



Robert J. Morrissey, Chair  
Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of  
Persons with Disabilities  
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6  
Via email: [HUMA@parl.gc.ca](mailto:HUMA@parl.gc.ca)

April 1, 2022

Dear Mr. Chair:

On behalf of the Automotive Industries Association of Canada (AIA Canada), I am pleased to submit our comments for the study on labour shortages, working conditions, and the care economy being undertaken by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

AIA Canada represents Canada's automotive aftermarket industry. The aftermarket employs 500,000 Canadians and contributes \$32 billion to the economy. Our independent auto repair shops provide consumers with vehicle repair and maintenance services, while the rest of the supply chain brings vehicle replacement parts and supplies to the market. AIA Canada has 800 members with 4,000 locations. Our members include Canadian Tire, CARSTAR, Mr. Transmission, and Fix Auto.

Canada's independent auto repair shops face two significant labour shortages. The first is a shortage of automotive tradespeople. The second is a skills shortage among our workforce. A skills shortage is equally consequential to a labour shortage; a worker that lacks the skills needed to complete service work, is just as significant as not having a worker to fill a position.

It is important that industry, with government support, implement solutions to meet our sector's labour needs. This includes ensuring that automotive tradespeople are properly trained to service electric vehicles (EVs) as Canada transitions to a growing EV fleet.

### **Labour Shortage**

An automotive service technician is one of Canada's top five in-demand trades. To meet national demand for automotive service technicians, close to 11,000 apprentices need to become certified between 2021 and 2025 (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2021).

A number of factors, including demographics, are contributing to the shortage. The trades workforce is aging at a faster pace than the university educated workforce. At the same time, apprenticeship registrations are decreasing. The automotive workforce also lacks diversity



which limits the pool of prospective workers. An analysis of 2016 census data shows that approximately 31% of the industry's workforce self-identifies as female, 22% as foreign-born, and 5% as an Indigenous person (Ernst & Young, 2020).

Stigma associated with a career in the skilled trades is another factor that deters some people from even considering a career in the automotive trades. Most parents view Canada's post-secondary education system as hierarchical; this is especially true for immigrant parents. A parent's perspective on education matters as their perceptions shape the tastes and expectations of their children.

### **Recommendation 1: Provide funding for industry-led initiatives that break stigma associated with a career in the automotive trades**

Technology is changing the type of work that automotive tradespeople do and the skills that they need. Servicing a modern vehicle involves working with digital tools, updating vehicle software, and calibrating and aligning sensors that support vehicles. Industry, with government support, can help raise awareness about how technology is changing the future of automotive repairs. Raising awareness can not only change perspectives but break stigma. This can attract more students to the industry at a younger age and attract more people from non-traditional groups, including women and immigrants.

AIA Canada is currently working to break stigma and to attract people to the industry. AIA Canada and St. Lawrence College are delivering an exciting, new automotive trades program. The program is open to job seekers and will be developed by an industry advisory committee. A portion of the training curriculum is dedicated to exploring how vehicle technology is evolving. Should the program demonstrate success, there is the possibility of reusing the curriculum at different post-secondary institutions.

### **Skills Shortage**

As vehicle technology evolves, the skills that automotive tradespeople need continue to change. For example, to service EVs, automotive service technicians need new skills related to high-voltage systems and battery removal. Because of advances in vehicle technology, when compared to other Red Seal trades, automotive service technicians face the largest amount of change in their workplace. Current skills training is not enough to keep pace with emerging vehicle technology.

To address the industry's skills shortage, upskilling and new skills training needs to improve. They need to be responsive and flexible to keep pace with technology and the needs of employers. Training curriculum should focus on a singular skill or competency and training programs should be short in length. New approaches to training like gamification, that support



rapid skill and competency development, should be invested in. Training needs to be a lifelong investment and skills training should reflect that.

### **Recommendation 2: Provide funding for industry-led upskilling initiatives**

Industry, in partnership with government, can more quickly adapt to meet skill needs than today's current apprenticeship training systems. For example, AIA Canada and St. Lawrence College's upskilling program will aim to develop the skills needed to service EVs. The program is open to incumbent workers, as well as apprentices looking to bridge the gap between what current curriculums offer and what the workplace demands. Learners will train on up-to-date equipment and tools; this is important as there is an acute lack of up-to-date equipment and tools at Canada's technical training institutes in the automotive sector.

With government funding, AIA Canada can partner with organizations to deliver similar upskilling programs. Governments can also make more funding available for employers to access third-party training for their workers. For instance, providing funding to companies to proactively deliver upskilling and training.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, Canada's automotive aftermarket industry faces a two-part labour shortage. The first is a shortage of automotive tradespeople. The second is a shortage among automotive tradespeople of the skills needed to service modern vehicles, including EVs.

Our industry is struggling to employ new technicians to service vehicles, and it will continue to be a challenge for the sector as more electric and connected vehicles replace traditional internal combustible engine vehicles.

Industry can take action to meet our labour needs, but we need the government's support. Continued investments into the skilled trades are critical to securing gainful employment in the sector. AIA Canada is committed to working with all parties to ensure that training programs are in place for the vehicles of the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments and insights. I would welcome the opportunity to share more information on our recommendations with committee members.

Sincerely,

JF Champagne, President  
Automotive Industries Association of Canada