

Women in our Industry

Corrie Robley

**Executive Director
Nova Scotia Automotive Human Resource
Sector Council**



What she does

As Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Automotive Human Resource Sector Council (AHRSC), Corrie Robley engages the Province's repair industry employers and listens to their workforce issues and needs. Through industry committees that can best represent regional and cross-sectoral segments of the industry, she works to plan, develop and implement solutions and strategies to achieve common goals. "Our provincial strategies and HR solutions are designed to be user-friendly, practical and accessible by all employers," says Corrie. "Furthermore, our initiatives are designed to improve the health, job mobility and future growth of Nova Scotia's automotive work force."

Biggest challenge

While small and medium sized businesses, which make up just over half of the repair and service industry, are focused on operations, "the greatest challenge we have is getting the message to them of the value of the Sector Council, and the role it can play for them," says Corrie. She draws the analogy that "the Council is essentially the Province's automotive human resource department, especially for small and medium enterprises." Employers become engaged in the Council's work and realize the benefits by attending their regional industry meeting, which has a high priority HR topic on the agenda."

The right job at the right time

"It's important to believe in the work you do. I'm thankful for the opportunity to get up every morning and enjoy going to work" says Corrie. "This career opportunity was simply meant to be, and came with the right set of circumstances." Through networking, Corrie

was introduced to the NS Automotive Sector Council, was interviewed, and decided to volunteer her time with the Council for two weeks to decide if this was the best 'fit'. She's been there ever since, and has served as Executive Director since 2006.

Skills and interests

Industry mentorship was an essential element in allowing Corrie to quickly learn the strengths and weaknesses of the automotive labour market, even though she did not have a background in the automotive industry before her appointment. What drives her, and has earned her the respect of her industry peers, is that "My education, professional development and passion are in human resource management and project management. I excel when I am working with other professionals to identify needs and in turn develop solutions that work." To anyone that meets her, it is very clear, that she means every word when she says that what motivates her is "being able to make a difference in the industry", and "identifying employers' needs and having the capacity, flexibility and creative opportunity to deliver results."

Greatest Rewards

The greatest sense of accomplishment, as far as Corrie is concerned, "comes from real success stories within individual companies; from knowing that your efforts made a difference in someone's life." These rewarding moments can come from connecting employees to the education system, so they can complete their high school education; creating a model enabling business employers to access skills training they can apply in their work, life and community; and "seeing months of paper work and consultation turn into enabling a young man and his family to immigrate to Canada to make a better life for themselves, while meeting employers' staffing needs."

"One of our greatest achievements has been to provide the leadership and the coordination necessary to help the Collision Repair Industry move towards compulsory certification," says Robley. This effort to raise the bar for training and skills standards in the industry came about after much hard work, not "trying to move the mountain, but working together to reach the summit."



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Corrie Robley continued

Work life balance

“Professional and forward thinking employers” Corrie believes, “realize that to achieve the highest productivity levels possible by their employees, they must provide an environment and work schedule that best fit each individual employee. We all work, think and communicate differently. Management needs to lead by example, offer flexible work schedules when possible, and provide a cafeteria style benefit program, to start.”

Her message for youth

The best thing that high school students can do, Corrie believes, is to take the initiative and go out and meet local employers, and then try an occupation on for size. “Hands-on career exploration is so important, to help young people decide what is of interest to them.”

In her constant travels around Nova Scotia to meet with industry employers, Corrie comes across a number of women in a variety of industry occupations. “Women excel in management, business development and as service advisors.” she finds, “These are three key roles I see most often filled by women in our industry.”

Other work

Corrie invests additional time and energy as President of the Association of Industry Sector Councils (AISC) which brings together eight Nova Scotia sector councils representing employers and

employees representing many industries including automotive, ICI construction, fisheries, health care, tourism, trucking, boatbuilding and home renovation and building.

“The AISC is a key organization for industry partners. Our organization offers one venue to communicate to and streamlines the process. We also share documents, human resource solutions and best practices to avoid duplication. We may take the best of the best and tailor it to our own industry.”



The future

“The greatest change I have experienced since I started at the NSAHRC in 2000,” says Corrie, “is how many employers are realizing the importance of focusing on human resource management and recognizing it as a necessity tool for their business. To be in business years from now, a company wants to strive for low-turnover and high employee satisfaction all through strong and positive management. The old saying goes, people don’t leave good jobs, they leave poor management.”

Looking to the near future, Corrie foresees the automotive industry investing more time and money in managing its people. Like other industries, the automotive repair and service industry will be competing for a smaller group of new workers coming into the workforce.

For herself? “I know I will continue to work with organizations that have identified organizational issues and need assistance to plan, develop and deliver company solutions together.”

For 2007-2008, working for the Nova Scotia automotive industry has included:

- working with over 70 employers (one-on-one) over the space of a year, helping them engage in the school system and ultimately connecting to Nova Scotian youth.
- looking at ways to get industry more involved in the secondary and post-secondary education network based on research into the motivations and career intentions of secondary and post-secondary automotive students. As part of this, AHRSC facilitated regional network meetings across Nova Scotia to bring together employers, school boards, teachers and provincial community based learning groups.
- designing a five-month employability course for Aboriginal Youth, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College. For this program, Aboriginal youth were interviewed by employers, selected, given 3 months of essential skills upgrading and basic automotive service and repair training by industry instructors, followed by a work term opportunity.
- researching to find out if automotive glass repair businesses feel there is a need to designate the Automotive Glass Technician as a trade under the NS Apprenticeship Trade and Qualification Act, as governed by the NS Department of Education.
- researching to identify the provincial protocol, advantages and limitations to recruiting certified (or near certified) technicians from outside of Canada. Moreover, to establish business relations with the Immigration network and key stakeholders.