

An Employers Guide to...

# Hiring Foreign Skilled Workers



The Nova Scotia Automotive Service & Repair Industry Immigration Strategy

## Executive Summary

Industry consultations, provincial communication meetings and human resource studies with Automotive Industry employers have consistently emphasized the need for new, proactive strategies to address the critical shortage of skilled workers.

Responding to this need, the Nova Scotia Automotive Sector Council initiated the research and development of an industry-specific automotive immigration strategy.

The strategy will consist of two phases over a three-year period. Phase one (2005/06) incorporates primary and secondary research of the current labour market environment specific to immigration. Phase two, anticipated to begin in the fall of 2006, will be a more detailed study of the research, implementation and evaluation of recruiting skilled workers from abroad through the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program.

Guided by the Board of Directors, in 2005 the Automotive Sector Council proceeded to establish new partnerships with the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association, Apprenticeship Training Division - Prior Learning and Assessment division, and UK 2 Nova Scotia Settlement agency.

Research consisted of one-on-one interviews with five identified employers who had previously hired foreign skilled workers, three foreign workers who successfully gained employment and twelve newcomers to Nova Scotia yet to integrate into the workforce.

Employers, immigrants and industry partners clearly identified the need to access more information. Secondly, most employers were unaware of immigration entry routes, how to access programs and expressed a need for a standard model across the province to hire foreign skilled workers.

The following guide is a summary of the information gathered throughout the research process, the development of the new Nova Scotia Automotive Immigration Pathway, and additional tools and resources to help promote the hiring of new foreign skilled workers.

# Hiring Foreign Skilled Workers

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to industry employers, employed foreign workers and newcomers to Nova Scotia who participated in the Automotive Sector Council's immigration research project. Each company and individual provided input and their personal experiences, which ultimately helped to shape this new Automotive Immigration Pathway.

Thank you to the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division for the partnership, information and input.

Acknowledgement is extended to the Canadian Exporters and Manufacturers, Nova Scotia Division for providing much of the secondary research, statistics and information for this guide, as noted in footnotes throughout the document.

Finally, once again we recognize the Automotive Sector Council Board of Directors for their ongoing support, participation and commitment to Industry workforce planning and development.

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**Graham Conrad**  
Executive Director

**Corrie Robley**  
Project Manager

**Canada**

## Introduction

As an employer, you want to hire the right person for the job. It's important to keep in mind that the right person could be an immigrant to Nova Scotia. Foreign skilled workers not only contribute to our labour market, they also possess knowledge, expertise and skills that are helpful to your business.

The purpose of this guide is to encourage you to hire foreign skilled workers. In today's highly competitive environment, companies seek new markets and customers to grow and be profitable. Skilled workers from different cultural backgrounds can provide valuable insights into serving customers with diverse needs.





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# 1 The Value of Immigration

Immigration has always played an important role in Canada's population and labour force growth. Between 1991 and 2001, 978,000 immigrants joined Canada's workforce, representing 70 percent of the decade's total labour force growth of 1.4 million people. By 2011, the Government of Canada predicts that immigration will account for all of Canada's labour force growth.

Immigration is playing a central role in Nova Scotia as our province faces both demographic and economic change. Over 23% of automotive collision repair technicians are over the age of 50. It is expected that the majority of those technicians will retire or make a career change by 2011.

The effects of our aging population are not unique to Nova Scotia. Canada is experiencing the same demographic shift as are other parts of the world.

Immigration is an obvious solution to the skills challenge. Most immigrants arriving in Canada are of working age and are highly skilled and educated. They also provide diversity of thought, culture and practices, which are beneficial in a global economy. A skilled and motivated labour force contributes to economic growth. Immigrants also have the potential to make significant contributions to our workplaces and businesses.

Case in point is Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. These large and vibrant cities attract almost three quarters of Canada's immigrants, demonstrating a strong correlation between high levels of immigration and economic vitality.

**The Nova Scotia Automotive Sector Council conducted a provincial labour market study in 2003. Nova Scotia automotive employers reported that they would need over 350 skilled trades in 2003 and an additional 297 new trades people between 2004 and 2006. With only a little over 100 new apprentices entering our industry over the past three years, the industry is far from meeting its needs.**

Automotive industry employers, especially in rural Nova Scotia, continue to feel the effects of youth and apprentice migration from rural communities to urban centres. As a result of the major outward migration of Nova Scotians to Western Canada, it is now more important than ever to look to immigration as one step in minimizing the shortage of skilled workers.



" I came to Canada with fifteen years of automotive skills and wanted to start work right away. I was fortunate to meet Peter Wolf and his staff at Wolf Collision, Halifax. They welcomed me into their workplace, assigned a mentor and for three weeks tested my skills. Everyone was very friendly and welcoming.

I wish this process had been in place when I arrived in Nova Scotia. Having information, resources and industry contacts is key to successfully entering the automotive industry."

**Mojtaba Talebzadeh**, Auto body technician

We have to work harder to attract, retain, and integrate immigrants if we want to reverse a shrinking population and labour force



By necessity, immigrants are resilient, open to change, and willing to learn.

## Dispelling the Myths of Immigration

Immigration to Nova Scotia has declined steadily since the mid-90s, and our retention rate is low. Only about 40 percent of immigrants stay to live and work in Nova Scotia. The primary reason they leave is lack of meaningful employment in the province, an irony considering that we face skills and worker shortages in Nova Scotia.

We have to work harder to attract, retain, and integrate immigrants if we want to reverse a shrinking population and labour force. The private sector has a role to play by creating appropriate conditions, including employment opportunities. Immigrants come from different countries and cultures but, like the Canadian-born population, they are looking to satisfy fundamental human needs, one of which is meaningful long-term employment.

One common myth is that immigrants "steal" jobs from local residents. In fact, there are not enough new apprentices and employees entering the automotive service and repair industry to completely fill all of the employment vacancies.

### **Immigration is part of the solution to ensuring a sufficient supply of skilled workers in Nova Scotia, however, higher levels of immigration alone will not be enough.**

Immigrants need to be more engaged in economic activity with employment that is suitable to their qualifications. If they are the most qualified candidates for job opportunities, they need to be given a chance to prove themselves in our workplaces.

## Foreign Skilled Workers Bring Technical Expertise

In many cases, foreign skilled automotive repair technicians bring expertise in specialty areas such as air conditioning, advancing technologies on imports, diesel engines and diagnostics, to name a few. These specialty skills can fill a skill shortage as well as create new business opportunities for employers, where they were unable to expand services otherwise

## Immigrants Characteristics

Aside from the experience and knowledge they bring, immigrants have other qualities needed in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

By necessity, immigrants are open to change and willing to learn. They leave for an uncertain future in a new country with different people, customs and systems. Once they arrive, they have to find employment, housing, health care services, transportation and social connections as well as adjust to new systems and customs. In today's global environment, where business has to adapt and take risks to be competitive, having employees who are open to change and learning is a competitive advantage.

## 2 Recruitment Process

### Permanent Resident Status

There are three primary routes of which the Automotive Industry will hire foreign workers through: Permanent Resident Status, Nova Scotia Nominee Program and the national Temporary Foreign Worker program.

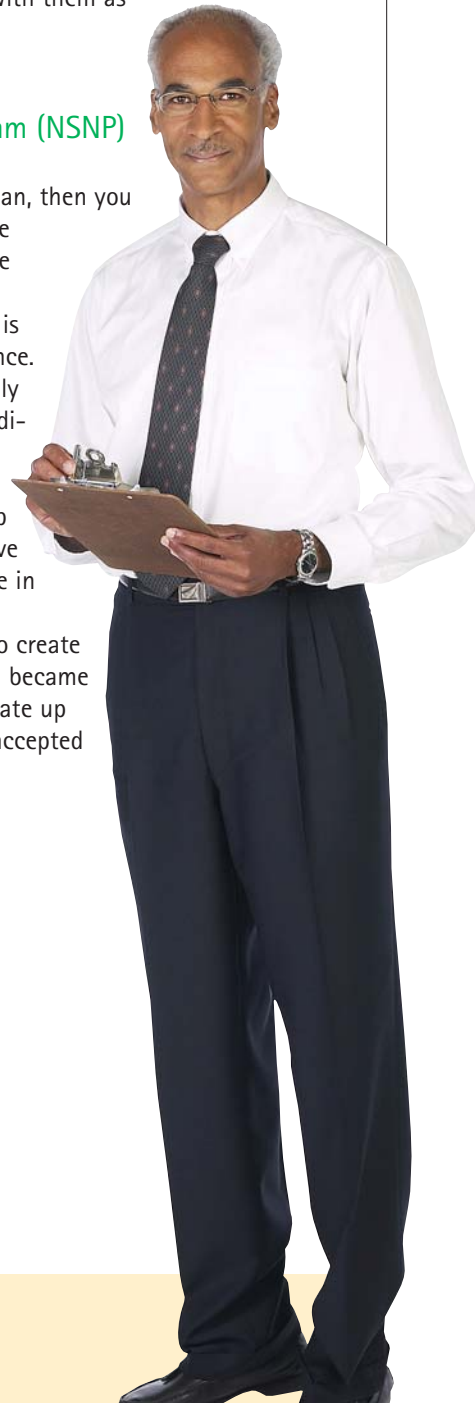
There is no special process for hiring immigrants who are already in Nova Scotia. They are permanent residents of Canada and are entitled to work in the country. You review their job applications and conduct interviews with them as you would with Canadian-born residents.

### Recruiting Abroad - Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP)

If you have a specific job that cannot be filled by a Canadian, then you can recruit from abroad. You can do this either through the Temporary Foreign Worker program administered by Service Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), or through the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP), which is the primary vehicle for recruiting immigrants to this province. In both cases, you must advertise provincially and nationally to prove and substantiate that there is no appropriate candidate in Canada to meet your needs.

In 2002, Nova Scotia signed an agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to allow the province to have a more active role in selecting immigrants who wish to live in the province. The program is designed to help Nova Scotia employers fill shortages in the permanent workforce and to create economic benefit for the provincial economy. This program became operational in July 2003 and allows the province to nominate up to 1,000 immigrant candidates over five years. Nominees accepted under NSNP will become permanent residents of Canada.

For more information on the NSNP, visit:  
[www.novascotiainmigration.com](http://www.novascotiainmigration.com)





“Having hired our employee from Russia has been a very positive learning experience for the company, staff and management. He came to us with a very good base of automotive skills, attended a private automotive college and had several years of work experience in his home country. He also learned English in very short period of time and has proven a great asset to our business. The key to hiring foreign workers is to have a welcoming attitude and sincere interest to help them acquaint themselves with our work culture.”

**Valerie Brace**, Fixed Operations Manager, Chebucto Ford.

Nova Scotia Nominee Program: Skilled Worker Stream	
Description	Requirements
The advantage of this category is to nominate skilled individuals, who can assist our Nova Scotia companies to expand their business and continue positively affect our economy. This is especially true when the business has been unable to find workers to do the jobs that are needed to enable the business to grow.	<p>Nominee must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a guaranteed permanent, full-time job offer in a skill area where a Nova Scotia employer has identified a skill shortage;</li> <li>• Have the ability to do the job ( i.e. the ability to be licensed where required);</li> <li>• Have basic literacy skills in English, or French and English to be able to function in a job situation;</li> <li>• Be of legal working age;</li> <li>• Hav a minimum education of Nova Scotia grade 12 or equivalent.</li> </ul>

### Temporary Foreign Worker Program

This program is a vehicle through which you can fill skills and labour force shortages. As an employer, you are required to submit specific documentation to HRSDC for assessment, including proof of an unsuccessful job search for a Canadian worker to do the job at a fair salary, and the job offer to the potential foreign worker. To find out more about the application process, call HRSDC in Halifax at (902) 426-8229 or visit [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/gateways/nav/top\\_nav/program/fw.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/gateways/nav/top_nav/program/fw.shtml)



## 3 Hiring Process

### 7 Steps to Hiring a Foreign Skilled Worker

Based on extensive research, the Automotive Sector Council recommends you use the following steps to hire a foreign skilled worker. You can also refer to the NS Automotive Immigration Pathway at the back of the guide for more detail on the roles and responsibilities of Industry, Apprenticeship, MISA and the newcomers

**Step 1** Refer individual to the Automotive Sector Council for preliminary interview

The Council may recommend that the client have a Foreign Credentials Assessment, Automotive Occupational Profile completed and English Language Training.

**Step 2** Information Exchange between Automotive Sector Council and Employer

**Step 3** Foreign Worker will complete a voluntary Workplace Skills Assessment

**Step 4** Employer provides Cultural Sensitivity Training to employees

**Step 5** Employer Interviews foreign worker

**Step 6** Employment offer & orientation period

**Step 7** Automotive Sector Council follow-up and evaluation

### Interviewing Immigrants

If the foreign skilled worker has contacted you directly, we recommend that you refer them to the Automotive Sector Council for preliminary interview and review of the new Immigration Pathway.

The Council will help the individual access information, resources and the necessary steps to successfully prepare for employment. Refer to the Automotive Immigration Pathway at the back of this guide.

Once the individual is ready to work, in your interview you can evaluate whether the persons' skills and experience meet the requirements of a particular position. To avoid misunderstandings during the interview and to ensure you don't eliminate the best candidate for the job, you should learn about differences in cross-cultural communication.

For example, what would you think if someone did not make eye contact with you during an interview? You might question the person's trustworthiness or interest in the job. However, in some countries, not making eye contact is a sign of respect. In this situation, not knowing about cultural differences may create bias in the selection process.





"The automotive service and repair industry needs skilled workers, especially automotive technicians. With the new Automotive Immigration Pathway, it will be much easier for you to understand how to enter the workforce. We are looking forward to helping more foreign skilled workers like yourself find the right job."

**Peter Wolf**, Wolf Collision Halifax

### What to do and what to avoid - when speaking with someone who speaks english as a second language

Do	Avoid
Use clear language, pronounce words with care, and finish your sentences.	Assuming that every communication issue is because of English not being the person's first language.
Speak more slowly (not more loudly).	Using idioms, slang, jargon and acronyms (unless you check for comprehension and explain).
Encourage the person to ask questions or seek clarification. Explain that asking questions is OK.	Assuming that, if there are no questions, then the person understand what you have said or explained. Check up on comprehension.
Use visual aids to assist with communicating your information (e.g. reports, maps, diagrams etc.).	Making assumptions or generalizations. Treat each person as an individual.
	Assuming the person will know Halifax Regional Municipality and Nova Scotia really well. Areas that may be new the person may include: provincial history, politics, geography, holidays, popular culture.

### Recognizing Foreign Worker Credentials

Foreign skilled workers face two major hurdles to continuing their professional careers in Canada: difficulty transferring their international credentials and lack of Canadian work experience.

In some cases, foreign skilled workers may come to Nova Scotia with training documentation and certificates. You can contact the Apprenticeship Training Division to learn if a credential equivalency review has been already done, or you may use professional Credential service providers.

World Education Services (WES) performs evaluations of certificates, diplomas and degrees earned by skilled immigrants and its services are accessible to employers and job seekers across Canada. The average processing time for an evaluation by WES is seven business days and the cost for a basic assessment is \$115 per application. Visit [www.wes.org](http://www.wes.org) or call 1-866-343-0070 for more information. Other credential assessment services are listed in the Resources section.

## Asking for Certification Documents

You can ask for certification or journeyman papers where applicable. Technicians arriving from Europe, Asia and other countries who have worked for international automobile manufacturers may present dealer-specific certificates. The Automotive Sector Council (ASC) has contacted several of the manufacturers for more details on the papers and is working with Apprenticeship to compare the training modules.

The United Kingdom uses a similar Apprenticeship model referred to as City & Guilds. The ASC is documenting the similarities of skills learning for Industry reference.

For assistance with qualification assessment, skills upgrading and certification, contact the NS Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division at 1-800-494-5651.

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The United Kingdom uses a similar Apprenticeship model referred to as City & Guilds. The ASC is documenting the similarities of skills learning for Industry reference.

For assistance with qualification assessment, skills upgrading and certification, contact the Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division, Nova Scotia Department of Education, at 1-800-494-5651.

## Suggested Interview Questions

### Training and Employment Background

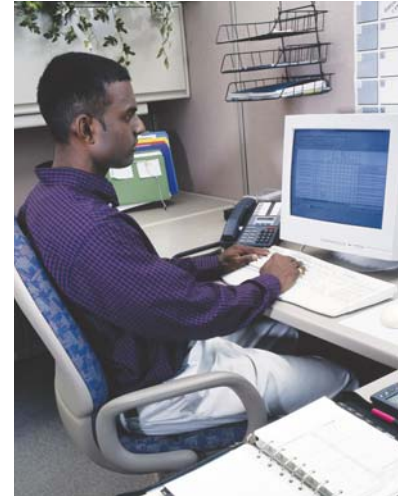
1. Do you have automotive training from your home country?
2. Did you go through an apprenticeship program?
3. Are you certified to work in your trade?
4. Do you have mechanical and auto body experience?
5. Describe your employment experience.
6. What kinds of vehicles did you work on?
7. Have you had your skills compared to the Canadian education system? (i.e. World Education Services)
8. Would you be willing to have an Automotive Occupational Profile done?
9. Do you need additional English Second Language training?
10. Have you had Safety Training, WHMIS, OH&S and First Aid?
11. Do you access to a computer for additional training purposes?

### Cultural Background

1. What were your work hours in your home country?
2. How many days per week did you work?
3. Did you take breaks during the day? How often?
4. Did you have to take training while working?
5. Describe the reporting structure. (Hierarchy)

### Integration Issues

1. Are you legally entitled to work in Canada?
2. If you here on a temporary work permit, when does it expire?
3. Do you have a Social Insurance Number?
4. Do you have a valid Canadian Driver's License?
5. Do you have special requirements? i.e. holidays.



Occupational Profiling assesses a person's learning style, behaviour and occupational interest.... The Profile improves the process of hiring the right fit.

## "Trying Out" Foreign Skilled Workers

The Automotive Sector Council has established a **Workplace Skills Assessment** program as a key component to hiring foreign skilled workers. This process was designed to create a realistic skills assessment for the immigrant that will compliment the Apprenticeship Training Division's theory assessment.

The Immigration Workplace Skills Assessment process utilizes a user-friendly skills checklist that compliments Apprenticeship modules. An employer assigns an experienced technician(s) to assess their skills, complete the form, and provide a copy to the immigrant and Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development division.

It is recommended that you provide an opportunity for the foreign worker to demonstrate their technical and non-technical skills for you over a course of one to six weeks. This can be conducted without an obligation to hire, however it is the employers best interest to indicate that you are looking for the right fit. Immigrants should come to you with safety training, e.g. WHMIS, Occupational Health & Safety, and St. John Ambulance First Aid and CPR.

The Automotive Technical Skills Assessment Chart is available on-line at [www.AutomotiveSectorCouncil.ca](http://www.AutomotiveSectorCouncil.ca) under HR Projects/Immigration, or by contacting the Council.

The Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association also coordinates work placements through the New Beginnings Program (NBP). An immigrant is placed with a Nova Scotia employer for up to six weeks - unpaid work placement. The placement will give you an opportunity to try out a potential employee, with no obligation to pay or hire.

There is no cost to employers, but the Canadian work experience that the immigrants gain is invaluable. Your screening process should include a skills test for all job applicants to assess technical

## Occupational Profiling

Industry is now using the Automotive Occupational Profile when hiring, promoting and managing employees. This Profile improves the process of hiring the right fit, and helps management get to know the individual much sooner than otherwise. Occupational Profiling assesses a person's learning style, behaviour and occupational interest. The Profile is available in several languages and is administered by the NS Automotive Sector Council.



## Sample Automotive Occupational Profile Report

### Thinking Style

Learning Index				4	5	6	7	8		
Verbal Skill					5	6	7	8		
Verbal Reasoning			3	4	5					
Numerical Ability				4	5	6	7	8		
Numeric Reasoning						6	7	8	9	

### Behavioral Traits

Energy Level				4	5	6	7			
Assertiveness				4	5	6	7			
Sociability			3	4	5	6	7			
Manageability				4	5	6	7			
Attitude				4	5	6				
Decisiveness				4	5	6	7			
Accommodating						6	7	8		
Independence				4	5	6	7			
Objective Judgment				4	5	6				

### Interests Ranking Occupational Interests

Top three interests for this position

Technical										
Mechanical										
Financial/Admin										

Top three interests for this position

Enterprising										
People Service										
Creative										

The Job Matching process for Interests is concerned with the top three interests of a Job Match Pattern and how closely a candidate's top three interests match. The three top interests for this Pattern are indicated and ranked from top to bottom.



Mentorship facilitates the transfer of information, the enhancement of skills and productivity, and the development of relationships.



Gordon Mackenzie (R) with David technician from the UK.

"Personally it was a rewarding process, to hire a professional from another country looking to continue their chosen vocation in a new country. There were a few obstacles in the beginning but everyone from Immigration to The Department of Education helped push on to make the process relatively smooth. I'm always looking to promote or hire from within our boundaries first but if the need to hire from outside Canada presents itself then it's good to know there are caring people in the right places to help out.

As far as my hire goes, I couldn't be happier. I found a true professional whose enthusiasm for our products matches our own. I wouldn't hesitate to hire abroad in the future if the need existed."

**Gordon Mackenzie**  
Service Manager, Hillcrest VW 1979 LTD.

## 4 Retention Process

### Developing a Culturally-friendly Organization

As with any employee, you want your immigrant employees to feel welcome in your organization. This is especially important for foreign skilled workers as they try to integrate into a new country. Immigrants have cultural differences from the mainstream norms and your staff should accept and be open to these differences. This diversity can even be recognized and celebrated for the value it adds to your organization's culture. An atmosphere of acceptance and openness, in turn, further enriches and promotes your organization as one that is culturally friendly.

### Diversity Training

The Automotive Sector Council encourages you to provide Cultural Training for employees to enhance understanding of different cultures. A common theme in diversity training is awareness: awareness of stereotypes, awareness of oneself, and awareness of those different from you. Contact the Automotive Sector Council for training availability.

### Orientation Program

As part of your organization's human resource strategy, you should have an effective orientation program for all employees. This training period helps create awareness of the organizational and expected norms and practices across the organization.

### Canadian Workplace Education

MISA now offers pre-employability training that will help the new comer better understand the Canadian workplace. Setting expectations before employment will help play a role in successfully integrating the person into the workplace. During the interview process, you may ask questions about their style of workplace in their country of origin.

### Mentoring Program

Mentoring is a valuable tool for employers and employees. The Automotive Sector Council has developed an Automotive Mentorship Strategy to help employers adopt the program into their workplace. Mentorship facilitates the transfer of information, the enhancement of skills and productivity, and the development of relationships. You can develop a program to match existing staff members with immigrant workers.

Mentors can:

- explain local business practices
- help with skills development
- gain information about business practices in other countries;
- create a welcoming environment
- enhance team environment

In return, the immigrant workers will:

- better understand the systems and culture of the workplace;
- receive moral support and encouragement;
- enhance their skills;
- be more productive.

To get your copy of the Automotive Mentorship Program, visit [www.AutomotiveSectorCouncil.ca/mentorship](http://www.AutomotiveSectorCouncil.ca/mentorship), or contact the Automotive Sector Council.

## ESL (English as a Second Language) Tutoring Programs

There are ESL programs that rely on volunteers to assist immigrants in developing language skills. The tutor is someone with whom to talk, share, and learn. ESL tutoring programs are offered by MISA, the Halifax Regional Library, and the Centre for Diverse Visible Cultures.

## English in the Workplace Program

The Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC) offers an English in the Workplace program for employees requiring additional English training. An instructor delivers customized training to foreign skilled workers on site. While there is no cost to employers, the program is delivered during regular working hours. For more information, call HILC at (902) 443-2937.

## On-line Automotive Translation Websites

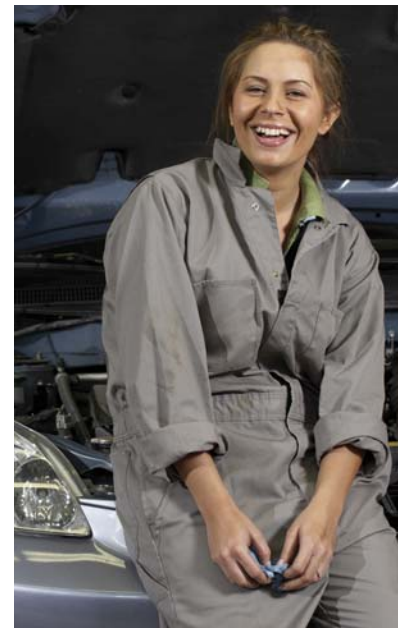
There are a variety of free websites that will help the foreign skilled worker learn English automotive terminology. We recommend that the employer bookmark these on their shop computers for quick and easy reference.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/translate/text.html>

<http://www.word2word.com/dictionary.html>

<http://babelfish.altavista.com>

<http://ets.freetranslation.com/>



# N.S. Automotive Immigration Pathway



\*If and where applicable

## Resource Information



### **Nova Scotia Automotive Human Resource Sector Council**

327 Prince Albert Rd, Suite 4  
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 1N7  
Tel: (902) 464-0168  
Fax: (902) 465-5734  
Email: [autohrsc@accesswave.ca](mailto:autohrsc@accesswave.ca)  
Web: [www.AutomotiveSectorCouncil.ca](http://www.AutomotiveSectorCouncil.ca)

### **Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA)**

MISA can provide candidate referrals for job openings. MISA also coordinates work placements through the New Beginnings Program (NBP). An immigrant is placed with a Nova Scotia employer for a 6-week unpaid work placement. The placement gives you an opportunity to try out a potential employee, with no obligation to pay or hire.  
7105 Chebucto Road, Suite 201  
Halifax, NS B3L 4W8  
Tel: (902) 423-3607  
Email: [info@misa.ns.ca](mailto:info@misa.ns.ca)  
[www.misa.ns.ca](http://www.misa.ns.ca)

### **Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division**

2021 Brunswick Street  
P.O. Box 578  
Halifax, N.S. B3J 2S9  
Tel: (902) 424-5651  
Fax: (902) 424-0717  
Toll Free: 1-800-494-5651  
Email: [apprenticeship@gov.ns.ca](mailto:apprenticeship@gov.ns.ca)  
Web: [www.apprenticeship.ednet.ns.ca](http://www.apprenticeship.ednet.ns.ca)

### **World Education Services (WES)**

WES provides foreign credential assessment services to immigrants, employers, academic institutions and occupational regulatory bodies across Canada. A person's credentials are compared to the local secondary or post-secondary institutes, where applicable.  
45 Charles Street East, Suite 700  
Toronto, ON M4Y 1S2  
Tel: (416) 972-0070 or 866-343-0070  
[canada@wes.org](mailto:canada@wes.org)  
[www.wes.org/ca](http://www.wes.org/ca)

### **Nova Scotia Office of Immigration & Nova Scotia Nominee Program**

This program is designed to help Nova Scotia employers fill skills shortages in the permanent workforce and to create economic benefit for the provincial economy.  
1741 Brunswick Street, Suite 110A  
PO Box 1535  
Halifax NS B3J 2Y3  
Tel: (902) 424-5230  
Toll Free: 1-877-292-9597  
Fax: (902) 424-7936  
Email: [immigration@gov.ns.ca](mailto:immigration@gov.ns.ca)  
Web: [www.novascotiainmigration.com](http://www.novascotiainmigration.com)



**Automotive**  
Sector Council  
of Nova Scotia