

## AN INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT- HOW ARE WE DOING ?

In the spring of 2018, the Ontario collision repair industry trade association, CIIA in co-operation with the Ontario College of Trades and the Workplace Safety and Prevention Services health and safety agency (WSPS), looked at the latest data for our trade.

In Ontario, there are, as of April 2018, a total of 4494 licensed technicians in collision repair and in autobody. These trades are restricted and mandatory, meaning that if you are performing most work in these trades you must be trades licensed. Failure to be licensed brings with it enforcement action which may include, being given a warning, being sent home or a ticket or charge. Automotive Painter and Automotive Glass Technician are voluntary trades and do not require trades licensing. There are 814 apprentices in the mandatory Collision and Auto Body trades.

The average age of a technician is going down in the last three years from 51 to 49 years old. Apprentices are getting older, aging from 27 to now 29 years old.

And they are better at working safely. New WSPS data from Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) show that auto body and collision repair shops Lost Time Injury rate dramatically lower than all other sectors in the automotive repair sector. In fact your chances of being injured on the job are a third of the chances of getting injured on the job another similar business, like automotive general repair or auto recycling.

Shops are still not registering for payment of WSIB premiums with only 1277 shops showing as having an account. There are 9,277 equivalent full-time staff working in the Ontario industry that are paying premiums, largely through their employer into the WSIB. Typically WSIB suggests a 25% non-compliance value but that rate in this industry is generally considered too low and that some shops are exempted due to possession of their own private insurance coverage or family business status. Typically the industry is viewed at employing some 12-13,000 people in this province.

Ontario has the largest number of collision and autobody repair facilities in the country. Statistics Canada new year 2015 data shows 8,926 shops in the country with just over 82% of those shops actually making a profit according to the latest data.

Often the big question asked is: How do we get more qualified staff to work at shops in Ontario?

Here are some of the advances that CIIA, working with our partners has accomplished in the last few months:

1) CIIA provides a three-day audit program of community college delivered programs with the co-operation of the College. These audits examine the delivery of the curriculum, interview staff and students , review equipment and interview employers in the area for what additional areas employers feel should be better emphasized or more effort spent on current curriculum issues. Employers should be able to rely on the training standards and published curriculum to determine the skills level of their apprentices when exiting a two-month training session at the College.

2) A new exemption test for Autobody Collision Damage Repairer (ABCDR) Level 1 is now available and in use at all colleges in the province, not just the Colleges that provide autobody and collision damage repairer (ABCDR) training. This exemption testing now allows those students that have some experience or even some training in the field to be able to prove competency and if successful, can bypass Level 1 training on their way to becoming a good technician and can then eliminate a year of their training requirements based on their experience. Copies of the application form are available at each College. A package is also available from CIIA.

3) As of November 2017, more grants and incentives are now available to assist both employers and apprentices in the Autobody and Collision Damage Repair trade. With incentive grants to the employer ranging from \$2500 in the first year to \$4300 when the apprentice becomes a tech, these grants, including the new Apprentice Loan of up to \$4000 per semester of training, and the \$2000 given to an employer on hiring and again at 6 months of apprenticeship or worker employment , help reduce the risks employers are faced with and make a hiring decision easier. Female worker and apprentice hirings generate even larger incentives to employers and the federal government has identified a new federal incentive planned in the last budget for trades that have few female workers with a further up to \$6000 for the employer to hire female workers.

4) The association web site ([www.ciia.com](http://www.ciia.com)) has been expanded to better feature job postings and resumes and to help shops with sample female-oriented ads, templates, interview techniques and female-friendly employment options for shops.

5) Curriculum at three school boards (and soon a fourth) were, with the permission of the provincial government, removed from the Grade 11 and Grade 12 delivery at high schools and replaced with the province's Level 1 apprenticeship program. This new curriculum was designed by industry to better meet employer and industry demands. This means that students graduating from high school will be full year ahead of their competitors and may be exempted for the

Level 1 training at the community college . This would make these students eligible for hiring one year earlier as techs and with skills needed by shops.

6) A new curriculum has been designed for the Branch 2 autobody program and now put into place. This will help more employers who may have wanted to hire an eager apprentice who did not have the required educational background to qualify for the collision repair technician trade.

7) CIIA has again this year endorsed the pre-apprenticeship training courses in Hamilton and Toronto with letters of intent from employers to assist delivery agents in their successful efforts to attract government funding for this training. These two class alone will generate a further forty new apprentices and techs this year. CIIA has also provided Tool Awareness training for some pre-apprenticeship courses to help students become more familiar with what work they are expected to complete for their employers during their initial co-op work placement.

8) Community college that deliver apprenticeship training for the Autobody Collision Damage Repairer trade are pleased with additional funding approval this year for more apprenticeship classes. Algonquin College will now be able offer a Level 3 class for instance with more scheduled classes over last year at Mohawk, Centennial and Fanshawe Colleges. CIIA, in partnership with 3M Canada, organizes graduation ceremonies at each of these Colleges, with food/refreshments and acknowledgement plaques and awards, offering ongoing communications with the students including free admission to our training programs. It's important to stay in touch with our young people in this industry.

9) The Branch 1 Auto Body Collision Damage Repairer (ABCDR) technician curriculum was redone by industry and community colleges and partners to reflect the newer technologies coming into the industry rather than technologies that we used to work on. As well, because newer technologies like Adhesive Bonding, Paintless Dent Repair and Pre and Post scanning issues were added to the course, graduates and apprentices will now be more valuable to employers with their knowledge, with staff getting a higher re-imburement level and being able to handle tasks that previously were contracted out, again making apprentices even more valuable.

10) CIIA graduates more than 100 students each year from our Certificate of Qualification exam preparation course (that often are 2/3rd cost repayable by the province) and that assist challengers and those "apprentices" with training needs for extra help to pass the trades qualification exam, because they did not

finish their classroom time at the Colleges or did not attend all training Levels. Due to these classes, the pass rate for challengers has dramatically improved. To be allowed to challenge the exam, challengers (persons who have the hours but not the apprenticeship classes behind them) can successfully complete a Technician Equivalency Assessment, (available at no charge from CIIA), which is a listing of competencies that are supplied to the Ontario College of Trades for permission to write the exam. Over 90% of applicants are approved to write the exam. Over 400 autobody and collision damage repair technician candidates have been approved for the exam.

11) New recent changes and additions include: Efforts towards inter-provincial harmonization for the trade may mean going to a four-intake process rather than the three school intakes now offered and early this year the hours limits were improved, irregardless of educational qualification, which would allow for an individual who had trades status as an Autobody tech to be able to write the Collision Repair exam after serving a further 2000 hours in the trade.

The processes and opportunities for more, advanced skilled staff are here already and getting better. What still often is missing is employers that care enough to properly retain staff rather than keep running ads to replace leaving techs who get abused and for more businesses to actually create and maintain some employment human resources programs that ensures employees have an identified path forward.

John Norris is the Executive Director of the Ontario collision repair industry association CIIA (Collision Industry Information Assistance) and the winner of the inaugural Award of Excellence from the Ontario College of Trades. He is the senior advisor to the Autobody and Collision Damage Repairer trade board.