



The voice of the Canadian Kitchen Cabinet Industry

The CKCA wants an end to the skilled trade labour shortage that threatens the Canadian woodworking industry

The Reality

The Canadian kitchen cabinet manufacturing industry faces an unprecedented shortage of skilled workers for multiple reasons; 1) Cabinet manufacturing suffers from an image problem; students, parents, and educators disfavor the skilled trades option as a career path. 2) Educational institutions have not kept up with industry requirements, and lack resources for community outreach and promotion. 3) The industry is at risk of losing the valuable intelligence of an aging and retiring workforce. 4) Rising costs of shop modernization, supply cost increases, equipment acquisition/replacement, and risk management mean there is less money to offer wages that compete with other industries. 5) The demand for high-tech jobs is pushing wages higher and widening the wage gap. 6) Access to existing tools and resources created within the industry or by government is hindered by funding limitations for communications, or scarcity of grant-writing assistance. 7) Competition for labour is increasing as other industry sectors face similar challenges. Without immediate action to address the challenges faced in recruiting labour, retaining & training employees, and access to available resources, the whole of the wood manufacturing sector is at risk.

The Numbers

The Canadian kitchen cabinet manufacturing industry represents an estimated \$1.5 billion in annual sales and employs more than 25,000 Canadians in an estimated 4,000 small- to medium-sized enterprises across Canada.

The Conference Board of Canada's 2016 Labor Market Report stated that another 8,000 workers would be required in the advanced wood manufacturing by 2020. "Businesses in the sector face several human resources challenges, including a lack of qualified workers, the need for new workforce skills, difficulty attracting new workers, difficulty replacing retiring workers". It further recommended that "concerted efforts were needed if the sector is going to reach its full growth potential in the years ahead".

The Story

The labour shortage has been intensifying over the last 5 years. In 2018, a CKCA member in Ontario voiced their concerns about the significant challenges they were facing in hiring qualified installers. As a result, the association ran a survey to benchmark the membership's employment practices and shortages. When asked if they were having difficulty hiring installers, 44% said yes and 46% said sometimes.¹ Stories recounted in the survey responses told the same stories; the pool of workers from which to draw is small, unskilled, and being poached by other sectors.

The Ask

The CKCA calls for support from industry and Government in, 1) communicating the benefits of working in the kitchen cabinet industry, while building educational programs that include mentorship and relevant skills training, 2) financial assistance for the retention and re-training of employees for shops investing in automation and continuous improvement, and 3) creating a support network that promotes and makes more accessible existing tools that address shared labour challenges.

¹ Kitchen Cabinet Installers Survey Results, CKCA, 2019