

## Narrowing the Skills Gap

### **Issue:**

Ontario businesses are increasingly having trouble finding the skilled and talented people they need to compete in the global knowledge-based economy, thereby constraining Ontario's competitiveness, productivity and economic progress.

### **Background:**

Recent research from prominent organizations proves that businesses are having trouble finding the skilled and talented people they need. Manpower Inc.'s (the world's leading staffing firm) January 2006 survey of 1,000 Canadian employers found that 66 per cent are having a tough time finding qualified job applicants.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses 2002 survey of 6,740 small and medium-sized business owners found that 50 per cent were concerned with the shortage of qualified labour and 60 per cent said it would be harder to find employees in the next three years. The Conference Board of Canada 2002 employer survey found that significant numbers of government and private sector organizations were experiencing skills shortages and Projected that the trend would intensify in next three to five years especially for particular occupations (professional and technical positions, senior management and executives, middle managers and supervisors)

The Hamilton Training Advisory Board 2005 survey of 200 small and medium-sized Hamilton businesses found that skills shortages, recruitment and succession planning were three of their top-five HR issues. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce reports that 52 per cent of skilled trades people are expected to retire within the next 15 years and 45 per cent of all steel trades people will retire in the next five years. The same report states that by 2020, if those workers are not replaced, Canada could be short one million workers.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:  
Establish a task force to:

- a) Document the best practices of local organizations across Ontario that are successfully leading community based workforce development;
- b) Examine the feasibility of establishing a program that would reward the leading organizations with additional resources, support and exposure; and
- c) Collaborate with the leading organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, to construct and promote a workforce development model that can be customized by other Ontario communities to meet their unique needs.