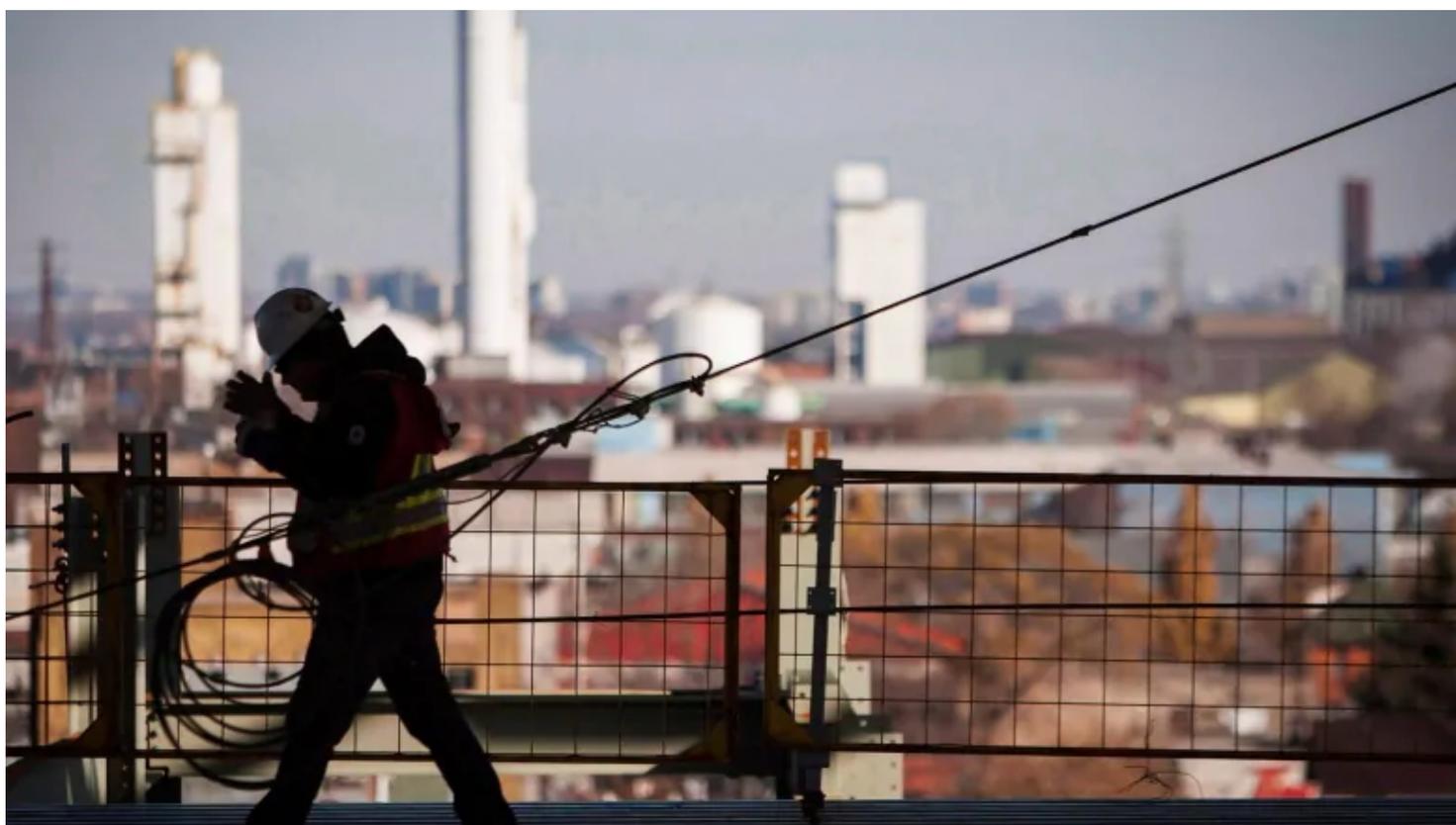


Ontario contractors say 2019 may be another tough year to get skilled workers



69 per cent say they have been facing a shortage of skilled workers for past three years

Carmen Ponciano · CBC News · Posted: Mar 13, 2019 1:53 PM ET | Last Updated: an hour ago



Contractors in Ontario may be in for a busier year in 2019, but many are facing a shortage of skilled workers. (Aaron Lynett/Canadian Press)

Ontario contractors may be in for a busier year than 2018, but many are facing a shortage of skilled workers, which many say has affected their business.

According to the Ontario Construction Secretariat (OCS), which surveyed 500 commercial and institutional contractors in Ontario, 69 per cent said they are expecting 2019 to be a more difficult year to source skilled labour than 2018.

Primary reasons for the shortfall include an increased amount of infrastructure and non-residential projects on the go, plus retirements among an aging workforce.

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BuildForce Canada, an organization that provides labour market information in the construction industry, projects 91,000 workers are set to retire in the next ten years.

"That's a lot of workers to replace, so I think contractors are feeling a bit of a pinch there," Katherine Jacobs, research director at OCS told CBC.

The Greater Toronto Area, Ottawa region and southwestern Ontario around Windsor are the busiest areas, she added, while cities in central Ontario such as Kitchener-Waterloo and Hamilton present a more stable outlook.

Ongoing impact

Almost 70 per cent of contractors in Ontario indicated they have been faced with a skilled worker shortage for the past three years, according to the OCS report.

Jacobs said the shortage has affected contractors' businesses in several ways, mostly in slowing growth and pursuing new projects.

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She explained many contractors said their firm's growth has slowed down over the past three years and some have had to turn down work or veer away from bidding on certain projects.

Contractors have also had to use less-qualified workers to get projects done, she adds.

Multiple solutions

Contractors have highlighted a number of solutions they have or are likely to adopt to help mitigate the issue.

Many stated they are likely to hire more apprentices in the coming years, incorporate new technologies in their work and raise wages for workers.

Contractors are also looking at deploying workers more efficiently.

"That tells me that there isn't any one solution to the challenge of finding skill workers," Jacobs said.

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