

OTTAWA'S HIGH TECH WORKFORCE: JOBS AND RETRAINING

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November 15th, 2009

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OTTAWA'S HIGH TECH WORKFORCE: JOBS AND RETRAINING

SUMMARY

1. CHALLENGES.

From at least as early as 2001 there have been some extremely serious problems regarding how training and re-skilling for laid-off high tech workers in Ottawa has been handled. Training and re-skilling is critical to enabling the unemployed to find work in the creative knowledge economy. Obtaining work in the fast paced creative knowledge economy requires significantly different skills from those that would have got you a job earlier in the decade. In general, understanding the changing skills demand of industry and the labour market has been compromised by universal and persistent non-recognition of what is involved. Repeated instances of mis-information in the media, based on incomplete and wrongly analyzed statistics, have made it appear that the unemployment and underemployment of highly skilled professionals was a one time occurrence following the 2001 economic downturn and recession which no longer needs to be addressed. The recent Nortel bankruptcy, Nortel layoffs and continuing layoffs at other companies also serve to highlight the ongoing nature of this problem and the lack of proper solutions to it, to date. The mis-information referred to has been aggravated by the mis-use of the employment numbers trends released by Statistics Canada and OCRI, giving rise to tacit assumptions that most or all of the people laid off were being re-hired. At the same time, there has been no system for tracking what was happening to individuals who were laid off, and hence no proof that they were actually being re-hired; how wrong such assumptions were was publicly recognized and made clear only in July 2007, when the Stats Can "Life After High Tech" report was released.

There are four distinct problem areas: -

1.1 There has been persistent refusal to recognize the underlying economic challenges posed by the large numbers or supply of people (typically 100 plus) applying for every position advertised. Thus there has never been proper attention to making the economy perform to the point where demand creates enough jobs for everybody who wants to work. Even the "Engineering Technology Labour Market Study – Final Report" of April 2009 does not address this. There has been little appreciation of the planning required to match supply and demand and to transition knowledge professionals in the declining industry sectors to the emerging and growing industry sectors.

1.2 There has been neglect or refusal to amend certain dysfunctional federal E.I. legislation and provincial social assistance legislation which has been disbaring most highly skilled people out of work from accessing appropriate re-training and re-skilling programs, thus preventing them from becoming productive employees and contributing to the economic well being of the community again. This also directly impacts the tax base of the community, the province and the country.

1.3 The forecasting of skills and capabilities needed by employers has presented certain challenges. Labour market "gaps" – i.e. skills currently in short supply, or expected to be in short supply in the future - are more difficult to identify now than they were prior to 2001. Successful re-training and re-integration into the work force of laid-off workers depends partly on being able to identify such labour market trends, followed by provision of adequate funding by government or employers to provide appropriate training programs and / or transitional employment for new hires.

1.4 In general, there has been a systemic failure to recognize the importance of contractual guarantees between job seekers, training providers and employers as part of the system for getting people back to work and making them taxpayers again. Thus, for example, it frequently happens that people take certain courses but then cannot obtain work because no employer has signed any agreement attesting to the relevance of the skill or capability being taught.

Addressing the problem as a whole requires a multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary approach between business, educational institutions and governments at all three levels (Federal, Provincial and Municipal). All of the measures (a) to (g) below will be necessary. Some of them – such as (a) - could be instituted quickly; others - such as (f) - will require time to set up: -

- (a) Coordinated rule changes at all three levels of government, including but not limited to federal E.I. and provincial social assistance
- (b) Attention to the true numbers of jobs required to employ everybody properly – including those grossly under-employed, or labelled “Not in the Labour Force” but actually unemployed, in addition to the so-called “official unemployed”. Attention to the scale of economic development necessary to achieve this.
- (c) New training and re-skilling programs to meet emerging socio-economic needs and labour market “gaps”
- (d) Actions to stimulate and support those sectors in the economy that can create sufficient jobs, based on (b), and more particularly the sectors deemed to be “economic generators”.
- (e) Educate employers concerning the importance of training and skills development
- (f) Better methods of measuring and public reporting on unemployment and under-employment, for the purpose of clarifying the extent of under-performance of the economy relative to potential.
- (g) Revisions to immigration policy to take account of the true state of the job market at any given time, and the trends therein. The “human capital” model currently in use has serious flaws.

2. REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS IN GETTING BACK TO WORK

Someone taking re-training in any shape or form will end up with a skill set, which will exactly match the requirements of a particular employer, **ONLY IF**: -

- (a) There is a prior agreement signed between the job seeker, the training provider(s) and an employer, which is effective from the time the job seeker commences re-training. One or more co-op work terms will usually be involved. The employer’s requirements may be changing during the time span of the whole program but the job seeker is kept continually updated and the training adjusted accordingly, such that the job seeker has all the skills needed to fill a specific job commencing when the program ends.

- or -

- (b) Following a period of re-training of any type whatsoever (or even without it) – and not necessarily a Vitesse Re-Skilling program - there are employers willing to sign agreements with job seekers and invest in some training of the new hire, or at least use a government-funded transitional employment program which will help them defray any retraining costs for a new hire.

If scenario (a) or (b) cannot be made to apply for everybody out of work and seeking to get back to work - because of a lack of political will or other reasons – then you have a set of conditions that is guaranteed to ensure that almost everybody’s efforts to get back to work will fail or be sub-optimal, with corresponding consequences for the economy as a whole and the government’s own tax base. This is examined in more detail in **APPENDIX 1** below.

3. ACTIONS REQUIRED TO MEET THE CHALLENGES AND FULFIL THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS.

These involve several distinct areas of work:

2.1. Training programs and transitional employment programs: -

- Summary of deficiencies with current programs. Details for each program examined are in **APPENDIX 2** These deficiencies involve any or all of:-
 - Unsatisfactory federal E.I. and /or provincial social assistance rules which in practice exclude most people from using the programs
 - Exclusion based on having a University Degree, Masters or Ph.D. based on the mistaken assumption that such people “don’t need” assistance to get employed (“over-qualified”)
 - Unnecessary or excessive information submission requirements for the job seeker.
 - In some cases, lack of contractual agreements signed by employers to hire people off training programs

Summary of actions required. Details of these, for each program examined, are also in **APPENDIX 2**.

- ✓ Change certain federal E.I. and provincial social assistance rules.
 - ✓ Remove all rules excluding people with a University Degree, Masters or Ph.D.
 - ✓ Simplify information submission requirements for the job seeker / abolish unnecessary requirements
 - ✓ Encourage employers to sign contractual agreements to hire people off training programs as well as transitional employment programs
- Programs to meet emerging labour market “gaps”, for instance “Clean Tech” and renewable energy projects. New programs will be necessary, funded by government if no employer sponsors can be found even when such a “gap” has been clearly proven to exist. Vitesse Re-Skilling is well placed to set up such programs.

2.2. Stop the flow of misinformation about unemployment to the media. Currently and for years or decades past, these have usually been making it appear that the so-called “official” unemployed represent the whole problem when in fact they only represent a small part of it. In addition there is a massive “under-employment” problem in Canada; this too is seldom discussed. This has been leading to massive under-performance of the economy relative to potential based on full employment, with few people being aware of it, and no attention to the true numbers of jobs needed to employ everybody who wants to work. Even the “Engineering Technology Labour Market Study – Final Report” of April 2008 does not address this issue. To remedy this, new and improved methods of measuring the problem and reporting on it are necessary. In addition, use of the terms “have given up looking for work”, “dropped out of the labour force”, “taking a break from job hunting”, “discouraged workers” etc., when referring to long-term unemployed, must cease because they are not valid descriptions of the people referred to - and more particularly with respect to so-called “older workers”. This is particularly important with respect to the “demographic time bomb” posed by “retirements” of the “baby boomers” – voluntary or otherwise – and stopping age-based discrimination in hiring practices. Failure to deal with this properly will have obvious and very severe negative consequences for the economy and the tax base. There have been repeated warnings about this demographic problem and its possible severe and negative consequences since at least as early as the year 2000.

Proper attention must be given to the overall performance of the economy, and policy measures must be instituted with the objective of maximizing performance relative to potential based on full employment. See the following for more information: -

APPENDIX 3. IMMIGRATION, SO-CALLED “SKILL SHORTAGES” AND INATTENTION TO RE-TRAINING.

This deals briefly with the problem of far too few jobs relative to need, and the consequences of ignoring it.

- and -

APPENDIX 4. SOME REPORTS ABOUT THE JOBLESS AND THE NUMBERS APPLYING FOR JOBS POSTED.

This shows actual extracts from reports about the jobless and the numbers of people applying for every job posted.

(APPENDIX 1 COMMENCES ON THE NEXT PAGE)

APPENDIX 1. DETAILS - REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS IN GETTING BACK TO WORK

Success depends on the satisfactory performance of the candidate in training, assuming that all the other conditions necessary to the candidate getting back to work have been set up.

Assuming that the candidate does in fact perform O.K., or is expected to perform O.K. with respect to his part of an agreement - the following additional conditions are mandatory requirements for success, based on the cause-and-effect relationships involved: -

Table 1. REQUIRED CONDITIONS

No	Required Condition	Consequence(s) of Required Condition not being met
1	Before even starting, satisfactory information must be available concerning demand versus supply of people to do any kind of work. (Such information is necessary to making a satisfactory selection of course(s) and subsequent work.)	Candidate will automatically make a wrong choice because whatever information is available will conveniently turn out to be “wrong”, in the worst possible sense, and after the candidate has already spent appreciable time looking for work in a field that is supposedly “booming”. Statements concerning a “hiring boom” (such as those typically appearing in the mass media) are false if jobs are not actually available in the numbers to match the numbers of people interested – as opposed to just people with “connections” in the business.
2	Course(s) in the relevant subject areas must actually be available.	Candidate has no hope of going anywhere i.e. no hope of obtaining work and no hope of contributing to the tax base.
3	Transitional employment programs must actually be available. (A transitional employment program may in itself be sufficient to get people back to work, in some cases. Example: Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy)	The candidate has no hope of getting work. If the candidate applies for a job, the situation will automatically default to failure because the candidate will be rejected based on “lack of on-the-job experience”, or some such.
4	Eligibility rules for entry to courses and/or transitional employment programs must be based purely on need by the individual to contribute to the tax base, interests and background of the student. Priority must be given to people out of work and people indisputably under-employed, whether eligible for federal E.I. or provincial social assistance or not.	The candidate has no hope of getting work and hence no hope of contributing to the tax base.
5	Whatever choice the person makes, places on courses and/or transitional employment programs must be available in numbers to match the people. (This factor operates independently of any reverse-selection processes by employers and educational institutions, for the purpose of selecting	The candidate has little or no hope of getting on the course and hence little or no hope of getting work and little or no hope of contributing to the tax base.

	the best students out of those who apply.)	
6	Whatever job choice the person makes, based on available information to the effect that a satisfactory supply/demand relationship exists, jobs must be available in numbers to match the people.	The candidate has little or no hope of getting work and hence little or no hope of contributing to the tax base.
7	Adequate finance must be available to meet basic living expenses, tuition fees, books, commuting to and from classes, computer(s) etc.	Unsatisfactory conditions for pursuing a course, which then translate into no hope of getting work and no hope of contributing to the tax base.
8	A legally binding contract must be in force between the student, the educational institution(s) and an employer. Among other things, the employer must agree to hire the student on completion of training.	There is no contract and the situation will auto-default at the candidate's expense i.e. no job and no tax revenues accruing subsequently to government. This will occur because employers will "conveniently" exploit the situation to refuse employment to the candidate on the "grounds" that the candidate doesn't quite meet "the requirements of the position", or some such.
9	A candidate rejected for one training program, by reason of excessive numbers applying and/or not being able to meet the program academic entry requirements, must have satisfactory alternative courses of action open to him / her.	Candidate has no hope of going anywhere i.e. no hope of getting work and no hope of contributing to the tax base.
10	There must be no "means test" applied to assistance for people out of work, unless they have been out of work by choice and in particular because they had adequate "independent income" from other sources such as investments.	Some programs – such as the Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy – have no "means test" as a condition for entry. Persons applying to other programs – such as the Ontario Opportunities Fund – find themselves subject to "means tests" for inappropriate and unsatisfactory reasons, possibly because they were deemed "ineligible" for another program based on unsatisfactory or inappropriate rules then applying. In such cases, they find themselves being expected to pay a contribution to their re-training costs, for the wrong reasons in the wrong circumstances.

Absence of or deficiencies in one or more of the above required conditions, depending on the candidate's situation, will cause automatic failure of his/her efforts to become a contributor to the tax base.

ALL human activities are attended by various conditions, some of which may be critical to the success of an activity and may dictate whether an activity is possible at all. This is basic to enabling someone who has been out of work to contribute to the tax base, or preventing them from doing so.

Certain currently prevailing social, legal or political "norms" – and in particular those which state what supposedly "...can't be done because of the legislation..." - have no place in the discussion and planning of solutions. Any that are found to be obstructing progress towards solutions must be removed – period.

As mentioned in the "**SUMMARY**", section 1 "**CHALLENGES**", para. 1.4, the set of challenges here is multi-faceted and requires a multi-disciplinary approach; relevant departments, in all three levels of government, will require guidance on how to work co-operatively on a problem where it is found necessary to involve more than

one such department and / or more than one level of government. The "...it's not my department, so I will have no part of any responsibility..." type of approach, often encountered in practice, will work against government's own interests by working against the creation of taxpayers.

APPENDIX 2. ACTUAL PROGRAMS, PAST AND PRESENT.

The analysis here is illustrative – and not exhaustive, in the sense that it does not cover every known program. The intent is to show why some programs are successful - and why others are either not successful, or have their degree of success severely limited by factors not properly considered when the program was set up or operating.

General Comments – Applicable to All Programs.

All programs simultaneously have positive attributes and limitations, and vice-versa. Some of these limitations consist of a shortage of places relative to the numbers of people applying; in some cases, this shortage is caused by an absolute lack of jobs relative to the numbers looking for work. Shortages of places in programs or shortages of jobs, or both, do not reflect criticism of the programs; instead, they reflect the state of the economy and a need to deal with its underlying problems which have been routinely ignored up to now.

Currently, in Canada there is a very large problem with "hidden unemployment" – as evidenced by the O.E.D.C.'s "Ottawa's Hidden Workforce" report of 1998, which indicated that most unemployed people are in fact classified as "Not in the Labour Force" and so aren't included with the "official unemployed" numbers announced monthly by Stats Can. In addition there is a massive "under-employment" problem in Canada, as evidenced by the Stats Can "Work Hours Instability in Canada" report of March 2006. Government and everybody else must be persuaded to recognize what this means in terms of gross under-performance of the economy relative to potential, and deal with it.

There will be solutions to the long-standing problems of gross lack of jobs in Canada relative to need ONLY if the problems just referred to are fixed. The same applies to Canada's immigration policies, at least for "independent immigrants" - who are currently selected for their education and qualifications based on the "human capital" immigration model, irrespective of whether there are jobs waiting for them or not.

Other problems, consisting of artificial disqualification of individuals from participating because of so-called "ineligibility" for federal E.I. benefits or provincial social assistance, are un-justifiable and inexcusable and must be removed by means of changes to certain regulations at federal and provincial government level. Regulations of the type referred to merely have the effect of dis-barring people out of work from contributing to the federal tax base and the provincial tax base, and hence are completely dysfunctional.

The descriptions of the deficiencies and remedies for them as noted below, may require detail amendments during the progress of any work to implement the remedies.

See also "**Table 1. REQUIRED CONDITIONS**" in **APPENDIX 1** above. As an example, "**conditions (4) and (5)**", referred to under para. **A2.1** below, means condition 4 and condition 5 in the table just referred to.

A2.1 Ontario Job Creation Partnerships (federal "ON-SITE" program prior to January 1st 2007).

This is a "transitional employment" program. It pays the person hired for 26 weeks, at the maximum regular E.I. benefit rate, to help defray re-training costs. After the initial 26 weeks, the employer MAY then hire the person at the regular rate for the job but does not sign any agreement to do so.

DEFICIENCIES:-

Fails on conditions (4) and (5) above. Also, there have been very small numbers of placements available relative to numbers of people interested. Restricted to people either meeting eligibility requirements for regular federal E.I. benefits or qualifying under “Reach Back”; “Reach Back” means up to 3 years after someone’s regular benefits expired except that this is extended to 5 years in the case of women who left the workforce to raise young children. The failure on condition (4) happens because of these arbitrary time limits combined with the time that some people have been out of work which can exceed 3 or even 5 years; they get classified as “Not in the Labour Force” by Statistics Canada after being out of work for 12 months or more. The failure on condition (5) happens because of inattention to the poor performance of the economy relative to potential, which means that the economy never permits employers to create anywhere near sufficient opportunities. **In addition to this,** someone contemplating a move to another province where job prospects appear better has to do so at their own expense, before applying to the program in that province. Further, an **additional type of failure** is exclusion from the program due to being refused E.I. benefits in the first place, based on “lack of insurable weeks” of employment - when this itself was due to layoff soon after starting work a previous employer.

REMEDIES: -

- (a) Abolish all the current E.I. –related eligibility rules. The only consideration should be that the person is out of work and wants to work.
- (b) Make the program fully portable between provinces.

A2.2 Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy (federal “Targeted Wage Subsidy” program prior to January 1st 2007).

This is also a “transitional employment” program. It pays the employer up to 60% of the regular salary for the job in question, for up to 78 weeks, to help defray re-training costs for the new hire. The employer, the new hire and the program administrators sign an agreement at the beginning - but the employer is not bound to hire the person for a specified length of time beyond the end of the subsidized period covered by the agreement.

DEFICIENCIES: -

Fails on conditions (4) and (5) above. Otherwise, it is similar to **Ontario Job Creation Partnerships** except that you can apply to use the program in another province where job prospects appear better, without having to move there before securing an agreement with an employer in the province where you propose to move.

REMEDIES: -

As for Ontario Job Creation Partnerships

A2.3 Ontario Opportunities Fund

This, like **Ontario Job Creation Partnerships** and the **Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy** also appears to be funded by the federal government and is targeted at people with a recognized disability. It involves a period of formal re-training and the job seeker has to try to prove that there will be a job to follow.

Reference: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/funding_programs/opportunities_fund/index.shtml

To get assistance from this program, the information you have to provide includes documented evidence of efforts to find work for the 2 months up to the date of applying, a minimum of 5 job postings for your proposed future career, details of family income and expenses (used in a “means test”, as part of the application process), and details of at least 3 employers where you plan to apply for jobs to commence at the end of your training period.

DEFICIENCIES: -

Fails on conditions (8) and (10)

The requirements for accessing the program include submission of certain evidence that PROSPECTS for getting appropriate work will be satisfactory, following a period of training. This is understandable but all the onus of proof is placed on the job seeker with no signed agreement on the part of any employer to hire the job seeker. Employers can say one thing but then “conveniently” back down later; other employers approached by the job seeker will then “conveniently” not be interested. The “means test” element also does not make sense. This program might work properly if (a) there were employers willing to sign agreements to hire from the moment someone signs on to the program, and (b) the “means test” was eliminated because it is irrelevant to the requirement for making a taxpayer out of someone who wants to work. If there were employers willing to sign agreements, the job search evidence and future employer information submission requirements become irrelevant, the application process becomes simpler and there would be much less work for the program administrators. Far more importantly, there would be better guarantees of work for the job seeker and return on investment for the government.

REMEDIES: -

- (a) Encourage employers to use the program and sign agreements with job seekers prior to entering the program
- (b) Eliminate the Means Test
- (c) Simplify the job seeker information submission requirements.

A2.4 “Second Career” – Ontario

Reference: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/secondcareer/>

Second Career was launched in June 2008 to help laid-off Ontarians identify and train for new careers in growing sectors. Each participant can receive up to \$28,000 to help pay for tuition, travel, books and other training costs.

But see also the following – CTV report “Making Ontario's job training work for jobseekers”: -

http://ottawa.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20081024/OTT_workers_training_081024/20081024/?hub=OttawaHome

Quote: “But former high-tech workers with university degrees face a challenge in accessing these resources, according to Ian Lambert, who has lost his job twice. ... But he was **too qualified for training** under the program, which will now accept people laid off since January 2005 or those with interim jobs.

Eligible workers must come from jobs no higher than a Level B national occupations classification, which don't require a university degree.

"The idea behind the second career strategy is to help lower-skilled workers access training that will get them in higher-skilled jobs..." "

DEFICIENCIES: -

Fails on condition (4) – because in practice most high tech workers and engineers have University degrees, Masters or Ph. D's

In Ottawa, particularly, there are also serious and inexcusable problems with deficient hiring practices in the public sector; these problems extend into the private sector because the public sector contracts out much of its work to private sector firms and individual "independent consultants" or "contractors". These deficient practices involve a combination of excessive rigidity concerning long and detailed lists of so-called "requirements for the position" which are often unnecessary. This is aggravated by the general non-availability in practice of transitional programs such as the Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy, which are supposed to help employers defray any retraining costs for closing up skill set "gaps" for new hires. Other problems involve use of clauses in government R.F.P.'s to exclude properly-supervised trainees from working on projects and unnecessary delays in paying private sector consultants who might also have employees.

See also <http://www.itbusiness.ca/it/client/en/TechGovernment/News.asp?id=782>

- "The government should follow the Golden Rule in hiring tech consultants"

It is no use anybody relying on the un-substantiated belief or assumption that anyone with a Degree or higher should have no trouble getting work – because in practice the job market just doesn't work that way and is grossly inefficient, partly for the reasons just given and partly because of the general refusal to acknowledge the underlying problems involving the large numbers of people applying for every job.

See also: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/employmentontario/>

REMEDIES: -

Remove the rule excluding jobs higher than Level B, and people with University degrees or higher.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: -

General comments.

Obviously not all the conditions (1) to (10) above are applicable because they do not involve "applying for a job" or "re-training for a job" in the usual sense.

A2.5 Ontario "Self Employment Benefit" program

Reference: http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/sid/cia/grants/self-emp/desc_self-emp.shtml

Self-Employment (SE) is an employment program of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) that provides financial assistance to eligible individuals to help them create jobs for themselves by starting a business.

Comments: -

Restricted to people either meeting eligibility requirements for regular federal E.I. benefits or qualifying under “Reach Back”; “Reach Back” means up to 3 years after someone’s regular benefits expired except that this is extended to 5 years in the case of women who left the workforce to raise young children.

DEFICIENCIES: -

Fails on condition (4) above.

It will also work if and only if the individual has a business idea which he / she has been able to develop to the point where there is an unambiguous and clearly defined route to the required destination i.e. good revenues and profits. This is usually based either on uniqueness of the business (i.e. no competitors offering anything comparable) - or on innovations which have the effect of being able to offer a service similar to other businesses, but at markedly lower prices whilst still allowing the business owner to generate good revenues and profits. In either case, the concept has to be proved before it can be considered worth investing in.

REMEDIES: -

Abolish all the current E.I. – related eligibility rules. The only consideration should be that the person is out of work and wants to work.

A2.6. “Lead to Win” program – Tony Bailetti / Carleton University.

Reference: <http://www.leadtowin.ca/>

Lead to Win is part of Carleton University's Talent First Network program and is focused on driving massive entrepreneurial activity.

The program is intended for talented individuals who want to launch a new technology business. The program is free to qualified applicants.

Reference: http://www.leadtowin.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=95&Itemid=182

Lead to Win is a business development program. The objective of the Lead to Win program is to establish and grow technology businesses in Canada's Capital Region. The goal is for each business to generate a minimum of six technology jobs in the next three years.

Comments: -

As with the **Self Employment Assistance** program, it will work if and only if the individual has a business idea which he / she has been able to develop to the point where there is an unambiguous and clearly-defined route to the required destination i.e. good revenues and profits. The numbers of people who can use the program effectively is limited solely by the aforementioned consideration.

This program, which is essentially about business leadership, has none of the problems typically associated with government programs, but does not provide provides financial assistance to new businesses.

OTHER PROGRAMS: -

A2.7. University-level courses – Degree, Masters and Ph.D.

Some of these – particularly Degree courses - come with co-op work terms, but not invariably. In any case, anyone graduating from a course at any level will in general not exactly fit the requirements of positions posted by employers, hence there will be some unavoidable skill set “gaps” between what prospective new hires can offer versus what the employers want. In some cases this may not matter, in other cases the ready availability of a “transitional employment” program will help particularly if the employer happens to be a small company.

DEFICIENCIES: -

Advertised “co-op” parts in a course also often do not come to pass because of adverse job market changes during the time span of the course, which **can lead to failure on condition (3)** if a transitional employment program happens to “conveniently” not be available, possibly followed by a **failure on condition (4)** and others as well.

REMEDIES: -

Make transitional employment programs such as the **Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy** available to all course graduates.

A2.8. Community College courses

Similar considerations to those for **University-level courses** apply.

A2.9 Vitesse Re-Skilling.

This partly involves some **University-level courses**.

See the web site <http://www.vitesse.ca/> for detailed information.

The O-Vitesse organization – since re-named Vitesse Re-Skilling - is successful in running high tech training programs whose graduates have no trouble getting employed. It has also achieved international recognition – in South Africa and elsewhere - as a sound example to follow.

See http://www.vitesse.ca/about_us/about.asp

It has been successful partly because there have been employers willing to sign agreements with O-Vitesse, the training provider and the job seeker prior to entering the program, concerning employment to commence on completion. The programs themselves also include several paid co-op type work terms with the employer in question, who may also pay the tuition fees. The job seeker is kept continually updated about changes in the employer’s requirements during the time span of the program and the training is adjusted accordingly. The result is that the job seeker has all the skills needed to fill a specific job, commencing when the program ends

Employer sponsors for Vitesse Re-Skilling programs - new as well as existing - are more difficult to find in 2009 than they were prior to 2001 but this situation will improve as new labour market “gaps” are discovered.

If new labour market “gaps” are found, posing a clear need for new Vitesse Re-Skilling programs, then government funding will be necessary if for some reason Canadian employer sponsors cannot be found.

Now see: <http://www.vitesse.ca/professionals/benefits.asp>

Some key features of the program are: -

- Excellent opportunity to re-skill™ within a sponsored program
- Focus on critical skill acquisition
- Fast track training period that combines work experience and accredited education
- Educational & employer 'mentorship'

Real opportunity for job link upon program completion

Failure on any of conditions (1) to (10) above is unlikely, assuming adequate finance - because of the programs' intentional built-in contractual relationships involving the job seeker, training provider, the employer and Vitesse Re-Skilling.

A2.10 FEDERAL / ONTARIO LABOUR MARKET AGREEMENT – EARLY 2008

This new agreement was signed in February 2008 and became effective as of April 1st 2008. Without going into lengthy details here, it clearly states that re-training is to be made available to everybody who is out of work – irrespective of for how long and whether or not the job seeker is deemed “eligible” for federal E.I. benefits under the usual rules.

DEFICIENCIES:-

The author, who is deemed “ineligible” for E.I. benefits, enquired about the effect of this agreement on his own case soon after April 1st 2008, with respect to accessing the Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy program. He was told that he was still “ineligible” because the Labour Market Agreement had not yet been “implemented”. At the time of writing (September 2009) there is still no statement of when the Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy program will be made available to people deemed “ineligible” for federal E.I. benefits. Thus it appears that the Government of Ontario is in breach of the Labour Market Agreement – at the expense of the author and anyone else deemed “ineligible” for federal E.I. benefits.

REMEDIES: -

The Government of Ontario must ensure without delay that it complies with the terms of the Agreement, more particularly when anyone requests assistance under the terms of the Agreement.

APPENDIX 3. IMMIGRATION, SO-CALLED “SKILL SHORTAGES” AND INATTENTION TO RE-TRAINING.

DEFICIENCIES: -

In 2009 and for years or decades past, a common type of problem involves employers claiming “skill shortages” whilst being unable / unwilling to sponsor any re-training of people already in Canada and out of work. Worse,

there is seldom any recognition of training requirements or even “down-time” just for an existing work force to keep up to date, never mind new hires. When they lay off members of an existing work force on the “grounds” that they are “out of date”, or some such, they then claim inability to get the people they need in Canada so as to “justify” lobbying for skilled immigrants to meet the said “skill shortages”. This dysfunctional approach could be compared with buying fireworks, letting them off and then discarding them after use - when people actually do not have the attributes and limitations of brainless fireworks.

See also www.unempgeninfo.com - in general.

On this same web site, see the following in particular: -

2008/04-1. Title: Skilled IT Worker Shortage a Major Concern, April 04, 2008 article by Tess van Straaten in the periodical, **Business Edge**

Another problem, directly related to this, concerns training programs being set up with no jobs actually waiting for the people graduating from the courses. Currently, the Obama administration in the U.S. is running into trouble with this, as evidenced by the following: -

Reference: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/06/us/06retrain.html>

- **New York Times article of July 5th 2009, “Job Retraining May Fall Short of High Hopes”.**

It is obviously imperative that proper attention be paid to making the economy work properly, such that it creates sufficient jobs for everybody who wants to work. Only if this is done will there be hope of training programs of any kind being effective on the scale that is actually necessary.

See also the following report: -

Reference: http://www.spcottawa.on.ca/z_home_e.asp

“Immigrants Economic Integration: Successes and Challenges”. Social Planning Council of Ottawa, June 2009. From the Executive Summary: -

Quote (on pages 8 and 9): -

“There are several factors that lead to economic exclusion for immigrants. This report, building on previous work by the Social Planning Council, clarifies that economic exclusion for immigrants on the one hand, and visible minority citizens on the other, is multi-faceted.

The report points to five primary factors affecting the economic status of immigrants, as follows:

- **Labour market barriers** experienced by first-generation immigrants (e.g. lack of recognition of foreign credentials and experience, language barriers, difficulties related to the naturalization process, challenges faced by refugees).
- **Labour market barriers** experienced by ethnic minority residents (either Canadian born or immigrants), (access to networks and social capital, cultural context in hiring and promotion, racism and anti-Arab sentiment, particularly since 9/11, and a shortage of culturally appropriate child care).

- **The nature of Ottawa's economy and labour market** (e.g. predominance of the federal government as employer with various systemic barriers to employment; growing number of precarious jobs; increasing educational requirements for administrative, professional and managerial positions; downturn in sectors with a significant proportion of immigrant employees such as the high tech sector; importance of knowledge based employment with rapidly changing education requirements, etc).
- **The demographic and family structures of immigrant communities**, esp. recent (including visible minority) immigrants - larger percentage of dependents, larger percentage of one-earner families, – coupled with lack of access to affordable day care (e.g. in 2007, there were only 7,481 subsidized, licensed child care spaces and 3,614 children on the waiting list) and appropriate housing.
- **Racialization of economic exclusion in Ottawa**, particularly poverty, resulting in polarization of economic benefits along colour lines. The factors which result in the racialization of poverty are the same as those which affect immigrants.

From the above highlights, it is clear that family and labour policies and programs to address the challenges that immigrant families face are crucial for their social and economic inclusion and the City's economic prosperity. “

Comments

The report just referred to appears to be very complete, except for one glaring and fundamental omission: the numbers of people applying for every job that becomes open - as if the issue does not even exist. Yet, for obvious reasons, this is basic to determining the time required for someone to find work and become a contributor to the tax base. It is also basic to determining the numbers of people who can be effectively re-trained – which equals the numbers of jobs that can be made available.

REMEDIES: -

A public education campaign, through the media, concerning the following: -

1. The interplay between immigration policies, alleged “skill shortages”, labour shortages, lack of jobs in Canada relative to need, inattention to re-training and the overall under-performance of the economy relative to potential.
2. The requirement for attention to the real numbers of jobs needed.
3. The requirement for employers to pay attention to training every time they hire somebody.
4. The requirement to change the general mind-set which tacitly accepts or encourages a massive wastage of people. People simply do not have the attributes and limitations of brainless fireworks which are designed to be let off and then discarded after use.
5. The requirement for economic policies, tax and immigration policies which are better informed concerning the numbers of jobs needed to employ everybody properly.

It should be noted that Vitesse Re-Skilling is well placed to provide input and direction to any such public education campaign.

APPENDIX 4. SOME REPORTS ABOUT THE JOBLESS AND THE NUMBERS APPLYING FOR JOBS POSTED.

So far as this author is concerned, the inattention to the implications of this for job seekers, government's own tax base and the economy - by everybody – almost defies belief and is totally unsatisfactory.

Even the “Engineering Technology Labour Market Study – Final Report” of April 2009 does not address this and its obvious implications.

NUMBERS OF JOB APPLICATIONS REPORTED FOR EVERY JOB OPEN

Ratio	Source and Remarks
300 to 800	http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OttawaHiTech/message/329 From Paul Swinwood, President of SHRC - April 26, 2003 posting
Up to 5,000	http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OttawaHiTech/message/663 Federal government
1000	http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OttawaHiTech/message/794 Federal government (DND)
1000	http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OttawaHiTech/message/797 Also federal government – example involved 1000 applicants, of whom 265 selected to write exam, of whom 75 interviewed, of whom 25 put on eligibility list for between 4 and 15 positions depending on funding (note: 15 minus 4 equals 11 possible “pink elephant” situations for some unlucky persons involved
***N/s	http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OttawaHiTech/message/2754 Refer to OSPE letter to the P.M. dated March 18th 2004 – effects of immigration policy
500+	http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OttawaHiTech/message/3774 Local (Ottawa) engineering co: 500 applicants in one week quoted by the co.'s HR dept. - June 17, 2004 posting
1,470	mail@a-better-chance.org - E-mail to author Monday, May 09, 2005 3:28 PM Local (Ottawa) agency helping immigrants.

Other indicators reported: -

Few takers as Ottawa jobs more widely available

Kathryn May, CanWest News Service; Ottawa Citizen

Published: Monday, November 26, 2007

Quote: "...the government nationally advertised 660 job postings in the Ottawa-area and received 143,000 applications."

The ratio of applicants to positions was 143,000 / 660 = 217

Hardly a surprise

The Ottawa Citizen

Published: Wednesday, November 28, 2007

Quote: - "This article stated that since April, **660 job postings in the national capital region were advertised and received 143,000 applications**. Only 34 per cent lived outside the region. The only region that attracted fewer outside applicants was Quebec, largely because of the language requirements. **Surely there can't be any surprise here..... isn't it obvious that the reason for the low number of applications is the same as that for the low number in Quebec -- the need to have French?**"

From a current Ottawa Business Journal discussion board: reference

<http://discussion.ottawabusinessjournal.com/article.php?sid=1084>

"Nortel today, Cognos this summer", comment dated March 03 2008: -

"I am in government and I deal with HR. We do not get 1000 CV's for any given poster and the more specific the poster, the lower the **numbers of CV's are received**. Anywhere **from 70-400** is more appropriate. **Add to that, you have a very high percentage of people (educated guess would be around 85%) who have limited or no experience in the posting they have applied for, do not meet the requirements and the list goes on.....**

Laid-off workers go back to school

Former auto worker retraining for new career in electricity sector

March 25, 2009

Tyler Hamilton

ENERGY REPORTER

Quote 1:-

"Luxton is a rare specimen on the (auto) assembly line. He's got a degree from Carleton University with a B.A. in architecture and art history, which is a good sign – it means he's likely to complete his retraining program."

(Jason Luxton, who is featured in this article, had applied for the Second Career program in Ontario)

Quote 2 (by laid-off auto worker Jason Luxton):-

"In the Durham region there's so much competition for work. **You're fighting with 100, if not 200 people for one position. It's getting ridiculous. I'm not desperate yet, but I'm getting to that point.**"

PS to stay on hiring spree, clerk says

New graduates, mid-career professionals targeted

By Kathryn May, The Ottawa Citizen March 27, 2009

Quote: "A sagging economy always creates a demand for secure government jobs. Applications for federal jobs have increased in recent months. **Last year, the government drew more than a million applications -- about 90 applications for every job posted.** "

Closing comments concerning this Appendix: -

For instance: -

1. How could you say, in 2007, that there were "Few Takers as Ottawa jobs more widely available" when on average there were 217 applications submitted for every government job posted?

2. How could you say in March 2009 that the "PS (is) to stay on hiring spree, clerk says" when there was an average of 90 applications submitted for every government job posted during 2008?

NONE OF THIS MAKES ANY SENSE!!