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Hydro One  
Remarks: Skills Canada  
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## Introductory Comments

Thank you and good morning.

It is an absolute pleasure to be with you today and my thanks to Skills Canada, Ontario for your kind invitation.

Hydro One is big supporter and advocate of the work of Skills Canada, Ontario because we are a **company that is inherently dependant upon a workforce of people skilled in the trades and technology fields.**

Let me put this into context for you...

We own and operate Ontario's high-voltage transmission network that delivers electricity directly to large industrial customers, like auto manufacturers and refineries, and we also deliver electricity to local utilities and our own 1.3 million customers.

To give you a sense of the size and magnitude of our operation, our high-voltage transmission network spans 28,400 kilometres and our low-voltage distribution system spans 122,000 kilometres.

Our operation is huge and **everyone in the province is relying on us** to deliver electricity safely and reliably every minute of every day.

Simply put, we **can not meet our commitment** to the homes, businesses, hospitals and schools of this Province **without a constant supply of people in the skilled trades and technology fields.**

This is precisely the reason why Hydro One is pleased to support Skills Canada, Ontario.

I would like to focus my remarks today on three key issues that are important to Hydro One and that I think will also resonate with everyone in this room.

**First:** The **demographic shift** that is impacting our business and how Hydro One is responding to this shift

**Secondly:** Ensuring a **safe workplace** for young people entering the workforce

**And finally:** Why it is important for all of us to support Skills Canada and **promote skilled trades and technologies as viable, first-choice careers** for Ontario youth.

## **One: Demographic Shift impacting our industry and how Hydro One is responding to this shift**

As I have just said, the people of Ontario are counting on Hydro One to fulfill its mandate to ensure that homes, businesses, schools and hospitals of Ontario have **safe and reliable power**.

To meet our commitment to all our customers, we need the best and the brightest working for us.

But as an employer, we are grappling with one of the single greatest **human resource challenges** our industry has ever confronted.

In Canada 9.6 million baby boomers will soon reach retirement. This generation has long provided our industry with an enormous pool of talented and ambitious women and men.

At Hydro One, we expect to see more than **30 percent of our workforce depart** in the next few years.

We're faced with the likelihood of a severe **shortage of trained staff over the next five to 10 years**.

Simply put, the greying of our workforce precipitates the need for a **proactive and aggressive workforce renewal program**.

For me, this issue is not just about recruitment.

We need to **maximize the skill sets of two generations** simultaneously and in a way that responds to their very different approaches to their work and careers.

We are seeing an incredibly adept and skilled workforce walking out the door at precisely the time we need them to mentor a new generation of new workers.

And, if that weren't enough, we are watching these people leave during one of our **most significant building phases** in the last twenty year.

We need skilled people now more than ever.

It is, as the saying goes, **a perfect storm**.

Hydro One is not sitting on its hands waiting for someone else to solve our problems; we have established a very aggressive workforce renewal project to get ahead of the curve.

## **Apprentices**

For example, because trades represent a significant piece of our business, Hydro One has undertaken **ambitious trades apprenticeship programs** in recent years.

Since 2002, almost **600 people have been hired** into apprentice jobs in our various trades.

Our efforts are ensuring that we're drawing from the widest pool of possible employees and reflecting the communities where we live and work.

We give them the best possible training, a safe environment in which to develop their skills, and the foundation for a long and safe career.

They benefit from working along side and benefiting from our most capable and committed employees.

Our people are very proud of what they do and how they do it so it goes without saying that they are passionate about mentoring new apprentices and passing along their expertise.

## **Aboriginal Communities**

We also recognize that our workforce renewal programs and the people we hire should be a reflection of our customer base and the people of this province.

We know that aboriginal communities **tend to be under represented in our workforce.**

We also know that aboriginal communities tend to have the opposite demographic profile to other communities – while our population is aging, **they have a large youth populations.**

With this in mind, we believe that aboriginal communities contain an **underutilized resource** – a human resource.

Recently we began to pilot a partnership with the Sioux Lookout Aboriginal Management Board and the Power Workers Union to **offer training aboriginal people so that they have the skill sets to do our type of work.**

We are excited about this initiative and hope to roll it out on a broader basis in the future.

## **College Partnerships**

Also key to our workforce renewal strategy is establishing **creative and exciting partnerships** with educational and academic institutions.

One partnership, of which I am particularly proud, is the partnership we have recently established with a number of Ontario colleges.

In November of last year, we announced we had established partnerships with four Ontario colleges to fund curriculum development and ensure that graduates will leave school with the skills we need.

These colleges include:

- Mohawk College in Hamilton
- Algonquin College in Ottawa
- Northern College in Timmins
- Georgian College in Barrie

And I am pleased to see our College partners represented here today.

For its part, Hydro One will contribute to **scholarships, program development and equipment over four years**

for programs that will train people as technicians, technologists and trades positions in the electricity sector.

We are extremely excited about this partnership and I know that the **Colleges share our enthusiasm.**

In fact, our educational partners have praised the company for taking a proactive and leadership role in curriculum development that will ultimately **serve the schools, their students and the electricity industry.**

Our experience working with these Colleges has been extremely positive and we commend them for their enthusiasm and dedication they have demonstrated to developing meaningful programs to launch the long and successful careers for our future workers.

I understand that this partnership is **already paying dividends.**

Georgian College tells us that they enrollment is full in their Electrical Engineering Technology Program for next year.

This is fantastic news and proof of what employers and schools can achieve together.

## **Relationship with Universities**

Hydro One is not only facing a shortage of skilled and trades workers, we are also **struggling to attract and retain Electrical Engineers.**

While not specifically related to skilled work and trades, we also have established **partnerships, MOUs, scholarships,**

**on-line course delivery with universities** to seed the next generation of talent in our industry.

We're strengthening our long and productive association with the University of Western Ontario's faculty of engineering.

We're working with Ryerson and McMaster to embed power engineering in their curriculums and provide us with even more talented grads.

We've made a good start, but there's so much more to do.

And while I want all this activity to result in some great new hires for Hydro One, the work we are doing, whether it is with our apprentices, Colleges and Universities, **I believe will serve our industry and this province.**

The curriculum we help create, the people we train and develop, will help launch a new generation of skilled workers with a **portable skill set that will put them in good stead in any electricity utility -- anywhere.**

### **Second: Ensuring a safe workplace for our new employees**

I can't talk about workforce renewal and the need for skilled workers without talking about the very thing that **keeps me awake at night.....and that is the safety of our workers.**

The very nature of our business requires that our skilled and trades workers work in **often dangerous and challenging environments.**

Our people work with and around electricity – need I say more?

Many of them work outdoors in the harshest weather this province has to offer.

So with new and young workers comprising a larger segment of our workforce than ever, we must **redouble our efforts in the area of workers safety.**

For its part, Hydro One considers **health and safety core values** that are key to the success of our company.

Hydro One understands the importance of providing safety and technical training and in the power of instilling core safety values in new and young workers.

It is incumbent upon everyone us to do all possible to provide the safest possible workplace by eliminating and controlling hazards, by instilling our safety values in new and young workers, by giving them the **training and the tools they need to ensure their safety on their first day and on every day that follows.**

So while an exodus of experienced employees results in so many opportunities for new and young people to join our industry, it underscores the need for us to redouble our efforts in the safety training for our new colleagues.

I believe Hydro One is well positioned to manage this emerging trend and challenge.

We know how to do this.

Every year, we hire hundreds of students.

Every year, we have a continuous influx of young and new workers join the company through hiring halls, apprenticeships, grads and summer students.

Hydro One believes that our core safety values must be instilled in young workers – **not on the first day of the job – but well before they ever complete their first full day of work in the field.**

We achieve this through our four **formal training facilities** in Kleinburg, Smiths Falls, Orangeville and Oakville.

Whether it's a new protection and control engineer, an apprentice line maintainer or a veteran who is upgrading skills, our training facilities are the place where our people go to learn what they need to know to get their job done safely and efficiently.

These facilities give future line maintainers, meter readers, ADETS, MDETS and P&C trainees a hands-on experience in a safe environment.

It should be noted that these centres not only provide vital training to Hydro One apprentices, they are Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities certified.

And it is not just new Hydro One employees that benefit from the safety skills and training at these facilities, apprentices from utilities across the province come to us to put spurs on for the first time and take their first steps up a wooden pole.

The ultimate goal of these training facilities is to produce **highly qualified employees who learn in a safe manner using up-to-date tools, equipment and processes.**

More than anything, they benefit from the unparalleled experience of our most highly qualified and skilled workers who are deeply passionate and uncompromising when it comes to safety.

Our new workers are in good hands.

**Third: Why it is important for all of us to support Skills Canada, Ontario and promote skilled trades and technologies as viable, first-choice careers for Ontario youth.**

So, why is it important for us to be here today? Why do we need to support Skills Canada?

The fact is, we are the **very people who stand to lose** the most if we do not support their efforts.

We are the people who are **responsible for filling the employment void** created by the mass boomer exodus from the workplace – the exodus that is already upon us.

We are the people who are, and **will be accountable, when there aren't enough skilled and trained workers** to keep the lights on, build homes, offices, and cars, maintain our computer systems.

We can choose to sit idly by and ask: why aren't schools and governments doing something?

But then all too soon the question will become: why can't I find anyone?

So.....what can we do?

In my view there are **two important things we can do.**

First, we can all do the very things I just described.

As employers, we can work with colleges, we can develop apprenticeship programs, and we can work with First Nations and Aboriginal Communities.

All within our capability to do.

But I think the most important thing we can do is help eradicate the stigma attached to trades and skilled work.

The ridiculous **stigma that skilled work is dirty and underpaid.**

Nothing could be further from the truth and we must challenge anyone who suggests otherwise.

As employers requiring skilled workforces, we know and respect that skilled and trades workers are **the very people who get the job done.**

They take our paper and our plans and turn them into an important reality.

They are **the backbone of our organizations and our economy.**

We know that there are seemingly limitless types of work skilled workers do and can do – something to suit everyone, so to speak.

We know that skilled and trade work can be very portable and take you to any corner of the globe, if you so desire.

We know that skilled and trade work can make you a **valuable resource to a company** but can also put you in the position to **work for yourself**.

As employers, we can get out there to schools and employment fairs and **be cheerleaders for trades** by talking to young people.

We can **advocate on behalf of trades and skilled work** and let them know all the options they have and where those options can take them.

We can help them understand that skilled trades and **technology can be viable, first-choice careers for Ontario youth**.

Above all, if they do choose this path, we must give them the **training and tools to ensure they go home safe everyday**.

Because as I have said, if we are the people that need the workers, then **we bear the responsibility to ensure they are there when we need them**.

## **Concluding Remarks**

In closing, I would like to say that as a CEO of a company that relies so heavily on skilled trades and technology workers, I am extremely pleased to take part in events such as this.

I am **very proud of Hydro One's skilled workers** – they are **second to none** and a great example of what a career in trades and technology can do for people.

It was my distinct pleasure to address you today and my **thanks to Skills Canada Ontario for their efforts on our collective behalves.**

Thank you.