

An Analysis of the Ottawa Labour Market

**Background report for
Joint Project on Integrating Foreign
Trained Workers into the Labour Market**



Analysis of the Ottawa Labour Market

1. THE OTTAWA LABOUR MARKET

Traditionally, the Ottawa economy has been dependent on the public sector for employment opportunities, but emerging sectors such as those based on information and communications or biotechnologies are increasingly important for the growth and stability of local businesses and organizations. Recent trends in the Ottawa labour market have highlighted the fact that despite the presence of a highly educated and flexible workforce, the local economy remains vulnerable to the ups and downs of economic, social, demographic and other forces. The advent of the knowledge-based economy has brought about significant opportunities for Ottawa businesses and citizens, but it has also created new challenges for those who have not been able to fully reap its benefits.

In recognition of these challenges, Talentworks – a partnership of various local groups concerned about labour market development issues – has sponsored the *Ottawa Works* initiative. The initiative is seen as a step to improve the access of companies and organizations to skilled employees while creating opportunities for the unemployed, underemployed and currently employed to more fully participate in the economy. The present report draws on Talentworks' research and other sources of information to provide an overview of the Ottawa labour market's main trends and issues. It then proceeds to discuss supply and demand conditions for the five occupational groupings that are being examined in the context of this project.

1.1 GENERAL GROWTH PROSPECTS

Despite the decline in manufacturing activity brought about by the slowdown in the high technology sector, the Ottawa economy remains strong and, indeed, has outperformed the national average in recent years. Even the pace of the decline in the high technology sector is showing signs of slowing down, and increased employment in a number of sectors – public administration and construction, to name two – is contributing to sustained employment growth. As reported in *Report II: Profiling Ottawa's Workforce*, several features of the local economy and of the social fabric leave room for optimism:

- The region's Gross Domestic Product per capita has regularly outperformed the Canadian average and short-term projections suggest a continuation of this good performance. Employment growth and the unemployment rate trends also compare favorably. The local economy, thus, is becoming increasingly diversified although it remains vulnerable to the vagaries of political decision-making and international competition.
- Ottawa possesses the most highly educated workforce in the country, explaining in part the relatively high level of R & D spending and activity. Venture capital investment increased in Ottawa more than tenfold between 1998 and 2001. In 2001, venture capital investment activity was down in Ontario, from \$2.9 billion in 2000 to

\$2.0 billion a year later, but IT firms in the Ottawa Valley attracted undiminished support from investors, with \$1.1 billion of the provincial total in 2001.

- Although the economy still lacks diversification – with more than 17% of the workforce in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector and a further 19% in public administration, cross-referencing employment by industry to occupations reveals that a large number of occupations in these sectors also relate to other key sectors, suggesting that the workforce has inherent flexibility and can respond to shifts in employment patterns.
- The number of social assistance and employment insurance cases are declining but levels of the former are higher than provincial and national averages. While these relatively high levels are linked to correspondingly high levels of self-employment, the fact remains that the incidence of poverty has not diminished. For Jackson and Khan (2002), the ‘experience of the 1990s in [high tech] cluster growth in the NCR was that it was largely irrelevant to the interests of poor and disadvantaged citizens.’¹
- Ottawa’s median family income have been increasing over the last five years, and they are now higher than both the Ontario and the national averages. Coupled with a generally high quality of life and relatively inexpensive housing costs – compared to other North American cities – this prosperity will help fuel the economy but create additional challenges for those with lower disposable income or facing access to labour market barriers.

1.2 LABOUR MARKET TRENDS

Short Term

Between June 2001 and June 2002, the number of employed people in Ottawa’s Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) declined by 14,600 – or 3.3% – to settle at 434,500 persons. Employment started to decline significantly in January, 2002, and bottomed out at 430,600 persons in May of that year. Since then, it has been increasing. Despite these changes in overall employment levels, the region’s unemployment rate has remained more or less steady at 7.1% (June 2002).

A look at employment trends by industry shows that, between April and June 2002, more than 3,000 jobs were created in the goods-producing sector. Within this broad grouping, construction was responsible for the creation of 4,000 jobs while, by contrast, manufacturing continued its employment decline – driven by the high technology slowdown.² In the services-producing sector, there was during this period an overall decline of almost 3,000 jobs. Several related industries – including education, transportation and warehousing, and professional, scientific and technical services – experienced a decline but, pursuing a trend started in November 2001, public administration continued to grow and now exceeds 90,000 jobs. Growth in public administration, therefore, is picking some of the slack left by the slowdown in

¹ Jackson and Khan, 2002, p.5.

² Jackson and Khan (2002) reported that between March 2001 and October 2002, the region’s technology sector lost 15,000 jobs.

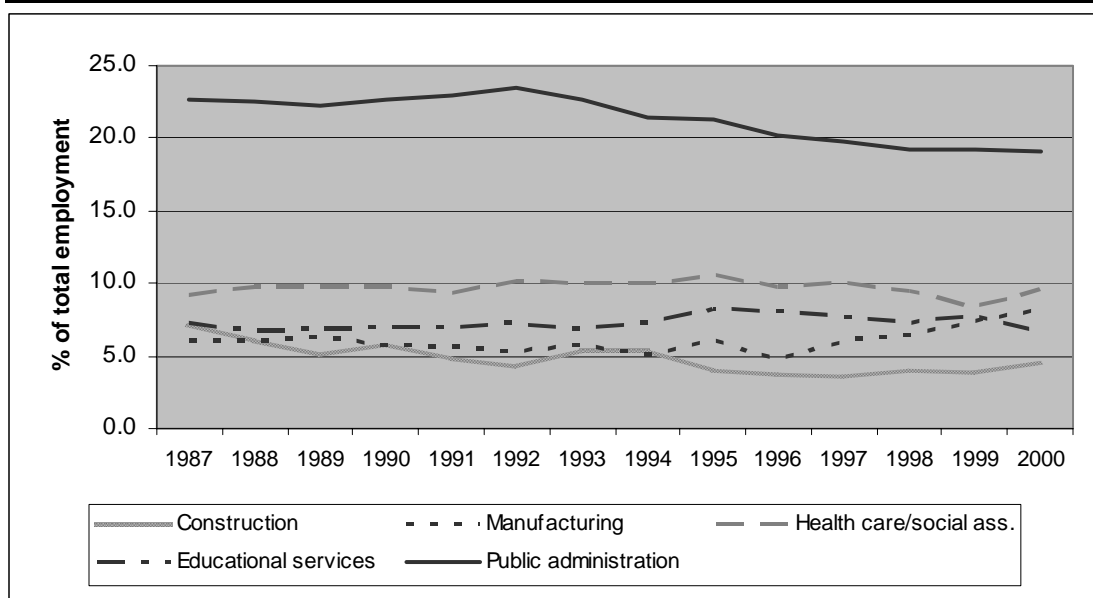
manufacturing (although it is important to note that the pace of the slowdown in the technology sector has greatly diminished and that a large number of smaller high tech firms are currently thriving).

Long Term

Several long-term trends are evident when looking at selected employment and demographic indicators, such as:

- Self-employment has become a much more prevalent form of employment now than it was just over ten years ago: it represented 8% of total employment in 1990 (below the Canadian average) but jumped to 20% in 2001, a proportion higher than all major Canadian cities. The growth in self-employment has been steady from 1993 on, although its characteristics may have changed following the high tech meltdown. This growth in self-employment, coupled with a dramatic reduction in business bankruptcies, have led analysts to suggest that the region is home to a highly ‘entrepreneurial’ culture.

Chart 2.1
Shifts in industrial structure, Ottawa-Hull CMA
 1987-2000



Source: Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey – Historical Review*, 2001.

- There have been some shifts in the industrial and occupational structure of the local economy. A lack of data availability prevents us from looking at detailed occupational changes over time, but Chart 2.1 provides a picture of some of the main changes in the relative importance of Ottawa’s economic sectors. It shows that:
 - the construction industry has lost some of its relative importance (although more recent data might change this conclusion), since it went from 7.2% of all employment in 1987 to 4.5% in 2000;

- public administration employment has also lost some of its relative importance, since it went from a peak of 23.4% of total employment in 1992 to 19.1% in 2000 (however, recent trends indicate that the Federal government's hiring activity is going up again). As such, the local economy has become slightly less dependent on public sector employment.

By and large, these statistics point to a relatively vibrant economy that is slowly diversifying. It is telling that despite the relatively large number of jobs that were lost in the high tech sector in recent years, the unemployment level has remained relatively low. The recently renewed efforts by the government sector to recruit more workers at all levels, combined with a desire by an expanding number of people to create their own job, have increased the local economy's ability to adapt to swings in activity. Beyond that, however, these statistics and trends suggest that the local workforce is occupationally mobile and flexible, perhaps a result of relatively high levels of education and income among workers.

2. OCCUPATIONAL PROFILES

2.1 ENGINEERS

Growth prospects and demand conditions

It is difficult to trace a general portrait of the engineering occupation given that engineers work in various sectors of the economy and that each occupational sub-group is subjected to markedly different labour market supply and demand conditions. That said, the bulk of Ottawa-based engineers work as electrical/electronics engineers, or as computer engineers. Much of the employment for these types of engineers comes from the ICT industry, which has been hard hit by the high tech meltdown. Estimates from World Job Skills is that up to 80-90% of the workforce at some of the high tech companies recently hit by massive layoffs were comprised of immigrants, meaning that this group has been hit particularly hard.³ Despite the slowdown, however, this industry is still the most important private sector employer in the region.

According to *Report II: Profiling Ottawa's Workforce*, the recent downturn in ICT has resulted in an over-supply of intermediate and junior (computer, electronics and electrical) engineers, but shortages still exist for engineers with specialized expertise although these shortages are not as widespread as they were in 1999-2000. Occupations that are also expected to decline in importance are fiber optics engineers and electrical/electronics engineers. The report made note of the fact that 'it is easier for immigrant engineers to get into Canada [as licensed workers] than to actually find work because professional engineering associations tend to put fewer obstacles around accreditation than other licensing bodies.'⁴

Moving beyond the ICT sector, an increasing share of the future demand for engineers will come from the growing biotech field. According to a survey carried out in 2000, Ottawa-based biotech organizations representing about one-third of all regional biotech employment expect to hire 106 engineers over a 36-month period.⁵ Civil engineers are employed primarily in business services industries, government services, and construction services. Employment in this occupation tends to follow the cycles of construction activity and, given the current boom, demand for civil engineers is expected to remain strong in the short to mid term.

Mechanical engineers are employed by the federal government in departments such as Public Works, Transport, and National Defense, as well as local government agencies and some manufacturing firms. Given these sources of employment, the demand for mechanical engineers does not tend to fluctuate as much as that for other types of engineering occupations.

³ As reported in HRDC, *Labour Market Bulletin – An Analysis of the Ottawa Area Labour Market*, April-June 2002.

⁴ Talentworks, *Report II: Profiling Ottawa's Workforce – A Mosaic of Ottawa's Economic and Workforce Landscape*, 2002, p. 28.

⁵ Ottawa Life Sciences Council, *The Next Wave: Harnessing Our Potential- Life Sciences Human Resource Needs in the Ottawa Region*, September 2000.

Labour market indicators

Table 2.1 provides a collection of labour market indicators for the most important engineering occupational subgroups. It shows that electrical/electronics, as well as computer, engineers have been fast growing since the 1991 reference year. These two occupational groups also contain the largest numbers of engineers. When analyzing the labour force data (columns **1**, **2** and **3**), however, the reader is reminded that the 2001 data deals with the Ottawa-Hull CMA, while the 1991 and 1996 data only with the Ontario portion of the same statistical unit.

Table 2.1
Labour market indicators – Engineers
 Selected occupational groups, Ottawa region

<i>Description</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	<i>Labour force 1991¹</i>	<i>Labour force 1996</i>	<i>Labour force 2001²</i>	<i>Variation 91-96 (%)</i>	<i>Vacancies Jan-Nov 2002³</i>	<i>Foreign worker demand⁴</i>	<i>Claimants Jan-Nov 2002⁵</i>
Civil (2131)	1 315	1 285	-	-2.3	3.3	6	21.1
Mechanical (2132)	850	845	-	-0.6	1.3	11	49.9
Electrical/electronics (2133)	3 505	4 065	4 800	16.0	4.4	32	245.6
Industrial/manufacturing (2141)	335	210	-	-37.3	0.6	1	55.2
Computer (2147)	1 420	2 150	6 300	51.4	5.6	105	683.0

Source: ¹ Censuses 1991 and 1996, data for the Ontario portion of the Ottawa-Hull CMA

² Labour Force Survey, *Special compilations obtained from Report II: Profiling Ottawa's Workforce*, 2002. Data is for the National Capital Region.

³ Local advertised vacancies compiled by HRDC, 10-month averages, Ottawa HRCC Territory

⁴ Demands from employers for foreign workers, January – September 2002, Ottawa HRCC Territory

⁵ Monthly Employment Insurance Claims, 10-month average, Ottawa HRCC Territory

The last three columns in Table 2.1 provides some indications of supply and demand conditions for selected engineering occupations in the Ottawa labour market. These data should be interpreted with caution, however, since they do not provide a complete picture of existing supply and demand conditions. Statistics on possible labour shortages can be found in columns **5** and **6**. Information on vacancies – column **5** – is derived from a compilation of advertised vacancies in the Ottawa Citizen twice a month and, as such, does not constitute a comprehensive tally of vacancies. That said, it shows that computer engineers and electrical/electronic engineers were in demand this year, although not substantially so. Column **6** provides indications of the demands from employers for foreign workers. The information is derived from the records of HRDC's Foreign Worker Recruitment Program and it represents the number of requests made by employers to hire foreign workers in a given occupation, after the possibility of hiring locally has been exhausted. The data show that the demand was relatively high for computer engineers, followed by electrical/electronic engineers.

Some indications of surpluses can be found in column 7, which contains the most recent ten-month average in the number of Employment Insurance (EI) claimants by occupation. The column reveals that a fairly large number of computer and electrical/electronic engineers were collecting EI throughout the year, no doubt an aftermath of the high tech meltdown.

Combining information from all columns suggests that a relative shortage of ICT-related engineers may coexist with surpluses in the same occupational groups. This apparent contradiction can probably be explained by the fact that the occupational groupings listed in Table 2.1 do not allow for an analysis of specialties and that the identified shortages are associated with one engineering specialty or another (of course, the same logic would apply to identified surpluses).

2.2 TEACHERS AND INSTRUCTORS

Growth prospects and demand conditions

Funding cuts during the early to mid-1990s have resulted in the number of teaching positions being reduced at all levels, except perhaps at private vocational schools. It was estimated that in the mid-1990s, less than one in four graduates of teaching programs were able to find teaching employment in the first year of their graduation. In Ontario, for example, only 23% of 5,500 graduates in 1995 found staff jobs in publicly-funded schools in their first year of looking.

In more recent years, however, an aging teacher workforce, the impact of the double cohort, and a trend toward early retirement have all contributed to reverse the situation. Today, shortages are more acute at the post-secondary level. In particular, there is a growing shortage of qualified teachers in the areas of teacher education and for the technical skills most in demand such as site computing, electrical engineering, multimedia, and biotechnology (Talentworks, 2002). Over the next eight years, up to one-third of teachers are expected to retire, further contributing to the shortage situation. Hiring practices are extending beyond the Ottawa region and the province.

Labour market indicators

The labour market indicators contained in Table 2.2 partly corroborate the diagnostic established under *Growth prospects and demand conditions*. The table shows that unmet demand – either reported in the Ottawa Citizen (column 5) or by local employers seeking to recruit foreign teachers (column 6) – is of greater magnitude at the post-secondary level than at other levels, and most notable for college and vocational instructors. For this group, the shortage may involve instructors with very specialized knowledge. The data on EI claimants, contained in column 7, point to significant surpluses in all occupational groups.

Table 2.2
Labour market indicators – Teachers and Instructors
 Selected occupational groups, Ottawa region

<i>Description</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	<i>Labour force 1991¹</i>	<i>Labour force 1996</i>	<i>Labour force 2001²</i>	<i>Variation 91-96 (%)</i>	<i>Vacancies Jan-Nov 2002³</i>	<i>Foreign worker demand⁴</i>	<i>Claimants Jan-Nov 2002⁵</i>
College/vocat. instructors (4131)	3 065	2 870	2 400	-6.4	16.4	75	77.2
Secondary school teachers (4141)	4 685	4 505	19 000	-3.8	5.1	2	70.3
Elementary/kind. teachers (4142)	6 435	6 790		5.5	5.7	16	115.4

Source: ¹ Censuses 1991 and 1996, data for the Ontario portion of the Ottawa-Hull CMA
² Labour Force Survey, *Special compilations obtained from Report II: Profiling Ottawa's Workforce*, 2002. Data is for the National Capital Region.
³ Local advertised vacancies compiled by HRDC, 10-month averages, Ottawa HRCC Territory
⁴ Demands from employers for foreign workers, January – September 2002, Ottawa HRCC Territory
⁵ Monthly Employment Insurance Claims, 10-month average, Ottawa HRCC Territory

In the final analysis, the lack of perceived shortages combined with a large number of EI claimants suggest that there are fewer employment opportunities available for elementary and kindergarten teachers than for other groups. Furthermore, the relatively high level of demand for college and vocational instructors combined with a comparatively high level of unemployment in this occupational group may indicate that the set of available skills does not represent a good match to what is required by employers. It may also indicate that some of the unemployed instructors are facing barriers to finding employment.

2.3 MASONRY AND PLASTERING TRADES

Growth prospects and market and demand conditions

Nationally, the number of workers in the Masonry and Plastering trades grew at a significantly above average rate over the period 1999–2001. While figures for this trade in particular are not available for Ottawa, it is known that construction employment in the city grew by 2.6% between 2001 and 2002, reflecting an exceptionally strong residential construction market (housing starts for 2002 were the highest observed since 1988), suggesting a corresponding growth in the employment of masons.

Projections for 2003, however, forecast a decline of 2.1% in the Gross Domestic Product for Canadian residential construction. The Canadian Construction Association has forecast a tapering off of employment growth for *all* construction trades relative to GDP growth, and this will presumably have an impact on masons, bricklayers, concrete finishers and other persons in this trades area. For the Ottawa region, however, local sources have indicated that forecasts are optimistic for 2003. While this is true for residential construction, growth is expected to be particularly strong in institutional

construction (ICI), attributable to a number of very large hospital construction projects in the Ottawa region that are currently under way.

2000 estimates for Ontario indicated that bricklaying and tile setting were among the trades with the lowest levels of unemployment. Employment demand in these two trades had outpaced the available labour supply, and the departure of workers through retirement or relocation effectively reduced the size of the workforce.

Still, bricklayers are—at least for Canada as a whole—among the oldest construction workers, with 17.5% aged 55 or over in 2001.⁶ For all masonry trades, despite an older than average workforce (41 years) the retirement rate to 2007 is expected to be below average, as workers in this occupation tend to retire at a later age (65). Nationally, unionized workers in this occupation are older on average (44 years) than non-unionized workers (38 years), and the average in Ontario is slightly lower than the national average.

Survey results appearing in *Canadians Building Canada*, an analytical report on masonry human resources, revealed that 37% of masons in Ontario were born outside of Canada.⁷ Nationally, only about 10% of immigrant masonry workers are under the age of 40; 65% are over the age of 50. Current immigration patterns do not seem to offer much *short-term* hope in the way of alleviating potential worker shortages in this trade because: (a) a greater proportion of recent immigrants have PSE qualifications that would not lead them to employment in construction, and (b) recent immigrants have recently been drawn from countries which have not historically been sources of construction workers in Canada.

Labour Market Indicators

Table 2.3 assembles labour market indicators for the principal professions in the masonry and plastering trades. According to 2001 Census figures, there were 335 Bricklayers and Masons in the Ottawa area. This represented an increase of 1.5% from 1996. *Employment* is likely greater than this given that labour demand in the Ottawa construction sector may also attract masons from Quebec.⁸

Table 2.3 also indicates that employment growth for this trade lagged behind employment growth for all of the construction trades (1.5% as compared to 4.3% for the period 1996–2001). Also, the contraction of the labour force (for the interval 1991/1996) was also greater for this particular trade than it was for the construction trades as a whole.

A comparison of employment growth figures for 8 major metropolitan centres (including Ottawa) indicated that when employment grew in the construction trades (between 1996 and 2001), it grew more slowly in the Masonry Trades. When employment shrank in the

⁶ 2001 Census. *The Changing Profile of Canada's Labour Force*.

⁷ 1999 survey.

⁸ Census figures would report these workers in a different Census division. It is difficult to estimate how many Quebec-based masons and bricklayers actually worked in the Ottawa construction market during the census period in question.

construction trades (between 1991 and 1996), it shrank more quickly in the masonry trades.

Table 2.3
Labour Market Indicators—Masonry and Plastering Trades
 Principal occupational groups, Ottawa region.

Description	Labour Force ¹			Variation 1991–96	Variation 1996– 2001	Average Advertised Vacancies 2002 ³	Foreign Worker Demand	Average No. EI Claimants 2002
	1991	1996	2001					
All Construction Trades	6,305	5,575	5,815	-11.6%	4.3%	—	—	—
Bricklayers & Masons ²	405	330	335	-18.5%	1.5%	4	1	27

Sources:

¹ Census data for 1991, 1996 and 2001 for the Ottawa portion of the Ottawa-Hull CMA.

² NOC 7281 includes Bricklayers, Stonemasons, Stonecutters and apprentices in these trades.

³ As advertised in Saturday editions of the *Ottawa Citizen*.

The average monthly number of *advertised* vacancies for Bricklayers and Masons was 4 for 2002. This figure may be somewhat misleading as a significant portion of hiring occurs through union halls for this trade. This is at least true in the ICI and Heavy Engineering sectors, where 90% of hiring takes place through union halls. In 2002, some 260 masons were hired through union locals in Ottawa, and an additional 20 had to be hired from outside the city or province.

For 2002, the average monthly number of EI claimants who were Bricklayers and Masons in Ottawa was 27. However, this figure conceals a great deal of seasonal variation. Claimants were as numerous as 58 in January of 2002 and as low as 5 in September that same year. These figures would appear to correspond to seasonal troughs and peaks in the construction cycle.

Hiring figures for the residential sector are very difficult to collect as the hiring of non-certified masons is more prevalent in this sector, and the size of the workforce represented by underground or “wheel barrel” masonry contractors is difficult to estimate.

Short-term demand for masons and bricklayers is expected to be high. Representatives of the unionized part of the sector foresee no difficulty in finding contracts for their members, and will likely attempt to hire masons from affiliated locals from other parts of Ontario and Canada. In addition, a training representative for the masonry workforce expects that the enrolment of 40 masons currently being trained at the newly established Ottawa Masonry Training Centre will make a very small impact on meeting the local demand for masons and bricklayers.

Private communications with Ontario HRCC personnel indicate that the demand for foreign workers in this trade is virtually negligible, with only *one* such request placed at the Ottawa HRCC in all of 2002. According to a local labour spokesperson for the trade,

drawing on immigrants as a source of qualified labour has been “extremely difficult and prohibitive as a result of government bureaucracy,” and that therefore meeting demand through immigration has not been a strong option in Ottawa.

By and large, information about the recent past indicates that the demand for masons and bricklayers in Ottawa is high and exceeds the available local supply. While attrition from the masonry workforce as a result of ageing is a concern for the sector, the masonry workforce does tend to retire at a later age than workers in other construction trades. A perceived inability or unwillingness to rely on immigration as a source of labour, and a shortage of contractors willing to hire and train masonry apprentices, may together indicate potential and ongoing problems in satisfying local construction demand for masons and bricklayers.

At the same time, the forecast for both ICI and residential construction is excellent for 2003, with numerous projects currently moving towards construction start dates. It is expected, on the basis of the current situation, that excess demand for masons and bricklayers will likely be met with hirings from other cities in Ontario or other provinces.

2.4 NURSES

Growth prospects and demand conditions

Recent labour market information indicates that 8,700 persons worked as registered nurses in 2002. According to the Talentworks’ 2002 report, shortages have been identified for registered nurses. Furthermore, the skills of foreign-trained nurses are currently underutilized because of restricting licensing/certification requirements. For instance, in Ontario the failure rate for foreign-trained nurses writing the licensing exam is 66 percent, despite the fact that 70 percent of these candidates have the right formal education and experience.⁹

Employment availability is relatively high in all of Ontario, given a reduced supply in the number of nurses in the province, an increase in population growth, as well as increased demand for health care resulting from an ageing population.¹⁰ It is now well established that a nursing shortage exists in the province: 8,000 additional nurses are needed in the province, according to the Canadian Nurses Association.¹¹ Another trend worth noting is a ‘trend for employment to move out of the hospitals and into the community sector [...] in long-term care facilities such as nursing homes, retirement houses and homes for the aged.’¹²

Labour market indicators

Labour market indicators pertinent to nurses and nursing assistants can be found in Table 2.4. Data limitations prevent us from providing a complete analysis of the nursing

⁹ K. Harding, *Nursing is Different Here*, Globe and Mail, Jan. 8, 2003, page C5.

¹⁰ College of Nurses of Ontario, *Occupational Fact Sheet for Foreign-Trained Nurses*, 1997.

¹¹ As reported by C. Cornwall, *Where Have All the Nurses Gone?*, Reader’s Digest, Feb. 2003.

¹² College of Nurses of Ontario, *ibid.*

occupation, but available evidence points to a level of demand that current supply cannot meet. Data on foreign worker demand (column 5) suggest that local employers are looking at foreign-trained nurses to help meet their employment needs.

Table 2.4
Labour market indicators – Nurses
 Selected occupational groups, Ottawa region

<i>Description</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<i>Labour force 1991¹</i>	<i>Labour force 1996</i>	<i>Variation 91-96 (%)</i>	<i>Vacancies Jan-Nov 2002²</i>	<i>Foreign worker demand³</i>	<i>Claimants Jan-Nov 2002⁴</i>
Reg. nursing assistants (3233)	985	605	-38.6	-	0	-
Registered nurses (3152)	6 560	7 065	7.7	-	27	-

Source: * data not available

¹ Censuses 1991 and 1996, data for the Ontario portion of the Ottawa-Hull CMA

² Local advertised vacancies compiled by HRDC, 10-month averages, Ottawa HRCC Territory

³ Demands from employers for foreign workers, January – September 2002, Ottawa HRCC Territory

⁴ Monthly Employment Insurance Claims, 10-month average, Ottawa HRCC Territory

3. CONCLUSIONS

We conclude this short profile of the Ottawa labour market and the featured occupations by noting the following:

- growth prospects are promising: the economy is diversifying, dependence on public sector decreasing, level of income is high and unemployment relatively low; and
- the workforce is proving to be adaptable and flexible, given the speed at which contingents of workers presumably moved from the high tech to government and to self-employment, in recent years.

At the occupational level, employment prospects are generally encouraging although predictions are always risky:

- for engineers, still a bit in turmoil with a sizable number of engineers being unemployed and a comparably-sized group in shortages; demand seems to focus on the highly specialized fields;
- for teachers, also some indications of labour market disequilibrium, particularly for instructors at the college and vocational level where demand is present but unemployment is significant; surpluses seem to exist at the elementary and kindergarten levels;
- for masons, the prospects for employment are encouraging, as local demand is expected to remain strong and a significant proportion of the workforce is nearing retirement. That said, the fortune of masons and bricklayers is intimately tied to that of the construction industry, which is notorious for its wide swings in activity; and
- for nurses, shortages exist for specialists and the demand for foreign-trained doctors is high; shortages exist for other occupations but it may have more to do with poor working conditions and inadequate remuneration. We may need to analyze other health occupations more closely.