



Canadian Automotive  
Repair and Service  
Service d'entretien et de  
réparation automobiles du Canada

PERFORMANCE *driven*

# ■ EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMUNITY:

WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM THE CARS 2009 LABOUR MARKET UPDATE STUDY!

The Canadian Automotive Repair and Service (CARS) Council continues to keep an ear to the ground to assess the rapid pace of change that pervades the automotive, truck and collision repair and service sector.

The most recent of these studies is the 2009 LMU study.

## The importance of essential skills:

While the majority of employees working in the automotive repair and service sector are confident that they possess the knowledge and skills to perform their jobs, some 35%, are less confident.

CARS' research indicates that essential skills, or foundation skills, remain an area in which many industry workers could be improved. More than one half of employers say their employees need improvement with:

- Problem solving;
- Continuous learning;
- Decision making;
- Job task planning and organization;
- Computer usage; and
- Critical thinking.

## Skills assessment and training:

CARS' study determined that the availability of training was a key factor in recruitment and in improving retention. Over 80% of employers reported that they offered training as part of their recruitment strategy.

The study also identified that critical to the successful take-up of training, was the ability to effectively assess the training needs as part of a responsive and sustainable training plan.

The study indicated that the majority of industry employers are not accessing available resources necessary to conduct accurate needs assessment and direct employees to appropriate learning solutions.

Participants in the LMU roundtable discussions cited online resources such as CARSability and CARS OnDemand as being particularly useful tools in the development of a training plan.

## New vehicle technologies making an impact:

New vehicle technologies are bringing exciting change to the automotive repair and service workplace at an unprecedented pace.

Driven by consumer demand, safety, fuel economy and environmental concerns, new technologies have also predicated immense changes in the requirements for new skills, knowledge and training for employees and apprentices.

The 2009 LMU echoed the findings of previous industry studies that noted the two key factors challenging industry participants were the pace of change and the increasing intricacy of new vehicles. The complexity of vehicles now requires that technicians become familiar with very complex electrical and electronic technologies and be able to understand and operate the more sophisticated technologies.

### Labour market:

The 2009 LMU paints a picture of a sector with an estimated 13,000 unfilled positions, of which about 37% are service technician positions. The report notes that 29% of industry employers surveyed say they have one or more unfilled positions within their shop. Labour supply and demand will continue to be closely matched for the next five years thus demanding an investment in both technology and training as a long-term necessity.

### Sector profile:

The Canadian automotive repair and service sector is comprised of 306,165 employees (Statistics Canada, *2006 Census*) and 66,262 facilities across Canada.

The most common occupation in the automotive repair and service sector is that of automotive service technician (AST). ASTs account for one in four sector employees (25%), and employers who have at least one AST on staff employ an average of 4.81 ASTs per location. The second most common occupation is counterperson, constituting just over one tenth of sector employees, with an average of 3.05 per location.

### CARS 2009 LMU Study Highlights:

- The impact of new vehicle technologies
- Critical new skills needed now
- Barriers and constraints to business development
- Need for planning in recruitment and retention
- Need for sharing of HR 'best practices'
- The value of apprenticeship
- New training for new vehicle technologies
- Need for training in new business technologies

Installers and technician specialists are also common and are roughly equal in numbers in the sector, each accounting for 9% of all sector employees.

The sector has undergone considerable consolidation in recent years with larger businesses increasing in number relative to smaller, independent operations. However, small independent repair shops still comprise the largest proportion of businesses in the sector.

For more information, go to [www.cars-council.ca](http://www.cars-council.ca)

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In compiling the 2009 Labour Market Update, CARS conducted 2,181 employer surveys; 1,481 employee surveys; interviews with 48 post-secondary institutions; and, 12 roundtable discussions with employers, employees and educators/policy makers.