

Toronto's Opportunities and Priorities (TOP) Report is Toronto Workforce Innovation Group's annual overview of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the labour market in the City of Toronto. The TOP Report responds to the changes in Toronto's economy by identifying and profiling key economic sectors and industries so that employers, job seekers, community agencies and economic development analysts can work towards building Toronto's economy and the capacity of its workforce today and in the future.

Toronto Workforce Innovation Group (TWIG) develops the TOP Report by:

- Analyzing Statistics Canada data and other labour force data;
- Conducting consultations and interviews with representatives from key economic and industrial sectors;
- Attending consultations that provide information about the economy;
- Meeting with the City of Toronto's Economic Development experts.

The 2010-2011 TOP Report identifies six workforce development strategic priorities for Toronto:

1. Coordinating labour market planning across Toronto.
2. Matching re-training/training programs with labour market needs and skills requirements.
3. Supporting Small/Medium Enterprises.
4. Removing barriers to internationally trained and/or educated immigrants to facilitate their attachment to the labour force in jobs/positions that match their skills, education and experience.
5. Developing strategies to address Toronto's high levels of youth unemployment.
6. Ensuring and expanding Toronto's place as a leader in the "green economy".

In addition to these overarching priorities, the TOP Report also identifies strengths and challenges, and makes recommendations and action plans on the sectors significant to Toronto's economy: **Finance and Insurance, Construction, Hospitality and Tourism, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, Healthcare, Retail Trade, Information and Communications and Manufacturing.**

Key challenges and recommendations by sector include:

Finance and Insurance

Challenges

- Local and global competition for talent
- Gaps in leadership talent
- Significant loss in critical knowledge and skill with retirees
- Attracting younger workers and managing a multi-generational workforce
- Retaining critical retiree skills and knowledge

Recommendations

- Eliminate barriers to hiring and integrating new immigrants.
- Strengthen financial services education and its alignment to industry needs.
- Improve Toronto’s financial services “brand”.
- Develop partnerships with the Toronto Financial Services Alliance to connect them to high school students.

Construction

Challenges

- Labour shortages are expected as workers reach retirement age and not enough young people are entering the trades.
- “Green” construction opportunities require special training and entry-level positions are the last to emerge.
- There is a greater need to apply rules of certification for LEED buildings.
- Parents are unaware of the trades as a viable career option and youth lack awareness about the opportunities available in the trades.
- There is a ratio problem between journey-persons and apprentices: not enough journey persons to take on new apprentices.
- More diversity is needed in the trades. Women and newcomers are underrepresented.

Recommendations

- Develop a city-wide local hiring strategy to hire local youth and workers for contracts in the City of Toronto.
- Increase programs that inform and prepare youth for successful apprenticeships.
- Initiate cross-collaborations between unions, businesses, communities and government to re-tool industries and develop local manufacturing opportunities.
- Encourage more diversity in the trades and develop a system to recognize the skills of professionally certified immigrants in the trades.
- More training and funding in sustainability and LEED construction is needed to prepare for future demands.

Hospitality and Tourism

Challenges

- Trends suggest that over the next 15 years Toronto could experience a 12.8% labour shortage in overall tourism labour demand.
- The recent economic crisis, rising energy costs, the strong Canadian dollar and increased border security have changed the market.
- The Tourism sector has difficulty attracting new talent because it is considered a “low-wage” service sector.
- Literacy levels, customer service and “soft skills of youth, newcomers and new employees are not meeting employers’ needs.
- Small Medium Enterprises are most vulnerable to the predicted labour market talent shortages because they are “too busy surviving” to develop HR practices and training programs.

Recommendations

- Develop a strategy to re-define “literacy” to include social skills, problem-solving, critical thinking and cultural competency.
- Work with colleges and educators to develop curriculum that reflects the need for more “soft and essential skills”.
- Collaborate with OTEC and industry associations to increase connections between the TDSB and Youth Employment Services to better inform youth of career opportunities in the sector

Arts, Entertainment and Recreation

Challenges

- Large scale projects (such as the AGO, ROM, Sony Centre for the Performing Arts) have eclipsed the smaller, medium sized organizations who constitute the “bricks and mortar” of the arts sector.
- Artists are often “under employed” and have difficulty making a living. They tend to be highly educated yet poorly compensated for their services/products. As a result, turnover rates are high and succession is an issue as talent moves on to higher paying industries.
- There is a need to better educate and promote the value of arts to youth.
- Toronto is a very diverse city but current audiences tend not to reflect this diversity.
- The recent recession has reduced investments, funds and donations for the arts, culture, recreation and entertainment sector.
- The majority of artists are self-employed and lack training in business management.
- People are the most important resource in the arts sector, yet human resource planning, such as benefits and professional development, is a low priority.
- “Digital Transformation,” such as social media and the internet, is having a significant impact on the traditional business model and require new skills, continuous learning and training.

Recommendations

- Improve customer service skills.
- Increase cross-sector work with culture, education and Tourism to connect sector with initiatives such as the TDSB Work Connections Career Fair.
- Examine the feasibility of current internship programs and the development of a “Creative Blueprint” Strategy similar to the U.K.’s.
- Provide on-going professional development for artists such as a “re-incubator” that provides them with business strategies and skills.
- Consider the feasibility of connecting business organizations/associations with arts associations.

Healthcare – Ambulatory Health Care Services

Challenges

- There is still racism in nursing, creating barriers to foreign-trained health care professionals.
- Nurses in Ontario are generalists while nurses from off-shore are often specialists whose skills and experience may not match Ontario’s requirements.
- Nurses are looking for ways to manage an unrelenting workload, especially in acute care.
- Employers are not replacing nurses who are retiring, for the most part because government funding is not increasing in relation to rising need.

- The expansion of care provision in the community sector is keeping people in their homes but not supplying them with licensed health care providers. This role is often filled by personal support workers, who, while often competent, are only permitted to perform limited services such as cleaning and bathing.
- Recruitment and retention of new graduates is a problem.
- Hospitals and health care facilities are hiring for leadership positions rather than health care provision jobs.

Recommendations

- Funding for additional faculty positions is needed in educational institutions. This would provide career pathways that allow nurses to move out of clinical care and into teaching and/or mentoring without leaving the profession.
- Further the implementation of career ladders in local health care settings.

Retail Trade

Challenges

- Toronto experienced significant shrinkage in its retail sector between 2003 and 2007, with the total number of employers diminishing by 5% (845 employers).
- Many companies are starting to replace people with automation. For example, Cineplex, Staples and Home Depot all have online purchasing and check-out.
- Companies cut hours rather than people to cope with recession as a short term strategy, reducing the hours an employee works to share the responsibility among staff.
- Transit and affordable housing are issues for employees; people who work in warehousing are often not able to get there by transit as many of these jobs are located in parts of Toronto that are not well-served by public transit.
- Many youth entering the workforce for the first time take jobs in retail or take part time positions while attending school, many of whom do not have a long-term interest in “working their way up”.
- Newcomers tend to take positions in retail as a “survival job” while they gain Canadian workplace experience.

Recommendations

- Expand literacy programs in the sector to include core skills such as writing, public speaking and customer relations.
- Increase programs and partnerships between employers and agencies to integrate newcomers into the sector and recognize their skills and experience so that entry positions lead to management and other advanced jobs.

Information and Communications Technology

Challenges

- Although Toronto’s New Media sector is fast-growing and creative, it also tends to be “underground”. Firms are small and do not have the resources needed to market their capabilities on a world stage. As a result Toronto’s ICT sector does not attract the talent or investment required to help it grow.
- Initial investment for ICT start-up’s in Toronto is difficult to find.

- The city also has strengths in biotechnology, materials science, nanotechnology, and other fast-growing fields. It will be challenging to find a way to promote ICT without diminishing Toronto's other strengths in other fields of science and technology.
- Toronto's ICT sector faces global challenges to its future competitiveness such as the changing economics of global production, increasing private sector foreign investment, "offshoring" of manufacturing and services, disruptive technologies, new business management methods, changing markets, industry rationalization, and skills availability.

Recommendations

- Develop a marketing strategy that would promote Toronto's innovative ICT sector.
- Develop a multi-stakeholder partnership to serve as an advisory and reference group as well as an ICT think tank to implement an ICT strategy.
- Bring together representatives from local educational institutions could help to develop new programs that blend technical, business and design skills to respond to companies' needs for "critical" talent and innovation in the ITC sector.

Manufacturing

Challenges

- Positioning the sector in a new and emerging economy related to sustainable and environmentally-friendly products. Strategies to retrofit factories to produce these goods will help manufacturing reposition in a changing economy.
- There is a need to retrain and/or re-skill workers to be able to transition into the new and emerging "green" jobs in manufacturing.

Recommendations

- Conduct research into the potential of "transforming" existing manufacturing to meet the needs of the emerging green economy.
- Conduct R&D into best or promising practices that are transitioning workers from shrinking manufacturing sectors into "green" manufacturing.

To download the full 2010-2011 Trends, Opportunities and Priorities Report, please visit our website: www.workforceinnovation.ca

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