



Labour Market Bulletin

Human Resource Centre of Canada

St. Thomas - Elgin

~ An Analysis of the St. Thomas - Elgin Area Labour Market ~ July to September 2004 ~

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An overview of the St. Thomas-Elgin Area

Employment levels continued to climb in the third quarter in the London Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), but at a slower pace compared to the second quarter. September brought the first dip in employment levels from a summer that saw employment peak at 239,700 in August. While full-time employment climbed by 10,200, part-time positions slipped by 6,000. The influx of workers into the labour market resulted in the unemployment rate climbing to 6.1% from 5.3% in the second quarter.

Overall, the Goods-Producing Sectors recorded employment gains of 6,300 in the third quarter, while the Services-Producing Sectors posted a loss of 2,200. Bustling construction activity of all types (residential, commercial and institutional) translated into a 35.5% employment growth compared to the second quarter. A number of other sectors recorded significant employment gains during the quarter including Health Care and Social Assistance; Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing; and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services. Other sectors saw considerable employment losses during the quarter including Business Building and Other Support Services; Other Services; and Accommodation and Food Services. Looking at year-over-year figures, the largest employment gains were seen in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (+87.7%); Transportation and Warehousing (+3,600); and Construction (+25.2%).

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Strong construction activity continues in the St. Thomas-Elgin area. In addition to increased home activity, construction is underway for the new Valleyview Home for the Aged and the new \$12 million downtown arena.
- ▶ A \$20 million agreement with the Canadian Armed Forces will see Arva Industries supply 28 Multipurpose Engineering Vehicles to the military.
- ▶ Employment at Sterling Truck climbed by 500 to a total unionized workforce of 1,800.
- ▶ A variety of openings were advertised for the new Real Canadian Superstore including Grocery, Salad Bar, Electronics, Cashiers and Photo Camera.
- ▶ The demand for skilled trades occupations continues to be a concern. Forty-two percent of Canadian youth are unlikely to consider a career in skilled trades.

The St. Thomas-Elgin HRCC Labour Market Bulletin is a quarterly report produced by the area Labour Market Information Analyst. This bulletin and other LMI products may also be found on our website.
(aussi disponible en français)

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Human Resources and
Skills Development Canada

Ressources humaines et
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Canada

LABOUR MARKET NEWS

Highlights on industry activities that have an impact on the local labour market, this information is derived from several sources including local newspapers, newsletters and various publications. Please refer to "Notes to Readers" for additional information.

Agriculture

The 2004 **tobacco crop** quota of 87.9 million pounds is a record low and the average price of \$2.23 per pound is nearly the same as 2003. With manufacturers turning more to international growers in Brazil, China and Africa, the number of farms in Ontario has shrunk to fewer than 800 from over 2,000 in the 1950s and 1960s.

Construction

In St. Thomas, there were 31 **housing starts** (all singles) in June, up 55% from 20 starts (all singles) in June 2003. In July, there were 34 starts, all singles, up 70% from 20 starts in July 2003. August saw 30 starts (24 singles and 6 row home ownership units), a 9% increase from last year. Compared to 2003, total housing starts for the first 8 months of the year are up 44% and single starts are up 39%.

Construction started in August on the new **Valleyview Home for the Aged** in St. Thomas. The \$18 million facility is to open in February 2006.

Construction of the new Valleyview facility has pushed the value of **building permits in St. Thomas** into the second highest total on record. Between January and July, permits totalled \$54.9 million, well ahead of the \$50.7 million reached in 2001 and considerably higher than the year-to-date total of \$21.1 million last year. The city's all-time record occurred in 1997 when the construction of the Formet facility pushed permits up to \$69.9 million. July alone shows building permits totalling \$17.7 million, including 27 single-family dwellings, up from 4 last year. For the first 7 months of the year, 182 single-family building permits were issued, up from 130 last year.

The official ground-breaking ceremony for the new **\$12 million, two-pad downtown arena** in St. Thomas was scheduled to take place on September 13.

Several construction projects are underway in the **Belmont** ice area. The arena is getting a \$1.07 million addition. Construction began in August on a new \$1.9 million water tower, and a new sewage lagoon is also planned. The upgrades should bring more development and growth to the area.

Manufacturing

Arva Industries in St. Thomas successfully negotiated a \$20

million deal with the Canadian Armed Forces to supply 28 Multipurpose Engineering Vehicles (MPEV). Each MPEV is valued at \$450,000. Additional maintenance, spare parts and servicing increased the cost of the contract. The vehicles act as modified backhoes, travel up to 110 kilometres per hour and can perform a number of functions including moving tanks and fixing bridges. Arva Industries is currently in talks with the U.S. military. The company, which also manufactures other heavy equipment such as subway cars, locomotives and earth-moving equipment, currently has over 30 full-time employees.

Sterling Truck has hired 500 more workers and now has a unionized workforce of 1,800. The plant currently turns out 106 trucks a day, but hopes to increase this to 120, which will necessitate more hiring next year.

Ford Motor Co. announced production cutbacks at both the St. Thomas and Oakville plants. Company officials only confirmed a **one-week layoff starting October 4**, but union officials suggest as much as seven weeks including three in November and additional weeks in December, January and February. The St. Thomas plant builds the Crown Victoria and Grand Marquis models. Both vehicles, widely used by police departments, are facing increased competition from General Motors and DaimlerChrysler. A number of area parts suppliers including Intier Automotive Inc. and Magna International Inc. will be affected by the layoffs.

Compared to the first 6 months of 2003, **employment in the auto sector** fell by 4,239 jobs this year – 3,064 jobs in auto assembly (-6%) and 1,175 jobs in auto parts (-1%). DesRosiers Automotive Consultants claims that border delays at Windsor/Detroit were a major contributor to the loss of jobs. The Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association of Canada also blamed the higher Canadian dollar and the closing of some assembly plants.

Automotive consultant Dennis DesRosiers visited four European cities to **promote the North American market for automotive parts** plants, in a tour sponsored by the federal government. London Economic Development Corporation president John Kime followed up the presentations with group and one-on-one discussions on the benefits of investing specifically in London.

While talks continue between Ford Canada and government officials on a \$1.2 billion flexible manufacturing plant in Oakville, experts in the auto industry agree that in order to be



successful, **Canadian assembly plants must turn to flexible facilities** where production can be shifted to meet market demand. Despite the additional cost of creating an adaptable system, a flexible plant can quickly adjust for different models using the same equipment. Several flexible plants are already in operation including DaimlerChrysler plants in Windsor and Brampton. General Motors is also investigating a more flexible process that could be incorporated at the Cami Automotive joint venture with Suzuki in Ingersoll.

Trade

In July, the **Real Canadian Superstore** in St. Thomas advertised for part-time workers with excellent customer service skills to work at their new outlet on Talbot Street. A wide variety of positions were available in Grocery, Salad Bar, Electronics, Cashiers, Community Room, Photo Camera, Beauty and Apparel.

Closings:

- Buck or Two, Elgin Mall St. Thomas, with a loss of 10 jobs.

Transportation and Warehousing

A study by the Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council and the federal government predicts that between now and 2008, **Canada will need 224,000 new truck drivers**, close to the current 265,000 commercial drivers. Knowing that it is not possible to produce that number, the trucking industry, particularly in British Columbia, is looking to add the occupation to the list of classifications recognized by Citizenship and Immigration. Commercial drivers now operate state-of-the-art tractor-trailer units with on-board computers and satellite tracking systems. According to Statistics Canada, from 1991 to 2001, the numbers of truck drivers rose from 204,195 to 263,510 in Canada, and from 70,670 to 93,390 in Ontario. The provincial Ministry of Transport reports that 25,000 transport trucks travel the 401 past London every day.

Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing

Housing sales in St. Thomas totalled 432 for the first 6 months of the year, up 11% from 350 for the same period in 2003. The average price rose from \$122,791 to \$136,608. There were 64 home sales in St. Thomas in July, compared to 74 in July 2003. In August, sales were up 41.5% to 75, and year-to-date sales of 570 were up 28.1% over last year.

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

A new survey by Robert Half Technology of over 270 chief information officers in Canada shows that 7% intend to expand their information technology departments in the fourth quarter. Only 1% plan to eliminate staff and the vast majority - 92% - do not plan to change staff levels. Canadian companies with over 1,000 workers reported the highest hiring plans at 28%.

The Hiring Index and Skills Report also found that 93% of CIOs reported a **need for Microsoft Windows administration**. Companies are cautiously hiring additional full-time staff and often rely on project professionals for short-term demands.

Educational Services

School boards across the province will share in an increase of \$162 million for special-education programs. The extra funding will ensure the **hiring of 4,000 new staff** to work with 54,000 special-needs students in the fall.

In an effort to lower class sizes in primary grades, the Thames Valley District school board received \$3.4 million in provincial funding to hire **34 new teachers**.

Health Care and Social Assistance

The provincial government announced an additional \$73.2 million annually to treat people at home, through 42 community care access centres across Ontario. The funding is part of a **four-year expansion of home care** and will come from the new Ontario health-care premium.

The Ontario government will fund 55 new midwives this year, adding to the 270 midwives currently practicing in the province.

The **Elgin-St. Thomas EMS** unit will soon have a new facility on Edward Street and a new satellite station at the Shaw Valley subdivision. A total of 40 full-time and 30 part-time paramedics provide services across Elgin County. Four 24-hour duty managers were recently hired to accommodate the needs of paramedics.

Arts, Entertainment and Recreation

The **Port Stanley Festival Theatre**, with \$200,000 in ticket sales last year, was worth \$1.4 million to the local economy. The economic spinoff of an event is calculated by using a 7-to-1 formula used by a number of other industries. The formula estimates that \$7 is spent on food, accommodations, fuel and shopping for every \$1 spent on tickets.

Openings:

- Kettle Creek Golf & Country Club, Port Stanley

Public Administration

In an effort to reduce workplace injuries, the province will hire **200 new health and safety inspectors** over the next two years, bringing the number of workplace inspectors to 430.



LABOUR FORCE TRENDS

Produced by Ray Gormley, Southern Ontario Area Economist

- Large seasonal influx of job seekers pushes unemployment rate up to 6.1%
- Labour market continues to show strong gains year-over-year, although the pace of growth slows over the quarter
- Quarterly job gains are concentrated in a few industries, while year-to-year growth is more widespread

London's labour market continued its seasonal expansion in the third quarter. New and returning job seekers pushed labour force participation up by 2.6% to nearly 250,000. However, employment growth slowed compared with the

second quarter. While the area saw strong full-time job gains, these were offset by a decline in part-time work, largely reflecting youth moving from part-time to full-time jobs over the summer. Overall, employment rose by 1.8% (4,000). The larger increase in job seekers pushed the unemployment rate up to 6.1% from 5.3% last quarter.

On a year-over-year basis, the area continued to outpace growth for Ontario overall. Employment was up by 4.8% (11,000) above its third quarter 2003 level, compared with an Ontario average of 1.8%. A smaller increase in the labour force (3.2%) over the same period meant that fewer people were unemployed, reducing the unemployment rate from 7.5% a year ago. Conditions improved most for youth (aged 15-24). One note of caution is that labour market growth slowed noticeably over the quarter, after accelerating since the end of last year.

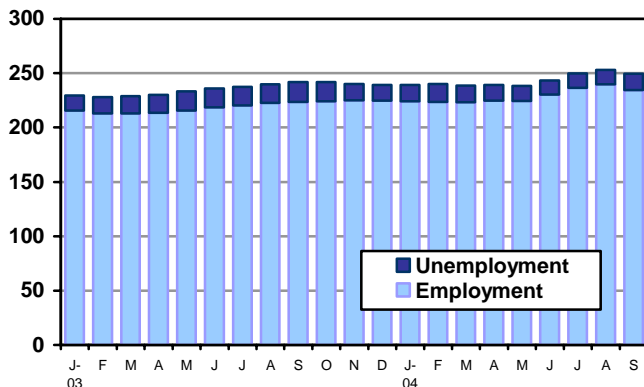
London-St. Thomas Census Metropolitan Area Labour Force Trends ('000)

	July to September 2004	April to June 2004	July to September 2003	Quarter/Quarter Change		Year/Year Change	
				Absolute	%	Absolute	%
Population 15 +	350.9	350.0	347.9	0.9	0.3	3.0	0.9
Labour Force	249.5	243.2	241.8	6.3	2.6	7.7	3.2
Employed	234.5	230.3	223.7	4.2	1.8	10.8	4.8
Full-time	194.9	184.7	181.4	10.2	5.5	13.5	7.4
Part-time	39.6	45.6	42.3	-6.0	-13.2	-2.7	-6.4
Unemployed	15.1	12.9	18.1	2.2	17.1	-3.0	-16.6
Not in Labour Force	101.3	106.8	106.1	-5.5	-5.1	-4.8	-4.5
Participation Rate (%)	71.1	69.5	69.5	1.6		1.6	
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.1	5.3	7.5	0.8		-1.4	
Employment Rate (%)	66.8	65.8	64.3	1.0		2.5	

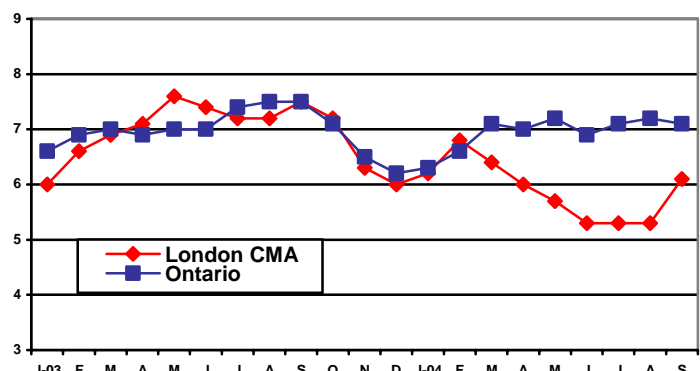
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

London-St. Thomas CMA: Labour Force, January 2003 to September 2004 ('000)



London-St. Thomas CMA and Ontario Unemployment Rate January 2003 to September 2004 (%)



Employment by Industry

The Goods-Producing Sector generated a disproportionate share of the job growth over the quarter, while Services-Producing industries posted mixed results. A booming housing market propelled job growth in Construction, as employment in that industry rose by nearly 36% to a historical high of 16,000. By comparison, Manufacturing employment showed little change, and has remained relatively flat for the past two years. Employment levels fell across several Services-Producing industries causing a net decline in employment for that sector. The largest loss came from Building, Business and Support Services, which has seen declining employment over the past two quarters after rising to a historical high in the first quarter. The job losses overshadowed gains in three industries: Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; and Health Care and Social Assistance.

Job growth year-to-year was limited to the Services-Producing industries and Construction. The largest increases within the Services Sector came from three industries: Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, which had seen an unusual decline in the first half of 2003; Wholesale/Retail Trade; and Transportation and Warehousing. However, the area saw lower employment in Business, Building and Other Support; Educational Services; and Public Administration. Employment in Educational Services has been trending downwards since early 2003, following a staff-up prior to the double cohort graduation.

Note: Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the major source of data for this Review. As relatively small sample sizes are utilized in compiling sub-provincial estimates for the survey, there is a chance of variation due to sampling error. Therefore, the reader is cautioned that small changes in some time series could be wholly or partially due to these statistical sampling errors, and may not necessarily reflect actual events in the labour force. Data are three-month moving averages.

London Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) Employment by Industry ('000)

Industry Group	July to September 2004	April to June 2004	July to September 2003	Quarter/Quarter Change		Year/Year Change	
				Absolute	%	Absolute	%
All Industries	234.5	230.3	223.7	4.2	1.8	10.8	4.8
Goods-Producing Sector	57.9	51.6	54.8	6.3	12.2	3.1	5.7
Agriculture	3.0	1.9	4.2	1.1	57.9	-1.2	-28.6
Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Oil and Gas	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Utilities	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Construction	16.4	12.1	13.1	4.3	35.5	3.3	25.2
Manufacturing	37.4	36.8	36.7	0.6	1.6	0.7	1.9
Services-Producing Sector	176.5	178.7	168.9	-2.2	-1.2	7.6	4.5
Trade	36.3	37.5	33.9	-1.2	-3.2	2.4	7.1
Transportation and Warehousing	11.6	13.0	8.0	-1.4	-10.8	3.6	45.0
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	16.3	13.2	17.0	3.1	23.5	-0.7	-4.1
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	13.7	11.4	7.3	2.3	20.2	6.4	87.7
Business Building and Other Support Services	9.1	12.2	11.5	-3.1	-25.4	-2.4	-20.9
Educational Services	15.3	17.0	19.0	-1.7	-10.0	-3.7	-19.5
Health Care and Social Assistance	36.0	32.1	33.5	3.9	12.1	2.5	7.5
Information, Culture and Recreation	8.6	8.0	8.2	0.6	7.5	0.4	4.9
Accommodation and Food Services	13.3	15.2	13.6	-1.9	-12.5	-0.3	-2.2
Other Services	9.5	12.0	7.9	-2.5	-20.8	1.6	20.3
Public Administration	6.8	7.2	8.9	-0.4	-5.6	-2.1	-23.6

Note: "..." indicates that data are too small to be expressed and are not appropriate for release. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

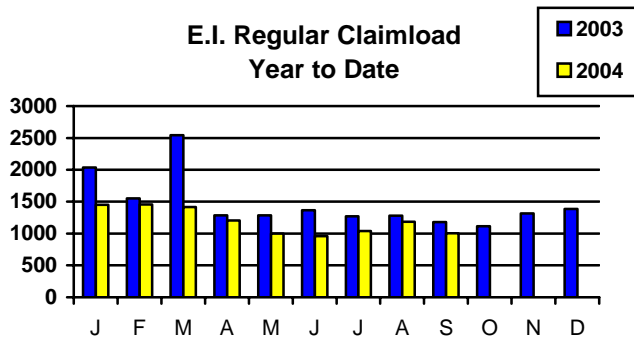


LABOUR SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Employment Insurance Claimload

St. Thomas/Elgin Employment Insurance Claimload

Quarter to Quarter Comparison

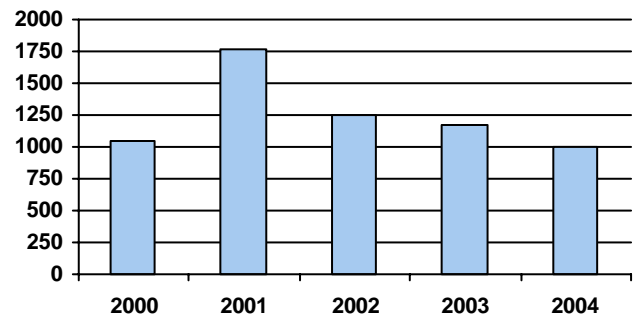


Between June and September, the regular EI claimload in the St. Thomas/Elgin area rose by 5.1% (+49 claims). September's dip followed two months of increases in July and August. All claimload gains were recorded by women. Their claimloads climbed by 27.9% (+118 claims) while men experienced a 12.9% decline (-69 claims). Three of four age groups posted an increase in claimload levels ranging from 9.8% in the 45 to 64 age sector (+31 claims) to 3.1% in the 25-44 age bracket (+15 claims). The 65+ age group recorded a small decline of 12.5% (-2 claims).

Year-Over-Year Comparison

- Compared to September of 2003, total regular claimload numbers slipped by 14.6% (-172 claims) in September of 2004. Men saw the largest decline – down 27.2% (-173 claims) while the number of women receiving regular benefits saw almost no change. Every age group recorded a drop in claimload levels in September. The largest decline (-88 claims) was seen in the 25-44 age group (-14.9%). The smallest loss was recorded in the youth age bracket 14 to 24 years of age where claimloads fell by 14.5% (-24 claims). Just over 48.0% of people receiving regular Employment Insurance benefits in September had worked in one of the following major occupational groupings: labourers in processing, manufacturing and utilities; intermediate sales and service; trades and skilled transport and equipment; or clerical occupations.

Regular EI Claims Year-to-Year comparison for September



Regular Employment Insurance Claimants – St. Thomas/Elgin by Month

MONTH	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	AGE					WKS ON CLAIM
				14-19	20-24	25-44	45-64	65+	
July 2004	1,038	540	498	14	115	542	350	17	17
August 2004	1,182	669	513	14	126	605	421	16	17
September 2004	1,005	541	464	12	130	503	346	14	19

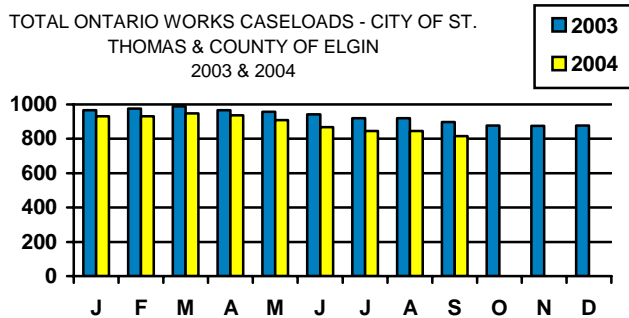
Regular Employment Insurance Claimants – St. Thomas/Elgin Year Over Year

MONTH	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	AGE					WKS ON CLAIM
				14-19	20-24	25-44	45-64	65+	
September 2003	1,177	540	637	24	142	591	406	14	18
September 2004	1,005	541	464	12	130	503	346	14	19
Actual Variance	(-172)	(+1)	(-173)	(-12)	(-12)	(-88)	(-60)	(--)	(+1)

Source: HRCC administrative data C-356



Ontario Works Caseload



During the third quarter of 2004, the total number of Ontario Works caseloads in the City of St. Thomas and County of Elgin fell 6.0% (-52). The second quarter closed with 867 caseloads. During the third quarter, total caseloads slipped to 815 in September. Compared to September of 2003, total caseloads fell 9.1% (-82 caseloads).

Source: City of St. Thomas

LABOUR MARKET IMBALANCES

Skill shortages in construction

A feature in the *London Free Press* on Continuing Education focused on the **shortage of skilled trades in the construction sector**. The article highlighted several of the challenges facing the industry and some of the local efforts to respond to those issues.

- Parents continue to urge their children to attend college and university rather than examine the opportunities in skilled trades where brick layers can earn \$30,000 to \$50,000 annually. Basic labourers earn \$16.00 an hour to start and those who specialize can earn \$20.00 to \$25.00. Apprentices may earn between \$30.00 and \$35.00.
- Locally, Fanshawe College is working with the Ministry of Colleges, Training and Apprenticeships to offer more seats to apprentices. The college currently has 450 electricians, 200 carpenters and 50 stonemasons in apprenticeship programs.
- Some of the four-year apprenticeship programs offered by the college include plumbing, sheet metal, carpentry, brick and stonemasons and electrician.
- A number of other diploma programs are available including Construction Carpentry Techniques, and Construction Engineering Technician (Supervisor or Management).
- In an effort to meet the training needs of local apprentices, a new Construction Trades and Technology building should be completed at the college by the summer of 2005.

The president of the **London Home Builders' Association** reiterated the need for skilled labour in the construction industry, and is working with Fanshawe College to educate students about the trades. The association's Education Committee is creating a speakers' bureau, publishing brochures and maintaining an informative Website. Students are reminded of the wide variety of occupations employed in the construction industry including blueprint reader, estimator, draftsman, engineering or architectural technologist, developer, architect, engineer and salesperson. These occupations are in addition to the predicted shortage of apprenticeable occupations such as brick and stone masons, electricians, general carpenters, plumbers and sheet metalworkers.

In 2003, the London Home Builders Association offered a pilot co-op work program offering 32 students job placements with some of its 200 member companies. The program will continue in 2004 and will accommodate more **students who will learn building skills while earning high school credits**.

According to a 2001 national survey, 20% of Canadians are **"job snobs"** who believe that it is less prestigious to work in trades and technology occupations than in white-collar occupations. (*Toronto Star*, 28 July 2004)

- Despite the **known demand for skilled trades occupations**, the areas of study with the highest growth rate between 1991 and 2001 include engineering, computer science, data processing, commerce and finance.

- The Canadian Tooling and Machining Association reports that 50,000 skilled trades workers will be needed in the next five years.
- By 2007, the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Associates predicts a 42% vacancy rate in skilled trades.
- A recent Scotiabank report claims that in the next five years, there will continue to be significant growth in high-skilled jobs across the country, despite a slower rate of growth for Canada's overall economy.



- Starting hourly wages for skilled trades occupations can range from \$15.00 to \$25.00. That range can climb to \$35.00 for experienced electricians, toolmakers, pipefitters and chefs. With overtime, those wages can exceed \$100,000.

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and Skills Canada launched a national campaign to highlight the **benefits of training in one of Canada's 200 licensed trades**. The \$12 million campaign, funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada over three years, will include print, radio, television and cinema advertisements. A study sponsored by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and Skills Canada found that between 1991 and 2001, 3.8% fewer workers were involved in skilled trades and the number was expected to continue to fall by a similar rate over the next decade. Despite this figure, 42% of Canadian youth are unlikely to consider a career in skilled trades. Considerable time is needed to graduate a fully-trained skilled trades worker. With the average age of some construction workers in the mid-fifties, a number of industries are concerned about the lack of interest in skilled trades by students, parents and guidance counsellors.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Wage Settlements
National

Average Wage Settlement Increases drawn from Collective Agreements (HRSDC Wage Settlements Bulletin) across Canada – Bargaining units 500+				
	August 2004	2003	2002	2001
Public Sector	3.6% (14 contracts covering 14,440 workers)	2.9%	2.9%	3.4%
Private Sector	2.4% (8 contracts covering 20,610 workers)	1.2%	2.6%	3.0%
Consumer Price Index	1.9% (Canadian)	2.8%	2.2%	2.6%

Source: The Wage Settlements Bulletin, October 2004, Volume 15, Issue 10

Provincial

Average Wage Settlement Increases drawn from Collective Agreements (Ontario Collective Bargaining Highlights) across Ontario – Bargaining units 200+				
	August 2004	2003	2002	2001
Public Sector	2.9% (15 contracts covering 10,643 workers)	3.5%	2.9%	2.9%
Private Sector	2.8% (6 contracts covering 10,900 workers)	1.9%	3.0%	3.0%
Consumer Price Index	(Provincial) 1.8% (2004 Y-T-D)	2.7%	2.0%	3.1%

Source: Ontario Collective Bargaining Highlights October 2004, Ontario Ministry of Labour

Local

Between June and September of 2004, the London Human Resource office recorded 20 contracts exclusively covering workers in Middlesex, Elgin and Oxford Counties using

information from the Ontario Collective Bargaining Highlights and local media sources. Based on these 20 contracts, the **average settlement increase** was 3.1%.

Update on Wages:

A number of human resource firms announced the findings of their **2005 compensation surveys**. Overall, employees can expect pay increases in the mid-3% range. A number of exceptions can expect higher raises including executives, top-performing employees, workers in Western Canada and those in the oil and gas and pharmaceutical industries. Aon Consulting forecasts salary increases of 3.3% next year, down slightly from 3.4% in 2004. Executives, directors and managers will enjoy higher increases of 3.6%, 3.5% and 3.4% respectively. Hourly union workers are expected to see a 2.8% gain. The Hay Group forecasts wage increases averaging 3.2% in 2005.

Via Rail employees ratified a new three-year contract. In addition to a long-term disability plan, the agreement provides for a 3.0% wage increase in the first year, 4.0% in the second year and a further 3.0% in the last year. The contract covers union members working in train stations, on board trains and in equipment maintenance.

After months of negotiations, **7,000 technicians at Bell Canada** voted to accept a new four-year agreement. The contract includes provisions for a 12.1% wage increase, pension plan protection for existing employees, the reclassification of many part-time workers to full-time and the addition of 200 new jobs.

INTERVENTIONS

Students in Elgin County benefited from the services of the **Student Employment Office**. By the end of July, nearly 800 students registered with the centre in St. Thomas. Five hundred students found jobs and close to 100 others took odd job positions. It is estimated that 2,000 students received assistance by registering for work, having questions answered or receiving help with resumes. Satellite offices were also located in Aylmer and West Lorne.

Two sociology professors from the University of Western Ontario have completed a report, published by the Canadian Policy Research Networks, which indicates that Canada may face a serious shortage of skilled labour, brought about by a number of factors and **not just an aging workforce**. While aging workers will figure strongly in some specific locations, occupations and industries, the authors concluded that other factors, such as working conditions and length of training could be as important if not more important in contributing to a skills shortage. The report examined the nursing, information technology, skilled manufacturing trades and biotechnology sectors. The full report, "Labour Force Ageing and Skill

Shortages in Canada and Ontario”, is available on the CPRN website at <http://www.cprn.com/en/doc.cfm?doc=1088>.

Employers are increasingly **using the Internet to find qualified workers**, and almost 8.5 million job seekers have gone online to find work, according to an Ipsos-Reid study. Monster.ca and Workopolis are the most popular sites in Canada.

The province is adding another \$21 million to the **Ontario**

Student Assistance Program (OSAP) and estimates that more than 50,000 students will be able to pursue post-secondary education with the increased funding. According to a Statistics Canada report on the Class of 2000, university bachelor graduates have an average debt of \$19,500 and college graduates have an average debt of \$12,600. It was also reported that 45% of university graduates and 41% of college graduates have student loans to repay, and some people feel that a better solution is to reduce tuition fees.

Notes to Readers:

1. The **London Census Metropolitan Area** is comprised of the Cities of London and St. Thomas and the Townships of Middlesex Centre, Thames Centre, Central Elgin and Southwold.
2. For the purpose of this publication, the **St. Thomas-Elgin Area** includes the City of St. Thomas and all communities within the County of Elgin.
3. The information contained in the Labour Market News section is gathered using a variety of internal and external sources. The primary sources of information include **HRSDC and HRC reports, Statistics Canada, The London Free Press, businessLondon, The St. Thomas Times Journal, The National Post, The Financial Post, The Globe & Mail, The Toronto Star, Technology in Government, The Sentinel-Review, The Age Dispatch, The Tillsonburg News, The Tillsonburg Independent News and the Housing Market Outlook.**
4. **Definitions – Labour Force Survey data**
Population 15+ (the working age population) consists of all persons 15 years of age and over residing in Canada with the exception of residents of the Territories, persons living on Indian Reserves, inmates of institutions and full-time members of the Canadian Armed forces. The **Labour Force** consists of people employed or unemployed and searching for work. Those who are neither employed nor unemployed and are not willing or able to supply labour services are considered **Not in the Labour Force**. The **Participation Rate** is the percentage of the working age population (15+) who are seeking work or are employed. The **Unemployment Rate** is the number of people who are unemployed and looking for work as a percentage of the number of people in the Labour Force. The **Employment Rate** is the number of people employed as a percentage of the working age population.
5. **Definitions - HRSDC Corporate Data**
Employment Insurance claim load: The number of individuals with an active claim for regular Employment Insurance benefits. Data on Employment Insurance claimants is not an accurate measure of the absolute level of unemployment. The data does not include unemployed individuals who: 1/ have not met the program's eligibility requirements or 2/ have exhausted their benefit entitlement.
Employment Opportunities: Advertised employment opportunities are comprised of vacancies notified to the HRCC offices in our area and newspaper want ads. This data is not a count of all labour market activity; in practical terms, such a count is not feasible. This data is useful to track short and long-term changes in the demand for individual occupations. The total number of opportunities is equal to full-time plus part-time and casual.
6. This review uses data from **Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS)**. In any survey there is a chance of variation due to sampling size. **Three-month moving averages** are used for selected labour force characteristics in an attempt to improve the reliability of this data. For further information on the Labour Force Survey, visit Statistics Canada's website at: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/concepts/labour/index.htm>
7. For more information on Industrial and Occupational categories used in this review, visit **Statistics Canada's website** at: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/concepts/index.htm>
8. **Note:** In preparing this bulletin, HRSDC has taken care to provide clients with labour market information from reliable sources that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since the bulletin was published. Readers are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this bulletin does not necessarily reflect official policies of HRSDC.

