





## Acknowledgements

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# AN EXAMINATION OF Common Skills Lexicon *in the Manufacturing Sector*

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## Executive Summary

This research examined how job seekers, employers and the Action Centres serving laid-off workers describe generic skills and skills sets in the job search process. The impetus behind this research is that the use of different skills lexicons or terminologies by various parties may in fact constitute barriers to employment.

This research also examines various vocational classification systems, including the Canadian National Occupational Classification (NOC) system, its British equivalent the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system, and the British National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system which builds on SOC. It considers whether more widespread use of classification systems might simplify understanding of and communication around various skill sets.

Nine laid-off workers using the services of Action Centres located in London, Hamilton and St. Catharines/Thorold Ontario were interviewed to identify their way of describing their work experience and skills. This was followed by interviews of six employers from the manufacturing sector, including steel manufacturing, machining, automotive parts manufacturing, and the food industry. Finally, six Action Centre staff were interviewed to ascertain how they identify and describe the skills of affected employees.

Contrary to expectations, this qualitative research found no significant differences in the lexicon used by employees describing their skills sets compared to what employers or the Action Centres used. In fact, a strong consistency in the descriptions used by employees was shown when compared to the formal skills classification systems such as NOC and NVQ/SOC. The Action Centre process was found to enable workers to describe their work skills in standardized terms, including Essential Skills. For the skilled trades included in this study, employers relied on criteria for the occupation certification outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities.

As a result of these qualitative findings, it is recommended that:

- 1 strategies to further enable employers, educators, and workers to use the NOC approach to describe generic skills sets be developed.
- 2 consideration be given to an approach which educates both employer and employee to the advantages of looking at skills sets generically. Governments should consider support incentives to employers to encourage their creating opportunities for individuals to move into higher skilled occupations through on the job training.
- 3 future Action Centres build employer relations and include a direct selection and referral point for their workers.
- 4 a pilot project employ a “neutral broker” approach to providing Employer Services under the Employment umbrella.
- 5 a comprehensive analysis be done to determine if there is in fact a labour shortage occurring in the skilled trades areas.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgement . . . . .	inside front cover
Executive Summary . . . . .	1
Table of Contents . . . . .	2
Introduction. . . . .	3
Review of Skills Classification Systems. . . . .	4
Skills Transferability. . . . .	7
Findings from Laid-off Workers seeking Employment . . . . .	8
Findings from Employers. . . . .	9
Findings from Action Centre Staff . . . . .	12
Analysis and Conclusions. . . . .	13
Key Findings and Recommendations . . . . .	16
References . . . . .	18
Appendix A. Questions for Job Seekers. . . . .	19
Appendix B. Questions for Employers. . . . .	20
Appendix C. Questions for Action Centre Staff . . . . .	24
Appendix D. National Occupations Classification (NOC) Code . . . . .	26
Appendix E. Summary of Responses from Laid-off Workers . . . . .	27
Appendix F. Summary of Responses from Action Centre Staff . . . . .	28
Appendix G. Summary of Responses from Employers. . . . .	29
Appendix H. Summary of Employer Responses regarding Recruitment and Hiring. . . . .	30
Appendix I. Summary of Responses from Laid-off Workers regarding NVQ/SOC . . . . .	32

## Introduction

Do job seekers use the same language to describe their skills sets as employers use to describe their workforce needs? This research seeks to answer this question by examining the skills lexicon used by employers, Action Centres, and laid-off workers seeking employment in the manufacturing sector. The impetus behind this research is that the use of different skills lexicons or terminologies by various parties may in fact constitute barriers to employment.

This research also examines various vocational classification systems, including the Canadian National Occupational Classification (NOC) system, its British equivalent the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system, and the British National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system which builds on SOC. It considers whether more widespread use of classification systems might simplify understanding of and communication around various skill sets. It also considers whether Canada would benefit from adopting the British National Vocational Qualifications model to supplement the existing NOC.

To answer these questions, this research focused on the manufacturing sector in three cities in southern Ontario: Hamilton, London, and St. Catharines/Thorold. Each city has been home to a large manufacturing sector, and each has been impacted by lay-offs in this sector. Each city is also home to Action Centres set up in partnership with the government and various employers to provide peer support to laid-off workers.<sup>1</sup>

Specifically, the research consisted of the following:

- 1 Interviews with three (3) laid-off workers seeking employment who used the services of three (3) Action Centres located in London, Hamilton and St. Catharines/Thorold. The interviews followed a standardized questionnaire to determine the existing criteria used by workers to describe their own work experience and skills (included as Appendix A to this report).
- 2 Interviews of two (2) manufacturing employers in each of the three locations. The interviews sought to identify how employers assess skills and competency in the workplace. A standardized questionnaire identified the employer's application of skill requirements to their hiring processes (included as Appendix B).
- 3 Interviews with six Action Centre staff to determine the processes they use to assess and identify client workplace skills. The overall process and language used by the Centres was identified to provide a further comparison of criteria used to assess workers workplace skills (included as Appendix C).

In brief, the research is based on information gathered from 21 job seekers, employers, and Action Centre staff.

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<sup>1</sup>Most Action Centres are created in the context of specific plant closures that lay off at least 50 persons and have a temporary existence. The Workers Action Centre in Hamilton has a more permanent status due to ongoing restructuring in the steel industry.

## Review of Skills Classification Systems

In the field of career counselling and vocational guidance, there has long been interest in finding a simple consistent approach to identify skills sets which are readily transferable across a series of jobs or occupations. Recognizing skills and knowledge that can be transferred among workplaces is particularly important to recruitment and hiring practices.

An occupational or skills classification system provides a basis for ordering existing operational structures. Tracking the labour force through different occupations offers information on the relationship of occupations to job supply and demand by:

- demonstrating where there are opportunities to advance and where there are new entry level positions
- suggesting education and training needs
- indicating the number of people engaged in a certain occupation over time.

In this section, two major skills classification systems are presented. The National Occupations Classification (NOC) system is the standard in Canada. Its equivalent in Britain is the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. It has been supplemented by the British National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) system, an ambitious and extensive approach. What is the potential for the NVQ approach to be applied in the Canadian context, as a mechanism to set acceptable criteria across occupations? After a brief presentation of these two approaches, this question will be considered in the context of the results of qualitative research with employees, employers and service providers in identifying occupational description criteria for marketable skills.

### The National Occupations Classification System (Canada)

The National Occupations Classification (NOC) system is the authoritative resource on occupational information in Canada. The NOC provides a standardized framework for organizing the world of work in a coherent system. It has been utilized for extensive research in areas of career planning and education, and NOC has been implemented in a number of major services and products throughout the private and public sectors in Canada.

Under NOC, occupations are classified into 520 groups, to which over 25,000 job titles are assigned. Most classification systems have grouped occupations by the type of work performed (i.e., *the skill type*). NOC has combined this criterion with the type and length of education and training required to perform the job (i.e., *the skill level*). The complete range of NOC can be seen in table format that contain columns of ten broad “skill type” categories and rows of four broad “skill levels” down the side. The three and four digit code assigned to various levels within each group allows for easy location of occupations. Details about the NOC categories can be found in Appendix D.

Margaret Roberts (2003) developed a matrix of skills transferability using the NOC system. According to Roberts (2003: 4), the NOC system identifies concrete skills and contains an effective mechanism for inter-relating mobility with a more qualitative analysis.

The extended occupational system under NOC includes skills sets for each occupation, profiles of Essential Skills,<sup>2</sup> entry requirements, aptitudes and interests, physical activities and occupational standards (Roberts 2003: 8). The government of Canada has created over 250 occupations within the NOC with Essential Skills profiles. These occupations presently represent all occupations requiring a High School graduation or less.

The NOC system provides online access to the full classification system and provides both an Employer Guide and a Career Handbook which allows for the effective use and direct comparison of all included occupational information. These are available on the website of Human Resources and Social Development Canada.<sup>3</sup>

The Career Handbook focuses on the similarities of skills within an occupation, allowing users to examine concepts of occupational mobility, transferability of skills and career shifts by checking the rating of occupational groups by various characteristics. These characteristics include aptitudes; interests; working with data/information, people, or things; physical activities; environmental conditions, and employment requirements.

The greatest difficulty identified with the NOC system approach related to those occupations requiring little education or training. The information available simply does not provide the level of comparability to determine movement across occupations. Also, Roberts found that transferability of existing skill sets in the matrix worked better in one direction than the other. The matrix generally allowed for greater downward mobility -- i.e., occupations at a lower skills and knowledge level -- than upward mobility to occupations at a higher level (Roberts 2003: 3).

## ■ The British National Vocational Qualifications

The British approach to the standardization of workplace skills assessment is more complex. Indeed, it is considered to be the most extensive restructuring of educational approaches to work in the western world. The British system focuses on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) which in turn are based on the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. SOC is very similar to Canada's NOC except that SOC does not include skill level or educational requirements. These are instead outlined by the NVQ. According to the United Kingdom's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority website ([www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)):

- NVQs are work-related, competence-based qualifications. They reflect the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively, and they show that a candidate is competent in the area of work the NVQ represents.

<sup>2</sup>The Government of Canada identifies nine Essential Skills: Reading Text, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Continuous Learning, Thinking Skills, and Computer Use. For more information on essential skills, please refer to the HRSDC website.

<sup>3</sup><http://www23.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/2001/e/generic/welcome.shtml>

- NVQs are organized into nine levels of achievement and areas of competence as follows: introductory, trade, technical/craft and supervision, "incorporated" equivalent, and "chartered" equivalent. These standards are statements of performance that describe what competent people in a particular occupation are expected to be able to do. They cover all the main aspects of an occupation, including current best practice, the ability to adapt to future requirements and the knowledge and understanding that underpin competent performance.
- Within reason, NVQs do not have to be completed in a specified amount of time. They can be taken by full-time employees or by school and college students with a work placement or part-time job that enables them to develop the appropriate skills. There are no age limits and no special entry requirements.
- NVQs are achieved through assessment and training. Assessment is normally through on-the-job observation and questioning. Candidates produce evidence to prove they have the competence to meet the NVQ standards. Assessors 'sign-off' units when the candidates are ready - the assessor tests candidates' underpinning knowledge, understanding and work-based performance to make sure they can demonstrate competence in the workplace.
- When new candidates start an NVQ, the assessor will usually help them to:
  - identify what they can do already
  - agree on the standard and level they are aiming for
  - analyse what they need to learn
  - choose and agree on activities that would allow them to learn what they need.
- Candidates might take a course if that seems the best way to learn what they need. Or they might agree with their employer or supervisor to do slightly different work to gain the evidence of competence they need.
- Candidates compare their performance with the standards as they learn. They look at what they have achieved, how much they still need to do and how they should go about it, until they are assessed as competent for a unit or a whole NVQ. The system is right for candidates who already have skills and want to increase them, but also for those who are starting from the beginning. As the system is so flexible, new ways of learning can be used immediately. (<http://www.qca.org.uk>)
- Similar to Essential Skills, Key Skills are skills that are commonly needed for success in a range of activities in education and training, work and life in general. The key skills specifications aim to develop and recognize candidates' abilities to apply these skills in ways that are appropriate to different contexts, in order to improve the quality of learning and performance. They are intended for everyone, from pupils in school to chief executives in large companies. The six key skills are:
  - communication
  - application of numbers
  - information technology
  - working with others
  - improving own learning and performance
  - problem solving

In brief, the NVQ system is more sophisticated, and more complex, than the Canadian NOC system. The development of a comprehensive standardized tool to provide a competency-based assessment of workplace skills was a major undertaking. Moreover, it was created within a certain national context: it was developed within Britain's well-established standardized guild system. This facilitated the development of a national standard for assessment of skills levels across the entire educational and working skilled trades environment.

## Skills Transferability

The skills specific to a job -- for example, calculations for machine set-up -- may draw on academic skills and be further complemented by core generic or basic skills such as problem solving, communication, interpersonal, reading, and writing skills. Some organizations exclusively hire the individual based on their demonstrating the job specific skills (i.e., tool and die maker) and will not consider related skills sets as meeting their employability requirements. Other employers focus more on knowledge acquired through formal education. Some employers prefer to hire persons at the lowest skill level and then provide them with internal training and opportunities to progress within the company through ongoing training.

The concept of skills transferability means that an individual can apply his or her skills and knowledge to a potential range of occupations. The greater the range of tasks one can perform, the greater number of potential jobs may be available. Conversely, individuals who have limited skills and knowledge are increasingly isolated from available employment opportunities. This research considers how skills transferability may be applied to a range of occupations based on the ability of employees, employers and service providers (in this case Action Centres) to describe the skills and knowledge with a consistent language and understanding.

As shown above, occupation descriptions in the Canadian National Occupational Classification system and the British SOC and NVQ typically contain information regarding the skills and knowledge required within that occupation. Workers' ability to change occupations depends on the skills transferability between occupations, and this is often encumbered by the differences in describing the job skills among employer, service providers and potential employees. Labour market flexibility hinges on the establishment of a common lexicon or language for all parties. The presence of a common lexicon enhances the recognition of skills transferability and ultimately facilitates the movement of individuals across a range of occupations consistent with their generic skills sets.

Modifications to a number of job design features have had important implications for labour adjustment. Broader-based job classifications have become more prominent, with job functions being enlarged so that employees are responsible for a wider array of tasks (i.e., multi-tasking). This is often accompanied by job rotation so that employees know a range of tasks. Does this multi-skilling mean that the employee understands the broader application of their skills to a wider array of job opportunities both internal to a company and externally? In assessing internal and external adjustment variables, Gomez and Gunderson (2006a) argue that broader-based job classifications, multi-tasking and job rotation better equip employees to deal with a wider array of tasks. Because their work is not so dependent upon one function that could be displaced -- for example, by technological change -- this should facilitate adjustment within internal labour markets. According to Gomez and Gunderson, employees should be better equipped for tasks in other organizations because they have a broader base of transferable skills, making them more marketable and more rapidly adjusted to external job opportunities.

This research described below is intended to assess this premise that multi-skilling facilitates labour market adjustment. The focus is on how workers, employers and Action Centre staff describe the job skills they have, seek or market.

## **Findings from Laid-off Workers seeking Employment**

In the London area, individuals from the Food Processing sector including a Production Supervisor, a Janitor/packer and a Maintenance Millwright were interviewed. In Hamilton, the researcher interviewed individuals from the Steel manufacturing sector including a Shear Operator, a Maintenance Mechanic, and an Industrial Maintenance Electrician. St. Catharines provided individuals who had worked in the Automotive Parts Industry including a Machine Operator, an Electrician and a Press Operator. In each case, interview questions were drawn from a standard list of questions (provided in Appendix A to this report).

The responses from each individual described the main duties of their occupation and the profile of marketable and other job skills they felt they had developed over their working lives. The survey provided the opportunity to identify their perception of how employers and Action Centres identified their skills. Finally, employees offered recommendations to Action Centres, service providers and employers regarding what they felt would facilitate their own entrance to the labour market after experiencing adjustment due to plant closures or downsizing.

Responses from the laid-off workers seeking employment showed a clear understanding of the duties in each of their respective occupational areas. (These are detailed in Appendix E.) The lexicon or language usage was consistent with the Canadian National Occupational Classification (NOC) system. It was also consistent with language used in the British Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) for each of their jobs. Indeed, employees identified more duties and greater detail than the SOC in all but one occupational area (shown in Appendix I).

The ability to effectively identify and list activities related to their work was attributed to the effective support provided through the various Action Centres serving the affected employees. Specifically, the up-front needs assessments, one-to-one interviews, and resume workshops each contributed to the individuals being able to clearly describe the work they had been doing. The process took job seekers through the review of the actual detail of their day-to-day duties such that they used appropriate language to describe them.

Educational levels ranged from Grade 10 to Grade 13 for entry into the jobs with employers. The higher grade levels were a requirement to be considered for entry into the apprenticeship of any of the identified trades. The journeymen that were included in the survey included a Millwright, a Maintenance Mechanic, an Electrician, and an Industrial Electrician. At the time of hiring, the journeymen were required to have recognized Trade Certification from the Ministry. One had European Trades Certification and two were taken on as apprentices (shown in Appendix E). The Janitor, Press Operator, Shear Operator and Supervisor positions did not require certification for the trade although the Press Operator indicated he was required to have welding certification.

All of the job seekers were familiar with Essential Skills and identified from three to seven skills when interviewed by employers. All of them identified elements of the Essential Skills as important in approaching employers. Examples included continuous learning, working with others, good communications skills, and numeracy. The job seekers demonstrated an awareness of employability skills including adaptability, working safely, problem solving and a positive work attitude. They did not identify their specific job-related skills until prompted by questions requiring them to describe their work.

Job seekers in this study described hiring practices that ranged from simple resume review and an interview to practical tests in math and English, hands-on practical demonstration of the skill in the shop, and in one case psychological testing.

In brief, through interaction with supportive Action Centres, laid-off workers appear to have effectively learned how to describe their work duties, skills and abilities. The difficulties they experience finding new work does not appear to be a result of failing to communicate their existing skills and abilities, but rather other more systemic barriers such as the sheer volume of job seekers competing for similar jobs. Job seekers spoke of the need to access employers in a consistent, controlled way.

Their frustration was voiced towards the temporary placement agencies (“temp agencies”) that have become significant players in the employment field. Temp agencies make referrals to employers based on criteria outlined by the employers. They pre-screen candidates who must be willing to work at lower wages as well as give up the possibility of long term employment. Workers were particularly frustrated by the cut that the temp agency takes from the employer, e.g., employee receives \$12 and temp agency receives \$6. As industries close and employees with 20 to 30 years experience join the search for employment, it becomes a major issue to make referrals to employment that can provide some degree of stability and comparable compensation in their later working years.

Workers' awareness of the skills and abilities they possess and the demonstrated ability to express those skills effectively indicate language is not a barrier. In this limited and anecdotal survey approach, it was interesting to note that there was no difference in the use of language and level of detail from the three sectors examined (Steel Manufacturing, Automotive Parts manufacturing and the Food Processing sector). That same consistency was demonstrated across the communities of London, Hamilton and St. Catharines/Thorold for the employees interviewed. Although the sample size was limited, the findings are significant insofar as they were consistent across a range of occupations and years of experience.

## **Findings from Employers**

Employers were also interviewed using a standard set of questions (found in Appendix B). Participants included two employers from each of the three areas: London, Hamilton, and St. Catharines. The employers were in the food sector, metal machining, machine making industry, steel manufacturing, small machining facility, and auto parts supply. All employers were individually interviewed and provided with an opportunity to identify their key issues related to hiring in the occupational areas of skilled trades. The interview also provided the opportunity for employers to answer some brief questions regarding their strategies for recruiting and hiring employees.

The employers in this study represented a cross section of small, medium and large manufacturers in the three communities. Three employers had between 20 and 45 employees, two employers had between 180 and 540 employees, and one employer had more than 6,000 employees. This sampling although anecdotal in nature provided a relevant cross section of the manufacturing facilities in Ontario. The wage ranges included a starting salary of \$12-\$13 per hour for a first year apprentice to \$20-\$29 per hour for a certified journeyman. The timeframe to find qualified journeymen ranged from three weeks to a three to six month range for a number of both small and large employers. (A detailed tabulation of the results of the employer survey is found in Appendix G to this report.)

Employers consistently stated that they relied on requirements for certification as a journeyman in the specific trade area (e.g. Electrician, Millwright, Maintenance Mechanic) for writing job descriptions. The process of assessment included the use of resumes, interviews which included behavioural-based questions and practical hands-on exercises in a shop environment to confirm practical knowledge and demonstrate ability. Three employers offered coop placements to assess individual skills prior to final hiring in the position. As shown in Appendix G, only two employers indicated knowledge and use of the NOC profiles and the Essential Skills profiles in assessing individual applicants. All employers relied on reference checks to confirm stated experience and to assess the employees interpersonal and essential skills.

In terms of listing job vacancies, use of the Certification Requirement by employers precluded their providing detailed job descriptions. Any details in the listings focused on identifying specific additional elements of the job that were particular to the plants operation. All of the employers indicated their interest in providing apprenticeship training in the skilled trades areas if they had a candidate who demonstrated a mechanical aptitude, the minimum Grade 12 level to qualify for apprentice registration, and some demonstrated experience in a comparable working environment.

One employer indicated extensive involvement with the local community college's two-year program, including active involvement on an advisory board which recommended course content to facilitate candidates meeting their operational needs. This was enhanced by extensive coop placement of the potential apprentice candidates including up to 16 months of coop placement across their industrial plant. This approach resulted in an effective feeder system that made the transition from school to work most productive for the candidates and the employer. The result of their extensive involvement over the two years prior to hiring was not only achieving success in finding appropriate candidates, but in setting the standard for the language which described the job such that the lexicon was the same for the employee as for the employer. This employer had 60 apprentices in the electrical trade and more than 1,000 full time Electricians.

In contrast, one small employer spoke of significant success in acquiring appropriate candidates for apprenticeship through a process of working with a local independent selection, referral and placement specialist. The success of this approach appeared to be a result of the broker having a well-established relationship with area employers. As such, the broker understood the job-related skills required as well as the complementary essential skills to facilitate success for the candidates in that employer's setting. The broker pre-screened candidates to meet the employers' criteria which facilitated the speed of filling local vacancies with appropriate clients. This was highly praised by the employer community for the quality of referrals and the employees benefited from a direct access in instances where they would not have been aware of the vacancies. The broker effectively represented a consistent understanding of the employer's needs (i.e., the main duties in the employer's lexicon) and a consistent approach to the assessment of the employees skills sets

(i.e., the lexicon of the employee in describing their skill sets). This apparently addressed the potential impact of language differences as a barrier by the broker providing the common understanding to bring the appropriate parties together.

All employers indicated a minimum of Grade 12 was required for a candidate to be considered as a potential hire for their plants. This represents a comparable NVQ Level 1, 2 and 3 diplomas and certificates in the British structure depending upon the starting point for an apprentice to the trade. (Please refer to Appendix I for a more detailed comparison of skills classification systems.) The grade level represents a technically broader criterion for entrance than the specifics established in the standardized NVQ approach.

Employers indicated that for all apprentice candidates they had well-established mentor/journeyman support in place to effectively provide the guidance, training and role examples to maximize the potential for success of the candidates. They expressed frustration at sometimes losing apprentices in the first two years of a program. One employer attempted to reduce such losses by continuing to provide full salary support to candidates while they attended the two month in-class portions of their programs. This employer was sensitive to the difficulties apprentices experienced when their programs required them to receive Employment Insurance benefits in lieu of salary. This employer recognized one way of protecting its investment in apprentices.

Overall, employers stated that Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities' criteria for each year of the apprenticeship and the description of the certified journeyman served them well in describing the details of the job. Action Centres and local service providers helped laid off workers to learn to effectively describe their skills sets relative to employer demands. The apparent gap appears to be in the ability of the existing infrastructure to bring the two together. There does not appear to be a consistent support for the demand side of the equation represented by employers.

Regarding strategies for recruiting and hiring (detailed in Appendix H), six employers stated that better working conditions were key to attracting employees; the need to work with other organizations to attract candidates to the skilled trades; and the need for the educational system to increase its capacity to produce more skilled people. Three of the employers agreed the skills and competencies were set clearly and did not need changing to attract people to the skilled trades. This latter point speaks specifically to the issue of descriptive language or the lexicon used and indicates that they feel it is not a barrier to filling the trades. Fully half of the employers felt that there was a need to improve training, development and retention of their existing employees to stabilize the skilled trades. Four of the employers indicated that inter-provincial and international barriers needed to be removed to facilitate skilled trades access to the Ontario labour market.

The employer portion of this survey provided a snapshot of the process used across manufacturing industries in Ontario. Although different in its representation (i.e. short reference to the Ministry's certification criteria), the lexicon was consistent with the employees' description of main duties and what would be the baseline standard occupational descriptions. Recruitment processes and timelines varied considerably across the six employers. Practices included extensive involvement with the college feeder system; a struggle to access acceptable candidates due to a lack of a coordinated resource to bring potential employees together with the vacancies of employers; and the effective use of an independent selection, referral and placement service tailored to employer and employee needs.

All employers expressed a concern with the lack of a consistent employer support service to provide an effective bridge to access qualified personnel. Issues such as the homogeneity of resumes created a screening problem for employers in sectors with an abundance of candidates. The candidates described on paper often did not meet the basic qualifications and experience sought by the employers. This resulted in frustration to the job seeker and the employer as well as time lost interviewing inappropriate candidates. As a result, vacancies were not quickly filled. No employers were using temporary employment agencies at this time. Employers who had used an agency in the past indicated the agency understood the employer needs but had difficulty providing skilled trades personnel because of the reluctance of journeymen to risk the significant pay loss with no employment guarantee after a contract.

## Findings from Action Centre Staff

The Action Centres participating in this study included the Steelworkers Action Centre in Hamilton; the McCormick (Beta Brands) Action Centre in London; and the Dana Action Centre in Thorold. The three Action Centres are working with employees that have been affected by plant closures in the manufacturing sector of southern Ontario.

Action Centres are established when an Adjustment Committee is created to support the employees affected by the closure or downsizing of a facility. The Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities office of Labour Adjustment provides financial and consulting support in partnership with the federal government, unions, employee groups and employers to facilitate the rapid re-employment of the affected workers.

In each case, Action Centre staff were interviewed in person using a standard list of questions. These questions focused on their role in facilitating the transition of affected workers to employment. As the first point of contact Action Centres play a key role in providing support to their co-workers by being the main filter and referral point to effective adjustment. Their peer counsellor role in an environment that is often familiar to the affected workers offers a “safe haven” for future employment exploration. The position of the Action Centre between the lost employment and the future employment represents a significant opportunity to affect the language and understanding of the employees about their skills and abilities.

Employees are generally registered with the Action Centre as a result of the generation of a company lay-off list; the completion of an employee survey questionnaire either prior to or shortly after the lay-off; or a phone contact follow up with the employee inviting them to register with the Centre after lay-off. (Further details of the results of the Action Centre survey can be found in Appendix F.)

Action Centres will then provide an opportunity for a one-to-one interview with a peer helper to further assess the skills, abilities and needs of the affected worker. The needs assessment may identify the worker's interest in moving on to additional skills training or job search related assistance such as resume writing, job search or job clubs. Referral will be made to a local assessment centre that will provide the development of a Return to Work Action Plan for the worker if training is an identified goal. The referral process is done through a phone contact with the assessment centre to provide the client's name and arrange for an appointment.

Discussions with Action Centre staff indicated that the individualized assessments and the Employee Survey provided an excellent opportunity to assist individuals in identifying their existing skills. This was often the preliminary step to resume writing and enabled workers to generate comprehensive, clear descriptions of existing skills for the resume.

The process of assessing workers and then referring them to appropriate workshops or further community assessment after providing an excellent orientation to their skills and abilities provides a solid baseline for the worker. As detailed in Appendices E and I, the resulting language to describe their skills effectively meets the labour market understanding of the skill sets as described in the NVQ/SOC criteria.

The Action Centres maintain resume files of the employees registered with them. These resumes reflect an effective skills inventory for all of the affected employees and are often used as a marketing tool to area employers, to raise their awareness of the bank of skills available to them.

Four of the six Action Centre staff surveyed had received “peer helper” training to prepare co-workers to work as resources to their employment colleagues. As presented in Appendix F, they indicated the training helped to identify and understand what community resources were available and how to work with their peers to refer them to training. The focus was on assisting the employees to make the transition to work through some level of re-skilling or training. Action Centres also maintained a large job board with vacancies and provided access to local newspapers and the Internet for job search.

All of the Action Centres indicated that they would provide resumes to employers when requested to do so. They did not actively develop relationships with employers. They did not directly refer workers on job orders or establish the Action Centre as a local selection, referral and placement resource to employers.

The role of the Action Centre has evolved to a strongly supportive resource for employees affected by closure and downsizing. Their focus is on the process of developing awareness of the appropriate steps to access Employment Insurance, identify opportunities and the steps to access modern job search support workshops; and provide a site which is safe and familiar for workers to access information on job vacancies. Action Centres do not operate as a labour exchange for employers but rather as a follow up resource for an employer who may have been contacted by someone seeking employment.

The Action Centres through their registration and assessment process help to establish what appears to be a consistent lexicon for describing work skills and essential skills and abilities for the employees. The Centre is the fulcrum point for ongoing referral to additional employment related programs and services available in the community.

## **Analysis and Conclusions**

The purpose of this research was to assess whether the lexicon or language used by employees to describe their current skills was different from that used by employers in seeking individuals to fill vacancies. If the lexicon differed, the risk would be that employers fail to connect with eligible candidates because the candidates were not describing their skills sets in a recognizable way for the given occupations. The actual findings of this research are presented below.

## ■ **Appropriate Lexicon was used by Job Seekers**

Interviews with laid-off workers seeking employment found the risk of communications failures of this type to be minimal. In fact, the workers described their skills appropriately and in ways consistent with actual occupational descriptions used in skills classification systems such as NOC and NVQ/SOC. The descriptions used by workers provided as much detail and in some cases more detail than these classification systems and also referenced appropriate Essential Skills.

Although the sample size was small, it covered three industries in the manufacturing sector located in the different markets of London, Hamilton and St. Catharines, Ontario. The results across the three industries and for all employees revealed the use of very standardized language to describe skills sets. Based on the survey of employees, the lexicon used and the final language descriptions developed by employees was consistent and appropriate with the language used by employers.

The transferability of skills in a generic context was aptly demonstrated by two of the nine employee participants. A Press Operator who had been in the occupation for the past nine years identified interests from previous work and personal health interests and was completing a program for registration as a nutritionist. The supervisor had taken her extensive experience as a supervisor in the plant and her current experience managing an Action Centre and used it as a spring board to a new full time position directing an area Help Centre. These results are very encouraging given the combination of experience and age represented by the individuals. If two out of nine employees are able to effectively identify and achieve a career change it indicates that there is great potential in the displaced workforce to move effectively given appropriate support.

## ■ **Canadian Adoption of NVQ not Recommended**

The results of this research indicate that the introduction of the National Vocational Qualification system into Canada would not be worth the costs involved. A study on the implementation of NVQs indicated that the major reservation of establishing the structure was the associated costs to do so, and the major criticism was the confusion of the actual language used (Toye and Vigore 1994: 37). The intent to introduce a process of competency based assessment to establish standardizations for all occupations would represent a major challenge given the existing complexities of the Canadian labour market. The need for a “buy in” from the educational field, the apprenticeship training area, unions and employers represents a massive undertaking.

This qualitative study found that skills lexicon does not seem to be a major barrier to employee and employer finding one another in the Ontario labour market. The Action Centres provide a significant support service to co-workers, albeit they have a strong employment assistance focus with less direct employer contact on behalf of the worker. The knowledge of the appropriate skills description and its communication is generally seen as consistent for all three parties surveyed. It would appear that the introduction of an NVQ-type competency standard, although comprehensive in setting a standard would not significantly change the employees’ understanding of the work they can do.

This study does not have sufficient depth to indicate that employers would more effectively recognize the skills sets offered by these employees through an NVQ structure as opposed to the existing apprenticeship and journeyman certification process in the Province. Moreover, adopting a competency-based assessment process such as is represented by the National Vocational Qualification structure from Britain would require a total revamping of existing approaches. As such, any value added to adopting such an approach would be negated by the effort and expense required for implementation.

## **Need to better connect Job Seekers with Employers**

A larger point uncovered in this research is the lack of neutral brokers who can effectively work with both employers and job seekers. Temporary employment agencies are seen as one of the few agencies that directly address employers' needs, but this may be done at the expense of job security and appropriate wages for those hired. Most other service providers in the employment field focus more on the employee side of the equation.

Job seekers expressed greatest frustration in being unable to effectively access the employers, not because they did not describe their skills effectively but because there was no "honest broker" available to provide a direct referral to those employers hiring. Since Canada Employment and Immigration began the dismantling of this service in 1995, there has not been any universal selection, referral and placement service for unemployed individuals. The subsequent approach of the new Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has been to focus on Employment Assistance Services rather than providing any comprehensive service support for employers. According to those interviewed for this research, there are few examples of employment brokers who provide an effective bridge to employment for both employer and employee.

There was significant discussion by participants concerning the effective re-employment of the highly skilled individuals within this survey. The Millwright, Maintenance Mechanic, Industrial Electrician, Electrician and Machinist all represented significant certified skilled trades. Their experience ranged from 12 years to 31 years as journeymen, and they were considered by their employers to be extremely competent and state of the art in their skills sets and knowledge of new machinery and technology. Yet they seemed to be experiencing the greatest difficulty in transitioning to a new job. At the same time, employers were having difficulty finding these same trades. This was expressed in the survey by both the largest and the smallest employer surveyed.

Rafael Gomez and Morley Gunderson (2006b: 13) indicate that "dynamic monopsony" occurs when the hiring of a new skilled employee impacts on the wage rates of the employer's entire workforce. The result is the employer chooses to hold back on direct hiring of the tradesman and will report skilled shortages and vacancies but will do nothing because the cost is too high. This results in the labour market perceiving shortages while they may not actually exist but are an artefact of the systemic barrier to hiring. Gomez and Gunderson describe many systemic barriers to effective transition for skilled trades in the labour market and offer a number of possible structural and policy changes to begin to balance the impact.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

Based on the research findings presented in this report, a number of recommendations can be made.

### Use of Skills Classification Systems

**Key Finding:** The Canadian National Occupational Classification (NOC) system provides a comparable standardization of description for occupations, and familiarity with NOC already exists among job seekers, Action Centre staff and some employers.

**Recommendation:** Strategies to further enable employers, educators, and workers to use the NOC approach to describe generic skill sets be developed.

### Skills Transferability

**Key Finding:** Effective labour market adjustment for employers and job seekers can be achieved through improved skills transferability. Historically, people have been encouraged to adjust to lower level occupations for easier adjustment.

**Recommendation:** Consideration should be given to an approach which educates both employer and job seeker to the advantages of looking at skills sets generically. Governments should consider support incentives to employers to encourage their creating opportunities for individuals to move into higher skilled occupations through on the job training.

### The Role of Action Centres

**Key Finding:** Action Centres clearly provide a strong supportive service to their co-workers during the difficult adjustment period. There has been a shift in focus to assessment and referral to employment assisted services as their main role. Most individuals after short job search related activities are ready for work but appear to be experiencing greater difficulty getting to employers as individuals.

**Recommendation:** That future Action Centres build employer relations and include a direct selection and referral point for their workers.

## ■ The Role of Employment Service Providers

**Key Finding:** The skilled trades employees interviewed in this research were evidently job ready. The premise in labour adjustment with long-term employees affected by a closure has been that 80 to 85% are considered to be “job ready” as demonstrated by their long and excellent work history. The highest potential for “Rapid Re-Employment” rests in the capacity to move employees to employers in the most direct approach possible, yet there is no supportive service that markets job seekers directly to employers.

**Recommendation:** That a pilot project employ a “neutral broker” approach to providing Employer Services under the Employment umbrella.

## ■ Labour Market Information

**Key Finding:** Many workers with experience in the skilled trades are unable to find employment in their fields.

**Recommendation:** That a comprehensive analysis be done to determine if there is in fact a labour shortage occurring in the skilled trades areas. Is the demographic shifting or are we simply camouflaging the activity by the idiosyncrasies of the labour market? Further study needs to occur to identify actual available trades by occupation.

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National Occupational Classification System. Forum for Labour Market Ministers- LMI Working Group 13- Effective Use of LMI with Clients- A Guide Module 3:  
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## Appendix A. Questions for Job Seekers

### Hamilton Training Advisory Board (HTAB)- Ontario: Labour Market Employee Survey

**Purpose:** Hamilton Training Advisory Board is interested in researching labour market conditions among major employers, employees and service providers in the \_\_\_\_\_ sector. The information gathered in this survey will help us work with individuals and the industry to meet the human resource needs of organizations in your sector. We appreciate your assistance by providing this information.

**Confidentiality:** Respondents to this survey, and their organizations, will not be referred to by name, and information provided will not be shared with anyone except the analysts responsible for monitoring these labour markets. Information based on this survey will only be released in an aggregate form based on all responses. Results based on responses from fewer than 2 individuals will not be released.

Contact: If you have any questions or concerns about this survey please contact Judy Travis at HTAB, 905-521-5777, email: [judy@htab.ca](mailto:judy@htab.ca)

1. What are the titles of the last 3 jobs you held?
2. Can you describe the main duties of the job?
3. What was the educational level required for the job? (grade/certificates/apprenticeship)
4. Were you required to use any tools on the job? What were they?
5. Were you required to interact with other employees on the job?
6. What type of interaction was it? (conversation, written communication, email, receiving instructions, sit on committees etc.)
7. Have you acquired other job skills from previous jobs? List those skills.
8. What do you believe are your most marketable skills?
9. How do employers identify the skills you have in an interview?
10. How does the Action Centre identify the marketable job related skills you have?
11. Do you have any suggestions that would help employers or Action Centres in identifying the skills you bring to a job and help make you more marketable?

## Appendix B. Questions for Employers

### Hamilton Training Advisory Board (HTAB)- EMPLOYER: Labour Market Monitoring Survey

**Purpose:** Hamilton Training Advisory Board is interested in monitoring labour market conditions among major employers in the **MANUFACTURING** sector. This information gathered in this survey will help us work with the industry to meet the human resource needs of organizations in your sector. We appreciate your assistance by providing this information.

**Confidentiality:** Respondents to this survey, and their organizations, will not be referred to by name, and information provided will not be shared with anyone except the analysts responsible for monitoring these labour markets. Information based on this survey will only be released in an aggregate form based on all responses. Results based on responses from fewer than 5 organizations will not be released.

Contact: If you have any questions or concerns about this survey please contact Judy Travis at HTAB, 905-521-5777, email: judy@htab.ca

### Part I: Identifying Your Organization

1.	Respondent:		<i>Senior HR or Personnel Officer</i>
2.	Organization		
3.	Position		<i>Senior HR or Personnel Officer</i>
4.	Location (City)		
5a.	Industry		
5b.	Nature of Business		<i>goods or service provided-</i>
6a.	Single or multiple establishment		<i>more than one location -</i>
6b.	How are referrals for this occupation made to your organization?		
7a.	Total Employees		
7b.	Total Full-Time Employees		
8a.	Do you have any filled or vacant positions in the - _____ occupation? If Yes, please go to Part 2 on the next page.		<i>Y or N</i>
8b.	If No, are there any other occupations for which you are currently having difficulty finding qualified personnel?		<i>Y or N</i>
8c.	What is the education level and is certification/apprentice eligibility required?		
8d.	Do you have specific skills identified for this occupation and how are these skills identified?.		

**Part II: The Current Labour Market**

(Occupations should normally inserted before interview or questionnaire send out/ substitute other occupation with hiring difficulties if none in initial.)

Occupations  
Occup. 1:

**9b.** How many people do you currently employ in this occupation? |

**9c.** How many people did you employ in this occupation 12 months ago? |

**10a.** How many current vacancies do you have in this occupation? [if zero, skip to 11] |

**10b.** How many current vacancies are full-time, permanent jobs? |

**10c.** How many current vacancies are part-time, permanent jobs? |

**10d.** How many current vacancies are temporary or seasonal jobs? |

**10e.** What would you identify as Essential Skills (ES) for this occupation?

- Do you formally assess candidates on the Essential Skills?
- Where do you get the standard for performance on the ES?
- Does your company provide training or upgrading of ES?

*There are nine Essential Skills:*

- Reading Text
- Document Use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral Communication
- Working with Others
- Continuous Learning
- Thinking Skills
- Computer Use

**10f.** What Employability Skills are important for this occupation?

- Do you formally assess candidates on the Employability Skills?
- Where do you get your standards of performance on the Em.S.?
- Does your company provide opportunities to develop the Em. S.?

*There are eleven Employability Skills:*

- Communication
- Manage Information
- Use Numbers
- Think & Solve Problems
- Demonstrate Positive Attitudes
- Be Responsible
- Be Adaptable

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learn Continuously</li> <li>- Work Safely</li> <li>- Work With Others</li> <li>- Participate in Projects/Tasks</li> </ul>
<b>11.</b>	How many people have you hired in this occupation over the last 12 months? (Total number of hires whether still employed or not).	
<b>12a.</b>	Please estimate the number of overtime hours currently worked weekly by an average employee in this occupation.	
<b>12b.</b>	What wage range do you offer a new hire in this occupation (hourly or annual)?	
<b>13a.</b>	Do you provide on the job training? To what skill level?	
<b>13b.</b>	What is the minimum education level you require for this job?	
<b>13c.</b>	Do you screen for specific credentials, qualifications, certification? What are those requirements?	
<b>13d.</b>	How do you assess an applicant's experience?	
<b>13e.</b>	Would you provide training for an applicant with excellent work history but no certification or job specific skills?	
<b>14a.</b>	Are you able to find qualified staff in a reasonable time frame for this occupation?	<i>Y or N</i>
<b>14b.</b>	What do you consider a reasonable time frame for hiring a new full-time employee in this occupation (from start of search to offer of employment)?	_____ weeks
<b>14c.</b>	Based on your recent experience how long would it take to fill a full-time position in this occupation (from start of search to offer)?	_____ weeks
<b>15a.</b>	Are there special skill areas in this occupation for which you are having difficulty hiring qualified personnel?	<i>Y or N</i>
<b>15b.</b>	If yes, please indicate which special skills are difficult to find.	
<b>16a.</b>	Are there other occupations for which you are having difficulty hiring qualified personnel?	<i>Y or N</i>
<b>16b.</b>	If yes, please indicate which other occupations in which you are having difficulty hiring staff:	

## Part III. Strategies for Dealing with the Labour Market

17. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), please indicate the level of your agreement with the following strategies for dealing with the current labour market in the \_\_\_\_\_ occupation.

	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 neutral	4 agree	5 strongly agree	no response
17a. We need to establish clear skills and competencies to attract people to these positions.	1	2	3	4	5	NR
17b. Better working conditions are key to attracting people.	1	2	3	4	5	NR
17c. We need to improve retention of our valued employees.	1	2	3	4	5	NR
17d. We need to improve staff training and development.	1	2	3	4	5	NR
17e. We need to improve employee recruitment strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	NR
17f. We don't need to change anything because the current situation is temporary.	1	2	3	4	5	NR

18. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), please indicate the level of your agreement with the following approaches to a better functioning labour market for the \_\_\_\_\_ occupation.

18a. We need to work with other organizations to attract people to this occupation and our industry.	1	2	3	4	5	NR
18b. We need better information systems for matching qualified workers with job vacancies.	1	2	3	4	5	NR
18c. Educational institutions need to increase capacity to produce more skilled people.	1	2	3	4	5	NR
18d. Unnecessary barriers to recruiting people from across Canada need to be removed.	1	2	3	4	5	NR
18e. If response to 17c is 4 or 5, could you give examples of barriers that should be removed? (non-recognition of skills or certification by provinces, other regulatory hurdles...)						
18f. We need to make it easier to recruit people from other countries.	1	2	3	4	5	Don't Know

Comments or Notes:





## Appendix D. National Occupations Classification (NOC) Code

This section is taken from the HRSDC website.<sup>4</sup>

### The Skill Types are (first digit in the NOC code):

- 0 - Management Occupations
- 1 - Business, Finance and Administration Occupations
- 2 - Natural and Applied Sciences and Related Occupations
- 3 - Health Occupations
- 4 - Occupations in Social Science, Education, Government Service and Religion
- 5 - Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport
- 6 - Sales and Service Occupations
- 7 - Trades, Transport, and Equipment Operators and Related Occupations
- 8 - Occupations Unique to Primary Industry
- 9 - Occupations Unique to Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities.

*Each skill type has four potential levels of skill into which occupations are classified.*

### The Skill Levels are (second digit in the NOC code):

**Skill Level A** - University education, represented by the number 1

**Skill Level B** - College-level education including trade apprenticeships, represented by the numbers 2 and 3

**Skill Level C** - Secondary school plus a period of job-specific training, represented by the numbers 4 and 5.

**Skill Level D** - Short work demonstration (up to two years of secondary school required), represented by the number 6.

*Forum for Labour Market Ministers – LMI Working Group 14 Effective Use of LMI with Clients – A Guide Module 3*

### How to Read a NOC code

In the example of Industrial Instrument Technicians and Mechanics, code 2243,

- The first digit is 2 because the occupations fall within the Skill Type: Natural and Applied Sciences and Related Occupations.
- The second digit 2 represents Skill Level B which means that technicians of this type require a college-level education.
- The third digit is 4 and represents the Minor Group: Technical Occupations in Electronics and Electrical Engineering.
- The fourth digit is 3, which is the specific unit group.
- The major group is 22: Technical Occupations Related to Natural and Applied Sciences.
- The minor group is 224: Technical Occupations in Electronics and Electrical Engineering.

## Appendix E. Summary of Responses from Laid-off Workers

Occupations	#of Main Duties Identified	Education	Certification	Essential Skills	Training	Employer Assessment
<b>London</b>						
Millwright (31yrs.)	14	German Tech. Sch.	German Trade Sch.	3	Mch. Mfctr. Trng.	Application Practical Test
Supervisor (36yrs)	9	Gr. - 10	No	5	Supervisor trng-5+crses.	Application Experience
Janitor (4yrs+23yrs)	7	Gr. - 10 N/A	No	5	3+crses	Application
<b>Thorold</b>						
Electrician (35yrs.)	7	Gr. - 12	Apprenticed	5	Appr-in class	Application & Gr.-12
Machine Operator (12yrs)	12	Gr. - 12	Welding Cert.	6	5+crses.	Application
Press Operator (9yrs)	15	Gr. - 12	Welding Cert.	6	Orientation 3+crses.	Resume, tests, references
<b>Hamilton</b>						
Maintenance Mechanic (12yrs.)	15	Gr. - 12	NO - Pass Mech. Aptitude Test	3	Appr.Trng. 5+crses.	Resume
Ind. Electrician (28yrs.)	21	Gr. - 13	Electrician Cert.	7	10+crses.	Resume Interview
Shear Operator (5yrs)	5	Not Required	NO	5	5+crses. ISO&QS	Application

## Appendix F. Summary of Responses from Action Centre Staff

	How are Employees Registered	Skill Assessment of Employees	Action Centre Skills Inventory	Referral to Comm. Agency	Information Provided on Referral	Peer Training Impact	Employer Referral & Main Duties(skills)
<b>London</b>							
# 1	- Phone contact - Needs Assessment	- Resume Review - Needs Assessment	Resume File	- No referral form - Phone	Needs Assessment - complete Application	- Awareness of Comm. Resources	Do not Refer
# 2	- Phone contact - Needs Assessment	- Resume Review - Needs Assessment	Resume File	- No referral form - Phone	-What Employee wants: train. Retire, work	-How to work with peers & refer to Training	No Referrals to work
<b>Thorold</b>							
# 1	Pay List & Needs Survey	Needs Survey	Resume	- No referral form - Phone	Resume Brochure	No Skills Assessm't Specific info.	Resume Education
# 2	Lay off List	Resume & 1-1 Needs Assessment	Resume	- No form - Phone	Name & Identified needs	Awareness of What the Lab Mkt. wants	Resume Reference re:skills
<b>Hamilton</b>							
# 1	- Phone contact	1-1 Interview for Needs Assessment	Maintains Resume on request	- No form - Phone	- Phone-Contact Card	Union trained N/A	Resume
# 2	- Employee Lay off List	1-1 Interview for Needs Assessment	Resume file	- No form - Phone	- Phone share Needs Assessment	N/A -Trained at Action Centre	- No Employer contact - resume on request

## Appendix G. Summary of Responses from Employers

Occupations	# of FT Positions Available /Rate/ Time to Fill	Total Employees FT/PT (contract)	Education	Certification/ Main Duties Description	Essential Skills/ Employability	Training	Employer Assessment
<b>London</b>							
Employer #1 Millwright	3-4/ \$25-\$28hr - 3-6 mths.	540/50	Gr. - 12	Certification/ Credentials & experience (no detail)	4/4	6 wks. Orientation with Mentor	-Resume/Cert. -Interview/Tests -Behavioural Ques. -References & Experience
Employer #2 CNC Machinist	2 \$12-Appr. \$20-\$29Cert -4 wks Appr. -4wks Mach.	22/1	Gr. - 12	CNC Machinist Cert -demonstrated experience (no detail)	3/5	-Appr. With Journeyman -Temp. to Assess skills	-pre-screen by independent broker -Resume -Experience
<b>Thorold</b>							
Employer #1 Electrician	4/ \$29hr. -3 mths.	180/0	Gr. - 12	-Certification -Apprentice (no detail)	0/0	Plant Orientation Appr-Trng	-Resume/ Cert. -Interview -References -3 mths probation
Employer#2 Machine Operator	1/ \$13-Appr. -Journeyman rate -3-6 mths.	20/0	Gr. - 12	-CNC Machinist Cert./Apprent. -No detail	2/3	Appr. With Mentor	-Resume/Cert. -Experience (5yrs) CNC
<b>Hamilton</b>							
Employer #1 Machinist	6/ \$20(cert.) -4-8 wks.	45/0	Gr. - 12	Machinist Cert. (no detail)	3-not a priority in Youth /6	-Mentor orientation Appr.Trng.	-Resume/Cert. -Interview/ detail Questions -6 mth. probation
Employer #2 Electrician	1060/ \$22.50/ -3-4wks	6,000/0	Gr. - 12 + 2yr College Electrical Prog.	-Skills Defined in College Curriculum Appr.-9000hrs -Electrician Cert.Exper. &12mth.trial	9/9 16 mth. Coop across work areas plus test	Appr. Trng. 9000 hrs full mentor support and full salary in classroom portion	-Liaise with College 2 yr Electrical Crse. -includes 16 mths coop-to assess -Resume/Cert. -Interview/ Psy.test

## Appendix H. Summary of Employer Responses Regarding Recruitment and Hiring

Excerpted from the Interview Schedule of Questions for Employers.

### Part III. Strategies for Dealing with the Labour Market

17. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), please indicate the level of your agreement with the following strategies for dealing with the current labour market in the Millwright/Machinist/Electrician occupations.

	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 neutral	4 agree	5 strongly agree	no response
17a. We need to establish clear skills and competencies to attract people to these positions.	3			2	1	
17b. Better working conditions are key to attracting people.				2	4	
17c. We need to improve retention of our valued employees.	1		3		2	
17d. We need to improve staff training and development.			3	2	1	
17e. We need to improve employee recruitment strategies.	2	1		3		
17f. We don't need to change anything because the current situation is temporary.	3		1			2

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18. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), please indicate the level of your agreement with the following approaches to a better functioning labour market for the Millwright/Machinist/Electrician occupations.

	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 neutral	4 agree	5 strongly agree	no response
18a. We need to work with other organizations to attract people to this occupation and our industry.				2	4	
18b. We need better information systems for matching qualified workers with job vacancies.		2		2	2	
18c. Educational institutions need to increase capacity to produce more skilled people.				2	4	
18d. Unnecessary barriers to recruiting people from across Canada need to be removed.			1	2	2	1
18e. If response to 17c is 4 or 5, could you give examples of barriers that should be removed? (non-recognition of skills or certification by provinces, other regulatory hurdles...)						
18f. We need to make it easier to recruit people from other countries.		1	1	3	1	

Comments or Notes:

- Education needs to teach trades in schools
- Need more industry led changes to build skills in workers
- Better access to referrals
- Employment Services Elgin provides a superior selection & referral service for their hiring needs

## Appendix I. Summary of Responses from Laid-off Workers Regarding NVQ/SOC

Occupations	#of Main Duties Identified	Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Main Duties	National Vocational Qualification	NVQ/SVQ Detail Examples of Qualifications	NVQ/SVQ What They give you
<b>London</b>					
Millwright (31 yrs.)	14	5223 Metal Working Production & Maintenance Fitters  8 main duties	-Entry- GNVQ -Appr.Lev-3.	-A levels- Advanced Extension Awards- GCE in applied subjects- International Baccalaureate- Key Skills level 3- NVQs- BTEC Diplomas, Certificates and Awards	- ability to gain or apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding, at a detailed level
Supervisor (36yrs)	9	1121 5 main duties	Degree or On the Job Trng.	N/A	N/A
Janitor (4yrs+23yrs)	7	6232 Caretakers  2 main duties	Entry	Not Required- Entry level certificates- Skills for Life at entry level	- basic knowledge and skills- ability to apply learning in everyday situations

Common Skills Lexicon *in the Manufacturing Sector*

Occupations	#of Main Duties Identified	Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Main Duties	National Vocational Qualification	NVQ/SVQ Detail Examples of Qualifications	NVQ/SVQ What They give you
<b>Thorold</b>					
Electrician (35yrs.)	7	5241 Electricians & Electrical Fitters 6 main duties	-GCSEs/S grades Appr.Lev-1,2,3	1-- GCSEs grades D-G- BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates 2-- GCSEs grades A*-C- BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates- OCR Nationals- Key Skills level 2 3-- A levels- Advanced Extension Awards- GCE in applied subjects- International Baccalaureate- Key Skills level 3	1-- ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision 2-- good knowledge and understanding of a subject- ability to perform variety of tasks with some guidance or supervision 3-- ability to gain or apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding, at a detailed level
Machine Operator (12yrs)	12	5221 Metal Machine Setters & Operatives 6 main duties	-GCSEs/S Level 2	2-- GCSEs grades A*-C- BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates- OCR Nationals- Key Skills level	2-- good knowledge and understanding of a subject- ability to perform variety of tasks with some guidance or supervision
Press Operator (9yrs)	15	8125 Metal Working Machine Operatives 6 main duties	No Formal Requirements -consider Lev.1	1-- GCSEs grades D-G- BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates	1-- ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision

**Common Skills Lexicon in the Manufacturing Sector**

Occupations	#of Main Duties Identified	Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Main Duties	National Vocational Qualification	NVQ/SVQ Detail Examples of Qualifications	NVQ/SVQ What They give you
<b>Hamilton</b>					
Maintenance Mechanic (12yrs.)	15	5223 Metal Working Production & Maintenance Fitters 5 main duties	-Entry- GNVQ -Appr.Lev-3.	-A levels- Advanced Extension Awards- GCE in applied subjects- International Baccalaureate- Key Skills level 3- NVQs- BTEC Diplomas, Certificates and Awards	Resume. - ability to gain or apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding, at a detailed level
Ind. Electrician (28yrs.)	21	5241 Electricians & Electrical Fitters 6 main duties	-GCSEs/S grades Appr.Lev- 1,2,3	1-- GCSEs grades D-G- BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates 2-- GCSEs grades A*-C- BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates- OCR Nationals- Key Skills level 2 3-- A levels- Advanced Extension Awards- GCE in applied subjects- International Baccalaureate- Key Skills level 3	1-- ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision 2-- good knowledge and understanding of a subject- ability to perform variety of tasks with some guidance or supervision 3-- ability to gain or apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding, at a detailed level
Shear Operator (5yrs)	5	8125 Electricians & Electrical Fitters 6 main duties	No Formal Requirements -consider Lev.1	1-- GCSEs grades D-G- BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Cert.	1-- ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision

## Hamilton Training Advisory Board

# *Business, Labour & Community: Partners in Workforce Development*

Established in 1997, the Hamilton Training Advisory Board is one of twenty-one Local Boards in Ontario. HTAB is a not-for-profit organization that draws on the expertise of a broad cross-section of our community to enable us to better identify and address existing and anticipated labour force needs.

At HTAB, we envision a healthy community where everyone achieves his or her potential. To accomplish this goal we:

- Profile the trends, opportunities, and priorities of Hamilton's labour market
- Identify skills shortages and future training requirements
- Share our research with the community to facilitate labour force planning and training
- Undertake projects and partnerships that address labour force issues

**Log on to HTAB's website at [www.htab.ca](http://www.htab.ca) and you will:**

**Discover** our community [Projects and Partners](#) promoting labour force development.

**Learn** about local labour market trends, opportunities, and priorities in our [Publications](#).

**Connect** to [Links](#) on training, employment, and labour market information.



Hamilton Training Advisory Board

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