



Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in
Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget

Prepared by Skills/Compétences Canada

Submitted: August 2020

Skills/Compétences Canada's Recommendations for Budget 2021:

Recommendation 1

That the federal government fund the promotion and orientation of skilled trade and technology-based occupations targeting underrepresented youth and people in career transition, including women, those who are racialized, Indigenous, living with a disability and/or part of the LGBTQS+ community.

Recommendation 2

That the federal government fund national awareness initiatives aimed at engaging parents on how the apprenticeship training system in Canada works; on the importance of the “Essential Skills” (soon to be rebranded as “Skills for Success”) and on recognizing the Red Seal Endorsement (RSE) acronym as a standard of Red Seal completion in the skilled trades.

Recommendation 3

That the federal government fund the work required to identify current and emerging technologies and how those technologies are and will be applied in apprenticeship and technology-based occupation training models.

Skills/Compétences Canada (SCC)

SCC's mission is to encourage and support a coordinated pan-Canadian approach to promoting careers in the skilled trades and technologies to youth and their communities. Operating as a nationally registered charity, SCC actively promotes careers in skilled trades and technologies to more than 100,000 Canadian youth on an annual basis.

Along with our many public and private sector partners, SCC is helping to address the skilled labour and/or skills gap issues that Canada currently faces in many sectors across the country.

As a pan-Canadian organization and Canada's member organization of WorldSkills International, SCC currently offers a wide range of skilled trades and technology activities, including competitions at the regional, provincial/territorial, national and international levels.

Our current programs are centered around building awareness and skills development for young Canadians about the many career opportunities in trades and technology sectors through hands on interactive, dynamic events and activities. These programs also target underrepresented groups such as persons with disabilities, women, LGBTQS+, Indigenous and New Canadians to name a few. In addition, Essential Skills messaging and skill development are incorporated into many of our competition and non-competition activities.

We operate on a federated organizational model that includes one-member organization under the Skills/Compétences Canada brand in each province and territory. This model allows the gathering of valuable input at the regional level and provides the mechanisms and structure to develop and promote programs that address both national and provincial/territorial needs.

Skills development and the impact of COVID-19

As the country continues to deal with the impacts of COVID-19 and as we envision a post-pandemic Canada, we believe that a strong skills-based economy and skills-led recovery will allow Canadians to contribute to the strengthening of our communities.

According to a national survey that was conducted in July on SCC's behalf by Quorus Consulting Group, close to 8 in 10 respondents agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to their attention the importance of the many essential workers in the skilled trades and technology sectors.

This increased awareness of essential occupations in the skilled trades and technologies combined with discussions of an increase in domestic manufacturing and infrastructure projects presents an opportunity to attract more Canadian youth to these careers.¹ It is imperative that Canadians are well informed about career options so that our workforce can be comprised of the right mix of skills to meet the short, medium- and long-term needs of our economy.

¹ Can Canada move its manufacturing back from China? It's complicated, Toronto Star-Vancouver Bureau, Jeremy Nuttall, April 30, 2020

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According to a survey that was conducted on our behalf in July, 57% and 53% of Canadians agree that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to encourage people to pursue apprenticeship-based and information technology-based careers respectively.²

During the earliest days of the pandemic when significant sectors of our communities had to be shut down to contain the spread of the virus, many skilled trade-based occupations were identified as essential jobs/occupations.

For example, many of the individuals and companies related to these occupations also transitioned their work to meet specific COVID-19 demands. Some manufactured masks and face shields, while others began retrofitting hospitals and businesses to reflect public health guidance and recommendations.

Furthermore, as governments regulated the movement of workers, closed public spaces and prohibited non-essential workers from going to their offices, many Canadians worked from home. These home offices relied heavily on information technology infrastructure but also upon the number of skilled workers within that sector to keep those communication systems functioning at maximum capacity.

As we consider important occupational sectors that are seeing shortages such as skilled trades (ranked as the sector experiencing the highest level of shortages) and construction (ranked third in terms of sector-wide shortages), it is even more important to reach out to under-represented communities.³

For instance, women currently make up 48% of the Canadian workforce, but they only comprise 28% of the manufacturing workforce and roughly 4% of the skilled trades.⁴

Therefore, SCC strongly believes that specific messaging is required from role models whom would speak to each of those communities. Tailored and culturally appropriate outreach approaches are also needed.

² Quorus Consulting Group, Omnibus Survey, July 2020

³ Manpower Group: Talent Shortage 2020 -Canadian Results

⁴ Why women could be the answer to Canada's skilled trades shortage, Amber Dowling, Global News, Posted March 2, 2020 1:00 am, Updated March 13, 2020 12:14 pm

Recommendation 2:

That the federal government fund national awareness initiatives aimed at engaging parents on how the apprenticeship training system in Canada works; on the importance of the “Essential Skills” (soon to be rebranded as “Skills for Success”) and on recognizing the Red Seal Endorsement (RSE) acronym as a standard of Red Seal completion in the skilled trades.

Our recent national survey also revealed that 46% of Canadians are mostly unfamiliar with the apprenticeship training system in Canada.⁵ This lack of knowledge undoubtedly contributes to our nation’s challenge in recruiting people to these occupations.

Most Canadians, and specifically parents, understand how more traditional and academic systems of education function, making it easier to explain and endorse those learning models.

Contrastingly, the apprenticeship model, which encompasses 80% on-the-job and 20% in-school training, is very different from the training and education that is typically based out of a single training institution.

In recent years, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) has gained momentum in education circles. WIL is an apprenticeship-type model which allows for some of the training to be conducted on-the-job with an employer. This increasingly popular approach speaks to the strength of the original on-the-job apprenticeship model.

SCC believes that if there was more awareness about the apprenticeship model, parents would likely be more willing to promote these occupations to their children, as there would be clarity around related career paths and benefits.

Also, if parents were more knowledgeable about the Essential Skills and how they are applied to skilled trade and technology occupations, they would better understand the full scope and demands of these occupations.

Perhaps most importantly, if the RSE was more recognized as a standard of completion and arguably a standard of professionalism, parents would respect the many years of training required for these individuals to acquire their skills and knowledge.

SCC is convinced that creating much greater awareness around apprenticeship programs will lessen the perception that skilled trades occupations are second-class, or jobs of last resort.

⁵ Quorus Consulting Group Omnibus Survey, July 2020

Recommendation 3: That the federal government fund the work required to identify current and emerging technologies and how those technologies are and will be applied in apprenticeship and technology-based occupation training models.

Profile the ever-increasing integration of technology into skilled trade (apprenticeship and recognized occupations).

There has been much discussion and study about how automation and robotic systems will impact all sectors of the economy. Many companies are already implementing technological changes to boost efficiency.

For example, since 2011, Airbus Corporation has been introducing a Smart Augmented Reality Tool for quality control in its production.⁶ The Brookfield institute also stated in 2018 that "... jobs can change in skill level and they can also be broken into different segments or micro-tasks so that humans and machines perform different parts of a job, or parts of different jobs."⁷

No doubt, these advancements and changes in jobs will challenge all industries to retool their workers with the required skills. It will also challenge our education system to prepare students for the evolving demands of the job market.

As we look at systemic manufacturing changes, it will be important for youth and those individuals in transition between jobs to have strong digital skills so we can not only be users of technology but also technology creators and problem-solvers.

Moreover, as governments at all levels and organizations of all types across Canada transition towards a digital delivery of their services – a move that has been accelerated because of the pandemic – it will be even more crucial for our country's incoming workforce to be educated and trained with a significant digital and innovation-focus.

However, beyond these large systemic changes, there are smaller transitions that also need to be considered. Specifically, in the skilled trades, we are seeing an increase in the prevalence of digital devices and technology, such as digital measuring devices, diagnostic equipment and green energy products. The integration of these types of technological tools and their new related procedures require further exploration.

For example, we need to examine at a micro level how the required skills and competencies will change for those training to be auto service mechanics since that profession will soon be faced with the repair and maintenance of autonomous trucks and cars. Meanwhile, those in the manufacturing sector will soon need to perform maintenance procedures on more sophisticated automated systems as it will still be a few years before machines (automated repair systems) will be widely used to repair other machines.

⁶ Skills of the future, How to thrive in the complex new world, pg. 17, E. Loshkareva, P. Luksha, I. Ninenko, I. Smagin, D. Sudakov.

⁷ The Impact of Technological Change on Ontario's Workforce Robot Talks Final Engagement Summary, Brookfield Institute, March 2018

In general, we are witnessing how the required skills in these industries are quickly changing, forcing us to contemplate the impact on our skills development strategy, and how we can quickly adjust our training programs. In the context of the current pandemic and also due to our increasingly digitized world, skilled trades and technology occupations have never been so relevant and interesting.

As a result, it only makes sense that through a variety of tailored approaches, the federal government invest further in the awareness and promotion of such careers paths. It must also look at supporting, along with its provincial and territorial partners, modern training opportunities that will realistically meet our future economic needs. SCC believes that its three recommendations will contribute to achieving this goal, and help Canada get its economy restarted.

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