



Focus on Skills Training

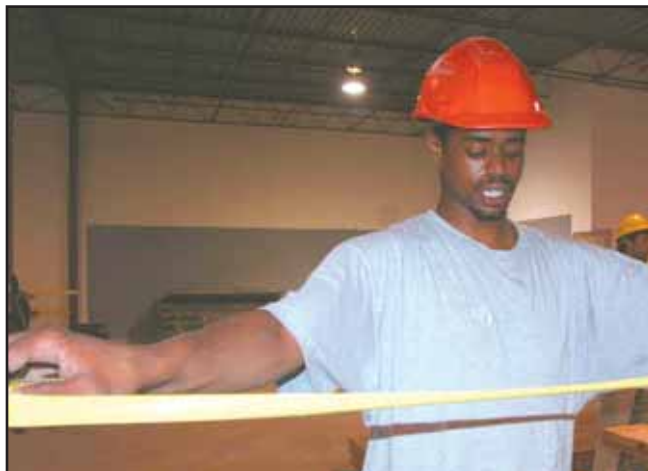
Students sticking with CHOICE pre-apprenticeship program

DON PROCTER
CORRESPONDENT

Not many pre-apprenticeship courses can claim as high a retention rate as the CHOICE Pre-apprenticeship Program for Youths at Risk can. In its fifth year, the unique Toronto-based program offers its students a chance to learn carpentry skills on the job at social housing properties operated by Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

Typically, 12 or 13 students in a class of 15 students graduate. That's a high rate of retention which is in line with the graduation numbers of successful apprenticeship programs, says Cristina Selva, director of training, Carpenters' Local 27 Joint Apprenticeship & Training Trust Fund Inc.

The program is a partnership of the Carpenters' union, Toronto's Housing Services Inc. (HSI), the YMCA Employment & Newcomer Services, and the Ministry of



CHOICE PROGRAM

Courtney Guthrie is a second-term apprentice in the CHOICE pre-apprenticeship program.

Training Colleges and Universities.

Selva says so few students drop out of the program in part because an intensive screening process of 80 or so applicants is done to select 15 students. Another reason is that students get paid \$11 an hour from the time they enter the program until they graduate. Of that hourly rate, the YMCA kicks in about

\$8 hour per student and the Toronto Housing Authority provides the rest. In addition, the YMCA pays for a start-up tool set for each student.

The course is open to anyone between 16 and their late 20s. While many of the students are from social housing projects, it is not mandatory for admission into the program.

Each course ranges from 10 to 14 weeks, with students spending three weeks in class getting health and safety training (including, fall protection, basic tool operations and WHMIS) before moving onto renovation sites at Toronto Community Housing developments. Students work in crews of four-to-five per instructor.

Successful graduates have the option of pursuing an apprenticeship in the one of the trades they have been exposed to through the course, including general carpentry and drywall. The program also provides job placements and follow-up support by the program partners.

Selva says students showing an aptitude and interest in formwork carpentry are offered positions in a new pre-apprenticeship course on the trade offered through the Carpenters' union. The six-week formworkers program was set up last year because of the shortage of formwork carpenters in the industry.

Based on the success of the program it is surprising that other trades haven't developed similar pre-apprenticeship courses, says Eddie Thornton, executive director of training at the Carpenters' apprenticeship & training trust fund.

"We think it is a great opportunity to give young people a break and do a trade and save them potentially getting into trouble on the streets."

The program is based on a U.S. program for youth at risk.

Thornton says he is not aware of any others unions or trade associations developing anything like it in Ontario but the City of Toronto recently put together a trades training course for low-income youth.

The carpenters union is discussing a possible partnership with the city on that initiative.

Heating, roofing join Conestoga training stream

Centre of Excellence expanding

DON PROCTER
CORRESPONDENT

Conestoga's College is busy adding to its Construction Centre of Excellence campus in Waterloo with a roofing training centre set to open its doors this September and an HVAC training facility to follow a year later.

The 12,000-square-foot Roofing Skills Training Centre being developed in partnership with the Ontario Industrial Roofing Contractors Association will offer programs and courses in a range of formats. The objective is to develop the province's most advanced roofing skills training facility for all sectors of construction, says Andre Beaudry, vice-president of development and alumni, Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning.

"We'd like to deliver programs that support new and emerging roofing technologies and construction practices. We want to heighten the state of practice for the industry by giving employers the best possible training programs for their employees."

The centre will also target new immigrants and unemployed adults looking for a new career. "There are people who have been laid off in certain sectors, especially manufacturing, who would love to get a skilled trade."

Meanwhile, the 10,000-square-foot HVAC Skills Training Centre will be up and running at Conestoga's Waterloo campus in the fall of 2010. Conestoga has been developing the centre in conjunction with the Heating Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute (HRAI). It will include training in facilities maintenance and heating plus apprenticeships in sheet metal and air con-

ditioning for residential and ICI building sectors.

Not all of the programs will be directed at people getting into the field for the first time. There will be certificate programs specific to professionals looking at upgrading their skills in such areas as energy conservation technology and automation systems for HVAC. It will also run various diploma programs.

"There's been a demand from industry for a number of years for a dedicated facility to train technicians and technologists in HVAC and finally we're going to be able to offer it," says Beaudry.

The two centres are being developed at the right time. Last year a study concluded that Conestoga is "significantly undersized" for its catchment area, he says.

The two trades facilities follow on the heels of the new 10,000-square-foot Centre of Excellence for the Masonry Trades at Conestoga's Kitchener campus last year with an intake of 18 apprentices in January. The new facility aims to train 100 or more masonry apprentices and related tradespeople annually.

Conestoga also has a school geared to carpentry. The Ontario Woodworking Centre at its Kitchener campus offers courses tailored to various carpentry trades.

Recently, Conestoga received a \$72 million federal/provincial government grant primarily geared to the School of Engineering, which includes the skilled construction trades centres at the Waterloo campus. "How much of it flows down to skilled trades remains to be seen but we got we asked for," says Beaudry, adding that Conestoga will be looking for private funding to complete its financial commitments to the new training schools.

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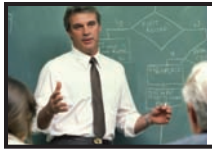


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Focus on Professional Development

Construction training building at Algonquin

New stream focuses on helping trades become supervisors

TERRY TINKESS
CORRESPONDENT

Algonquin College, with campuses in Perth, Pembroke and a central campus in Ottawa, is poised to become a focal point for skilled-trades programs in eastern Ontario.

The feeling around the campus is that the proposed \$69 million Environmental Demonstration Centre for Construction Trades and Building Sciences will soon take the giant step of moving

from the drawing table into reality.

"It's going to be a LEED certified building," says Jean Paul Tapp, Dean of the School of Transportation and Building Trades.

"We're excited about getting that new building and the new programming it will allow us to put into place, because there are some areas where we need to expand our programming."

The centre, which is slated for completion in 2011, will add 600 new student spaces

per year. But while in many cases the college has outgrown its existing facility, there are still some spots open.

"I'm not sure if the media coverage that we have received — that we have waiting lists — has discouraged some people," says Tapp, "but there is an opportunity for young people if they want to enroll in these programs. We still have spots available this year."

One program that is quite popular is the Building Construction Technician program. Training is provided over a period of 45 weeks — three 15-week semesters of 30 hours per week each.

"The program goes hand in hand with apprenticeship training," says Tapp. "Graduates are granted an exemption for level-one apprenticeship training. Essentially though, the program covers much more than level one. It's a program that is designed to equip an individual with knowledge of both the housing industry and the commercial construction industry."

As young people scan the job markets while searching for a career, they can't help but notice the opportunities that exist because of the shortage of skilled trades. "Certainly these jobs offer really excellent long-term stability and those situations are not always true on the other side of the employment spectrum," says Tapp. "Young people, I think, are probably evaluating those situations



Algonquin College's construction trades program attracts not just high school graduates but those looking to change careers. There at 900 students currently studying construction.

and they are also looking at salaries, but I think one thing that we really don't emphasize enough is that it's nice to do something you like."

It's not only young people who are in demand. Someone who is looking to change their career, or who has been out of the workforce for a while can fill the need as well. In Ottawa, for example, workers frequently affected by the ebb and flow of jobs in the hi-tech sector are now looking at a different option for maintaining some stability in their lives.

"I think that is going to be one of the areas where we have to do a lot of work because jobs change, jobs disappear and when jobs disappear, what are you going to

do?" asks Tapp.

"How are you going to address it? That is one of the things we did when we accelerated our program delivery. We wanted to make sure that once people had chosen a career path, they got out and into the workforce as quickly as possible."

In response to the construction industry's cry for qualified supervisors, Algonquin is already considering what types of new programming it could implement.

"The civil engineering and construction engineering technician/technology programs address part of that, but when we move into our new facility we are planning on taking a look at what opportunities might exist for

applied degrees in construction management.

"What happens now is that individuals start out as essentially carpenters and apprentices and work their way up through the system and are promoted on the basis of competency. There is not enough of them in the first place, and we have to address that training need."

In apprenticeship programs, (including automotive) there are approximately 1,500 apprentices registered annually in the School of Transportation and Building Trades and 2,600 across the college.

There are also 900 registrations in the post-secondary programs that focus on construction.



Unions addressing skills shortage with on-the-job training

Apprenticeship programs have stood the test of time

DAN PELTON
CORRESPONDENT

In these uncertain economic times, one prevailing certainty is that the Canadian education system needs the necessary tools, and proper direction, to ensure an adequate skilled labour force. There are, however, differing schools of thought on how we should

go about doing it.

The Greater Toronto Electrical Contractors Association, in conjunction with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), runs a program in Toronto that employs about 1,600 apprentices. Of these, about 175 are pre-apprentices who must work 1,800 hours prior to being indentured as first-

term apprentices.

The primary purpose of having a pre-apprentice segment in the training regime is to determine whether a candidate is suitable for the trade before taking him or her any further. The first entrants into the program in 2003 began to write their Certificate of Qualification exam in 2007 and, so far, the pass rate has been 100 per cent.

"Apprenticeship has historically been on-the-job

training," points out association executive vice-president Bob O'Donnell. "You're being mentored by a journeyman on the job. There's an employment relationship involved."

Having said this, O'Donnell has issues with what he calls the "skills-shortage bandwagon," saying it has been hyped by the media and has been gaining momentum over the last few years.

In its 2008 budget, the Ontario government

announced \$1.5 billion for skills training, with the goal of increasing the number of apprentices by 25 per cent in three years.

"As a result, pre-apprenticeship programs are popping up in colleges, private training institutes, and schools," O'Donnell said.

"The difference between most of these and our program is that ours is about jobs, while theirs is about filling seats in a classroom."

While the early success

of this particular program is evident, its scope is limited by the number of employers willing to participate and the number of jobs available.

For example, it is far more likely to succeed in the construction industry, which saw its number of workers increase by 309,000 from 2001 to 2007, than it is in the moribund manufacturing sector, which lost 184,000 jobs over the same period.

See APPRENTICESHIPS, Pg.4

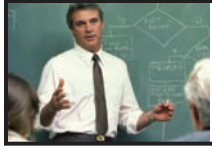


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Focus on Professional Development

ISCA forges ahead with training centre

Current facility bursting at seams

DON PROCTER
CORRESPONDENT

Good news has arrived for wall and ceiling associations with the Ontario government pledging to allocate \$200 million in capital funding over three years for training centre expansion around the province.

The Interior Systems Contractors Association of Ontario (ISCA) would have a place for money in a minute — its \$4.5 million training facility under construction in the Toronto suburb of Woodbridge. “We fully intend to apply when that process becomes apparent,” says Ron Johnson, the association’s deputy director.

The government made the announcement when the budget was released in March. Details are expected soon on how the money will be divided up.

To date, the province hasn’t contributed a penny towards the 27,000-square-foot facility, scheduled for its first class intake in November. ISCA has financed the project through its partnership with its contractor members and its union partners, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) and the Carpenters & Allied Workers Loc. 27.

Carpenters Union Loc. 18 (Hamilton-Niagara) also hopes to score on the government’s \$200 million plan. It currently runs apprenticeship training for 40 to 75 drywall acoustic students annually.

“We would like to build a (training) centre on the back of our building to become more involved with hands-on carpentry apprenticeship training,” says Barry Walker, business manager, Loc. 18.



The ISCA training centre under construction in Woodbridge has a price tag of \$4.5 million

Several years ago the union applied for funding under a provincial program that was mothballed by the province before the first cheque was signed.

That \$3-\$5 million building would have offered training in scaffolding, formwork, peri-formwork, insulated concrete forms and framing.

Walker says Loc. 18 will resurrect the building plans as soon the province firms up its \$200 million plans.

“It may be modified slightly based on our budget restraints. You have to make a five-year plan and make sure to allow for a possible downturn.”

Loc. 18’s current digs are on seven acres in Hamilton. The \$1.3 million facility was created in 2001 with little outside financial assistance.

Meanwhile, ISCA’s new train-

ing facility, adjacent to the association’s three-year-old, 56,000 square foot training centre in the Toronto suburb of Woodbridge, will have the capacity to train several hundred students annually. Emphasis will be on exterior insulation finish systems (EIFS) and hazardous worker training, such as asbestos and mould abatement.

“It’s an exciting step for us to take what is already considered the best training centre in North America and make it bigger and better,” says Johnson, adding that ISCA offers more training for the trade than community colleges ever did and its success rate (measured by how many students land jobs) is high.

When ISCA opened its new administrative and training facility in 2005, it was billed as the biggest and best in the wall and ceiling world around North America.

The Interior Finishing Systems Training Centre has an intake capacity of 30 drywall mechanics and 22 drywall finishers every two months and there is enough space for other trades training. But after operating only three years, it is bursting at the seams; reason enough for the start-up of the current expansion project.

“The people involved in the purchase of the current property had the foresight to purchase additional land at the time that would allow for our present expansion,” says Johnson.

While filling classroom seats hasn’t been difficult at ISCA, Johnson admits that it is still difficult to convince youth that a career in the wall and ceiling industry can be a viable one.

“We look to government to help us by providing a greater investment in apprenticeship training.”

Apprenticeships prove more popular

Continued from Pg. 3

Both employ the same skilled trades. Some college programs, meanwhile, have programs that allow the student to pick up certain trade skills as part of an overall college degree.

The Automotive Manufacturing Skills Initiative, launched in 1998 by Daimler Chrysler, the Canadian Auto Workers and St. Clair College, is a four-year program where students spend two days a week as an apprentice and the remaining three days in class. At the end of this program, students receive both a college degree and a trades certification.

While not qualified as journeymen, the graduates have a skill set for certain trades. The degree offers other options should jobs be scarce.

Regardless of how, or by whom, trade apprenticeships are being presented, they are obviously gaining in popularity. Brian McCabe, an executive with the Mechanical Contractors Association of Toronto, says the trades are attracting a larger cross-section of applicants; including university graduates.

“When we take applications through our joint training apprenticeship committee, we’ll get anywhere from 650 to 880 applying. The ages used to be 18 to 21 or 22. Now, it is more like 18 to 31.”

McCabe must have sparked some interest from a Grade 10 class he recently visited, especially when he introduced two tradesmen in their 20s who were already pulling down over \$80,000 per year.

Hopefully, such success stories will hope overcome the prevailing stigma that the trades are the traditional second choice behind university and college.

“In past years, there was a stigma to what the trades were all about,” says James Wright, projects and communications co-ordinator with the Ontario Construction Secretariat. “It was ‘since little Johnny isn’t the sharpest tool in the shed, let’s stick him in a trade.’ We have had to educate the teachers and guidance councillors to look upon the trades as more of an equal opportunity, as opposed to being a third choice.”



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