



# ***Hamilton Training Network***

## *Feasibility Study Final Report*

Conducted In Partnership With;

Hamilton Training Advisory Board  
&

The Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress

February, 2002

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Purpose .....	Page 1
Introduction .....	Page 1
Conclusions .....	Page 2
Recommendations .....	Page 2
Next Steps .....	Page 2
Appendix	
Background .....	Page 3
Process .....	Page 4
Survey Demographics .....	Page 5
Survey Observations .....	Page 6
Focus Group Observations .....	Page 7
Survey Questionnaire .....	Page 8 & 9

## PURPOSE

---

The purpose of this feasibility study is to determine the desirability and practicality of establishing an active web-based information and training co-ordination network in

the Hamilton area (Industry Training Network) that would provide greater opportunity for training to take place by promoting multi-workplace training.

## INTRODUCTION:

---

As part of an extensive survey of the Canadian steel industry undertaken by the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC) in 1999, human resource managers, production superintendents and supervisors, local union representatives, and research and development personnel met to gather information on:

- ◆ current and future skill gaps
- ◆ future employment potential for the industry
- ◆ barriers that prevent training from occurring.

It was during this process that the concept of an Industry Training Network (ITN) was presented that would allow interested workplaces to pool their training needs and resources to reduce costs and increase access to training.

Several employers identified a desire to optimize their training initiatives by combining training resources, and coordinating their scheduling of courses, trainees and training instruction with other employers in their area, since they either could not release enough workers at one time, or have too few workers to fill a training class on their own.

The Hamilton Training Advisory Board (HTAB) and the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress formed a partnership to explore the degree of interest and support for developing and implementing this concept in the strong manufacturing base of the Hamilton area.

The opinion of local manufacturing business representatives would be determined through an extensive survey and follow-up focus group meetings.

## CONCLUSIONS

In examining the data produced by the survey and focus group meetings, the authors of the Hamilton Training Network Feasibility Study conclude that the results show

positive conditions for the establishment of an Industry Training Network in Hamilton and a clear mandate for action has been determined.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

As a result of focus group consultations with a variety of employers representing different manufacturing sectors in the Hamilton area and the degree of interest and support expressed, the following recommendations are presented:

1. To proceed with the development of a Hamilton Training Network website.
2. To develop a model to demonstrate how the network would function.
3. To build a database of interested companies as users of the training network (member list).
4. To build a database of training providers and training courses.
5. To build a database of industry trainers and courses.
6. To build a database of jobs that have legislated training requirements.
7. To develop an on-line or self-paced CBT (Computer Based Training) module on how to use the system.

8. To develop a marketing promotion package that encourages broad participation across a wide variety of sectors and industries in a community.
9. To develop a procedure manual for other communities to enable them to establish a similar network.
10. To develop a project pilot.



## NEXT STEPS:

1. To identify a project manager that will be responsible for the development and implementation phase of the project.
2. To establish a project plan complete with time-lines, milestones and budget requirements to deliver the recommendations
3. To secure a funding source for this phase of the project.
4. To establish a structure of advisory and working resource groups within the community to guide and support the project activity.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Funding for the feasibility study was provided jointly by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities and Human Resources Development Canada through the Training Boards' Local Project Fund.

## APPENDIX:

### BACKGROUND:

Increased international competition and significant technological change has continued unabated in the manufacturing industry, in particular the Canadian steel industry. Globalization compels these companies to restructure their operations, reduce their workforce, and introduce new technologies to the labour process. The results have produced both the need for increased training, and, at the same time, significant constraints in manpower and financial resources.

As part of an extensive survey of the Canadian steel industry undertaken by the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC) in 1999, focus groups were set up with human resource managers, production superintendents and supervisors, local union representatives, and research and development personnel of the steel industry. The purpose was to gather qualitative as well as quantitative information on what skill gaps need to be addressed to maximize the future employment potential of the industry. Subsequently, regional meetings were held at workplaces across the country to, among other issues, determine what barriers existed that prevented necessary industry training from occurring. It was from one of these meetings that the concept of an Industry Training Network (ITN) was conceived.

The proposed ITN would not merely be an inventory of training programs in the area. Instead; it would be an active, web-based information and training co-ordination network that would promote multi-workplace training. The ITN would also allow interested workplaces that had training needs for smaller numbers of employees to pool their resources. As a result, workplaces would be able to reduce the costs of training and increase the access to training.

In March 2001, the Hamilton Training Advisory Board and the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress formed a partnership to conduct a feasibility study of industry in the Hamilton region to determine the desirability and practicality of an Industry Training Network (ITN) for their area.

The feasibility study would to be undertaken jointly by staff of the Hamilton Training Advisory Board and the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress. A coordinating committee consisting of Directors and staff of the Training Board and staff from the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress would direct the study.

The Executive Director from the Hamilton Training Advisory Board obtained funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities, and HRDC to conduct this study. The study involved the use of a broad-based mail survey and follow-up discussions with potentially interested workplaces. The survey and follow-up discussions would be used to develop specific recommendations on whether an ITN in the Hamilton area was desirable and feasible and how it would be set-up and made operational.

The co-ordinating committee would be responsible for the development and design of an appropriate survey instrument. The survey instrument would:

- ◆ Identify the value of training
- ◆ Identify potential training opportunities
- ◆ Identify barriers to training
- ◆ Gauge workplace interest in the proposed ITN concept
- ◆ Determine the degree of further involvement in the development of the ITN concept

The co-ordinating committee would also define the appropriate scope of the survey mailing. In terms of the potential users of training, the mailing would include steel industry members of CSTEC, relevant supplier and customer companies and other selected sectors. Staff would use past contacts and the Scotts Directory to compile the appropriate mailing list. In terms of training providers, staff would use their contacts as the basis of the mailing list.

## PROCESS:

In March 2001, a co-ordinating committee was formed consisting of the Executive Director from the Hamilton Training Advisory Board, 2 board members from the HTAB, 2 staff members from CSTEC and the Executive Director from the Algoma Training Board.

It was decided that CSTEC staff would draft the survey and the committee would meet to review and approve. On March 14, 2001 the committee met at the Dofasco Training center in Burlington to review the draft survey. All members were present and the Executive Director from the Algoma Training Board was

on conference via telephone. It was decided and agreed that the survey should be short and to the point allowing for a higher percentage of returns.

On March 22 the committee met again to review the 2nd draft. The committee agreed that the survey was almost ready, but needed some minor modifications. By March 26 the survey was complete and the compilation of a mailing list began with the goal of a complete mail out by March 30th. It was also decided that the name be changed from the Industry Training Network to the HAMILTON TRAINING NETWORK (HTN).

## SURVEY:

The survey consisted of 5 brief and relevant questions. (Copy attached)

- ◆ What, if any, training barriers the company experienced.
- ◆ What, if any, training activities the company participated in which enhanced training opportunities.
- ◆ Rate how they felt regarding the value of training i.e. "improves productivity, competitiveness, employee retention, etc. "
- ◆ Would they use the Industry Training Network (ITN) if it provided some very specific benefits.
- ◆ Would they be interested in meeting to discuss this initiative in more detail within a group setting or in private.

On March 27th CSTEC staff from the Hamilton Action Centre started compiling a mailing list, photocopying, collating and preparing for the mail out. On Monday April 2nd the survey was mailed out to 504 targeted companies in the Hamilton region with an April 18th response deadline. The surveys were to be faxed back to the CSTEC office at 350 Kenilworth Ave. N., Hamilton.

The mail out was not very successful as only 9 companies replied. The responses from the 9 were very favorable and demonstrated an interest in the HTN. As a result of the poor fax-back response the committee decided to try a phone survey using the existing developed questionnaire. The committee contacted the Call Centre Training Program managed by Sharon Marafon to conduct the survey.

Two individuals were hired to conduct the survey. A list of company contacts from the original 504 companies, excluding the 9 that had responded, was provided and the phone survey began on Tuesday May 15th and the results were available by May 24.

From the 504 companies contacted there was a small number, approximately 10-12 that had closed or moved their operations.

As a result of both surveys, the mail out and the phone survey there were 182 or 36% of the companies responded. The findings of the survey are documented under the observation section.



## THE FOCUS GROUP:

On December 4, 2001 the Hamilton Training Board and the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress hosted an employer focus group, "a business planning meeting for the Hamilton Training Network". The meeting was held at the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and lasted approximately 2 hours and was facilitated by John Sedgewick of Managing Imaginations.

The meeting started with a presentation on a concept and model of the proposed HTN and discussions continued with enthusiastic input from all guests. Ideas on financing, marketing, course delivery and quality assurance were discussed as well as future possibilities and next steps. The meeting was very positive and the participants agreed to continue as the advisory committee for the development phase of the Hamilton Training Network.



## SURVEY GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS:

Five hundred and four companies were targeted for the survey comprising of small to mid-size, and a few large manufacturers in the Hamilton region. All CSTEC members in the Hamilton region from the steel industry such as Stelco, Dofasco, Slater, Stelco Parkdale Works, and Frost Fence were also targeted for the survey.

Of the 504 companies targeted approximately 100 or 20% were larger organizations with over 100 employees. The remaining 404 or 80% were small to mid-size companies with total employees between 20 to 99. There was a large range of manufacturers targeted from steel producers, steel service centres, steel related companies, footwear industry, clothes and fabric manufacturers, food products and beverage producers, appliance manufacturers, tools and auto parts producers to name a few.

## SURVEY OBSERVATIONS:

Based on the 182 companies that responded to the survey the following will summarize our key findings.

### 1. There was an overwhelming level of support for the Hamilton Training Network.

**"A full 85% of survey respondents said they would use the HTN if it provided training relevant to their operations."**

- 82% said they would use the HTN if it provided local training delivery;
- 80% said that they would use the HTN if it helped reduce training costs;
- 78% said they would use the HTN if it provided increased opportunity for training;
- 76% of the respondents said they would use the HTN if it provided current training course opportunities and information;
- 75% said they would use the HTN if it provided short-term, accredited and standardized training.

### 2. Training issues have become increasingly important to survey respondents.

**"96% rated increased skills/knowledge as either "very important" or "important" in improving productivity."**

- 90% of employers saw the issue of improved health and safety performance as either "very important" or "important";
- 86% rated the assessment of employee training needs as "very important" or "important";
- 79% of employers rated information regarding training opportunities as "very important" or "important";
- 78% rated training staff as either "very important" or "important" in increasing employee retention.



### 3. Barriers to training are serious and diverse.

**"62% of respondents indicated that their production drops when employees are away on training sessions."**

- 51% have experienced scheduling/coordination training outside normal working hours as a barrier;
- 49% also said that the high cost of training has been a barrier in training their employees;
- 44% indicated that they have experienced a limited budget for training within their organization;
- 36% of the respondents indicated that travel/accommodation costs for training also posed a barrier.

### 4. A need for enhanced training opportunities was clearly articulated.

**"68% of those surveyed do not currently exchange or share in-house staff trainers."**

- 66% have not partnered with training providers for their training needs;
- 63% have not shared training information or opportunities with other companies;
- 57% said they have not accessed electronic information on the Internet relating to training.

### 5. When asked, would your company be interested in meeting to discuss this initiative in more detail?

**"76% of respondents said they would like to meet."**

- WITH YOUR COMPANY, ONLY: Sixty-seven or 37% would prefer to meet to discuss the HTN in more detail.
- WITH A SMALL GROUP OF EMPLOYERS: Seventy-one or 39% said they would prefer to meet with a small group of employers and some would prefer to meet with companies with similar products or needs.
- MAIL/FAX MORE INFORMATION: Twenty-one or 12% said they would prefer more information regarding the HTN prior to meeting with anyone.
- NOT INTERESTED: Twenty-three or 12% of respondents surveyed said they would not use the HTN. The main reason was that most companies have a training infrastructure already in place.

## FOCUS GROUP OBSERVATION:

THE CONCEPT OF A HAMILTON BASED  
SHARED TRAINING NETWORK (HTN)

The group explored the potential value of having a shared training network available to assist them with their training responsibilities. Suggested advantages included having active, on-line access to search for available local training opportunities, to screen training courses and providers through participant and coordinator feedback, to access existing training schedules and to enroll participants where space is available. This would provide "one stop shopping" for training providers and participants.

Equally important would be the opportunity to use the network as an on-line communication tool for collaboration with local companies on training related matters, to send and receive up-dates on new and revised course offerings and certification requirements, and to provide contacts and links to other training sites.

## IDEAS REGARDING THE FINANCING OF THE HTN:

Finances would be required for two stages of the process; the development stage, going from concept into a working network, and the maintenance stage to address any on-going operational costs. Several suggestions for potential funding were offered that might address the development requirements of the project. These included The Office of Learning Technology, Human Resource Development Canada – Partnerships Program, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, High Tech Group in Hamilton, Hamilton Connects, the Ministry of Training Colleges & Universities, and Industry Canada. To cover on-going operational costs, revenue might be derived from charging a user's fee, charging training deliverers a finder's fee, or selling training advertisements.

## IDEAS REGARDING MARKETING OF THE HTN:

The success of a shared training network depends on the number of users or clients and their level of training activity. It was generally agreed that "the more the better". To market and promote membership, strategies and tactics were explored. These included a campaign that appeals to the small and medium sized companies in the community, approaching HR associations and the Chambers of Commerce in Hamilton and adjacent communities, leverage the participation of the larger companies, public presentations, newspaper and trade journal advertisements, links to training organizations like O.S.T.D. and A.S.T.D.

IDEAS REGARDING COURSE  
DELIVERY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

There is potential to access training in several ways: by linking to on-line courses, downloading material, linking to schedules for private and public offerings, and search engines that will browse data bases of programs, courses, trainers, instructor profiles, certification requirements for specific jobs, new course offerings, etc. All these options can be explored.

On the topic of quality assurance, there should be a component that provides feedback from participants and company coordinators on the value, effectiveness, of courses and providers they have experienced.

There was consensus from the group that the concept of a shared training network for the Hamilton community poses enough potential value to proceed with the necessary research and development activities. The group also agreed to serve as a steering committee for subsequent project activity, and two participants wished to be more actively involved by volunteering to be part of the working committee.



HAMILTON TRAINING ADVISORY BOARD  
COMMISSION CONSULTATIVE SUR LA FORMATION À HAMILTON

180 James Street S., Suite 203, Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4V1, Phone 905-521-5777, Fax 905-521-9309, info@hwtb.on.ca

## APPENDIX

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE:

The Hamilton Training Advisory Board has formed an alliance with the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC) to develop a low cost, innovative strategy for meeting your company's training needs.

- ◆ As owner/manager HR/training director or supervisor – are you challenged by the high cost of training?
- ◆ Are you looking for alternative ways to reduce lost time, production losses because of training and don't know where to start?
- ◆ Are you interested in developing training solutions using technology?
- ◆ Do you have training needs that go unmet because you can't find an appropriate training provider?

If your answer is yes to any one of these questions we invite you to participate in a special study to gauge industry interest in the INDUSTRIAL TRAINING NETWORK (ITN).

Various employers in our community have identified a need to optimize and combine training resources by coordinating the scheduling of training courses, trainees and training institutions. One of the identified problems with the delivery of training programs is that employers either cannot release enough workers to fill a training class, or have fewer workers than the number needed to fill a class.

The ITN would be an active web-based information and training co-ordination network that would promote multi-workplace training. The ITN would allow interested

workplaces that had training needs to pool their resources. As a result, workplaces would be able to reduce the costs of training and increase access to training.

Here's how it works: the ITN would include a list of training providers and a list of companies. The ITN administrator would identify shared training needs and inform each of the ITN members of the training opportunities available. Even if you have a specific training need for only one or two employees, the HTN allows you to communicate your needs to others and share the costs and resources.

The proposed ITN would:

- ◆ connect you to appropriate training providers in the area;
- ◆ connect you with other industries/companies interested in the same training;
- ◆ connect you with an ITN administrator who would co-ordinate the information on training requests;
- ◆ be a solution that allows you to share costs, pool resources and offer more training to your employees.

Please take a moment to complete the attached survey and fax back to us at 905-548-6446. If there are a sufficient number of companies in Hamilton interested in joining this venture, we plan to launch a pilot of the Hamilton ITN by September of this year.

Follow-up contacts and/or meetings will be scheduled with interested workplaces once the results of the survey have been tabulated.

We thank you in advance for your participation in this survey.



**FEASIBILITY SURVEY** Please check the appropriate boxes:

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Training Barriers**

Has your company experienced any of the following barriers in training employees?

- Yes  No Limited budget for training
- Yes  No High cost of training
- Yes  No Employees away on training impacts company's production
- Yes  No Travel/accommodation cost for training limits training options
- Yes  No Scheduling/coordinating training outside normal working hours

Please identify any other training barriers \_\_\_\_\_

**Training Opportunities**

Has your company participated in any of the following activities, which enhanced your training opportunities?

- Yes  No Partnering with training providers
- Yes  No Exchanging/sharing in-house staff trainers
- Yes  No Sharing training information/opportunities with other companies
- Yes  No Accessing electronic information ie. websites, online databases

Please identify any other activities, which have enhanced this company's training opportunities \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the following training issues for your company?

- Very Important  Not important Increased skills/knowledge improves productivity
- Very Important  Not important Increased skills/knowledge improves competitiveness
- Very Important  Not important Information on training opportunities
- Very Important  Not important Training staff increases employee retention
- Very Important  Not important Assessment of employee training needs
- Very Important  Not important Improved health and safety performance

Please identify any other training issues which you feel have been important for your company. \_\_\_\_\_

Would your company use the Industrial Training Network (ITN) If?

- Yes  No Provided current training course opportunities and information
- Yes  No Reduced cost for training
- Yes  No Training relevant to you operation
- Yes  No Short term, accredited and standardized training
- Yes  No Increased opportunity for training
- Yes  No Training provided and delivered locally

Would your company be interested in meeting to discuss this initiative in more detail?

- Yes  No With your company, only
- Yes  No With a small group of employers

General Comments/Concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Fax Survey by April 6, 2001, to The Hamilton Training Advisory Board at 905-548-6446**



This report was sponsored by the Hamilton Training Advisory Board in partnership with the Canadian Steel Trades and Employment Congress.



Funding for this project was provided by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and Human Resources Development Canada

The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada or the Government of Ontario.



HAMILTON TRAINING ADVISORY BOARD  
COMMISSION CONSULTATIVE SUR LA FORMATION À HAMILTON

180 James Street S., Suite 203, Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4V1, Phone 905-521-5777, Fax 905-521-9309, info@hwtb.on.ca; www.hwtb.on.ca