



# Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council

Industrial-Commercial-Institutional

**Media Release**  
**May 9, 2007**

## **Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council Industrial-Commercial-Institutional**

### **2005-2007 Labour Market Reports**

#### **Backgrounder**

##### **Mandate:**

The Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council, Industrial-Commercial-Institutional (NSCSC – ICI), is a not for profit organization established to communicate and consult with the founding Member Organizations:

- ▶ Cape Breton Island Building & Construction Trades Council,
- ▶ Construction Management Bureau,
- ▶ Mainland Nova Scotia Building & Construction Trades Council,

the construction sector and federal and provincial partners to identify areas of concern related to human resource planning and skills development within the sector.

Working in partnership with the Member Organizations, NSCSC directors and staff will provide human resource and labour market information to industry partners including Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Province of Nova Scotia departments and agencies, national Construction Sector Council, public and private training institutions, associations, organizations, groups and individual Nova Scotians.

##### **Purpose**

Contribute Research and Labour Market Information which will support recommended short, medium and long term improvements and solutions focusing on the human resource capacity of this sector to:

- ▶ identify imminent and future skills required by sector employees.
- ▶ identify current worker skills and qualifications,
- ▶ identify the demand for additional skills development,
- ▶ identify current and future essential skills and new technology,
- ▶ promote this industry as a professional career choice.

##### **Goal**

To compliment the work of labour and management organizations, government departments and other industry associations and organizations and work to ensure industry and government investment is managed to benefit the sector.

The Labour Relations Board of Nova Scotia defines the Industrial and Commercial Sector as: *“Any aspect of the construction industry other than pipeline construction, bridge building, road building, the construction of sewers, tunnels and water mains and house building”*. House building is defined as: *“Construction of single family dwellings or duplexes for the purpose of residential use.”*

**Labour and Management working together.**



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## **LABOUR MARKET ASSESSMENT**

### **FACT SHEET**

According to this study, there is not an absence of labour (individuals to work) in Nova Scotia. In fact, the high response rate from individuals who indicated they “worked less than they wanted” indicates some “slack” in the labour supply. When a “skills shortage” is claimed, it does not mean the absence of skills; rather it indicates a need for continuing workforce training and development within a sector where methods, practices, tools and materials constantly change as new projects requiring new skills arise. According to employers, labour with the required skills and qualifications are in high demand. New projects sometimes require a new or upgraded set of skills; with the proper support for training infrastructure, the workforce will be more than capable of acquiring these necessary skills.

The ICI construction industry is very competitive and is driven by projects that arise as the financial realities dictate. As the demographic of the sector changes (retirement of older workers and fewer new entrants), the labour pool’s ability to meet these labour requirements is declining. Nova Scotia is too small to permit regions of the province to risk losing their critical mass of labour as a result of out migration to larger centres.

So what are we faced with?

We have a sector whose demographic is constantly changing and being challenged by mixed messages of the present and future state of the industry. Promotion of the trades as a viable career choice is needed with means to continue training/skills development in an economy that encourages investment.

#### **Demographic**

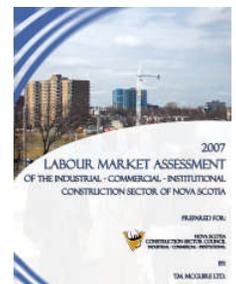
- The average age of ICI workers is 39 years (Min age 18, Max age 73 and most common age 44)
- 98% are Male (*visible minorities and women remain underrepresented in this industry*)
- The average worker has 15 years of experience in ICI construction

#### **Employment**

On average, workers:

- Worked 54% in ICI construction each year
- Worked 17% in Residential construction each year
- Worked 4% in ‘Non-Residential’ construction each year
- Worked 8% in ‘Other Sectors’
- Were ‘Unemployed’ 17% of each year
- 46% noted they worked “about as much as they wanted to”
- 47% noted they worked “less than preferred” (69.6% of these felt their main reason for working less was due to “lack of enough work”)
- 7% noted they worked “more than they wanted”

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At the time of the survey:

- 63.9% are employed in their trade
- 29.6% are unemployed
- 2.8% are employed in 'another sector'
- 2.4% are employed in ICI but not in their trade
- 1.1% are retired
- 88% of individuals currently unemployed indicated they "were able to work in their trade"

In the last 5 years, over 50% of employers surveyed had an increase in the numbers of trades workers they employ.

### Education

- 40% of workers have Red Seal certifications
- 57% hold a trade school or community college diploma
- 37% completed Grade 12 or equivalent
- 13% have Grade 9-12
- 8% hold a technical college diploma
- 4% have a university degree
- 3% have less than Grade 9

60% of employers stated they have a difficult time finding employees with the basic skills required.

### Retirement Plans

- 8% plan to retire within 1-3 years
- 6% plan to retire within 4-5 years
- 26% plan to retire within 5-10 years
- 14% plan to retire within 10-15 years
- 32% plan to retire in more than 15 years

### Mobility

- 78% do not plan to relocate/move to obtain work
- Workers aged 21-25 and 36-39 years have a higher probability/interest in relocating/moving for work
- Those who temporarily relocated for work had been gone for an average of 18 months

### Entering the Trades

Prior to working in ICI construction, workers worked an average of 1.4 fields. The top four being:

- 25% Information Technology
- 18% Public Administration
- 14% Educational Services
- 14% Management of Companies & Enterprises
- Workers identified: 'better wages, better standard of living, enjoyment working with their hands, family reasons, type/interest of work', as reasons they entered the ICI trades
- 59% would recommend a career in ICI construction to their children (67% to other family members)

- For more Information, please contact the Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council- ICI, or visit our website at [www.constructioncouncil.ns.ca](http://www.constructioncouncil.ns.ca)

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## **IT SKILLS FOR THE WORKPLACE**

### **FACT SHEET**

Although Information Technology is not usually synonymous with construction, many employers and labour representatives alike believe implementing IT Skills is a strategy to increase productivity and at least partially offset demographic changes. In that sense, increasing IT skills is a pillar in building a strong ICI construction sector workforce.

How do we do this?

The IT Skills for the Workplace report states the “adoption of IT will require a cultural shift” similar to the adoption of safety practices. Today the industry has a good safety culture. However, it took a good deal of effort to convince the industry that using safety devices was important. IT needs to support an organization’s capacity to model, analyze, simulate, and predict a project’s performance.

The report discusses the role and scope of IT in construction. It is situated in the current industry context with projects becoming increasingly complex technically, environmentally, socially, legally, and culturally. There are increasing economic pressures on facility owners and therefore on their projects with shorter and shorter timelines.

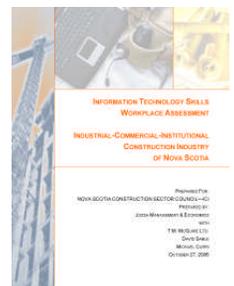
Within the business offices of the ICI construction sector, IT skill requirements are the same as they are for most businesses: data management, communications, project management, accounting, word processing, etc. As in most industries, there are early adopters who take the initiative and are actively interested in IT skills. The advantage of bringing IT into project management, materials inventory, scheduling and related administrative functions is clear. Both larger and smaller firms are already implementing IT to address these functions on large-scale projects.

In general, older workers are not eager to take on radically new ways of working involving skill sets based on digital technology. There are, however, exceptions to the generalization, and employers should be readily able to identify older or displaced workers who are interested in extending their careers as estimators, administrators or specialists in niche sub-trades.

Generally, the use of IT is growing among:

- Estimators,
- Project managers,
- The project development team (architects, engineers, contractors),
- Foremen/supervisors (scheduling, inventories, timesheets, voice communications, etc.), and
- Specific trades, particularly the mechanical and electrical trades that are beginning to rely on digital electronics, sensors, monitors, etc. in their tools

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The overriding need is to optimize the tradesperson's productivity, leaving job administration and IT to the foreman/supervisor. However, the primary IT skills gap that our research uncovered focused on foremen and supervisors. One of the main obstacles reported to upgrading skills was finding time to dedicate to training for the Foremen and Supervisors. Among workers, there is a willingness and interest on adopting IT in their work environment and there appears to be recognition that the workforce is moving in this direction. **The need for training is essential.**

The larger the project, the more likely the project will be managed using IT, involving the general contractor and all or some of the sub-trades sharing project related data through an extranet (network). Large projects are more likely to involve owners who are more technologically sophisticated. Research shows the increased use of IT is demanded by clients so that:

- They are kept up-to-date on project progress; and
- The project is run more smoothly with less disruption for existing tenants working in the facility.

Some concerns expressed regarding the applicability of IT on jobsites include:

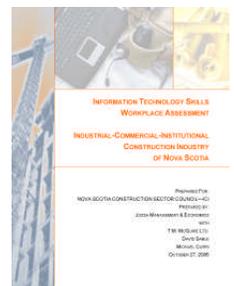
- Noise and other factors on the job site render some communications technology almost useless. Mobile technologies such as Personal Digital Assistants (PDA's) have screens that are far too small to display blueprints and drawings.
- Internet/Network connections at many job sites are unstable or nonexistent.
- Under rugged conditions, IT equipment must be able to withstand dust, moisture, and physical shocks.
- No technology integrates all needs (data transfer and good quality voice, for example). Consequently, different devices are needed for related tasks. Are more multi-function technologies coming? Manufacturers have not adequately tested their generic mobile technologies in construction environments or designed versions that are adequate to the conditions and needs on many construction job sites.

These problems tend to reinforce any existing reluctance to use IT on the job site.

The report emphasizes that knowledge of multiple trades is becoming more necessary as the construction sector produces more "smart" buildings through IT. IT will help tradespeople anticipate problems on site and respond on a timely basis during construction and ongoing operation and maintenance.

With the demands for increasingly complex buildings, IT Skills will be necessary for productivity and management of the ICI construction sector.

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## **MAJOR WORKFORCE ACTIVITY SCHEDULE MODEL**

### **FACT SHEET**

The Major Workforce Activity Schedule Model is an online human resource tool developed by the Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council – Industrial-Commercial-Institutional (NSCSC-ICI). It includes a schedule of projected major activities within the ICI construction sector and includes details of each project to:

- align the available skill supply with project demands in the industry;
- reduce overlapping schedules of major activities drawing from a common labour pool; and
- provide labour with the insight on upcoming workforce demands requiring specific training, qualifications and resources

essentially providing the Nova Scotia ICI construction sector a resource to address supply and demand imbalances within the industry.

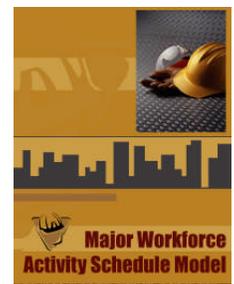
Focus groups, industry presentations and individual interviews conducted in Atlantic Canada and Alberta with construction employers and workers, noted that:

- The Major Workforce Activity Schedule is an extremely valuable to the labour force – both those workers who left Nova Scotia and those considering relocation;
- This information increases awareness of workforce demands and alleviates concerns associated with perceived levels of stable employment;
- The workforce finally has a tool to coordinate opportunities for consistent work without looking to other regions of Canada and the United States for job security;
- Any knowledge of workforce requirements and qualifications needed assists in the development of skill levels and justifies training programs; and
- Labour representatives will be able to prepare more effectively for industry demand by coordinating recruitment efforts, training programs and contract negotiations.

All research conducted for the MWASM focused on the ICI construction sector of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada. The research process primarily consisted of first hand, face-to-face interviews intended to develop relationships and cooperation among industry (management and labour) to address workforce activity demand imbalances.

All information presented on the schedule is confirmed by each company's representative responsible for planning the activity.

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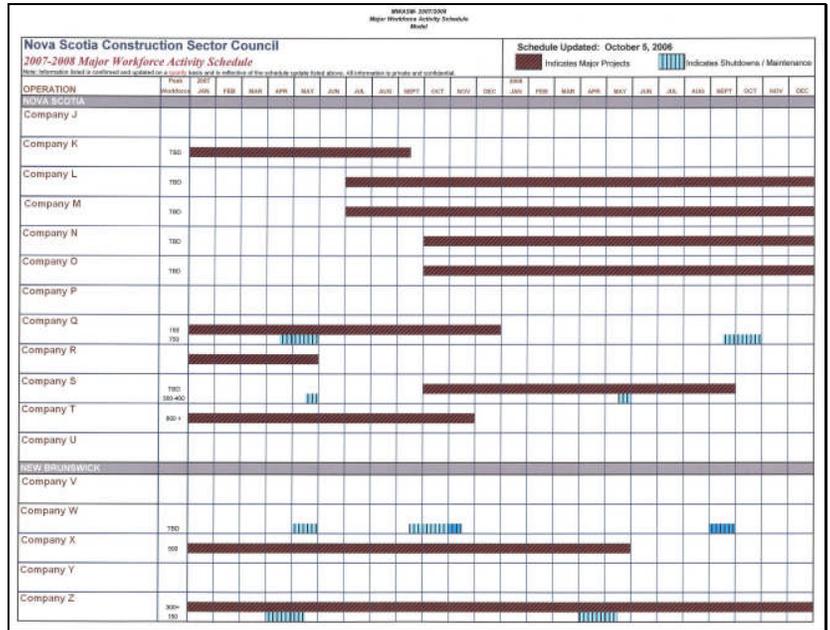




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### Major Workforce Activity Schedule Model

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**Company X**  
Updated December 31, 05

**Major Workforce Activity Schedule Model**

**COMPANY X**

Company X is scheduling Major Projects for the period: **March 2007 through January 2008**

Company X is scheduling Maintenance/Shutdown/Turnaround for: **April 17 to June 1, 2007 & 2008**

Major Projects – Workforce Demand (March 07 – January 08):		Maintenance/Shutdown/Turnaround – Workforce Demand (April 17, 2007 – June 1, 2007 & 2008)	
Trade	Workforce Projections	Trade	Workforce Projections
Boilermakers		Boilermakers	
Carpenters		Carpenters	
Crane Operators		Crane Operators	
Electricians		Electricians	
Insulators		Insulators	
Ironworkers		Ironworkers	
Labourers		Labourers	
Plumbers		Plumbers	
Sheet Metal Workers		Sheet Metal Workers	
<b>Total Workforce</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>Total Workforce</b>	<b>TBD</b>

**Desired Qualifications**  
At this time, Company X has identified the following required qualifications:  

- WHMIS & Confined Spaces

\*Note: All figures, qualifications, dates and details are preliminary and subject to change. All logos and information provided herein are the sole property of the contributing organization.

Sample Details Page identifying projects

With increasing industry awareness and support, this model continues to be an essential resource for the ICI construction sector to effectively engage human resource planning.

