2004-2005 vs 2005-06 TOP Reports shows that there has been little change in the nature of labour market challenges over the past few years. Many are systemic in nature thus necessitating long-term strategies. However, there are some new issues that were highlighted in the 2005-06 TOP Reports. In this context, "new" means that the issue is a refinement of a previous one, or is new to the particular Local Board area. These "new" issues identified in the 2005-06 TOP reports include:

Training availability/capacity

Often issues emerge as a direct outcome of other issues. For example, as Ontario grapples with the aging workforce and skill shortages, attention turns to the infrastructure required to train the next generation of skilled workers. Putting the spotlight on this raises the question of training capacity and availability.

Some Local Board areas have raised training availability/capacity as an issue for their region. For example:

- Durham Region has highlighted the lack of training opportunities for adults with basic literacy skills;
- The 1000 Islands Region has identified the lack of post secondary education as a barrier to employment;
- In the East Central Region, Prince Edward County is experiencing growth in the food service, accommodation and hospitality industry and needs qualified individuals to work in these areas. In this particular area, there are no local training programs to train people in these jobs;
- The Hamilton area lacks training programs provided in French to accommodate the needs of the Francophone population;
- In Simcoe County they have linked the shift towards more knowledge intensive industries to the related need for improved education and skills training of the local labour force. They go on to point out that this trend is placing pressure on communities to ensure appropriate training and education is available in new technologies.

HR Capacity of Small and Medium Size Businesses

The issue of Human Resource Capacity in small and medium sized businesses is not new. However, it has become a priority in 2005 in a few Local Board areas:

- The Elgin-Middlesex-Oxford area is experiencing an expansion of larger industry which is expected to create some movement of employees within the region. This will challenge the small and medium sized employers who do not have the resources to dedicate to recruitment and retention strategies.
- In the Sarnia Lambton area, the demands for a highly skilled workforce are increasing. Sixty percent of the small to medium enterprises are not training beyond basic orientation.
- In Simcoe County, some communities are experiencing pressures to move towards more knowledge intensive industries resulting in a need to improve education and skills training of the local labour force. This trend is placing pressure on communities to ensure appropriate training and education is available for their labour force in new technologies.

Low Education Levels of Workforce/Employer Demands for Higher Skill

This issue took the form of low levels of education attainment and a lack of the more basic employability or Essential Skills and refers to the disconnect between the education and skill levels of the local workforce and what employers are requiring. For example:

- In the York South Simcoe area, “youth lacking Essential Skills” was identified as one factor contributing to high youth unemployment;
- In the 1000 Island area, a general lack of post secondary education amongst workforce participants has been identified as a barrier to employment. Although the percentage of the population holding a post-secondary credential has increased, there is still a significant number that do not possess these credentials at a time when long-term employment security is increasingly dependent on the individual’s level of education;
- In Toronto, a slightly different take on this issue refers to the need to recognize skills and knowledge gained through informal learning due to the emphasis on the “knowledge economy”;
- In Hamilton this issue was raised in relation to Francophones noting that statistically Francophones have lower education levels than the community as a whole;
- Simcoe County points out that some areas within its region are experiencing a lack of highly skilled and educated workers. In some cases the highly skilled workers are commuting to the GTA for employment. Simcoe also points out that some people in the area do not have the basic skills necessary to function at work or participate in employment training programs. One in four people would benefit from Essential Skills upgrading;
- Looking North, the Muskoka, Nipissing, Parry Sound area also points to the education levels of area residents being lower than the provincial average. This means businesses have a limited supply of educated and or skilled people to draw from. The gap between the areas and the province is growing. The education level of the Aboriginal and Francophone populations also continues to lag those of the overall population. The impact of this is the importing of short-term workers, businesses not expanding or relocating to the area and minimal economic growth opportunities;
- In the Far Northeast, the issues of low educational attainment and low literacy levels have emerged as a barrier to the development of a highly skilled and productive workforce.

Inadequate Employment Programs and Information about Programs for Youth

This issue has plagued many local board areas over the years. This year it was highlighted by some areas that had not shown this issue as a priority in the previous year. For example:

- The Toronto area has highlighted both inadequate programming and the lack of information about programs in 2005 and is linking this issue to high youth unemployment. They also point out that inadequate occupational information is also a cause of high youth unemployment;
- The Hamilton area also indicates that youth at risk are not aware of the variety of community programs available to assist them. This perpetuates the cycle of youth reverting to low paid and short-term employment.

Shifts in Local Economy

There are some areas in the province that are experiencing a shift in the local economy and this is driving many of the labour market issues in the Local Board region. For example:

- Niagara Region is experiencing a shift from primarily goods-producing and manufacturing to services (accommodations and food, health care and social services, information culture and recreation). This transition is resulting in workers moving from one employer/sector to another. This creates a need for targeted support to assist the labour force with this shift;
- In the Elgin Middlesex Oxford area, the expansion of larger industry within the area is expected to create movement of employees within the region. Small to medium sized employers will require assistance to ensure the continued viability of their organizations.

This issue is perhaps most acute in the North. For example:

- In Muskoka-Nipissing-Parry Sound, average incomes are significantly lower than provincial averages as raw and semi-raw materials leave the area to be processed elsewhere. This leaves a limited number of jobs available associated with manufacturing, management and engineering. In addition, jobs are concentrated in too few industries. This results in a more vulnerable economy;
- The Sudbury-Manitoulin area continues to stress the importance of attracting new businesses to the area to create jobs. However, the majority of jobs are created through existing businesses. Therefore, the focus in this area has been toward business retention and expansion. Both are key to employment growth;
- A critical issue has been raised by the North Superior and Northwest areas with respect to the Forestry industry. Forestry, a key driver of the economy in these areas, is being described as “in crisis”. The industry is struggling to remain competitive when faced with high production costs, a rising Canadian dollar, and the unresolved US softwood dispute. The economic impact of this crisis affects all businesses in the communities. Several jobs have been lost through shutdowns, downsizing and layoffs.

New Emerging Shortages in Some Sectors/Occupations

Skill shortages have been a key labour market issue for some time now, and were clearly present in the 2004 TOP Reports. Much of the discussion has related to shortages in the skilled trades and the health care sector. However, this year a few additional skill shortage areas have emerged:

- In York South Simcoe the agricultural sector is experiencing shortages of experienced labour;
- In East Central Ontario, there is a need for front line cooks, chefs and food preparation workers;
- The Bruce Grey Huron Perth and Georgian Triangle report a need for professional and technical health care workers;
- The Sudbury-Manitoulin area has highlighted shortages in skilled trades this year as well as health care occupations;
- Ottawa-Carleton has identified a shortage of senior finance/accounting professionals;
- The Algoma area is experiencing shortages in the hospitality/tourism industry.

CONCLUSION

The publication of the 2005-06 TOP Reports marks the culmination of an ongoing local planning process led by Local Boards that brought together community stakeholders interested in coordinating their efforts and maximizing their resources to take action on local labour market issues.

What sets the TOP Reports apart is the inclusion of a “Community Action Plan” component. The type of action is dependent on the issue and the partners involved. The issues being addressed are often difficult and complex and many community partners have been working on solutions for a number of years. What is clear is that organizations need to work together to find effective solutions in dealing with these complex issues.

There are many excellent examples of communities working together. For example, in the area of skills shortages, three different but effective strategies were undertaken:

- In the Kawartha area, the Workforce Development Board and its partners tackled the skills shortage issue first by undertaking some research to make sure the issue was real. Then they spoke with guidance counsellors and parents about the benefits of a career in the skilled trades. They are now in the middle of planning their second apprenticeship career fair with an enormous amount of support – both human and financial - from employers;
- The Sarnia-Lambton Training Board and its partners addressed skills shortages by actively promoting the benefits of a career in the skilled trades to the young people in grades 7 and 8. They have just launched a Mobile Skilled Trades Lab, a 53-foot trailer, retrofitted with 10 work stations designed for use by students. This year, they will concentrate on the construction sector;
- The Far North East Training Board and its partners opted for a different approach that resulted in the development of an innovative workforce

succession planning tool called “VisionPro”. This software product is designed to help local businesses plan ahead for future skills shortages.

The TOP process represents “true community planning” in action. Through the leadership and coordination efforts of Local Boards, progress continues to be made in addressing ongoing labour market development challenges across the province.

Simply put, the TOP process led by Local Boards provides a “neutral environment” to engage community partners and stakeholders in the development and implementation of “community-driven” action plans that contribute to the improvement of local labour market conditions across Ontario.

Breakdown of geographical areas for each Region

Central Ontario

Durham Region Local Training Board: Regional Municipality of Durham including Newcastle, Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax and Pickering.

Peel Halton Dufferin Training Board: Dufferin County, the Regional Municipality of Peel and the Regional Municipality of Halton including Shelburne, Orangeville, Brampton, Mississauga, Oakville and Burlington.

Simcoe County Training Board: Simcoe County less the Georgian Bay Triangle Area, West Gwillimbury township and the town of Bradford. Includes Barrie, Orillia, Victoria Harbour, Midland and Penetanguishene.

Toronto Training Board: Regional Municipality of Toronto.

York South Simcoe Training & Adjustment Board: Regional Municipality of York and West Gwillimbury Township and the Town of Bradford, both from Simcoe County.

Eastern Ontario

1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board: United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, Frontenac County and Ernestown Township, Amherst Island and the Village of Bath in Lennox and Addington County including Kemptville, Prescott, Brockville, Athens, Newboro, Kingston and Bath.

East Central Ontario Training Board: Lennox and Addington County, excluding Ernestown Township, Amherst Island and the Village of Bath; Prince Edward County, Hastings County and a small part of Haliburton County. Includes Newburgh, Napanee, Picton, Wellington, Belleville, Trenton, Frankford, Tweed, Madoc, Deloro, Marmora and Bancroft.

Eastern Ontario Training Board: United Counties of Prescott and Russell, and the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. Includes Hawkesbury, L'Original, Rockland, Vanleek Hill, Casselman, Alexandria, Cornwall, Finch, Chesterville, Morrisburg and Iroquois.

Algonquin-Lanark-Renfrew area: Lanark County, Renfrew County and the part of Algonquin Park located in the southern section of Nipissing District. Includes Smiths Falls, Perth, Carleton Place, Almonte, Annprior, Braeside,

Renfrew, Beachburg, Pembroke, Eganville, Killaloe, Barry's Bay, Petawawa, Chalk River and Deep River.

Ottawa-Carleton area: Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton.

Workforce Development Board: Northumberland County, Peterborough County, Victoria County, almost all of Haliburton County, and Brock Township and part of Scugog Township in Durham Regional Municipality. Includes Brighton, Campbellford, Colborne, Cobourg, Port Hope, Peterborough, Lindsay, Bobcaygeon and Fenelon Falls.

Southwestern Ontario

Bruce Grey Huron Perth Georgian Triangle Training Board: Huron County, Perth County, Bruce County, Grey County and the Georgian Bay Triangle Area of Simcoe County including Collingwood, Stayner, Wasaga Beach, Creemore and Nottawasaga township. Includes Exeter, St. Marys, Stratford, Bayfield, Clinton, Listowel, Blyth, Goderich, Teeswater, Kincardine, Port Elgin, Lion's Head, Warton, Owen Sound, Durham, Markdale, Meaford, Thornbury, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach and Creemore.

Elgin, Middlesex & Oxford Local Training Board: Middlesex County, Oxford County and Elgin County including London, Woodstock, Tillsonburg, St. Thomas and Newbury.

Grand Erie Training and Adjustment Board: Brant County and the Regional Municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk including Brantford, Simcoe, Dunnville and Long Point.

Hamilton Training Advisory Board: Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth including Hamilton, Stoney Creek, Flamborough, Dundas and Ancaster.

Niagara Training & Adjustment Board: Regional Municipality of Niagara including St. Catharines, Welland, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie.

Sarnia Lambton Training Board: Lambton County, less Sombra, Dawn and Euphemia townships. Includes Oil Springs, Petrolia, Sarnia, Watford, Forest and Kettle Point.

Windsor-Essex-Kent area: Essex County, Kent County and the southern part of Lambton County including Sombra, Dawn and Euphemia townships including Amherstburg, Windsor, Leamington, Tilbury, Chatham, Thamesville, Dresden and Wallaceburg.

Waterloo Wellington Training & Adjustment Board: Wellington County and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo including Mount Forest, Harriston, Fergus, Erin, Guelph, Waterloo, Kitchener and Cambridge.

Northern Ontario

Algoma District: Algoma District including Sault Ste. Marie, Elliot Lake, Blind River, Dubreuilville and White River.

Far Northeast Training Board: Timiskaming District, part of Sudbury District, a small part of the north end of Algoma District, almost all of Cochrane District and a part of Kenora District west of James Bay and south of Hudson Bay. Includes New Liskeard, Kirkland Lake, Timmins, Iroquois Falls, Chapleau, Hornepayne, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Moose Factory, Moosonee and Fort Albany.

Muskoka, Nipissing, Parry Sound Local Training and Adjustment Board: District Municipality of Muskoka, Parry Sound District and Nipissing District except for the southern area where Algonquin Park is located. Includes Parry Sound, Burk's Falls, South River, Trout Creek, Powassan, North Bay, Mattawa and Sturgeon Falls.

North Superior Training Board: Thunder Bay District and part of Kenora District north of the Albany River including Kasabonika Lake. Includes Thunder Bay, Nipigon, Schreiber, Marathon, Manitouwadge, Longlac, Geraldton and Beardmore.

Northwest Training & Adjustment Board: Rainy River District and a large part of Kenora District along the Manitoba border north to Hudson Bay. Includes Fort Frances, Atikokan, Kenora, Dryden, Sioux Lookout, Ear Falls, Red Lake, Pickle Lake, Sandy Lake and Big Trout Lake.

Sudbury & Manitoulin Training Board: Regional Municipality of Sudbury, Manitoulin District and part of Sudbury District including Sudbury and Espanola.