

# ***Designation of Auto Body Technician as a Compulsory Certified Trade in Nova Scotia***

## ***Phase II: The Workforce Impact Study***

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from research and consultations carried out in 2006 on the introduction of compulsory certification for auto body repair technicians in Nova Scotia. The project has been carried out by the Nova Scotia Automotive Human Resource Sector Council, with support and direction from the Collision Repair Association of Nova Scotia, and with guidance from the Industry Advisory Committee.

The report marks the completion of the second of three phases in the process.

- The first phase, completed in the spring of 2005, involved an assessment of industry human resource needs and the levels of interest in compulsory certification. It resulted in a formal request to the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Board to take the requisite steps to designate the auto body repairer trade for compulsory certification.
- This second phase has utilised regional consultation meetings to inform industry stakeholders, and to get their views, about compulsory certification, how it will work and how the change will be managed. In addition a comprehensive survey of auto body repairers has generated up-to-date information about the labour force and its readiness to undertake this change. The report provides a profile of the workforce, its age characteristics, education levels, time in the industry and its attitudes and interest levels in relation to apprenticeship training.

- The third phase, the implementation phase, will begin following the decision by the Apprenticeship Board and the Minister of Education to designate the auto body repairer trade for compulsory certification. It is hoped that this will occur in early 2007.

The principal finding from the Phase II research and consultations is that when stakeholders are fully informed about the requirements, costs and operational aspects of compulsory certification for the auto body repair trade, the great majority support this change.

The industry is comprised of some 475 firms across the province ranging in size from an enterprise owner and one or two workers to large integrated retail and repair operations with 20 or more auto body repair technicians on site. The size of the auto body repairer labour force is estimated to be some 1,900 individuals. Of these, about half are certified journeypersons, an estimated 9% are registered apprentices and the remaining 40% are non-certified repairers. Like many other skilled trades, the labour force is aging, with perhaps a quarter of the journeypersons over the age of 50 and soon to leave the industry. Recruitment of young people into the industry has been weak in recent years.

Compulsory certification will mean that some 800 currently employed workers will need to complete the standard apprenticeship program or be certified through an appropriate prior learning assessment and recognition process. There will be special challenges related to the age profile of the workforce, the presence of many workers with low levels of formal schooling, and the wide distribution of the industry across many small businesses in all regions of the province.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations, principal among which is the request that, following a pattern already established in four other provinces of Canada, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Board and the Minister of Education move forward with the formal designation of the auto body repair trade for compulsory certification.

Other recommendations include the establishment of an Industry Certification and Standards Committee to provide effective industry leadership during the implementation phase, and the development of an ongoing and comprehensive communications strategy to inform all industry stakeholders about the change and to encourage buy-in and participation.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background

The Nova Scotia Automotive Human Resource Sector Council (AHRSC) is the lead agency for human resources development in the automotive service and repair industry in Nova Scotia. The Council's mission and mandate are as follows:

*The Nova Scotia Automotive Human Resource Sector Council is dedicated to working with industry to strengthen the Nova Scotia automotive service and repair labour force, working with leading industry partners to develop human resource planning initiatives and helping to make employment opportunities for Nova Scotia's equity groups such as women, disabled, visible minority and Aboriginal groups.*

Consistent with this mandate, and at the formal request of the Collision Repair Association of Nova Scotia (CRANS), the AHRSC began an initiative in 2004 to professionalize the collision repair industry in Nova Scotia. The project was directed by the AHRSC Board and by an Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) made up of independent collision repair business operators and representatives of CRANS, the Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division (ATSDD) of the Nova Scotia Department of Education, the Automobile Insurance Appraisers and Adjusters Association and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC).

The overall project is taking place in three phases:

- Phase I: the Industry Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study completed in March 2005;
- Phase II: The Workforce Impact Study completed with the submission to provincial government of this report; and
- Phase III: Implementation of Compulsory Certification, to begin when the decision is made by the Government of Nova Scotia to proceed with designating the auto body repairers trade for compulsory certification.

For Phase I of the project the methodology included regional consultation meetings and surveys of both employers and employees. As well, the Project Steering Committee held four meetings to oversee project activities, review findings and decide on the implementation strategy.

After completion of the surveys and focus groups, two industry validation meetings were held, one in Kentville and one in Dartmouth/Halifax. Approximately 40 stakeholder representatives including employers, employees, appraisers and insurance officials, attended these sessions. There was also representation of the Nova Scotia Community College and the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Board. PRAXIS Research presented a summary of findings from the consultations and facilitated the discussion on next steps.

All the findings from the research and consultations were supportive of the designation of the auto body repair technician occupation as a compulsory certified trade. In September 2005 CRANS and the AHRSC submitted a formal application to the Apprenticeship Board for implementation of this major step forward in the collision repair industry. In April of 2006 representatives of the IAC, CRANS and the AHRSC met with the Apprenticeship Board to answer their questions.

Leaders in the collision repair industry supported this initiative because they felt that their industry, in Nova Scotia and nationally, faces daunting challenges related to the development and retention of a skilled workforce. The major issue is the serious and growing shortage of new workers entering the trade. The designation of a trade is seen as essential to a new approach to labour force development and a key strategy for attracting new workers to the trade by updating training standards and improving the image of the industry.

At the time of writing the matter is still before the Apprenticeship Board. The expectation is that the Board will make its ruling in time for the provincial government to approve the change in the 2007 spring legislative session.

## 1.2. Workforce Impact Study

In anticipation of a favourable ruling by the Apprenticeship Board, CRANS, the AHRSC and the Project Steering Committee decided in late 2005 to proceed with another round of research and consultations to lay the groundwork for implementation of mandatory certification of collision repair technicians. The specific objectives of this initiative were:

1. To generate and analyze the demographic and workforce profile information needed by the ATSDD and the NSCC to move forward quickly and efficiently with implementation of mandatory certification once the formal designation process is completed; and
2. To inform industry stakeholders – employers and employees – about the impending change and to respond to their questions and concerns.

The methods employed in this project included regional consultation meetings and a province-wide survey of employees.

The employee surveys were conducted by sending packages of questionnaires to collision repair shops around the province. The initial mail-out was followed up with faxed reminders and direct telephone calls to non-responders by members of the IAC. Notices were also placed in industry magazines and newsletters to promote participation in the survey. The questionnaires were to be distributed to employees and returned by mail. The specific goal was to gather information on the principal characteristics of the labour force in terms of age, education and training, work experience and interest in further training and certification.

The regional industry communications and consultation meetings were held in six locations around the province. Invitations to participate were sent to all the collision repair shops in the province.<sup>1</sup> The goal of the sessions was to present all pertinent information about apprenticeship and compulsory certification, and to respond to the questions and concerns of industry stakeholders in an atmosphere of complete openness and transparency.

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<sup>1</sup> During this project the AHRSC developed and updated a database of collision repair firms in Nova Scotia by integrating data from CRANS, the Yellow Pages, and Insurance Appraiser's database and the Registry of Joint Stock Companies.

## 2. REVIEW OF FINDINGS

### 2.1. Survey Results

The employee surveys were conducted by means of questionnaires sent by mail to 475 collision repair shops using names and addresses from AHRSC and CRANS databases.<sup>2</sup> There were a total of 286 questionnaires returned by employees from 118 separate business locations. By conservative calculation the total collision repair technician workforce in the 475 shops across the province is approximately 1,900.<sup>3</sup> The survey population might therefore constitute a 15% sample of the total workforce. The sample was widely distributed regionally and included workers from shops of all sizes and types in the industry.

The makeup of the survey respondent population is as follows:

TABLE 1: SURVEY POPULATION		
Category of Respondents	Number	Percent
Journeypersons	139	48.6%
Registered Apprentices	26	9.1%
Non-certified Repairers	121	42.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>100 %</b>

This finding suggests that over 40% of the workforce, potentially as many as 760 or more individuals will require apprenticeship training or Section 30 challenge procedures when compulsory certification is introduced.

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<sup>2</sup> Firms listed in the AHRSC and CRANS databases would be those that participate in industry meetings and association activities, or are otherwise identifiable as legitimate industry operators. There are in fact many “backyard shops”, some of which participate in underground economy type activities, which will not be included in this analysis. There is no reliable way to estimate the number of such operators on a province-wide basis.

<sup>3</sup> There is no reliable source of statistical information to define this workforce. The industry includes some large shops with upwards of 20 collision repair technicians, but also a significant number of 1 and 2-person shops. The above estimate is based on the view of industry experts that the average would be from 3 to 5 repairers per shop. The 475 firms in the study database might therefore employ from 1,425 to 2,375 individuals. An “educated guess” therefore suggests a figure of 1,900 workers.

<b>TABLE 2: SURVEY POPULATION BY AGE GROUP</b>					
<b>Category of Respondents</b>	<b>16-20</b>	<b>21-30</b>	<b>31-50</b>	<b>51-60</b>	<b>60+</b>
Journeypersons		2	103	27	7
Registered Apprentices	2	13	6	3	1
Non-certified Repairers	5	19	65	19	10
<b>Total<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>7</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>18</b>
Percent	2.5%	12.1%	61.7%	17.4%	6.4%

In terms of age profile, nearly a quarter (24.4%) of the journeypersons surveyed are over the age of 50 years, indicating that the industry may soon begin to lose significant numbers of skilled workers to retirement. A similar 24.6% of non-certified workers are over 50, and 55% are between the ages of 31 and 50 years. This indicates that a significant proportion – perhaps half or more – of the workers who will be impacted by compulsory certification will be in the older age ranges (i.e., 40 and over).

The apprentices of course have a younger profile, but nearly 40% are over the age of 30. Many apprentices are therefore supporting families and carrying other obligations while doing the program.

The survey data suggests that only 14% of the entire workforce may be under the age of 30 – a source of concern regarding current levels of recruitment to the trade. This perspective is reinforced by the fact that 80% of the workforce have been employed in the industry for 10 years or more, while only 10% has worked for 5 years or less.

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<sup>4</sup> Numbers in tables vary slightly because some respondents did not answer some items.

**TABLE 3: SURVEY POPULATION BY HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED**

Category of Respondents		< Grade 12	Grade12/ GED	College	University	Vocational	Pre-Employ
Journey person	#	10	21	38	3	57	10
	%	7.2%	15.1%	27.3%	2.2%	41.0%	7.2%
Apprentice	#	1	3	14	1	5	2
	%	3.8%	11.5%	53.8%	3.8%	19.2%	7.7%
Non-certified	#	32	28	26	3	24	8
	%	26.4%	23.1%	21.5%	2.5%	19.8%	6.6%
<b>Total</b>	#	<b>43</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>20</b>
	%	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>27.3%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>30.1%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>

With regard to education and training levels, 15% of the survey population have less than Grade 12 as their highest level of schooling, and two thirds have no education or training beyond Grade 12. This again has implications for the introduction of compulsory certification, with the likelihood that a significant proportion of middle-aged and older workers with less than Grade 12 may face essential skills challenges. By way of illustration, of the 39 non-certified workers in the survey population who were over 50 years of age (representative of perhaps 24% of the total population of non-certified repairers in the industry in the province), 38% had less than Grade 12 education. There is a significant likelihood that many of these workers might have difficulty meeting the literacy requirements of apprenticeship courses or challenge exams.

It is notable that close to a fifth of non-certified repairers have college or vocational training, indicating that some may have started but not completed apprenticeship programs, or may have qualifications in other trades.

The survey questionnaire asked a series of questions related to mentorship and training via the Internet:

- *Asked to respondents who were journeypersons and non-certified repairers:* Are you interested in attending a Mentorship course to become an Industry Certified Mentor?
- *Asked to respondents who were non-certified repairers:* Would you be interested in taking theory technical training via the Internet?

- *Asked to respondents who were apprentices: Would you be interested in taking Apprenticeship training on-line via the Internet?*

**TABLE 4: INTEREST IN MENTORSHIP, TRAINING BY INTERNET, & TRAINING TO BE A MENTOR**

Category of Respondents	Being a Mentor		Mentorship Training		Training via Internet	
	Number	% Yes	Number	% Yes	Number	% Yes
Journeyman	38	27.3%	5	3.5%	NA	NA
Registered Apprentices	NA	NA	NA	NA	14	53.8%
Non-certified Repairers	NA	NA	41	33.8%	55	45.5%

The survey results indicate that limited but still significant proportions of respondents are interested in mentorship and in using the Internet for training purposes. Most notable is the evidence that 45% of non-certified workers and over half of the active apprentices are interested in doing training via the Internet. Strikingly, over a quarter of the journeymen are interested in becoming mentors for new apprentices, but only a few are interested in mentorship training. A third of non-certified workers say they are interested in training to become mentors.

In summary, the survey population provides a reasonable estimation of the size and makeup of the repairer labour force in the collision repair industry. At present close to half of this labour force does not have journeyman status, and over 40% have not begun apprenticeship training. The non-certified component of the labour force has a relative older age profile and a significant proportion has limited experience in training and may have essential skills deficits.

The survey findings suggest that there is a significant minority of workers in the sector – apprentices, journeyman and non-certified repairers – who are open to innovative approaches in the delivery of training via the Internet and who are prepared to take concrete steps to become mentors for apprentices in their workplaces.

In general it seems evident that a strategic approach will need to be developed specifically for this workforce to facilitate the introduction of compulsory certification.

## 2.2. Findings from Consultation Sessions

In response to invitations sent to the 475 collision repair shops, a total of 190 industry representatives (employers and employees) attended consultation sessions in the following locations:

TABLE 5: CONSULTATION SESSIONS	
Location	Attendance
Yarmouth	22
Kentville	33
Bridgewater	20
Dartmouth (for HRM)	63
Truro	27
Sydney	25

The agenda for these sessions included an introduction by the directors of CRANS and the AHRSC to explain the purpose of the meeting, the work accomplished to date to improve apprenticeship and other training programs for the collision repair industry, and the next steps in the process.

This introduction was followed by a comprehensive review of the apprenticeship system and how mandatory certification will work for collision repair technicians. Mr. Richard Sharpe, the Supervisor of Apprenticeship in the Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division (ATSDD) of the Department of Education made the presentations and was accompanied at each meeting by local Apprenticeship field staff representatives.

The presentation covered the following topics:

1. Explanation of the Apprenticeship Act and General Regulations;
2. The short and long-term aspects of how compulsory certification will affect the Nova Scotia auto body repair industry;
3. The routes for individual workers to achieve certification;
4. The standards for certification; and
5. Certification for experienced workers by challenging the exam (Section 30 of the regulations).

Copies of the Act and Regulations, together with the annual report of the Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division, the National

Occupational Code (NOC) profile for collision repair technicians, and other relevant documents were made available for participants in the sessions.

Participants were provided with the following definition of compulsory certification:

*When a person employed in a trade must be either registered as an apprentice, or hold a current certificate of qualification issued by the Nova Scotia Department of Education, Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division (ATSDD) or from another province bearing the Interprovincial Red Seal, or hold a valid temporary permit issued by ATSDD.*

Mr. Sharpe explained in detail how the ATSDD will do everything possible to assist individuals and firms in getting the required certification through access to affordable training or through the Section 30 challenge process. He made clear that individuals who have essential skills constraints will receive special assistance and will not be excluded from certification.

Mr. Sharpe summed up his core message to the industry as follows:

*If you look at succession planning, within 10 years there could be a huge turnover rate. Right now, we only have 34 apprentices in the system. There are not enough people coming into your trade. You have to look at benefits of compulsory certification:*

- *Inexpensive post-secondary education and training*
- *Up-to-date training in chosen occupation*
- *Hands-on experience and skills development*
- *Skills and qualifications recognized across Canada*
- *Excellent opportunities for continued employment*

*If you are a journeyperson you should have your certificate on display. You should be proud of that certificate. You should be proud of what you have accomplished. The other thing is that I have seen the level of expertise involved in your trade. Compulsory Certification shows the public that this is a professional trade. It does not cost anything to meet with us and advise you and let you know the best option for you.*

The presentation was followed by open-ended question and answer sessions that continued until all questions and concerns of participants had been addressed.

The following were some of the main points of discussion.

### 2.2.1. Impacts on Older Workers with Less Formal Education

Perhaps the most frequently expressed concern in the meetings related to the potential impacts of compulsory certification on experienced workers – many in the trade for up to 30 years – who are highly skilled but lack formal schooling and have literacy constraints.

In response, the Apprenticeship representatives emphasized that their job was to help every worker make it through the training program, and they will meet one-on-one with employees to develop plans on how to achieve journeyman status. They will conduct individual assessments as to whether the worker is ready to challenge under Section 30 or whether they will need upgrading courses. The following is a comment made by Mr. Sharpe on this general issue:

*We advise individuals, we will help you out, and we will set up upgrading training. It will be available throughout the province. Essential skills course will be available, or we will work with you on an individual basis. Our job is to help you through this.*

*For other people in the industry who have been working five years but have not covered all the trade - we will look at the training you have. People coming into the trade 1-2 years will take the apprenticeship route. We will look at training you have taken, any type of experience you have right now. We will give you credit for what you already have.*

A related question was whether any worker has to have Grade 12 completed to be certified. The answer was that Apprenticeship staff will do individual assessments and determine what upgrading, if any, is required. A certain level of math skills is necessary to challenge the journeyman exam successfully. Apprenticeship staff will help in locating and accessing upgrading and essential skills courses for those who need them.

### 2.2.2. Enforcement

Another issue that frequently came up was whether, and how, compulsory certification will be enforced.

The ATSDD officials explained that the Division has two enforcement officers who have the authority to issue summary offence tickets for \$1,000. However, the Division will do everything it can to work on a positive basis to help businesses comply with the regulations.

Participants in the sessions asked if the rules will be enforced on backyard shops or for individuals who repair cars themselves and then sell them. The answer was affirmative – anybody doing bodywork on a commercial basis will have to be certified.

Enforcement will also be achieved by insurance companies requiring shops to use certified workers to get their business.

In the longer run, however, the most effective forms of enforcement will be self-policing by industry associations and consumer demand.

### 2.2.3. Who Has To Be Certified?

Participants in the sessions asked about the types of workers who will have to be certified. The answer was that the rule will apply to anybody doing actual bodywork. Shop owners or supervisors, appraisers, painters or detailers will not have to be certified if they do not do the actual body repair work.

Over time industry will make decisions about training requirements for these other categories of workers, but the current process applies only for collision repair technicians.

### 2.2.4. Costs

A number of participants raised concerns about the costs of training for apprentices and the costs for employers when apprentices are on block release or when journeypersons take time to mentor apprentices.

ATSDD representatives recognized that these costs can be a burden for individuals and firms. Apprentices can get EI for time off for training. If enough apprentices are interested, training can be provided via the Internet to reduce time away from home and work.

Representatives of the AHRSC emphasised that the sector councils are working to encourage government to introduce tax measures and other incentives to help employers deal with the costs of training. The federal government has recently introduced measures of this type, but more needs to be done by provincial governments to encourage the development of a skilled labour force and to address skills shortages in many sectors.

With regard to the fees for challenging the journeyperson exam under Section 30 of the Act, the ATSDD officials made clear that when compulsory certification is introduced there will be a grace period of approximately 12 months during which the fees will be waived for qualified applicants. This is to encourage non-certified workers with requisite experience to register with Apprenticeship as soon as possible.

### 2.2.5. Wage Issues

Employers raised the concern that compulsory certification will drive up wage rates as more highly trained workers will demand better remuneration and will have options to leave for higher paying jobs.

Apprenticeship staff and representatives of CRANS and the AHRSC commented at length on this complex and important issue. They emphasized that the collision repair industry faces serious skills shortages in the context of a more competitive labour market. At the same time, skill standards are rising and shops will require more highly trained workers. The industry will have to pay higher wages if it is to attract and hold capable workers.

The key factor is that more highly trained workers should be more productive, and their greater productivity and efficiency should generate the incremental revenues needed to carry a higher wage burden. This is the future of the industry, and of many other sectors that depend on skilled trades. Compulsory certification is a way to move the industry forward more quickly and effectively in this direction than may otherwise happen.

### 2.2.6. How Soon Will It Happen?

Participants asked about the timetable for introducing compulsory certification. Apprenticeship staff explained that the decision is now on the Minister's desk and may be implemented by the spring of 2007.

It is expected that once compulsory certification is introduced, firms will have a year to comply. Compliance does not mean having all employees certified or registered as apprentices: the main objective is for business operators to be in communication with the ATSDD and to develop a plan on how they are going to meet the requirements within the required time period.

## 2.3. Automobile Insurance Appraisers Association Survey

The Automobile Insurance Appraisers Association of Nova Scotia (AIAANS) supports Industry's decision to re-designate the Motor Vehicle Repair (Body and Paint) trade to a compulsory certified trade governed by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. For the betterment of public safety, quality assurance and skills upgrading, compulsory certification will without doubt improve the state of Nova Scotia's future auto body workforce.

AIAANS Executive have been a member of the project Industry Advisory Committee since Phase I beginning in 2004. The Associations' goal is to work collaboratively with the Industry to help move the project forward and to be a key liaison between Industry and Insurance companies.

The Association objective is to include a new eligibility standard within their Act to ensure that all existing appraisers and future appraisers where eligible, are certified by the NS Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division.

Appraisers with over 8000 hours experience as a repairer in the last ten years are eligible to challenge the Journeyperson exam. Non-certified repairers without the required experience and appraisers with no technical background will require further assessment to determine their level of certification to be recognized by Industry, Association and Apprenticeship Division.

Included in the scope of the 2006 Certification Workforce Impact Study, the Automotive Sector Council and Appraisers Association partnered to conduct a demographic research study. The survey was distributed to all thirty five (35) association members and gathered specific information on demographics, certification statues, training history and support or opposition for certification.

The methodology for data gathering included electronic survey distribution, followed by mail post distribution and telemarketing to non-respondents.

Of the thirty-five members, the AIAANS received thirty-two (32) surveys, accounting for a 91% response rate. The Association's members demographics include 62% certified Journeypersons (issued by the NS Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division), 31% are non-certified repairers, and 7% appraisers have no past technical auto body background. Overall, 22 of 32 appraisers (69%) reported more than ten years experience in the auto body trade.

<b>Appraiser Certification Status</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Certified Journeypersons	20	62%
Non-Certified Repairers	10	31%
Appraisers with no technical background	2	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

Of the non-certified respondents, two are eligible to challenge the Apprenticeship Journeyperson exam. As previously reported, the Association will need to discuss with the Apprenticeship Division how best to move forward with the seven non-certified repairers who are ineligible.

<b>Non-Certified Repairs with Hours of Experience</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
< 2000 hours	4	50%
2000 – 10,000 hours	1	12.5%
10,000 + hours	2	25%
Non-respondent	1	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>

The age demographic statistics of the Appraisers workforce are much in line with the auto body workforce. Of the eight non-certified repairers five are between the

ages of 51-60 and two are over 60 years of age. This collectively accounts for 87% of the group.

<b>Appraisers By Age</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 30	0	0
31-50	13	45%
51-60	12	41%
60+	4	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>

Appraisers were asked to indicate their position, either supporting or opposing Compulsory Certification for Appraisers. The following chart depicts their position, subdivided by certification status.

<b>Appraisers By Age</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Opposed</b>	<b>No Response</b>
Certified Journeypersons	19	0	1
Non-Certified Repairers	7	1	2
Appraisers with no technical background	2	0	0
<i>Total N= 29</i>	28	1	3
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>9%</b>

With regard to education and training levels, four appraisers indicated less than a grade 12, two of whom are non-certified repairers. Nine appraisers graduated with a High School Diploma, seven completed vocational school and another seven attended University / College.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

This report has summarized the findings of research and consultations by the AHRSC, CRANS and the IAC to do the groundwork for the introduction of compulsory certification of auto body repair technicians in Nova Scotia.

The survey research established the size and general characteristics of the auto body repairer labour force. It is apparent that there will be approximately 700 to 800 individuals in the industry who are not certified or registered as apprentices. Most will need to be assessed to establish the necessary steps for each to achieve journeyman status. There will need to be preparations for a substantial number of experienced workers to challenge the exam under Section 30 of the regulations. There may also need to be arrangements for upgrading and other special supports for individuals with essential skills challenges.

The general finding from the six regional industry consultation meetings is that, despite concerns about costs, timing and the details of implementation, the industry is prepared to move forward with compulsory certification. Among the nearly 200 employers and employees who attended the sessions there were few voices of strong opposition to this change. With full disclosure of the details about apprenticeship and compulsory certification, and after due deliberation, stakeholders seem to accept the need for this significant step forward for their industry to address the serious human resource challenges they face.

It is the intent of the Automobile Insurance Appraisers Association of Nova to proceed with discussion among their Executive Committee and members as how best to proceed with ensuring certification is applicable to all. The AIAANS may proceed thereafter in scheduling a meeting with the Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division to discuss the process to certify non-certified auto body repairers and Appraisers with no technical background.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Following review and discussion of the findings from the surveys and regional consultation meetings, the Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) for this project is confident that there is continuing, broad-based industry support for the designation of compulsory certified status for the Motor Vehicle Metal and Paint trade. The IAC therefore approved the following recommendations for next steps towards the full implementation of compulsory certified status for auto body repairers:

1. The IAC formally requests that before the end of 2006 the Provincial Apprenticeship Board recommend to the Minister of Education the re-designation of auto repairer as a compulsory certified trade.
2. An Industry Certification and Standards Committee (ICSC) should be established with representation of all industry stakeholder groups and institutional partners. For purposes of continuity, members of the current IAC should be asked to carry on as members of the new committee. The ICSC, in partnership with CRANS, should play the lead role to:
  - a. Continue the working partnership with the Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division (ATSDD) on transitioning to compulsory certification;
  - b. Be the central information resource for industry for questions, comments and assistance in the transition to compulsory certification;
  - c. Act as the industry body for enforcement, working in tandem with the Apprenticeship Enforcement Division; and
  - d. Liaise with AIAANS and the insurance companies.
3. The ICSC in partnership with CRANS and other stakeholders should prepare a comprehensive industry communications strategy including, but not limited to:
  - a. A one-page document or brochure identifying the benefits of compulsory certification;
  - b. A fast facts information sheet;
  - c. A website to address frequently asked questions and to provide information on compulsory certification;
  - d. An industry e-mail database;

- e. Provision of public notices;
  - f. Coverage in the CRANS/industry newsletter; and
  - g. A 1-800 line for the transition period.
4. In partnership with the Automotive Sector Council and the Department of Education, the ICSC should assess the need for essential skills upgrading in the workforce and, where applicable, take steps to develop Workplace Education programs.
  5. A province-wide mentorship training course should be made available to certified and non-certified repairers to assist in skills development for new apprentices.
  6. The ICSC should work in partnership with the ATSDD to assist in developing the following resources for skills development in the auto body repair industry:
    - a. A needs assessment for workforce training;
    - b. Design of delivery modes appropriate to the industry;
    - c. A technical training refresher program for journeypersons;
    - d. An on-line forum for technical questions and answers; and
    - e. A set of practice exam questions for people preparing to challenge the exam.
  7. To encourage eligible non-certified repairers to challenge the journeyperson exam under Section 30, the ATSDD should accept letters of intent from such workers as a basis for waiving their Section 30 administration and exam fees.
  8. Through prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), the ATSDD should give credit for all I-CAR training courses completed by experienced auto body workers who register as apprentices.
  9. In particular circumstances where a repairer has significant time in the trade and can prove acceptable competency levels (validated by certified journeypersons in the industry), the ATSDD should issue a Certificate of Proficiency as an alternative to full journeyperson status to enable such individuals to continue in the trade after implementation of compulsory certification.

10. Based on the extensive evidence showing the lack of new entrants to the industry, the ICSC should actively promote awareness in the schools and the community of the Youth Apprenticeship Strategy and the Options and Opportunities (O2) Program, and should encourage employers to get involved in promoting the trade in their local secondary schools.
11. The ATSDD should conduct an province-wide industry mail-out, with a package including but not limited to:
  - a. A letter from the Director of Apprenticeship describing the current status of the project and its potential benefits, and encouraging employers and workers to get involved early rather than wait until formal approval when there likely will be a large numbers of applicants for registration and support;
  - b. An employers' guide;
  - c. The ITCO listing;
  - d. Information and promotional materials for apprentices;
  - e. A training schedule; and
  - f. Information about essential skills training opportunities.