

## **Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming 2024 Federal Budget**

By: HIEC-ApprenticeSearch.com

For more information, please contact:

Kelly Hoey

Executive Director, HIEC-ApprenticeSearch.com

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## Recommendations

### Recommendation #1

That the Government of Canada invest \$35 million over five years in HIEC-ApprenticeSearch.com's skilled trades employment platform to support job seekers from all backgrounds in preparing for, finding, and succeeding in apprenticeships.

### Recommendation #2

The Government of Canada renew its \$247 million financial investment in the Canadian Apprenticeship Service to capitalize on this program's momentum as it facilitates employers' participation in the apprenticeship system.

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## Labour Market Challenge

Skilled trades careers play a crucial role in our communities, and their continued growth and success are essential for economic prosperity. This was made clear during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when essential services consistently demanded skilled trades talent.

Despite the demand for skilled trades professionals and the increasing recognition of the skilled trades as a viable career path, accessing skilled trades talent remains a labour market challenge for the country for five main reasons:

1. **Job seekers find the apprenticeship system challenging to navigate.** The common theme in feedback from job seekers is that the apprenticeship pathway is fragmented and difficult to navigate. Individuals on the skilled trades pathway must work with multiple agencies to simply register and often don't have one institution or employer for the duration of their apprenticeship to address their needs.
2. **Job seekers lack the networks and connections to find and secure employment.** In a recent survey of young people by ApprenticeSearch.com, 55% of respondents identified needing help connecting with employers as their top barrier to developing a career in the skilled trades.
3. **There is a mismatch in the interests of job seekers and employers.** There's a disconnect between where job seekers and graduates seek opportunities and where the need for talent actually exists. We see this disconnect play out on ApprenticeSearch.com, where the top job searches from applicants don't match the most in-demand job openings from employers.
4. **There are barriers to participation for individuals from equity-deserving groups.** ApprenticeSearch.com's research, *Exploring Apprenticeship Training and Support Needs for Underrepresented Ontario Job Seekers*, explored the systemic barriers and roadblocks preventing equity-seeking group members from pursuing employment in the skilled trades. Our project found that individuals are experiencing barriers to entry, barriers to participation, and barriers to retention, and that these experiences of exclusion can be alienating and isolating for folks to navigate without additional support.
5. **Employers require support to hire and onboard apprentices.** In a recent survey of skilled trades employers conducted by ApprenticeSearch.com, finding candidates was one of the top barriers faced by employers, often due to a lack of internal capacity. This lack of capacity can dissuade employers from hiring and training apprentices, as they

often lack the time and resources to search for candidates, research and understand the apprenticeship process, or inquire about and access available grants and incentives.

## **Addressing the Labour Market Needs of the Skilled Trades Sector**

We recommend that the Government of Canada continues to make strategic investments to support the development of apprenticeship initiatives that help Canadians to succeed in the apprenticeship pathway and facilitate the participation of employers in apprenticeships.

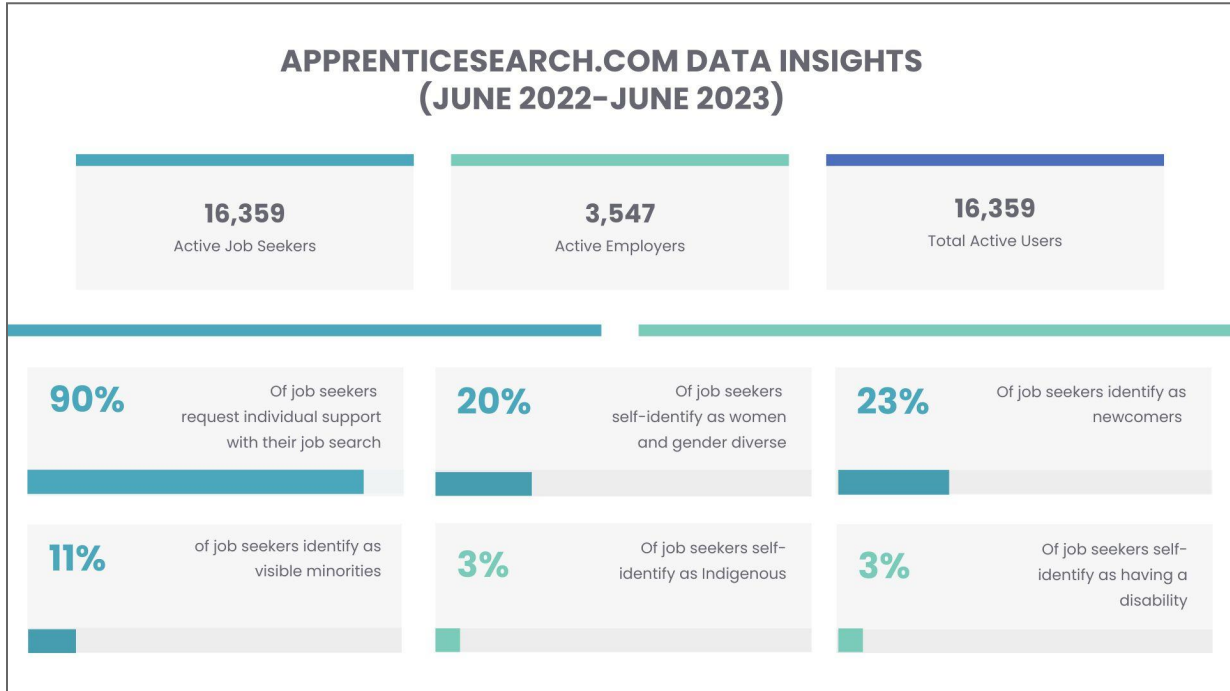
### **Recommendation #1**

**The Government of Canada invest \$35 million over five years in HIEC-ApprenticeSearch.com's skilled trades employment platform to support job seekers from all backgrounds in preparing for, finding, and succeeding in apprenticeships.**

ApprenticeSearch.com was developed over 23 years ago with the support of HRSDC (now ESDC) in response to a demonstrated industry need to increase awareness of the skilled trades as a career option and provide new avenues for people to find training and employment.

Our platform is powered by a combination of mobile-first technology and people ready to provide one-to-one support. Job seekers and employers register on ApprenticeSearch.com and can, respectively, search for and post jobs. At the same time, our team of Employment Specialists provides programs and services to support the connections between these two groups. This model has proven especially adept at helping groups that traditionally face barriers to accessing skilled trades employment. The federal government has recognized the effectiveness of this platform through its continued support of project-based grants.

While these grants have been beneficial, ApprenticeSearch.com is now at a critical inflection point, requiring more significant, longer-term funding to support the increasingly high demand from job seekers and employers across Canada who are seeking our assistance.



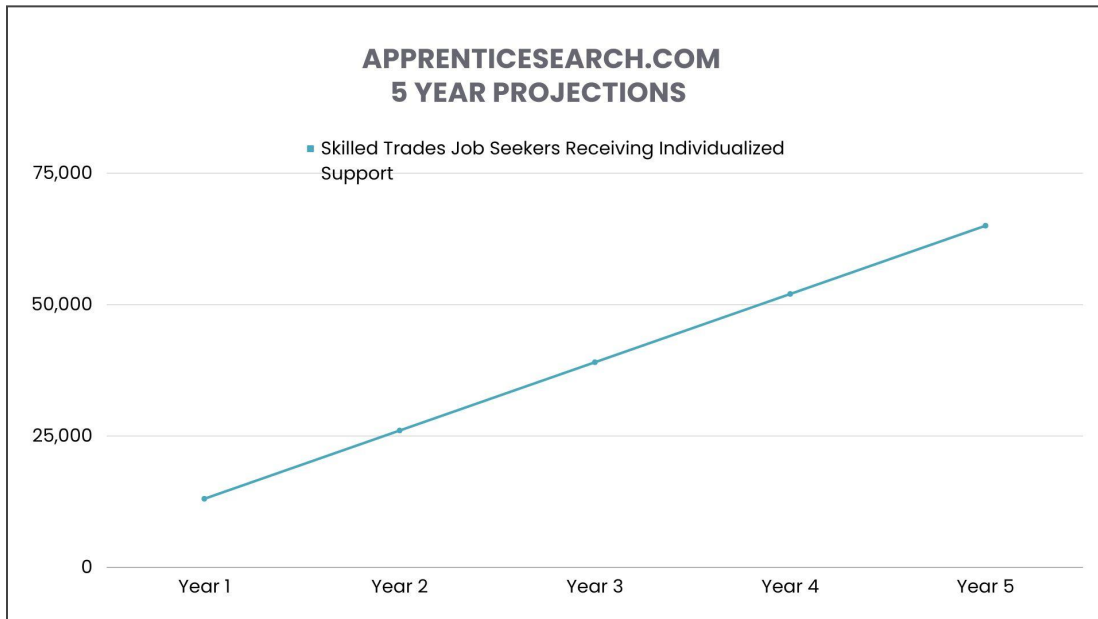
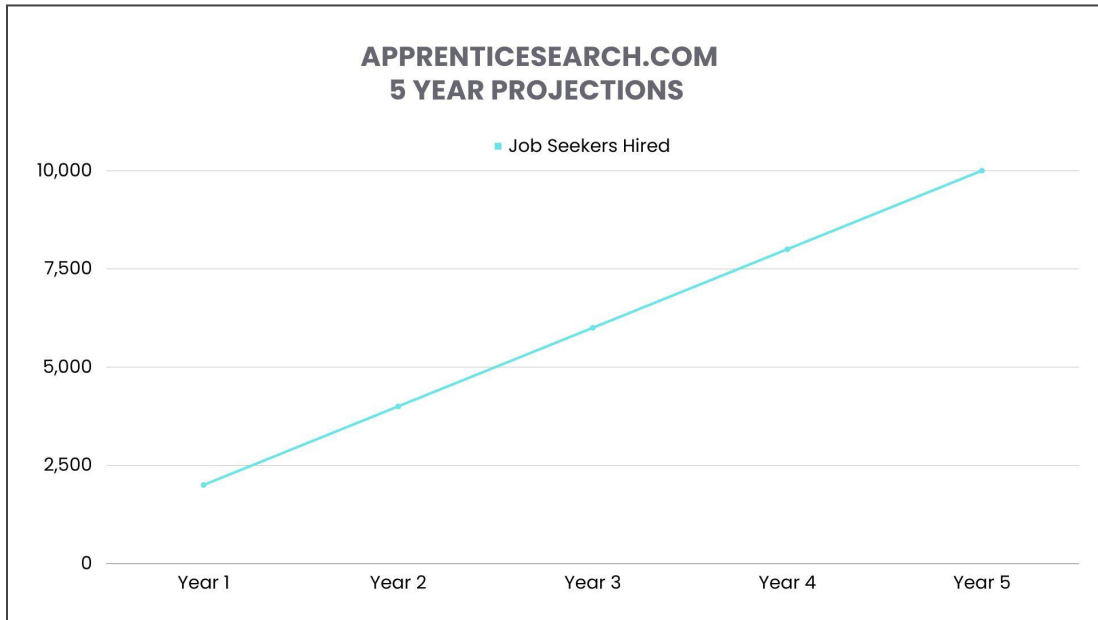
With an investment from the Government of Canada, HIEC-ApprenticeSearch.com will provide job seekers across Canada with direct connections to job opportunities in the skilled trades. Job seekers will receive personalized support from Apprenticesearch.com staff to navigate the apprenticeship pathway by helping them take the steps necessary to either start a career in the skilled trades or advance and complete an apprenticeship that’s already in progress.

At the same time, HIEC-ApprenticeSearch.com will reduce the administrative burden of human resourcing on business by supporting employers with assistance in finding and shortlisting candidates for job openings, resources to help hire and retain employees, access to training opportunities, and dedicated Apprenticesearch.com staff to provide service.

With funding from the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development, Apprenticesearch.com provided **3500 job seekers with individualized supports and helped 500 individuals achieve employment with skilled trades employers.** The number of individuals hired reflects job matches that we have confirmed with job seekers and employers - and we suspect that more individuals were hired that did not respond to requests for updates.

With our proven achievements in Ontario, we seek an investment from the Government of Canada to replicate these results nationally. Over five years, we expect to achieve the following results:

- 10,000 individuals hired by skilled trades employers
- 65,000 skilled trades job seekers receiving individualized support



With over two decades supporting the skilled trades pathway, established technology and processes, and a strong network of partnerships, Apprenticesearch.com is well-positioned to rapidly respond to the issues of skilled trades job seekers and employers.

Our growing network of partners and innovative social enterprise model has enabled us to scale to match our operational and project funding as needed. This approach has been the cornerstone of our lasting impact in the skilled trades employment landscape for over two decades.

An investment by the federal government would help scale our programs and services nationally. It would also help leverage further support from the private sector. Shorter-term contribution agreements don't give us sufficient time to build out large-scale offerings or secure and finalize long-term funding partnerships.

## Partners

In the past five years, we've had industry and community contributions from the following organizations who are also asking to see government at the table:

- W. Garfield Weston Foundation
- The Woodbridge Group
- Magna
- ArcelorMittal Dofasco
- Acces Employment
- Skills Canada Ontario
- Mohawk College
- Sheridan College

In addition, we've received substantial in-kind contributions from:

- NORCAT
- Mr. Safety Shoes Canada
- Techtronic Industries / Ryobi Tools

## Recommendation #2

### The Government of Canada renew its \$247 million financial investment in the Canadian Apprenticeship Service to capitalize on this program's momentum as it facilitates employers' participation in the apprenticeship system.

In 2022, HIEC-ApprenticeSearch.com partnered with the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum to act as the service delivery partner to work directly with small and medium-sized enterprises to access Canadian Apprenticeship Service grants of \$5,000 - \$10,000 to assist with upfront costs of hiring and training an apprentice.

Over 50% of employers that come to HIEC-ApprenticeSearch.com to access this grant need support finding an apprentice - which indicates the grant is a strong incentive for employers to seek out and onboard new talent. As an added support to this grant, our team works closely with employers to match them to job seekers in our database.

Employers have demonstrated tremendous interest in this program. We officially launched the program in September 2022, and since then:

- Over 2800 Employers have been contacted about the program
- 1505 Employers have registered with ApprenticeSearch.com with the intent to pursue the program
- 538 employers have successfully accessed the grant through our program, and 865 grants are in progress.

We're pleased to note that the goal of **boosting diversity in the Red Seal trades** by offering an additional \$5,000 to employers for hiring from equity-deserving groups is yielding results.

Of the grants our project has processed to date:

- 15% were disbursed to employers who hired women
- 47% were disbursed to employers who hired candidates from equity-priority groups (including women).

The Canadian Apprenticeship Service is demonstrating remarkable progress and has gained significant traction since its inception. We strongly recommend renewing the funding in Budget 2024 to solidify its foundation and ensure the program has lasting positive impacts on the skilled trades sector.



This grant has had a great impact on our ability to hire apprentices. While there's a need for skilled workers, a \$5,000 grant allows us to hire an apprentice without worrying about the financial aspect for a period of one and a half to two months at the beginning of their apprenticeship.

Because of this grant, we were able to hire two individuals who show great potential for our company, which will help us grow our business in the coming years.

Without the grant, [we] would probably have hired one instead of two. The grant allowed us to hire them both and give them the opportunity to perfect their skills alongside an experienced journeyman, working on some of the biggest projects in our company's history.

CHARLES ROBERGE, DIRECTOR, B.B.G. RÉFRIGÉRATION INC.

As the President of G2 Construction Inc., I am well aware of the challenges our industry faces, particularly the ongoing labour crisis. However, thanks to the funding we obtained through CAS, we have been able to proactively address these difficulties and achieve our development goals. We were able to recruit and train new apprentices, providing valuable learning opportunities to young people aspiring for a career in the construction industry.

Through [this] grant, our company was able to solidify its position in the market and maintain its competitiveness. The funds received contributed to our growth and enabled us to continue our expansion despite economic challenges and workforce constraints. We are grateful to the Government of Canada and the Canadian Apprenticeship Support Program for this crucial support.

ERIC GOSSELIN, PRESIDENT, G2 CONSTRUCTION INC.

## **About HIEC-ApprenticeSearch.com**

ApprenticeSearch.com is powered by HIEC (Halton Industry Education Council), an innovative not-for-profit social enterprise focusing on partnership, mentorship and workforce development. Since 1989, the organization has been working to build stronger connections between educators, employers and the students who will make up our future workforce.

HIEC has a full-circle approach to programming, which consists of career development labs, employment training, experiential learning opportunities, mentorship events and online communities focused on extending learning beyond the classroom.

The organization has a long history of working within the community to enhance pathways into meaningful employment for youth, women, racialized individuals, persons with disabilities or mental health challenges, and members of at-risk communities.