

# ***Nova Scotia Automotive Glass Technician Designation & Certification Industry Research Study***

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***The Nova Scotia Automotive Human Resources Sector Council***

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. FINDINGS FROM SURVEY RESEARCH .....	2
2.1. Methodology .....	2
2.2. Characteristics of the Employers and the Labour Force .....	2
2.3. Perceived Impacts of Trade Certification .....	7
2.4. Barriers to Certification .....	8
2.5. Support for Trade Designation .....	9
2.6. Compulsory or Voluntary Certification .....	12
2.7. Status of the Trade .....	12
2.8. Advice on Delivery of Training .....	13
2.9. Summary of Survey Findings .....	16
2.9.1. Industry Structure.....	16
2.9.2. Labour Supply.....	16
2.9.3. Employer Views on Trade Designation/Certification.....	17
2.9.4. Delivery of Training .....	18
2.10. Concluding Comment .....	19
3. INDUSTRY CONSULTATIONS .....	20
3.1. Description of Activities .....	20
3.2. Stellarton Meeting .....	21
3.3. Stellarton Meeting .....	25
3.4. Halifax Meeting .....	25
3.5. Yarmouth Meeting.....	27
3.6. Kentville Meeting .....	29
3.7. Interviews with Industry Representatives .....	30
4. CONCLUSIONS.....	33



# 1. INTRODUCTION

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.*

In 2007, the AHRSC consulted with the Nova Scotia automotive glass service industry on the apprenticeship designation and certification of the Automotive Glass Technician. This was done at the formal request of industry groups and is consistent with NS Automotive Sector Council's mandate.

The research and consultation project was overseen by the AHRSC Board and by an Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) which is made up of independent automotive glass business operators. The project was supported by the Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division (ATSDD) of the Nova Scotia Department of Education, and by the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC).

The project involved two major activities:

- A survey of a representative sample of industry operators, and;
- Regional consultations meetings with industry operators and other key stakeholders.

This report presents findings from the survey and consultations. It concludes with recommendations on moving forward with designation of the Automotive Glass Technician.

## **2. FINDINGS FROM SURVEY RESEARCH**

### **2.1. Methodology**

The Sector Council used its employer database, supplemented with additional employers found in the yellow pages, to begin building the sample population for the research phase of the project. The Glass Committee reviewed the list of employers and invited input from industry leaders to develop a sample frame of 52 companies across Nova Scotia that specialize in automotive glass services or otherwise employ Automotive Glass Technicians. The Council is confident that this represents the great majority of businesses in the automotive glass sector.

The survey, which was administered by mail to all employers in the population, followed by distribution via fax, personal telephone contact and regional meetings sessions. Employers who attended the regional meetings received information from the Department of Education and NS Automotive Sector Council about designation and certification of a trade. At this time, employers were able to express their opinions, discuss the benefits and implications of designation and certification and had the opportunity to voice support for or against the endeavour. As well, employers who attended regional consultation sessions were encouraged to fill out questionnaires if they had not already done so.

A total of 28 employers completed questionnaires, representing 53% of the sample frame population. The meetings were attended by 31 employers.

### **2.2. Characteristics of the Employers and Labour Force**

In their survey responses, not all of the respondents provided complete information about their companies. For those who did, the following are the findings.

Among the 18 respondents who identify their business locations, there is a reasonable distribution across the mainland of the province; however, no surveys were submitted from employers in Cape Breton.

- 7 from Halifax Regional Municipality, including outlying areas within the region
- 3 from the Annapolis Valley Region, NS
- 3 from the South Shore-Southwest Nova
- 5 from Colchester-Pictou-Antigonish counties

The NS Automotive Sector Council traveled to Cape Breton to meet with Sydney employers. They conducted a meeting with one employer, but were unable to meet with two others as a result of their business demands that day.

When asked what type of business they operate, the majority of respondents are independent operators although franchise shops are represented.

- 19 shops are independent operators;
- 7 shops are franchises;
- For one of these, the respondent is an operator of 3 franchise sites and 1 independent shop.
- 2 respondents did not answer this item;

The great majority of respondents are exclusively engaged in automotive glass services.

- 24 firms provide automotive glass repair, removal and installation service only;

- 1 provides light body repair as well as automotive glass repair/installation;
- 2 provide collision repair as well as automotive glass work;
- 1 company did not answer this question.

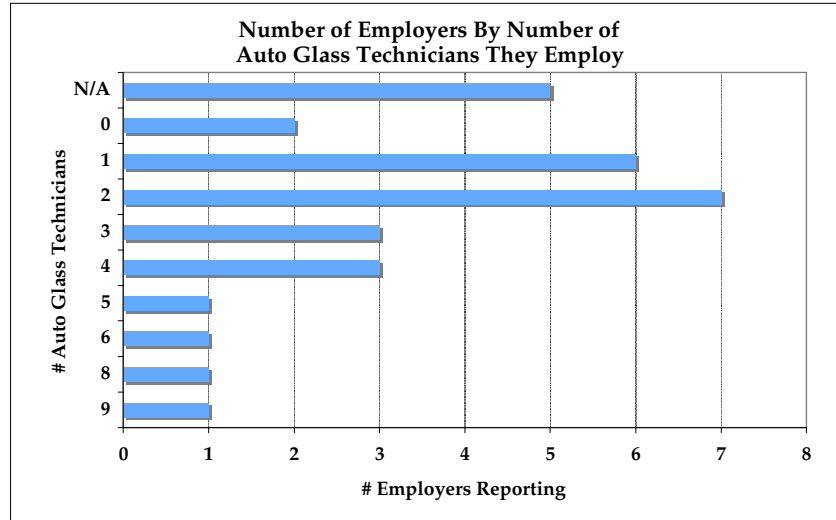
The employer-respondents were asked how many Automotive Glass Technicians they had employed over the previous 12 months. The 23 respondents who answered on this item had employed a total of 67 Automotive Glass Technicians.<sup>1</sup>

- One respondent reported on behalf of 4 separate shops with a total of 9 Automotive Glass Technicians on staff;
- 2 respondents reported employing no Automotive Glass Technicians -- they may themselves be the only technician in owner-operator shops;
- The following chart shows the number of respondents reporting different numbers of Automotive Glass Technicians in their work sites.

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<sup>1</sup> 67 is a derived number. There were two questionnaire items that asked about the number of employees. The first asked how many auto glass technicians were employed in the previous 12 months (total – 55). The second asked how many technicians were currently employed who had worked in the occupation for 5 years or more. In a couple of instances respondents did not answer the first question but did provide numbers on the second. Assuming that all currently employed workers should have been counted in the response to the first question, the two sets of responses were combined to create the estimate for the total number of auto glass technicians working for the employer-respondents within the previous 12 months.

Chart 1



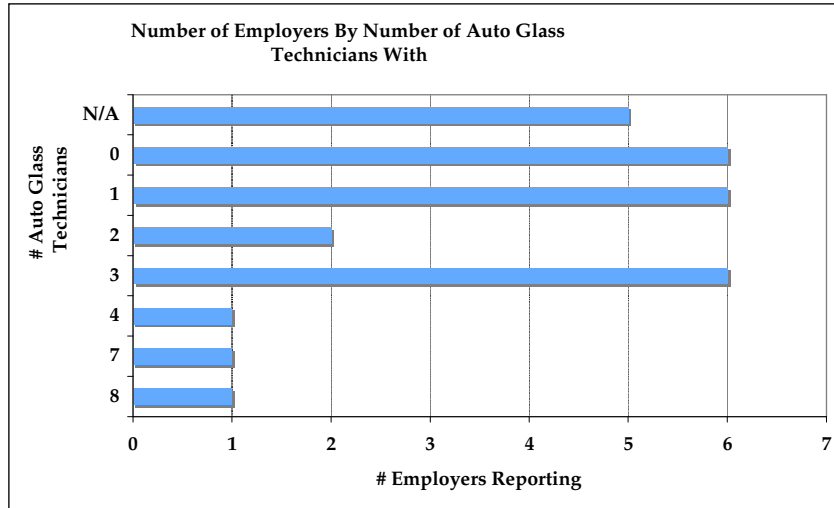
The average number of Automotive Glass Technician employees over the past year reported by the respondents was 3.2 (i.e., 67 employees divided by 23 employer-respondents). We can assume that this figure is exaggerated by the fact that one or more of the respondents was reporting on more than 1 shop. We know from the information provided, that one of the respondents was speaking for 4 separate shops, which would mean that the total of 67 Automotive Glass Technicians employed by the 23 respondents who provided this information was distributed among at least 26 shops. This would suggest a more realistic average of 2.7 Automotive Glass Technicians per shop.

Survey respondents were also asked about other employees in their shops.

- Two employers – both engaged in collision repair as well as automotive glass services – each reported having a licensed Automotive Body Technician working in their shop;
  - One of these 2 businesses also employs 2 non-licensed Automotive Body Technicians and one other shop had one such worker;
- 5 employers reported having managers or service advisors on staff.

The respondents were asked how many of their Automotive Glass Technicians have been in the occupation for 5 years or more. The following chart shows the distribution of responses.

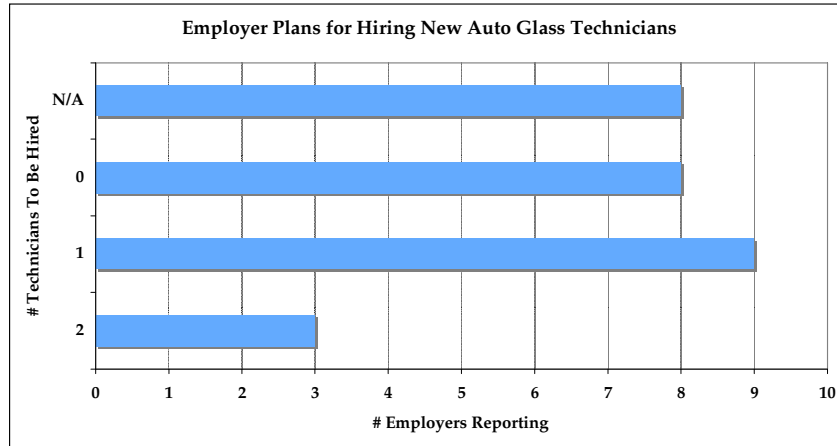
Chart 2



- 47 (i.e., 70%) of the 67 Automotive Glass Technicians employed by these respondents have been in the industry 5 years or more.

The respondents were asked how many Automotive Glass Technicians they plan to hire over the next 3 years.

**Chart 3**



- Of the 20 respondents who provided answers on this item, 9 plan to hire 1 new Automotive Glass Technician, 3 plan to hire 2 technicians, and 8 have no plans to hire. This equates to 60% plan to hire at least one technician.

### 2.3. Perceived Impacts of Trade Certification

The survey asked employers to address 11 questions about possible impacts on their businesses from trade designation and certification for Automotive Glass Technicians. Respondents were asked to score each question on a 5-point scale from 1 “very negative” to 5 “very positive”. The following table describes the number of responses (“N”) and the average rating for each item.

**Table 1**

Area of Impact	N	Mean
Safety of consumer	26	4.3
Image of your business	25	4.2
Public confidence	25	4.2
Quality of glass repairs	25	4.1
Relationship with insurance company	25	4.1

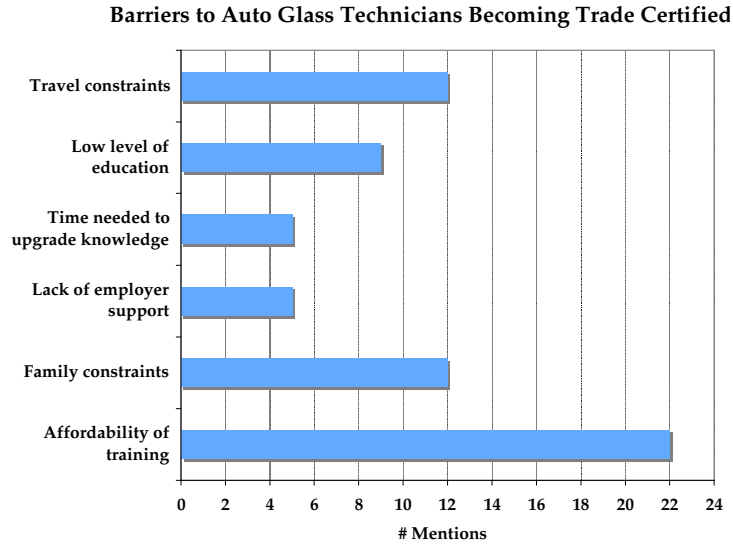
Safety of worker	27	4.0
Ability to recruit skilled workers	27	3.9
Future growth of your business	25	3.8
Shop competitiveness	25	3.7
Overall profitability of your business	25	3.6
Overall cost of glass repairs	25	3.3

The findings indicate that the employer-respondents perceive designation and certification of Automotive Glass Technicians to be a positive development with no clear downsides. The most positive impacts appear to be in the areas of **consumer safety, business image, public confidence, and quality of repairs**. The safety benefits apply to both customers and workers. The least positive impacts are perceived to be for the bottom line issues of cost of repairs and business profitability.

## 2.4. Barriers to Certification

Respondents were asked, “What barriers would limit an Automotive Glass Technician from becoming trade certified?” They could check off as many options as they thought applied. The following chart describes the pattern of responses.

Chart 4

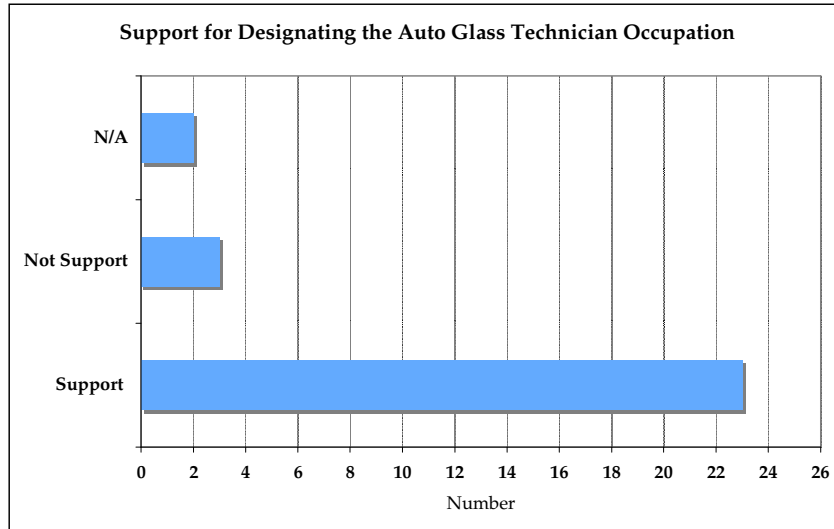


The employer-respondents clearly **perceive the cost of training**, or the limited abilities of their Automotive Glass Technicians to afford it, to be the most significant constraint on participation in training. After costs, family pressures and difficulties in managing travel to other locations for training are seen as constraints, although these two factors also relate to cost.

## 2.5. Support for Trade Designation

The next questionnaire item asked respondents the following question: “Do you support or not support designating the Automotive Glass Technician occupation under the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act?” The following chart shows the responses.

**Chart 5**



23 out of the 28 (82%) employer-respondents expressed support for designation of the Automotive Glass Technician trade. 3 (10%) expressed opposition and two did not respond on the item. The respondents wrote in additional comments:

- A few commentators expressed strong support, noting that certification will benefit everyone in the industry.
  - One supporter commented that it would help independent companies to compete with national chains, while another stated that designation would open the door to continuous training and upgrading of skills.
  - One stated: “It would be in everyone's best interest to have a program set up to properly train new people getting into the windshield replacement industry”.
  - One respondent noted that education is key to growth for the employee and, in turn, for the business.

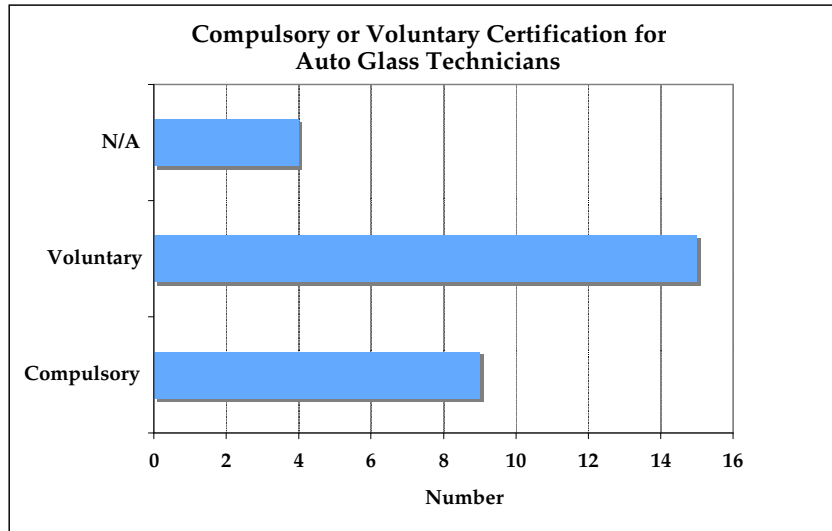
- One respondent expressed the fear that trade designation would hurt the smaller independent shops.
  - “I have worked in the industry for 30 years without any problems. I think it is about cost. I do not feel that this will in any way help the glass industry. Belron owns Speedy Glass & Apple Franchise Stores and also controls the Insurance Call Centers. They drive work into their own stores and already have a two-pay system -- one for independents and one for their own stores. I think a move like this will most certainly end a lot of independent shops.”
- One respondent commented that insurance companies will have a critical say on this issue.
  - This respondent noted that if insurance companies clearly support this endeavour in writing at an early stage, it will generate employer buy-in. But if these companies are hesitant, the employers will likely not support trade certification.
- One person described himself or herself as “undecided” on the question.
- One respondent felt that there are still too many grey areas.
  - “If you don't know the cost or length of the training period, you cannot tell what impact it will have.”
- Two respondents said they would support it if it were voluntary.
  - One noted that the attempt to introduce a compulsory certification program would in turn create opposition among people who are still uncertain.

- One respondent mentioned that the fear of examinations and the older profile of the workforce could act as constraints on acceptance of training and certification.

## 2.6. Compulsory or Voluntary Certification

The next questionnaire item posed the following question: “Should the Automotive Glass Technician occupation be compulsory or voluntary?” The following chart shows the responses.

Chart 6



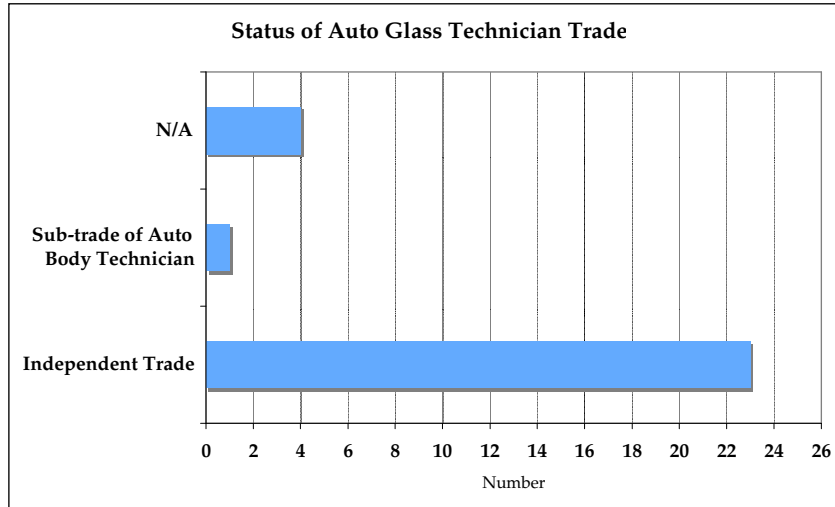
There is a marked difference of views on this issue. Of the 24 employer-respondents who answered on this item, 15 (62.5%) favored a voluntary approach while 9 (12.5%) supported compulsory certification. There is no obvious pattern in the data for the larger firms or franchises to have consistent views on this issue.

## 2.7. Status of the Trade

The next item asked respondents the following question: “Should Automotive Glass Technicians be an independent trade or a sub-trade of the Auto Body

Technician (which is under Motor Vehicle Body Repairer (Metal and Paint) of the NS Apprenticeship Trades and Qualification Act” The following chart illustrates the responses.

Chart 7



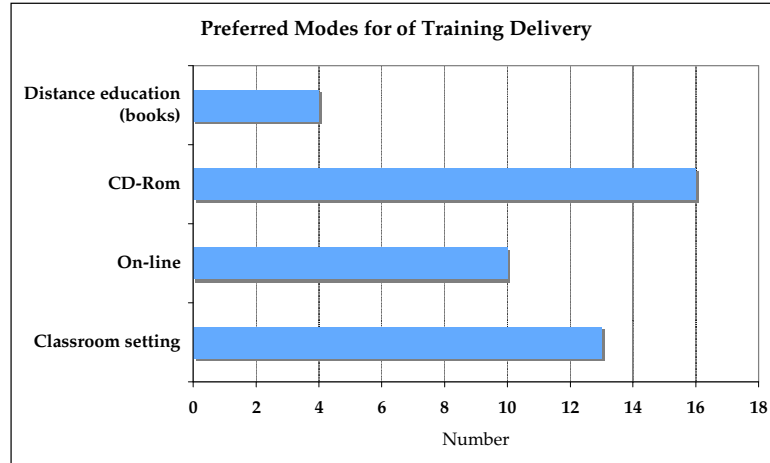
Four respondents did not answer this item. Of the 24 who did, all but one agree it should be an independent trade (i.e.96%).

## 2.8. Advice on Delivery of Training

The last set of questionnaire items asked employer-respondents to provide their input on the most effective ways to deliver training to their employees.

The first item asked respondents **how they would like to have training delivered**. They could indicate support for more than one option.

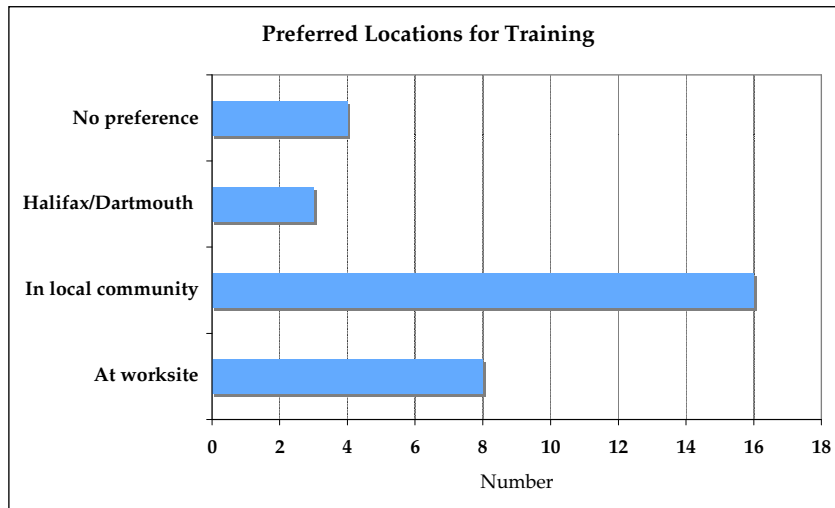
**Chart 8**



Provision of training programs by CD-Rom media received the most support followed by the traditional classroom setting and then on-line training. This indicates that employers are open to a variety of methods with some emphasis on distance education delivery. A total of 30 “votes” were for distance delivery options compared to 13 for classroom-based training.

The next item asked respondents **where they would like to have training** delivered. They could again indicate support for more than one option.

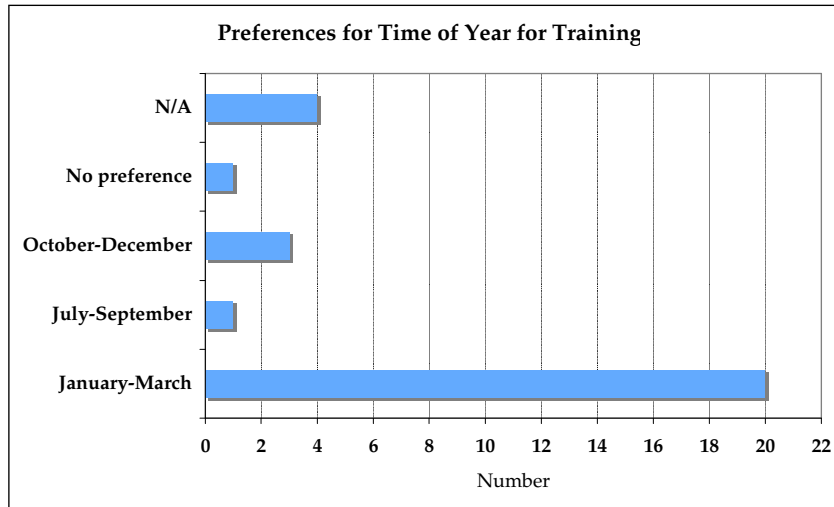
**Chart 9**



The clear emphasis in the responses is on delivery in the local community and in the worksite, consistent with the concerns noted above about cost and family and travel constraints.

The next item asked respondents about the time **of year when they would prefer to have training delivered**. They could indicate support for more than one option.

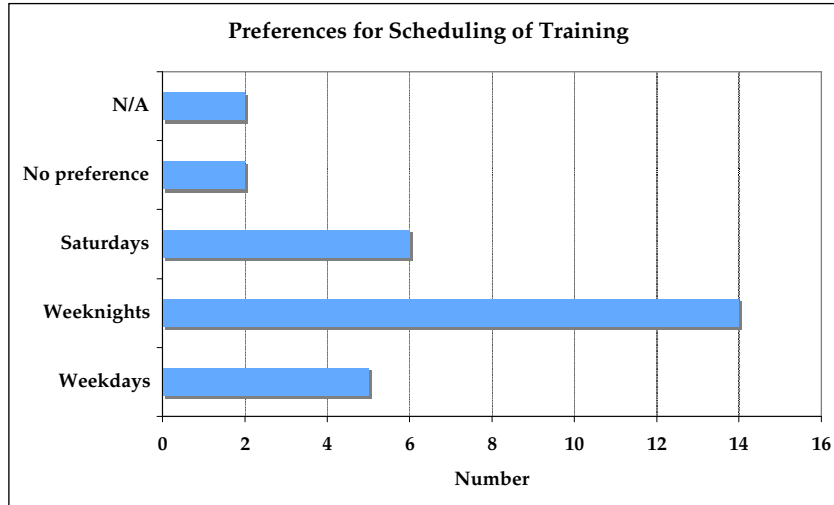
Chart 10



The overwhelming preference is for the January to March winter period, presumably a generally slower time in the industry. Four respondents did not answer on this item, and three said “no preference” or “anytime”.

The last item in this series asked respondents for their preferences regarding the time of the week for training. They could again indicate support for more than one option.

Chart 11



The strongest support is for training during weeknights. The underlying question here is whether training would occur during working hours: five respondents support training during weekdays, while 20 support delivery of training outside of normal hours, in the evenings or on the weekend.

## 2.9. Summary of Survey Findings

### 2.9.1. Industry Structure

The survey findings describe an industry sub-sector comprised of small shops, many in rural areas and small towns, with most employing fewer than three Automotive Glass Technicians. About two-thirds of the 28 employer-respondents describe themselves as independent businesses, the remainder being franchises or non-defined. All but a few are exclusively engaged in automotive glass services.

### 2.9.2. Labour Supply

It was estimated above that the average number of Automotive Glass Technicians per shop over the previous year in Nova Scotia is 2.7. On this

basis, assuming that our sample population is reasonably representative of the 52 identified firms in the province, the total number of Automotive Glass Technicians employed by the industry would be approximately 140.

Some 70% of the Automotive Glass Technicians employed by the respondents have been in the trade for five years or longer, suggesting a mature and somewhat stable labour force. This finding indicates that many individuals in the trade are committed to it as a career, an attribute that might lead them to be interested in professional recognition through trade designation and certification.

Twenty of the 28 (71%) employer-respondents described their future plans for hiring new Automotive Glass Technicians. While eight had no plans to hire within the next three years, the remaining 12 employers together expect to recruit a total of 15 new technicians.

We can extrapolate from this finding a demand level of .75 new Automotive Glass Technicians per employer (i.e., 15 new hires for each 20 employers). If we again assume that this group of respondents is reasonably representative of the 52 identified firms in the industry in Nova Scotia, we can project that employers in the sector will be looking to recruit approximately 39 new technicians over the next 3 years. This number could vary in response to a change – up or down – in the number of shops or in consumer demand for services over that period.

### 2.9.3. Employer Views on Trade Designation/Certification

It is evident from the findings that trade certification for Automotive Glass Technicians is perceived very positively by the great majority of respondents. While they did not expect it to have a great impact on their business bottom-lines, they did see significant benefits in terms of worker and customer safety, the image of the industry, quality of service and their relationships with insurance companies. The sense here is that almost all the employer-

respondents view trade designation/certification as a significant step forward for the industry.

The employer-respondents feel that the Automotive Glass Technicians themselves will face barriers to completing the training required for certification. The core issue is clearly cost; either directly for course fees or indirectly through the requirement to travel and spend time away from home.

Despite these constraints, 23 out of the 28 (82%) respondents expressed support for trade designation while three opposed it and two did not answer on this item. This can be interpreted as a strong endorsement for the proposal to designate the Automotive Glass Technician as a trade under the NS Apprenticeship Trades and Qualification Act.

However, there is no such consensus on how it should be implemented. A solid minority of nine respondents support compulsory certification, but the remainder favour a voluntary approach (15) - at least to start with - or providing no response (4) on this question. This response pattern suggests the need for continued sector engagement and perhaps for a step-by-step approach to increase awareness among employers and employees.

There was strong agreement - 23 out of 24 (96%) respondents - that the Automotive Glass Technician should be designated as an independent trade and not as a sub-trade of Automotive Body Technicians.

#### 2.9.4. Delivery of Training

The employer-respondents to the survey had clear points of advice on the delivery of training. They indicated that distance education methods, and/or local delivery of training, will be effective to overcome cost and travel constraints. They also heavily favoured the first quarter of the year as the best time for training courses aimed at employed technicians. Employer-respondents stated a preference for training outside of normal working hours.

## 2.10. Concluding Comment

Given the limited size of the industry sector, having identified a total of 52 businesses specializing in automotive glass repair/replacement services in the province, the sample population of 28 firms is considered to be robust. The NSAHRS achieved a 53% response rate, accurate 19/20 times.

Overall, the survey findings indicate a high level of support designation of Automotive Glass Technician as a trade. Employers associate this change with a general improvement in the image of the industry and its ability to market itself to both customers and potential employees.

There are indications of some nervousness as to whether this change will benefit some elements of the industry more than others. A majority of industry stakeholders are not ready to embrace compulsory training and certification yet. These findings suggest the need for a long-term strategy.

Finally, on the subject of training, the evidence from this survey's research suggests that constraints around cost and accessibility will have to be addressed if employed Automotive Glass Technicians are to be successfully enlisted in a new training and certification regime.

### 3. INDUSTRY CONSULTATIONS

#### 3.1. Description of Activities

Regional Industry meetings were conducted in four regions of the province. The names and affiliations of attendees are provided in Appendix II. The following table describes the locations, dates and attendance at the meetings.

Location	Date	Industry Representatives	NSCC and Apprenticeship Representatives
Stellarton	10/9/07	8	5
Halifax	10/16/07	12	5
Yarmouth	10/17/07	5	3
Kentville	10/17/07	7	3
Independent Interviews		3	0
Total		35	6

In addition, two industry representatives, who were not able to attend regional meetings, were interviewed by the NS Automotive Sector Council. Their input is included in this report.

The regional meetings were facilitated by the NS Automotive Human Resource Sector Council. After an introduction to the purpose of the consultation, Ms. Corrie Robley, Executive Director (AHRSC) made a presentation on the history of automotive trade designation, what spawned this initiative and discussed the Industry Advisory Committee's mandate. Mr. Richard Sharpe A/Supervisor for the NS Apprenticeship Training and Skills Development Division provided an overview of the trade designation process, apprenticeship training program and certification process.

Subsequently, the floor was opened for questions and discussion. Other staff members from Apprenticeship and from the Nova Scotia Community College were present in each meeting to help answer questions.

### **3.2. Stellarton, N.S. Consultation Meeting**

The meeting in Stellarton went well with participation from eight industry participants and five Apprenticeship and NSCC representatives. At the end of the meeting, the industry participants gave unanimous support to the move towards designating the trade as compulsory certified and making it an independent trade rather than a sub-trade of Motor Vehicle Body Repairer.

Some of the main points of discussion were:

- Designation of the trade will be positive to the industry overall and should have been done a long time ago.
- It is important to provide good quality training to new employees and to attract youth to the trade. It is essential that employees train for the new technology to keep up with the changes.
- If the trade becomes designated, new apprentices would be encouraged to obtain certification.
- One participant asked what the affect would be on current employees.
  - The NS Apprenticeship Training representative explained that the trade doesn't become compulsory designated right away with the application. The process would begin with voluntary designation. If it does become a designated trade, current employees may need to upgrade their essential and technical skills. Experienced technicians working in the trade would have an opportunity to achieve the NS Apprenticeship Certificate of Qualification either through an exam or recognition of time in the trade.
  - Industrial Training Certification Officers meet with individual technicians to review their current skills and prepare a training

- pathway, as well as identifying issues that may hinder achieving certification.
- It was also explained that the industry will work with the apprenticeship system to develop the training component. Examples of what other provinces are doing can provide background and ideas for developing a program specific to Nova Scotia.
  - It was asked what designating the trade would do to improve safety.
    - It was explained that some Automotive Glass Technicians already take advantage of the safety training available. Safety is always an issue and technicians will need continued training throughout their careers.
    - The training will have positive impacts for consumer safety.
    - The biggest issue is tool safety – hand tools etc. Equipment, product supplies and repair processes are constantly changing challenging workers to keep up-to-date.
  - Some of the challenges for the industry in regard to recruiting is that that not everyone is cut out for this type of work. Students are not aware of the industry sector, the potential careers. This is compounded by the fact that there is no provincial training program, which would be promoted by Industry and Industry partners.
  - It was mentioned that insurance companies, for due diligence reasons, require their work to go to certified technicians.
    - Designation will level the playing field between independent shops and the insurance agencies that force business to other shops.
  - Participants expressed concerns about how older workers will adjust to a new training and certification regime.
    - Apprenticeship representatives explained that industry will decide how to deal with the older workers if designation and /or certification is approved. For the Collision Repair Industry, experienced technicians will have one year to challenge the

Certificate of Qualification exam, or enter the apprenticeship training program, which ever is appropriate.

- The Automotive Glass Industry will decide the most appropriate means to achieve certification will be for their technicians.
- With regard to delivery of training, the participants favoured distance education methods including on-line courses, and they agreed that the winter months from January to March would be the best time for course delivery.
- It was asked if there would be training for customer service in the apprenticeship training program. Customer service is an important and large role for the technicians.
  - It was answered that the component could be built into the training if the industry wants it.
- It was asked if non-automotive glass training, i.e. glazier, could be added to the curriculum or designation as most companies provide, flat, glass repair, and stationary/non-stationary automotive glass repair.
  - It was answered that the Sector Council will do research to see how this issue has been handled in other provinces.
- It was asked how long the designation process would take.
  - The Sector Council responded by indicating that it has taken the Collision Repair Industry approximately two and a half years to conduct the studies and have the recommendation submitted to the Minister.
  - The time required may be shortened due to the size of Industry.
- It was asked how wages in the other provinces were affected when the trade was designated.
  - It was answered that designation could affect wages as employers will probably want to charge more to have a certified

technician do the job. In addition the certified technician will probably want to be paid more.

- It was asked whether the occupation of 'Trimmer' could be a separate career path.
  - It was answered that it could be if the demand is there. This is a business growth opportunity if you can find the people to train. 6 stores have need and/or capacity for trimmers.

At the end of the meeting, there was unanimous support for designation of the Automotive Glass Technician as an independent trade. All agreed that compulsory certification is necessary to ensure provincial standards are met. The benefits were agreed to be a) public and employee safety, b) keeping everyone on an equal economic and competitiveness level, c) improvements in productivity and lastly, establishing provincial trade standards.

### 3.3. Dartmouth, N.S. Consultation Meeting

The Dartmouth meeting was attended by a large majority of key business owners and managers from the Halifax Regional Municipality. After the presentations, there was lengthy discussion regarding designation, the impact on the industry, and in particular for small businesses in outlying rural areas. Overall, participants felt that designating the trade was a positive direction for the Industry and that it should be voluntary designated.

Main points of discussion were:

- The main concern of a few participants in the meeting was that designation might benefit the large company (Belron) but be a disadvantage for small independents. Participants expressed concern that a large organization such as Belron could distort the survey results because of the number of stores they control. The meeting participants recommended that the large conglomerate have one vote but that independent franchises should still receive one vote per store.
- There was a feeling that the industry is currently experiencing little to no staff shortages. It was discovered that employers only need to hire when they need to replace a seasoned technician. However, future workforce development is a real concern because there are few, if any, youth entering the industry. Certification will enable youth to access the industry, acquire training, achieve certification and improve labour mobility.
- There was also a concern that businesses that do not train or become certified, would lose work.

- The general attitude was positive – anytime training is available, it is a positive thing.
- The meeting reached consensus that certification should be voluntary to begin with and only with broad industry agreement would it move towards compulsory certification.
- Employee and Consumer safety was seen as a major concern. Body shop technicians should be trained on how to prepare the car surface properly before it goes to the glass technician. The repairer is responsible for quality repair returns.
- While meeting participants were apprehensive about compulsory certification, they were willing to move towards voluntary certification. This would allow the industry to work out the kinks and develop a comfort level. At a later date, if it was deemed necessary, the industry could look at compulsory certification. It was agreed that the trade should be independent and not a sub-trade of Motor Vehicle Body Repairer.
- Online training was seen as the best choice for basic knowledge training. It would also be possible to have on-site training or courses at a college once every 4-6 months so that training does not interfere with business. There was interest in a potential pre-employment program.
- It was agreed that the public would respond favourably to the certification of the trade. It would build confidence in the businesses that display the Certificate of Qualification on the wall.

### 3.4. Yarmouth, N.S. Consultation Meeting

The Yarmouth meeting had a very positive overtone. Once again, key industry leaders attended, including two Automobile Dealerships that have an in-house glass repair division. The employers represented the tri-county area for South West Nova Scotia. In summary, the business owners/managers strongly support designating the trade and feel that the trade should be voluntary at this time.

The main points of discussion were:

- The participants agreed that there should be standards in the shop and certification should help more than hurt the industry.
- Staff also need to know that they can turn work away if the car is not prepared properly. Work should also be rejected if it compromises staff and customer safety. The meeting participants were concerned about safety for consumers and believed that certification would address this issue.
- Designation and certification of the glass technician is an opportunity to level the playing field and does not mean that small shops would be put out of business.
- Showing technicians the right way to install a windshield will help them avoid potentially dangerous situations. They would have more confidence to turn down unsuitable or potentially harmful jobs.
- Compulsory certification could provide a career path to glass technicians and can come at a later date. Employees want to be acknowledged as trades people. Certifying the trade would improve the image and motivation of the industry and its workforce.

- There was some discomfort or fear associated with writing the exam.
  - The Apprenticeship representative explained that the Apprenticeship system would work with the individuals to prepare them. The Industry would have access to all the training and the information as it becomes available.
- It was suggested that theoretical training could be offered on line and would most likely be accessed in the winter months.
- Some participants stated that they are not experiencing a shortage of employees.
- The concern was expressed that certification will cost money and will be more onerous for small businesses as opposed to others with larger volumes of staff. Looking for people to train is not the problem. The main concern is cost, availability, location and training duration.

At the conclusion of the meeting, all businesses agreed with moving towards certification. However, half of the participants favoured voluntary certification followed by compulsory certification at a later date. The rest of the meeting group favoured compulsory certification being a part of the application at the beginning. Everyone agreed on establishing an independent trade and most preferred training in the winter.

### 3.5. Kentville Meeting

The meeting was very positive with unanimous support for designation of the trade. The meeting participants also felt that for it to be successful, industry would have to move to compulsory certification at some point.

In addition to the glass companies, there was representation from collision repair shops. These businesses participated in the session because they outsource their glass work and there is direct dependency between the two sectors. These companies also supported certification - again because of safety and liability. They would like to know that the companies they hire to provide glass repair/replacement are trained and meet at least the minimum industry standards, confirming they are competent to do the job.

Other points of discussion were:

- The main reason for certification is safety for both workers and consumer as well as issues of liability.
- Participants also felt that certifying the trade would attract youth to the industry.
- There was a general consensus that training should have an incentive. Training should focus on products for installation, glass safety and solid foundation skills. Some employers expressed that they would like to hire someone with foundation skills, then take them for hands-on mentorship, etc.
- It was commented that at some point in the future the insurance companies will not support a shop that does not employ certified technicians.

- One participant stated that it will help to level the playing field in the industry if the Government provided training. The smaller business does not have the financial resources to train the way Belron and other larger companies do. The Apprenticeship representative explained that government support for training would also be available to the larger businesses. They cannot discriminate who can and cannot access training.
- Writing the exam is a good checkpoint and the older workers should lead by example and write the exam. There are few backyard shops and they will always be there. In order to ensure that everyone is working to the same standards, the trade will need to be compulsory, as it would be too easy for some businesses not to train if they don't have too.

### 3.6. Interviews with Industry Representatives

Three interviews were conducted with industry people who could not attend regional meetings. Their names are not given to protect confidentiality.

#### **An Independent Owner-Operator Shop in the South Shore**

This interviewee did not feel that trade certification would benefit him or his business. It would not affect his ability to recruit skilled workers because he prefers to hire a mechanically inclined individual with no previous training, and to train them to meet his own high standards and to ensure that repairs are done his way.

Since he is a one-person operation, business hours do not enable him to take time away to upgrade his knowledge and skills. However, it appeared that if training was delivered in a distance education format allowing him to learn at his own pace, or if training was offered on site or within his home community around his business hours, he would be in a better position to participate in it.

The interviewee's raised industry concerns:

- He believed that the problems begin with substandard glass products, expired product and primer breaking down;
- Any new employee would need to be trained by him to meet his own quality and knowledge standards;
- Training of a new employee by the owner ensures that the owner approves each repair and retains his reputation with his customers.

### **An Auto Glass & Auto Trim Shop in Cape Breton**

The shop owner in Cape Breton, was initially undecided about the value of designating the trade and whether it would actually benefit the independents. His primary reason for voicing his opinion and supporting designation was that he was planning for succession. He believed that all new technicians entering the industry needed training.

Having worked for many of the leading names in the industry, he noted that Belron and other big chains have in-house training. While designating the trade would give the independents an edge, it would be temporary since Belron requires their technicians to be certified through their own corporate training program.

He was also concerned about the cost to employers forced to pay increased wages to certified technicians. How would this impact the businesses operating with slim profit margins? He recognized the importance of certification for marketing purposes and as a tool for consumer education.

His main concern was the many advantages that the big companies have over the independents, including their influence in the insurance industry. He added that Belron operates the call centre for claims and therefore has influence over where work is directed. Furthermore, he commented, they own the supply network and can provide discount pricing to their own corporate stores while charging independents a higher price. He felt that if an independent supplier

could open in the Sydney area, the independent repair providers could support the supplier, as long as pricing was competitive.

He agreed that the best solution would be to educate consumers on their rights and on how to tell where to get the best service. He concluded that the designation should be voluntary initially and should be an independent trade rather than a sub-trade.

### **A Franchise Shop on the South Shore**

This interview was conducted with the operator of a franchise.

He strongly supports trade designation because he is concerned about the safety of consumers with the way glass is installed by untrained staff in body shops.

He also raised concerns about the quality of the glass that is being installed. While he recognizes the Sector Council cannot challenge the suppliers, it can work with Industry to have the curriculum include training on how to identify and deal with inferior products.

In summary, it was apparent through many of his stories and examples, that the operator was mostly concerned with the quality of repair issue and consumer safety.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

This report has summarized the findings of research and consultations by the AHRSC and the Industry Advisory Committee on the proposed designation and certification of Automotive Glass Technician as a trade in Nova Scotia.

The survey research established the size and general characteristics of the NS Automotive Glass Technician labour force. It is estimated that there are approximately 140 individuals in the industry who are not currently trade certified and for whom there is no apprenticeship program in place. It is also expected that the industry will need to recruit approximately 39 new Automotive Glass Technicians over the next three years.

The general findings from the survey research and the consultation meetings are that a clear majority of employers believe that designation of the Automotive Glass Technician as a trade will benefit the industry overall. This will occur through the enhanced training and performance standards, the improved image of the industry, enhanced worker and customer safety, and by making the sector more attractive to new entrants.

However, there are concerns and differences of opinion within the industry about the potential impacts of trade certification on smaller, independent companies versus the larger companies and franchise operations. There are also differences of view regarding compulsory versus voluntary certification, with a preference shared by many stakeholders that designation and future certification of the trade be undertaken on a step-by-step basis to build trust in the process across the industry.

Almost all industry representatives share the view that delivery of training to the employed Automotive Glass Technicians labour force will face certain constraints around cost, accessibility of training sites, the age of workers and confidence in dealing with examinations. To meet these challenges stakeholders recommend a strategy for distance education with on-line training and local delivery of courses. Course delivery would be most feasible in the winter months.

Based on the findings from the surveys and regional consultation meetings, there is evidence of broad-based industry support for the designation of the automotive glass technician as a trade. It is therefore recommended that the next steps be taken:

1. The NS Automotive Glass Industry Advisory Committee, with support from the Sector Council, formally submit an application for trade designation to the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Board.
2. A demographic research study must be undertaken to identify who works in the Industry, their trade and occupation history and the growth potential of the Industry. This results of this information would be provided to the NS Apprenticeship Board to assist them in the decision making process.
3. After the application process is underway, the NS Automotive Glass IAC, with support from the AHRSC, proceed with Committee meetings to discuss the development and framework for a future provincial training program.
4. Ongoing communications to the NS Automotive Glass Industry regarding trade designation and the potential for future provincial training programs.
5. Should the Minister of Education approve trade designation for the occupation, an Industry Certification and Standards Committee (ICSC) should be established with representation of all industry stakeholder groups and institutional partners. The ICSC with support from the AHRSC should play the lead role to:
  - a. Continue the working partnership with the Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division (ATSDD) on designation and voluntary certification of the trade;
  - b. Be the central information resource for industry for questions, comments and assistance in the transition to trade certification;
  - c. Provide credible and legitimate leadership representing all sectors of the industry to move towards trade designation and perhaps, at a future point where industry is in full support, compulsory certification.
6. The ICSC, in partnership with the AHRSC and other stakeholders, should prepare an industry communications strategy to inform industry stakeholders about the process. In addition, the communication strategy should serve to build a climate of support for trade designation and certification.
7. The ICSC, in partnership with the AHRSC, the NSCC and the Apprenticeship Division, should undertake the development (i.e., design, testing and evaluation)

of a training program (i.e., curriculum and delivery strategy) for employed Automotive Glass Technicians to achieve certification.

## 5. VALIDATION

### 5.1. Project Steering Committee

Findings and recommendations from this report were presented to the Automotive Glass Designation Advisory Committee on January 24<sup>th</sup> 2008.

It was explained that the next steps in moving towards designation of the auto glass technician trade will be:

1. Posting of the final project report on the AHRSC website and distribution of copies to everyone who responded to the survey.
2. An application for the request to designate the trade will be completed and signed by three committee members. The final report, together with the application, will be submitted it to officials at the Apprenticeship Board.
3. Once the Apprenticeship Board receives the request to designate the trade, and agrees to act on it, the Automotive Glass industry will establish an Industry Certification and Standards Committee (ICSC). This will occur with continued partnership with Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development (ATSD) to drive the communications program
4. A “Needs Assessment or Impact Study” will be undertaken to back up industry support with solid labour market information.

Committee members raised the following points in the discussion:

- It is critically important at this point to communicate the Committee’s decision to industry and indicate the intent to move forward with the application for trade designation.
- More analysis should be done to identify the areas of the province where there is support or lack of support. It is evident that extra efforts should be made to communicate with industry stakeholders in Cape Breton.

- Given the concerns among stakeholders about the advantages or disadvantages for small independent shops versus the larger companies and franchise operators, it will be important to have a cross section of industry representatives on this Industry Certification and Standards Committee. Everyone will have to feel that their corner of the industry is represented and has a voice.
- The AHRSC will apply to Service Canada for funding to conduct the labour force profile study.

Committee members discussed the opposing views on compulsory versus voluntary certification.

- The reasons for making certification compulsory include the needs to enforce safety, to improve service quality, and to attract new employees to a recognized trade.
- When employees who have received in-house training in larger companies try to get jobs outside there is no way to assess their training levels. Their in-house training is limiting. The individuals who have their certification may have advantages in labour mobility.
- The subject of providing an exam to test competency was discussed with the representative of Apprenticeship Training. He clarified that Apprenticeship has always required an exam for journey person certification. Skill testing can be competency based for a trade that has provincial impact only. But if the trade became inter-provincial the issue of a written exam would have to be revisited. The Director of Apprenticeship will work with the industry recommendation on the exam and will have the final say on whether or not an examination is required to assess skill and competency prior to awarding certification.

The Committee was in agreement with moving forward with next steps based on the recommendations in the report.

## **5.2. The Automotive Sector Council Board**

A presentation of findings and recommendations from the study was presented to the Board of the Automotive Human Resources Sector Council on February 12<sup>th</sup> 2008.

Board members expressed satisfactions with the overall findings and approved moving forward with next steps as described above.



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