


EMPLOYEE  
RECRUITMENT,  
TRAINING & RETENTION

**2025 EMPLOYER SURVEY RESULTS**



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Canada 

**EMPLOYMENT  
ONTARIO**

Ontario 

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

The information presented in this report is current at the time of its release.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AWIC extends its sincere thanks to the 112 employers who participated in the 2025 survey. This outreach was made possible through the collaboration and support of local organizations that helped distribute the survey to their members and the broader community, as well as municipal economic development departments that assisted in connecting with businesses across the region.

## INTRODUCTION

There are twenty-five (25) workforce planning boards across Ontario, funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, collectively known as [Workforce Planning Ontario](#). The Algoma Workforce Investment Corporation (AWIC) is one of four workforce planning boards across northeastern Ontario and covers the Algoma District. Other workforce planning boards in the northeast include: [Workforce Planning for Sudbury & Manitoulin \(WPSM\)](#), [The Labour Market Group](#), and [Far Northeast Training Board](#).

A key mandate of all workforce planning boards is to conduct research and analyze the current state of the local labour market. In addition to utilizing various data sources, such as business data from Statistics Canada and the Census, workforce planning boards also conduct industry-specific research, consult key stakeholders throughout the year, and lead partnership projects. All of this is used to support and inform local workforce development strategies and local actions.

One of the challenges, however, is hearing directly from employers about the challenges they are facing with their workforce in terms of recruitment, training and retention. As a result, the four workforce planning boards in the northeast conducted a survey of employers in their area. While a full report will include the combined northeast results, this report focuses on the results of the employer survey for the Algoma District.



## METHODOLOGY

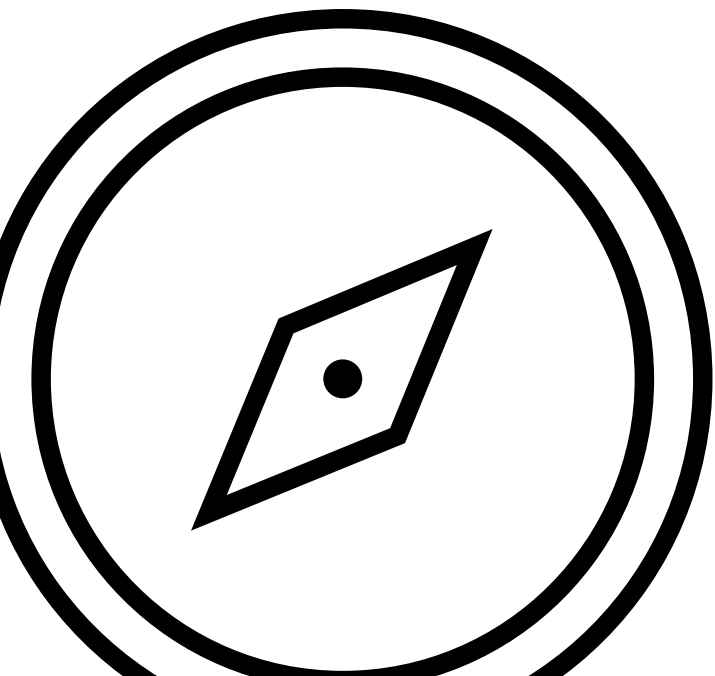
All four workforce planning boards across the northeast developed a common assessment tool and timeline for implementation of the survey. Employers were asked to answer key questions related to industry demographics, workforce changes in 2024 and anticipated changes in 2025, hard-to-fill positions, recruitment practices, skills and training requirements, impact of technological and environmental changes and challenges/opportunities moving forward.

The Northeast Ontario Employee Recruitment, Training and Retention Survey was administered to employers across the Algoma District from May 1 to June 1, 2025.

Each workforce planning board across the northeast conducted its own survey, and this report is an analysis of the results for the Algoma District. Since the same instrument, survey process, timelines and labour market research analyst were used for all four workforce planning boards, as noted, a collective report will be produced based on data from all four boards collapsed into one report for northeastern Ontario.

## LIMITATIONS

While the survey results are a snapshot of employers who responded across various industry sectors, it is important to note that it is not representative of all employers in the Algoma District.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a recent survey conducted with employers across the Algoma District in the spring of 2025. As a workforce planning board, we rely on multiple data sources to inform us of our understanding of local labour market trends, with employer input being a critical component.

The survey gathered responses from over 100 employers across a range of sectors. These employers, primarily business owners, senior managers, and HR professionals, represent both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. More than half of the respondents have been in business for 25 years or more, offering a long-term perspective on local workforce dynamics.

While the results did not introduce major new insights, they confirmed trends observed through other research and ongoing consultations with regional stakeholders. This survey is part of a larger workforce report for Northeastern Ontario, where similar findings were noted across other regions such as Timmins, Sudbury, and North Bay.

Key findings reveal that workforce-related issues are the most pressing concern for employers in the Algoma District. Over half of respondents identified challenges related to workforce availability as their primary concern for the next three years. These include the shortage of qualified workers, difficulties in employee retention, and concerns about replacing an aging workforce. While factors such as costs and access to financing were also mentioned, workforce issues were clearly the predominant concern.

Emerging technologies are another area of significant concern. Four specific issues—artificial intelligence, autonomous equipment, automation, and climate change—are expected to grow in importance and impact over the next few years. Despite these challenges, many employers expressed optimism about future growth opportunities, ranging from expanding their market reach to increasing workforce investment and adopting advanced technologies to improve operational efficiency.

One consistent barrier to recruitment identified by employers was the lack of available housing, which is hindering their ability to attract talent to the region. Additionally, employers continue to rely on traditional recruitment methods, such as word-of-mouth referrals, despite ongoing challenges in securing qualified candidates.

Regarding external factors, most employers indicated that U.S. tariffs are already affecting their operations, particularly through supply chain disruptions and the need to raise prices. A smaller proportion cited concerns about having to restrict spending due to these external pressures.

In summary, while employers in the Algoma District are grappling with significant workforce challenges, there are also clear growth opportunities. Addressing gaps in skill development, leveraging emerging technologies, and supporting housing and recruitment initiatives will be crucial to sustaining and expanding business operations in the region.

# SURVEY FINDINGS

## Profile of respondents and their Business

In the Algoma region, the employer outreach efforts resulted in 112 survey starts. The quality of the data collected was strong, as roughly 75% of the employers who began the survey submitted complete and usable responses.

## Industries Represented

Respondents reflected a range of industries. Table 1 provides the breakdown of respondents by industry and compares the percentage distribution with the distribution of businesses in Algoma District in December 2024. The colour-coding for the survey results highlights where the survey percentage share is much greater (yellow) or much lower (red) than the actual distribution based on Canadian Business Counts data as of December 2024.

TABLE 1: NUMBER AND PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS BY INDUSTRY			
INDUSTRY	SURVEY RESPONDENTS		ACTUAL %
	NUMBER	PERCENT	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1	0.9%	2.7%
Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction	4	3.6%	0.3%
Utilities	0	0.0%	0.6%
Construction	10	8.9%	12.6%
Manufacturing	6	5.4%	3.3%
Wholesale Trade	1	0.9%	2.8%
Retail Trade	13	11.6%	16.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	2	1.8%	3.0%
Information and Cultural Industries	2	1.8%	1.9%
Finance and Insurance	4	3.6%	3.4%
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	0	0.0%	4.8%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	3	2.7%	7.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	0.9%	0.3%
Administration and Support, Waste Mgmt.	0	0.0%	4.8%
Educational Services	8	7.1%	0.8%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	19	17.0%	12.4%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	5	4.5%	1.8%
Accommodation and Food Services	17	15.2%	9.5%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	10	8.9%	10.0%
Public Administration	6	5.4%	1.8%
TOTAL	112	100.0%	100.1%

Actual figures are from Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts, December 2024, Algoma

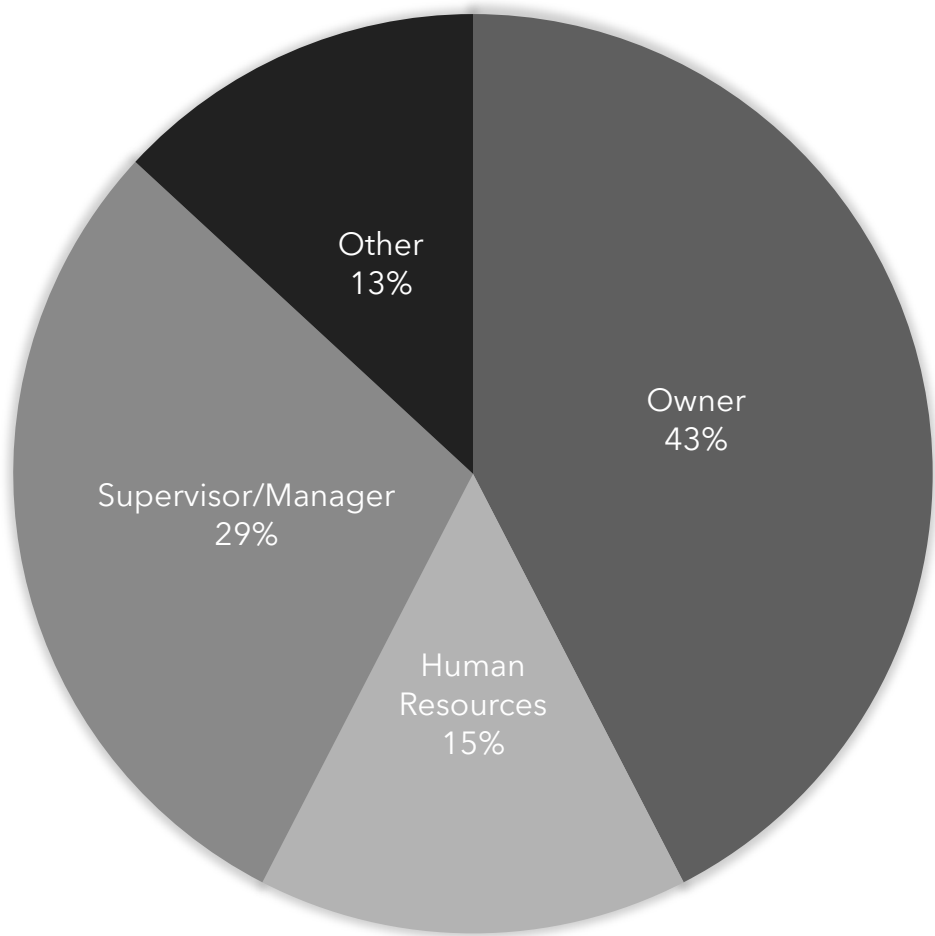
In Table 1, there are a few imbalances when it comes to the distribution of respondents by industry, but there are certainly more instances where the survey responses/distribution are quite close to the actual distribution of firms by industry in the Algoma region. The sectors with a disproportionately higher share of responses are in *Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction; Educational Services; Arts, Entertainment and Recreation; Accommodation and Food Services; and Public Administration*, while the lower proportions are among *Wholesale Trade; Real Estate and Rental and Leasing; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; and Administrative and Support*.

**Respondent Profile: Organizational Authority**

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The integrity of the survey findings is supported by the seniority of the individuals who completed the questionnaire (as detailed in Chart 1). In most cases, the respondent was the business owner, a manager/supervisor, or a Human Resources professional. While a small percentage fell into the "Other" category, these positions predominantly included high-level roles such as Executive Director. Only a small portion represented secondary managerial or front-line staff, ensuring the data reflects a strategic, decision-making perspective.

Chart 1: Respondent Profile



## Geographic Distribution of Respondents

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The survey successfully gathered insights from across the district, with the regional distribution of respondents as follows:

- Central Algoma (Sault Ste. Marie area): 52%
- East Algoma (Bruce Mines to Spanish): 33%
- North Algoma (Wawa, Dubreuilville, White River): 15%

This distribution ensures that the findings reflect a broad, cross-district perspective.

## Years of Operation

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The employer cohort is characterized by a high degree of maturity, which is a critical factor in interpreting the findings. A significant majority of respondents represent businesses that have operated for over two decades:

- 55% of participating organizations report being in operation for 25 years or more.
- An additional 17% have been operating for 16 to 24 years.
- Newer businesses (1 to 15 years in operation) collectively account for only 28% of the responses.

This distribution confirms that the data and derived insights are predominantly shaped by the experiences of the region's long-established employers.

## Number of Employees

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The demographic breakdown of survey respondents by business size reveals a significant overrepresentation of medium to larger firms, which is a key factor when interpreting the findings. The survey was specifically designed to gain insights into workforce-related issues, but businesses with zero employees—often sole proprietors or businesses without any paid staff—comprise 65% of the actual business landscape in the Algoma District. These businesses, however, are not relevant to the survey's focus on workforce needs, as they do not employ workers. Table 2 compares the survey's distribution of respondents to the actual business counts for the Algoma District as of December 2024 (Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts).

TABLE 2: PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS BY NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES COMPARED TO ACTUAL PERCENTAGE		
Number of Employees	Survey (%)	Actual Business Count (%)
Zero employees	4%	65%
1-4 employees	13%	16%
5-99 employees	63%	19%
100-499 employees	13%	1%

<b>500+ employees</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0.10%</b>
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Actual figures are from Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts, December 2024, Algoma

### Business Characteristics and Ownership

The survey allowed respondents to select multiple characteristics for their organization, so the total percentage exceeds 100%. The findings are heavily dominated by the private, for-profit sector:

- **Private sector for-profit employers** represent the largest cohort at 65% of respondents.
- **Not-for-profit/Registered charity employers** and **non-government funded not-for-profit employers** collectively account for 20% of the responses (17%+3%).
- **Other** classifications, which were specified by the respondent, made up 13%.
- **Franchises** accounted for 6% of the respondent base.
- **Government-funded for-profit employers** represented 4%.
- Both **Francophone businesses** and **Indigenous businesses** were minimally represented, each making up only 2% of the responding organizations.

### Employment of Different Age Cohorts

The survey profiled the age composition of the workforce, revealing a high degree of age diversity across respondent organizations.

- 94% of employers have staff in the core Prime Working Age (25 to 54 years) cohort.
- 68% of employers have Older Workers (55 or over).
- Specifically, 28% of employers have staff aged 65 or older.
- 60% of employers employ Younger Workers (Under 25 years).

51% of respondents employ both someone under 25 and someone 55 years or older, indicating a significant prevalence of intergenerational workforces.

This distribution confirms that while the 25-to-54 cohort remains the core, employers in the Algoma region actively engage both younger and older workers, highlighting a diverse age profile in the local labour market.

## Employment of Different Demographic Categories

Table 3 presents the data on the employment of different demographic groups in the Algoma region, with a key comparison between Private Sector For-Profit firms and other organizations (Non-Profit, Public Sector, etc.).

TABLE 3: EMPLOYMENT OF DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES			
Demographic Category	All Respondents (%)	Private Sector For-Profit (%)	Other Respondents (%)
<b>Female</b>	94%	92%	97%
<b>Male</b>	89%	93%	82%
Indigenous	55%	52%	62%
Immigrants/Other cultural groups	52%	51%	54%
Francophones	45%	38%	56%
Domestic students	38%	33%	49%
Persons with a known physical disability	28%	21%	41%
International students	25%	19%	36%
Persons with a known developmental disability	23%	22%	26%

Based on the survey respondents, near-universal gender employment and a significant sector disparity in the inclusion of diverse groups.

- Nearly all respondents employ female (94%) and male (89%) staff, demonstrating widespread gender inclusion.
- Around half of employers hire **Indigenous (55%), Immigrants/Other Cultural Groups (52%),** and **Francophone (45%)** staff, reflecting moderate workforce diversity.
- Employment of people with a known physical disability (28%) and persons with a known developmental disability (23%) remains limited, highlighting opportunities to enhance accessibility and inclusion.
- Non-profit and public sector organizations consistently show higher inclusion than private for-profit employers, indicating that the private sector has room to strengthen diversity practices:
  - Persons with physical disabilities: 41% vs. 21%
  - Francophones: 56% vs. 38%
  - International students: 36% vs. 19%

Succession Planning is a proactive process through which an organization identifies and develops internal talent to fill key roles in the future. It ensures that critical positions—such as leadership, management, or specialized roles—can be quickly and effectively filled when current employees retire, leave, or are promoted.

**Plan in place**

- 40% currently have a succession plan established for either key roles or some key roles.

**No formal succession plan**

- 43% do not currently have a succession plan

**Currently developing a plan**

- 8% are in the process of creating a succession plan.

**Do not know**

- 9% of respondents are unsure about their organization's succession planning status.

This indicates that while many organizations are taking steps to prepare for leadership transitions, a significant portion still lacks formal strategies to ensure continuity in critical roles.



# WORKFORCE HIRINGS AND SEPARATIONS

## (2024 AND 2025)

### Separations in 2024

A separation is defined as a retirement, a dismissal/being fired, an employee who left or quit, a permanent layoff, a temporary layoff, or any other termination of employment.

- Yes**72% of respondents reported experiencing at least one employee separation.
- No**25% did not experience any separations.
- Uncertain**3% were unsure about separations in their organization.

Among those who did experience a separation, a further question explored what category of separation was involved, together with the number of employees in each category. Table 4 responds. "Other" responses included that the employment contract ended, the employee moved away and that a health issue prevented them from working.

TABLE 4: TYPE OF SEPARATION AND NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES INVOLVED BY PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS					
	Any number of employees	1-9 employees	10-24 employees	25-49 employees	50+ employees
Employee quit	87%	65%	16%	4%	1%
Employee retired	41%	36%	1%	4%	0%
Temporary layoff	24%	19%	1%	3%	1%
Permanent layoff	8%	5%	1%	0%	1%
Employee was terminated/fired	68%	60%	5%	3%	0%
Left for more flexible work (i.e., remote work)	16%	12%	4%	0%	0%
Other	21%	16%	1%	3%	1%

By far, the single largest reason for a separation was that the employee quit (87% of respondents experienced this reason), followed by termination (68%) and retirement (41%). In most instances, the separation involved 1-9 employees.

## Hiring & Reasons for Hiring in 2024

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Respondents were asked whether their business hired any employees in 2024:

- 83% indicated that they did hire.
- 16% did not hire.
- 0.9% were uncertain.

The survey then explored the reasons for new hires, including the number of hires each reason represented (Table 5). “Other” responses mainly included seasonal hires—such as summer students—and filling a job vacancy (already listed as a primary reason).

By far, the primary reason for hiring was to fill an existing vacancy (80% of respondents cited this reason), followed by a hiring in response to growth or expansion (45%) or to replace a person who retired (29%). As in the case of separations, the large majority of these hirings involve 1-9 employees.

TABLE 5: REASONS FOR NEW HIRES IN 2024					
	Any number of employees	1-9 employees	10-24 employees	25-49 employees	50+ employees
Retirements	29%	25%	4%	1%	0%
Filling existing vacancies	80%	62%	12%	2%	4%
Growth/expansion	45%	33%	7%	2%	2%
Restructuring	18%	17%	0%	1%	0%
Technological changes	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Other	11%	8%	0%	1%	1%

## Occupations Most Commonly Hired in 2024

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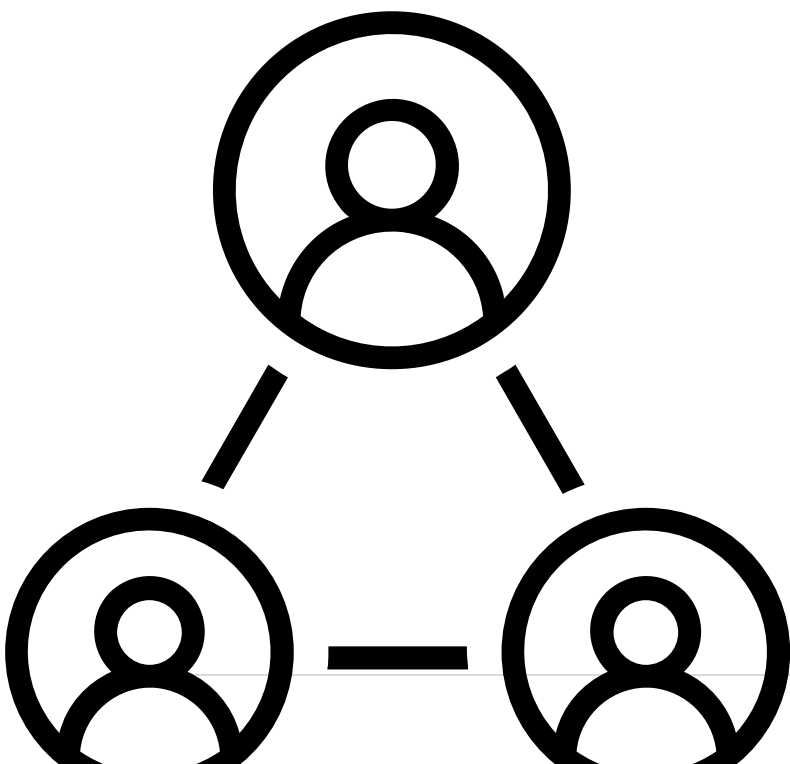
Respondents were next asked to list up to five occupations for which they hired the greatest number of new employees in 2024. Based on a survey of 218 respondents, the following occupations were most frequently cited as being in demand in 2024:

- Administrative staff, clerical
- Labourer, maintenance worker
- Cook
- Server
- Housekeeping
- Manager/management
- Kitchen helper/dishwasher, food service worker
- Registered nurse
- Early childhood educator/assistant educator
- Personal support worker
- Finance
- Registered practical nurse
- Sales associate
- Apprentice – skilled trades
- Bartender
- Bookkeeper
- Equipment operator
- Mechanic
- Operator
- Project manager/project leader
- Receptionist
- Skilled trades
- Supervisor
- Welder/metal fabricator

## Job Posting Practices

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Three-quarters (74%) said their business or organization frequently re-posts job openings or extends application deadlines to draw more qualified applicants, whereas one quarter (26%) said they did not.



## ANTICIPATED WORKFORCE CHANGES IN 2025

Respondents were asked about hiring in 2025, whether they had been hired or were planning to hire. Seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents said yes, they plan to hire, twelve percent (12%) said no, and eleven percent (11%) were uncertain.

The main difference between the responses in 2024 and 2025 is the larger proportion of respondents who were uncertain (in 2024: 0.9%; in 2025: 11%), in part because one is asking them to forecast halfway through 2025, compared to reporting on what happened in 2024. Overall, the proportions between those hiring/expecting to hire and not hiring are quite close.

Respondents were asked about hiring in 2025, whether they had been hired or were planning to hire. Table 6 shows the results for respondents who answered that they had hired or planned to hire in 2025.

TABLE 6: ALREADY HIRED OR PLAN TO HIRE IN 2025					
	Any number of employees	1-9 employees	10-24 employees	25-49 employees	50+ employees
Already hired in 2025	82%	64%	10%	4%	4%
Plan to hire in 2025	80%	64%	10%	3%	3%

### Reasons for Hiring in 2025

As in the case of the 2024 hires, respondents were asked to provide the reason for the new hires. The proportions are provided in Table 7, and the distribution by reason is very similar to the reasons provided for the hires in 2024 (Table 6).

TABLE 7: REASONS FOR NEW HIRES IN 2025					
	Any number of employees	1-9 employees	10-24 employees	25-49 employees	50+ employees
Retirements	31%	27%	3%	1%	0%
Filling existing vacancies	82%	68%	12%	1%	1%
Growth/expansion	46%	39%	3%	1%	3%
Restructuring	14%	12%	1%	0%	0%
Technological changes	3%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Other	14%	11%	1%	0%	1%

The occupations which respondents had hired or expected to hire in 2025 were generally like those which they had hired in 2024, notably among the larger categories: cook, labourer/maintenance worker, educators/assistant educators, registered nurse, servers, housekeeping, sales associates, administrative staff, carpenter, kitchen helpers, operators and supervisors.

## HIRING CHALLENGES

Table 8 illustrates the biggest challenges employers faced when recruiting new employees, as a percentage of those who answered this question (respondents were allowed to select as many challenges as applied).

The biggest challenge was that applicants lacked the skills required, cited by 60% of the respondents. Three other challenges were each noted by around half of the respondents: applicants lacked the qualifications required (55%), applicants lacked the work experience required (54%) or a low number of applicants (54%). Only slightly lower on the list (four in ten) were such issues as applicants lacking soft skills (36%), competition from other employers (38%), compensation expectations (37%) and location challenges (28%).

In the “Other” category (20%), one quarter of respondents cited lack of a vehicle or transportation challenges; the only other item mentioned more than once was difficulties for foreign workers in getting a work permit or not being able to qualify for their profession in Canada.

TABLE 8: BIGGEST CHALLENGES WHEN RECRUITING NEW EMPLOYEES	
Challenge	Percent
Applicants lack the skills required	60%
Applicants lack the qualifications required	55%
Applicants lack the required work experience	54%
Low number of applicants	54%
Applicants lack soft skills (communication, work ethics, etc.)	41%
Competition from other employers	38%
Compensation expectations	37%
Location challenges	36%
Other	20%

## Other Factors Affecting Employers' Ability to Recruit and Retain Employees

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When asked about additional factors affecting their ability to recruit and retain employees, respondents identified several key barriers:

- 37% cited a lack of rental housing as a significant challenge.
- 20% noted a shortage of daycare services, which impacts working parents.
- 19% highlighted the lack of public transportation as a barrier for employees.
- 18% pointed to the limited availability of homes for purchase.
- 5% mentioned the lack of reliable and affordable high-speed internet access.
- 52% referenced "other" factors, which varied based on specific regional challenges.

These challenges underscore the broader issues employers face in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, particularly in regions with limited housing and support services. Such factors complicate efforts to maintain a stable workforce, extending beyond direct employment concerns to include issues like housing availability, childcare, transportation, and infrastructure.

## Hard to fill positions

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Respondents were given another opportunity to identify up to five occupations that are difficult to fill. After combining all 197 mentions, the occupations that received at least three responses were as follows:

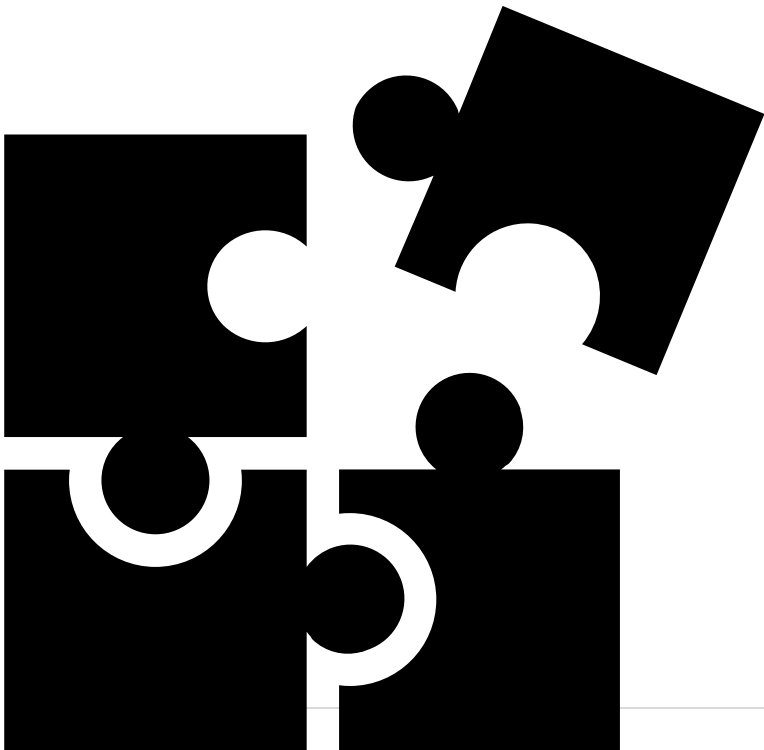
- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| • Cook  | • Administrative staff, clerical |
| • Manager/management                          | • Operator                       |
| • Carpenter                                   | • Plumber                        |
| • Labourer                                    | • Skilled trades                 |
| • Cashier                                     | • Housekeeping                   |
| • Early childhood educator/assistant educator | • Human resources                |
| • Finance/accounting                          | • Supervisor                     |
| • Sales associate, customer service           | • Kitchen helper                 |

### Adapting When Vacancies Cannot Be Filled

Respondents were asked how they adapt or will adapt where they cannot fill all their vacancies, for each of 2024 and 2025. Table 9 shows their responses as a percentage of all those who replied to this question.

In 2024, the most common strategy for coping with unfilled vacancies was having current staff work more overtime. However, in 2025, the proportion of employers relying on overtime barely increased. Instead, the second and third most popular options from 2024 saw more responses in 2025. This shift suggests that there may be a limit to how much overtime can be relied upon, prompting employers to turn to alternative strategies like cross-training staff or redistributing workloads. Notably, every option saw an increase in the percentage of employers selecting it from 2024 to 2025, though often incremental; in some cases, the rise was more significant.

TABLE 9: ADAPTATIONS WHERE VACANCIES CANNOT BE FILLED		
	2024	2025
More overtime for current staff	54%	55%
Cross training for current employees	40%	48%
Redistribution of work	35%	45%
Subcontract/Outsourcing	18%	20%
Offer job placements and internships	15%	17%
Access staffing agencies	14%	15%
Diversify our workforce	12%	18%
Reduction of our workforce	12%	13%
Offering remote work options	9%	10%
Implementation of technology/automation	7%	6%
Other	6%	7%



# RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

## Methods Used to Recruit Candidates

The majority of employers (99%) primarily recruit locally within their own community or district. More than half (57%) extend their search to other regions within Northern Ontario. About a third (36%) recruit from Southern Ontario, and a smaller portion looks to other provinces (21%) and internationally (18%) to fill their vacancies.

In Table 10, the most used recruitment method among employers was word-of-mouth, followed closely by several other methods, including free online job boards, social media, employee referrals, company websites, and local employment services.

Traditional, low-tech strategies like word-of-mouth and employee referrals remain widely used, while online platforms and local services have also become key components of the recruitment process. Many of these methods saw an increase in usage in 2025 compared to 2024, reflecting a continued shift towards combining traditional and digital recruitment strategies. Local employment services also ranked highly among employers.

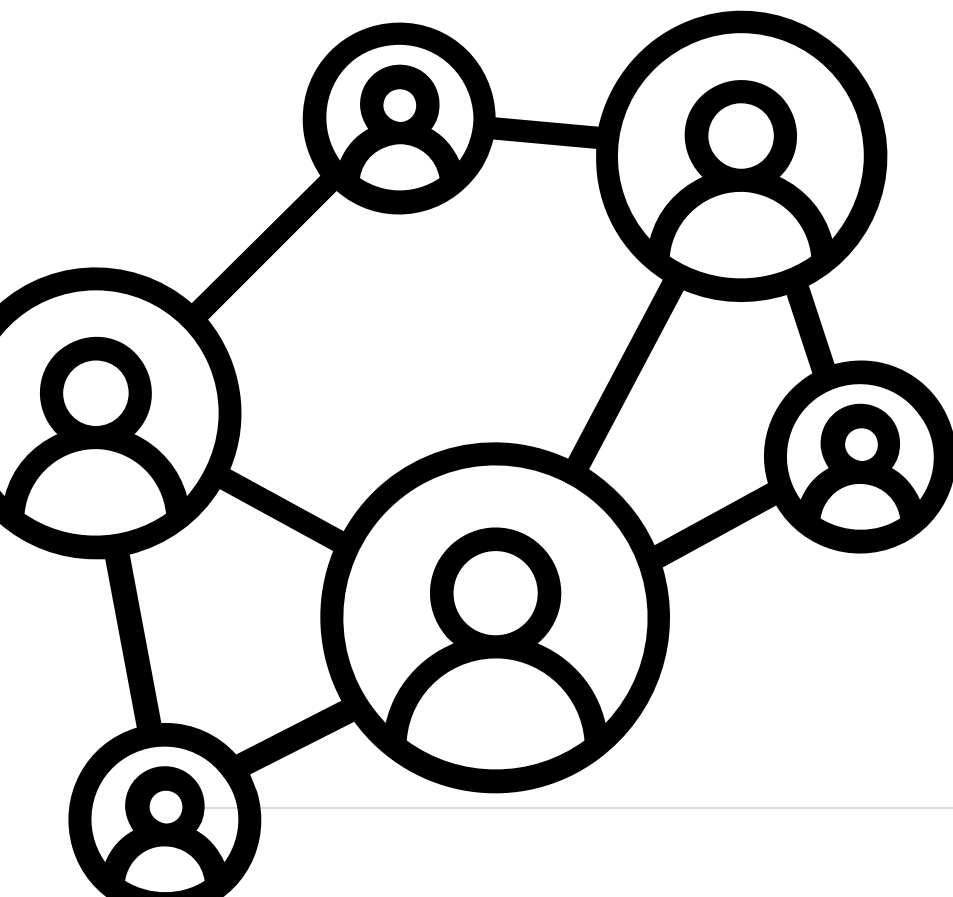
TABLE 10: RECRUITMENT METHODS USED TO FIND CANDIDATES FOR JOB VACANCIES		
	2024	2025
Word of mouth, personal contacts, referrals, and informal networks	79%	87%
Free online job boards/online postings	61%	61%
Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn)	59%	63%
Employee referrals	59%	63%
Our business/organization's own website	59%	61%
Local employment service agencies	57%	57%
Paid online job boards/online postings	47%	44%
On-site recruitment at schools, colleges and universities	36%	36%
On-site job signs or posters	34%	40%
Job fairs	33%	38%
Print and online news media	28%	28%
Trade or professional publications or websites	17%	17%
Executive search companies/Headhunters	12%	9%
Radio ads	4%	4%
Other	3%	2%

Local employment services were utilized by 57% of respondents (52 employers). However, when asked about their reliance on employment programs or services to assist with recruitment, only 30% (28 respondents) confirmed they had used such services, while 63% had not, and 7% were uncertain.

When asked to specify the services they had used, respondents were able to name up to five options, though most named only one or two. Among the 40 responses provided, the most frequently mentioned services included:

- Employment Solutions
- Employment Options
- Sault Community Career Centre
- Regional Employment Help Centre
- Health Force Ontario
- Job fairs
- Wage subsidy

This suggests that while local employment services are commonly used, many employers rely on a relatively small selection of specific programs, with a few key services receiving the most attention.



## WORKFORCE SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT

### Most Important Skills When Hiring

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Respondents were asked to select the five most important skills they look for when hiring from a list of thirteen. The skills that received the highest percentage of selections are as follows:

- 75%: Work Ethic, Dedication, and Dependability
- 73%: Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills
- 46%: Oral and Written Communication
- 46%: Customer Service
- 45%: Willingness to Learn
- 41%: Self-Motivation and Independence
- 35%: Ability to Follow Instructions
- 33%: Time Management and Organization Skills
- 31%: Technical
- 30%: Professionalism
- 25%: Problem Solving and Creativity
- 12%: Computer Literacy
- 9%: Analytical/Research Skills

These findings show that soft skills are consistently prioritized over more technical abilities, such as computer literacy and analytical skills, which were selected by a smaller percentage of respondents. This highlights a clear preference for foundational, interpersonal traits in the hiring process. Notably, previous surveys conducted by AWIC have identified the same key skills that employers value most, with work ethic, dedication, and dependability ranking as the number one skill employers continue to seek.

The report highlights that **Work ethics, dedication and dependability** and **Teamwork and interpersonal skills are** the most important skills employers seek, with **around 75%** of respondents prioritizing these qualities.

**Communication, customer service, willingness to learn, and self-motivation** also rank highly, with about **40%** of employers emphasizing these traits.

Technical skills such as **computer literacy** and **analytical abilities** were less frequently mentioned, signaling that **foundational skills** are of greater importance in the hiring process.

## Training and Education Support for Employees

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Most employers are actively investing in employee development. 77% fund training or education (either fully or partially), and about half offer flexible work schedules (49%) or provide information on available opportunities (48%).

Additionally, 25% use government hiring and training incentives, while 9% offer other support, mostly in-house training.

These actions reflect employers' commitment to developing their workforce through a mix of financial support, flexibility, and learning opportunities.

- 77%: Fund training or education, fully or partially
- 49%: Offer flexible work schedules
- 48%: Supply information on opportunities available
- 25%: Use government hiring and training incentives
- 9%: Other (e.g., in-house training)

## Sources of Training & Education

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Respondents were asked to choose as many responses as relevant to their business regarding common sources of training and education for their employees. Options and responses include:

- **81%:** On-the-job training
- **52%:** College
- **52%:** Online webinars/workshops
- **46%:** Peer-to-peer training
- **41%:** Distance/online education
- **31%:** Industry professional association
- **29%:** University
- **22%:** Private trainers
- **4%:** Local union
- **2%:** School board
- **2%:** Adult learning center
- **2%:** Other

**81% of employers provide on-the-job training, making it the top choice for employee development.**

## Obstacles to the provision of or support for training

Over half of respondents (57%) identified the cost of training as the biggest obstacle to providing employee development opportunities. Distance to travel for training was the second most common barrier, affecting 41% of employers. Other significant challenges included:

- 35%: Loss of trained employees to other employers
- 33%: Relevant programs not offered in the region
- 27%: Lack of awareness of training programs available
- 22%: Loss of productivity during training periods
- 16%: Lack of awareness of support for employee training
- 5%: Lack of awareness of legislated training requirements
- 13%: Other (e.g., employees lacking desire for training)

The “Other” category mentioned issues such as employees lacking the desire for training.

## Employment experience opportunities for students and youth

A large majority of respondents (82%) provide employment experience opportunities for students and youth, such as paid and unpaid co-op placements, internships, apprenticeships, summer jobs, and part-time positions. Nearly half of these employers (44%) offer at least three different types of opportunities, showing a strong commitment to fostering youth employment.

In Table 11, the most common opportunities include summer student positions (52%) and part-time jobs (44%). There is also significant engagement in co-op placements and internships, with 59% of respondents offering at least one of these experiences. Around 28% host at least three types of co-op or internship opportunities.

A small number of respondents indicated they did not offer student opportunities, with a few noting restrictions on hiring individuals under 18 years of age or simply not employing students at all. Most “Other” responses reflected the absence of any additional opportunities.

TABLE 11: EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH	
Employment experience opportunity	Percent
Summer jobs for students	52%
Part-time jobs for students	44%
Unpaid high school Co-op placements	40%
Unpaid college Co-op placements	27%
Unpaid university Co-op placements	24%
Other (please specify)	20%
College apprenticeships	19%
Paid college Co-op placements	18%
Paid internship	15%
Paid high school Co-op placements	13%
Paid university Co-op placements	12%
Unpaid internship	9%

## TECHNOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

### Impact of Technological and Environmental Changes

Respondents were asked about the impact of technological and environmental changes and their impact on their workforce, both currently and in the future (Table 12). Three out of ten (30%) said that none of these changes had a current or future impact on their workforce. Following closely, there were four items where one out of five indicated that there was a current impact, notably:

- Cyber-security
- Digitalization
- Cloud-based technology
- Real-time data collection, management and analysis

Three of these items refer to digital and data-based issues (digitalization, cloud-based technology, and real-time data collection, management and analysis). If a respondent chose one of these items, they were slightly more likely to choose two or all of them, as opposed to only highlighting one.

Four issues showed larger increases in concern for their future impact compared to their current impact:

- Artificial intelligence
- Autonomous equipment
- Automation and robotics
- Climate change

Electrification and autonomous equipment were rated lower in terms of their impact, with 5% to 10% citing current or future impacts. In the Other category, two respondents simply stated that they had nothing further to add, while one mentioned the lack of infrastructure to support reliable internet and cell phone services.

**TABLE 12: TECHNOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES CURRENTLY IMPACTING OR WILL IMPACT THE WORKFORCE**

Changes	Current	Future
No impact on our business/organization	30%	30%
Cyber-security	22%	23%
Digitization	22%	19%
Cloud-based technology	21%	23%
Real-time data collection, management and analysis	19%	15%
Climate change	11%	18%
Environmental regulations	11%	16%
Artificial intelligence	10%	25%
Automation and robotics	10%	18%
Electrification	7%	10%
Autonomous equipment	5%	10%
Other	9%	9%

## Impacts on the workforce of technological and environmental changes on the workforce

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Respondents were next asked what the impacts would be of these technological and environmental changes on their workforce. By far, the biggest impact predicted by respondents was on the need for skills upgrading, as half (48%) of respondents chose “our workforce will need to continue upskilling or reskilling,” followed by other impacts such as:

- **48%** - Workforce will need to **continue upskilling or reskilling**.
- 28% - Workforce productivity expected to improve.
- 23% - Health and safety requirements anticipated to change.
- 20% - Workforce will need advanced computer skills.
- 14% - Workforce will increase (new jobs created).
- 14% - Workforce will need project management skills.
- 14% - Workforce will need data management skills.
- 13% - Changes will facilitate remote work arrangements.
- 11% - Workforce will decrease (some jobs lost).
- 14% - Other impacts, including no impact noted or weather-related factors affecting hours

## Occupations Expected to Be Most Impacted by Technological and Environmental Changes

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Respondents were invited to name up to five occupations which they thought would be most impacted by technological and environmental change. In total, 88 made at least one entry, together with another 108 entries for the second, third, fourth and fifth occupations, resulting in 196 responses. However, 28 of these responses included either “no impact,” “not applicable,” or “do not know,” leaving 168 entries to analyze.

The remaining 392 entries either named an occupation or a specific task that would be affected. The most common responses (five or more) were the following:

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| • Administrative staff, clerical  | • Housekeeper                |
| • Management, manager, project manager, program manager, office manager | • Bookkeeper                 |
| • Sales, salesclerk, salesperson  | • Cook                       |
| • Server  | • Finance, financial officer |
| • Carpenter   | • Human resources            |
| • Cashier   | • Labourer                   |
|   | • Plumber                    |
|   | • Technician                 |

The selection of some of these occupations is no doubt based on the expansion of AI, in such roles as administrative staff, finance, accounting and even management. It is less clear why other occupations were selected, such as skilled trades occupations, although one respondent added an explanation for choosing a plumber, saying that more online videos and resources would allow for more do-it-yourself repairs and more replacement work rather than repair work.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES MOVING FORWARD

### Current and Future Impact of U.S. Tariffs

Given the current news regarding US tariffs, respondents were asked about the impact that US tariffs are having or could have on their business. Table 13 shows the percentage of respondents selecting each impact, both currently and in the future.

<b>TABLE 13: IMPACT OF US TARIFFS ON BUSINESS OR ORGANIZATION, CURRENTLY AND IN THE FUTURE</b>		
Nature of impact	Current	Future
Our supply chain will be impacted	48%	42%
We will have to raise our prices	33%	41%
We will have to restrict spending because of uncertainty	31%	30%
No impact on our business/organization	26%	21%
We will delay growth/expansion plans	20%	21%
We will reduce our hours, staff and operations	16%	20%
We will have difficulty honouring existing contracts	12%	12%
Other	7%	8%

Supply chain disruptions and the need to raise prices are the two most common impacts selected, both currently and for the future, with restricted spending due to uncertainty coming in third.

Around a quarter (26%) say there is no current impact, which drops to one-fifth (21%) in predicting future impact. In most instances, the expected future impact is about the same or lower than the current impact, except in the case of having to raise prices and having to reduce hours, staff and operations.

Among those who contributed to the Other category, several said there was either no impact or they were uncertain about the impact, while a few repeated impacts profiled in Table 13. As far as other impacts go, two were concerned that they may see fewer US visitors or seasonal residents, dampening business, and one felt that the circumstances could lead to new business development strategies.

## The Biggest Challenge in the Next Three Years

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Over the next three years, businesses anticipate a variety of challenges, with workforce issues emerging as the most significant concern. More than half of respondents (58%) identified workforce-related challenges, which included:

- 29% - Lack of qualified workers
- 19% - Shortage of job candidates
- 6% - Employee retention concerns
- 6% - Replacing retiring staff

In addition to workforce issues, businesses highlighted other key challenges:

- **Rising costs (14%)** - including inflation, higher input prices, and taxes
- **Operational and logistical factors (9%)** - such as aging equipment/infrastructure, remote locations, and impacts from tariffs
- **Financing and funding concerns (8%)** - access to capital or resources
- **Other external factors** - including tariffs, managing growth, and government policies, particularly **immigration and international student restrictions**

## The Biggest Opportunity in the Next Three Years

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organization in the next three years. In total, after the elimination of entries that said not applicable or do not know, 63 comments were made (a handful mentioned more than one item). Most of the responses fell into the following clusters:

### **Expansion (35% of all respondents)**

- These respondents mentioned their own plans to expand their premises, outlets or the range of services they provide, or opportunities that were emerging

### **Business circumstances (21%)**

- These respondents cited something specific about their business, such as a change in ownership or an increase in prices for their product, or a specific demand for what they provide

### **Workforce (18%)**

- These respondents noted how they would be initiating something with respect to their workforce practices that would improve things for their organization (for example, cross-training, upskilling, recruiting from non-traditional labour markets, developing talent from within)

### **Growth (10%)**

- These respondents felt that growth in the local economy would benefit them, including an increasing population; two specifically mentioned mining and one mentioned tourism

### **Technology (8%)**

- Several respondents believed efficiency and productivity improvements would come from AI, automation and cloud-based technology

Even though this question asked about opportunities, a few expressed concerns about the immediate future, given uncertainties, and several conditioned their responses on the ability to find qualified workers.

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any other comments to make regarding employee recruitment, training and retention for their business or organization. Only nine respondents offered any closing thoughts, and almost all of them lamented the lack of qualified workers and the absence of a work ethic, with several specifically singling out youth.

## **CONCLUSION**

Employers across the Algoma District are at a pivotal point, balancing persistent workforce challenges with promising growth opportunities. Workforce issues remain a defining concern—four out of five employers report both staff turnover and new hiring activity. More than three-quarters invest in employee training or education, while about half provide flexible work options or share information on advancement opportunities. Many also demonstrate a strong commitment to youth employment, with roughly half hiring summer or part-time students, and six in ten offering co-op placements or internships.

Looking ahead, over half of respondents identify workforce-related issues as their most pressing challenge for the next three years. Key concerns include a shortage of qualified candidates, employee retention, and succession planning for retiring workers. Technological advancements, particularly in AI and automation, are expected to further heighten the demand for ongoing upskilling and adaptability.

At the same time, employers recognize clear opportunities for progress through business expansion, diversification of services, investment in their workforce, and leveraging technology to drive productivity. Yet, external pressures such as housing affordability and global economic uncertainty (including U.S. tariffs) continue to shape the local labour market landscape.

By acting on these insights, AWIC and its community partners can play a vital role in building a skilled, adaptable, and resilient workforce. Through strategic collaboration and targeted workforce development initiatives, the Algoma region can strengthen its economic foundation and continue to thrive amid change.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this report, the following recommendations are put forth to address the identified workforce challenges and capitalize on opportunities:

### **Develop Targeted Skill Development Programs**

Collaborate with educational institutions and training providers to create and promote programs that directly address the identified skill gaps, particularly in hard-to-fill occupations (e.g., trades, healthcare, and business and administrative support). Focus on both technical and foundational skills.

### **Enhance Recruitment and Retention Strategies**

- Support employers in diversifying recruitment efforts beyond local sources, exploring regional, national, and international talent pools.
- Promote best practices for employee retention, including competitive compensation, positive workplace culture, and opportunities for career advancement.
- Advocate for solutions to the housing affordability crisis in the AWIC area to reduce a significant barrier to attracting new talent.

### **Invest in Technology Adaptation and Training**

Support businesses in understanding and integrating emerging technologies (AI, automation) and provide resources for workforce upskilling and reskilling to adapt to these changes.

### **Strengthen Succession Planning Initiatives**

Develop and promote resources and workshops for businesses, particularly SMEs, on effective succession planning to ensure leadership continuity and knowledge transfer.

### **Leverage Student Engagement**

Continue to foster strong relationships between employers and educational institutions to maximize opportunities for co-op placements, internships, and part-time student employment, building a pipeline of local talent.

### **Facilitate Access to Training Resources**

Explore avenues to mitigate training costs and travel distances for employers and employees. This could include subsidized training programs, local delivery of relevant courses, and promotion of online learning platforms.

### **Monitor and Respond to Economic Shifts**

Continuously monitor the impact of external economic factors like tariffs and supply chain disruptions, providing resources and guidance to businesses on adaptation strategies.

[illegible]

