



Ontario
Electrical
League



Small Businesses with Big Issues

Current Pressures on Ontario's Electrical
Sector and the Need for Action


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Our Mission

To Promote, Strengthen, and Represent
the Electrical Industry in Ontario.



Since 1922, the Ontario Electrical League has been a non-profit member-based organization dedicated to supporting and evolving the advancement of independent Licensed Electrical Contractors in the province.

To accelerate careers and kick start new ones. To share industry and trade knowledge. To advocate for our Members to help them overcome obstacles. To foster industry-wide networks and collaboration. To represent and pave the way for future generations in the trade.

Labour Shortages in Ontario's Electrical Sector

Ontario's electrical industry is grappling with a significant and accelerating labour shortage. Despite the increased demand for new construction, grid modernization, and renewable energy installations since 2018, the labour supply has not kept pace.

An Aging Workforce

Labour market forecasts suggest that by 2028, the sector will require over 28,000 new workers. Of these, 57% will be required to replace retiring journeymen alone. This could lead to delays in residential & commercial projects, increased infrastructure costs, lower construction quality, and an overall decreased productivity across the supply chain.

Gaps in Workforce Development

The number of post-secondary electrical training programs has declined, and a large proportion of qualified instructors are nearing retirement.



Tying into the aging workforce, many of the instructors in technical education - particularly electrical and engineer-related disciplines - lack successors in place. A significant portion of senior faculty members (40%) are set to retire within the next five years. This raises the concern about the capacity of educational institutions to train the next generation of electricians and skilled tradespeople.

Additionally, there is a persistent devaluation of vocational education, despite the promising career prospects in the skilled trades. Many students tend to prefer university pathways and perceive a career in the trades as a second or third career choice.

Workplace Retention & Attrition

In the skilled trades, electricians tend to report higher-than-average scores for occupational burnout and diminished capacity to meet job demands. These can be attributed to job-specific stressors, including unpredictable shift work, extended hours, high pressure environments, and physical hazards.

If left unaddressed, these factors may contribute to increased absenteeism, early exits from the trade, and long-term labour force attrition.



Systemic Inequities & Barriers in Ontario's Electrical Workforce



The electrical sector's labour shortage cannot be addressed without resolving the longstanding inequities in access to skilled trades employment. Addressing systemic barriers to entry is not only a social requirement, but a practical strategy for sustainability in the sector's labour market.

Women & Masculine Cultural Norms

Women account for only 7.4% of workers in the skilled trades in Canada. Masculine cultural norms make it difficult for women to gain equal footing, and frequently result in unequal access to employment, limited mentorships, and exclusion from informal training opportunities.

Additionally, women are more likely to encounter poorly fitting safety equipment designed for male-bodies. They are at higher risk of injury due to these inadequacies, in addition to harassment, underreporting of injuries, and lack of organizational support.



Newcomers & Barriers to Entry

Newcomers to Canada, who form a substantial part of Ontario's broader labour force, also face unique barriers to entry in the sector. Internationally-trained professionals, whose credentials may not be immediately recognized, increase the time and effort for them to enter the skilled trade through the extended licensing process - possibly even discouraging them outright. Moreover, employer demands for "Canadian experience" often have qualified newcomers resort to lower-paying and precarious jobs.

Indigenous Workers & Systemic Inequities

Despite significant efforts and commitments in hiring and supporting indigenous workers, they still remain among the most marginalized in the skilled trades - particularly those in remote communities. Imbalances in access to secondary and post-secondary education are compounded by systemic racism, geographic isolation, and a lack of culturally safe work environments.

Indigenous women in particular face even more of this disparity with challenges relating to their gender and race, making career advancement more difficult.

Tariffs & Economic Pressures

In addition to existing economic pressures like inflation and rising operating costs, the U.S. tariffs (and Canada's retaliation) have created unprecedented challenges for Ontario's electrical contractors.

Implications on the Electrical Sector

The most immediate consequences are the sharp increase in material prices, particularly copper wiring, aluminum conduits, and structural steel - all critical to electrical infrastructure projects. As a result, timelines have lengthened, project budgets ballooned, and in some cases, project delays or cancellations altogether. Contractors report difficulty in securing competitively priced materials and concerns about the affordability of future projects.

Many have been forced to renegotiate contracts, pass on costs to clients, and reduce their workforce - all of which contribute to the broader economic uncertainty in the construction sector.



Short-Term Efforts Not Enough

Efforts across the industry have included diversifying suppliers, prioritizing domestic sourcing, and introducing contingency clauses into construction contracts. While practical in the short-term, broader policy support is needed for the overall stability of the sector.

Recommendations for Small Businesses



In light of the numerous challenges small electrical contractors face— particularly the economic pressures, it is essential for owners and operators to adopt proactive strategies to remain competitive and resilient.

Diversify your supplier network.

Build relationships with more suppliers with diverse sourcing outside the U.S., and adopt a 'Canadian-first' approach to material procurement.

Practice price transparency.

Include a pricing clause in contracts and keep clients regularly informed on pricing to ensure transparency.

Take advantage of government support.

The Federal and Provincial Governments have various programs, grants, and funding that can help small businesses mitigate the effects of tariffs.

Talk with your teams.

Check in with your employees often to understand their needs and make informed retention decisions.

Get professional legal advice.

A lawyer can help you navigate complex business challenges, from labour relations and HR to contracts and regulatory compliance.

Monitor your costs closely.

Economic conditions, especially with the tariffs, can cause costs to change quickly.

Stay informed and updated.

These unprecedented times cause conditions to fluctuate. Make sure you're always updated on the current situation to make informed decisions regarding your business.

Strengthen risk management.

Account for this uncertainty by lengthening project timelines and expand your contingency budgets.

Strategic Recommendations for Policy Makers

Ontario's electrical sector is facing a critical situation. Addressing the growing labour shortage, breaking down systemic barriers, and easing economic pressures will require targeted action. With the provincial support, the industry can build a stronger and more sustainable future.

On behalf Ontario's electrical sector, we recommend our policy-makers to consider the following strategic interventions:

- **Strengthen Workforce Development**

Invest in apprenticeship and skilled trades programs. Promote trades careers in K-12 education, and fund partnerships between schools, colleges, and the industry,

- **Promote a Resilient Workforce**

Invest in partnerships between trade organizations and occupational health and research teams to support the health and wellbeing of small-to-medium sized businesses and their workers.

- **Enhance Equity and Inclusion in the Workforce**

Enforce equity audits on public projects. Streamline credential recognition for immigrants. Fund mentorships and training for women and indigenous workers. Mandate inclusive safety practices.

- **Mitigate Economic Pressures**

Provide subsidies or tax credits for Canadian-sourced materials. Support small-to-medium businesses facing tariff burdens. Create legal guidelines for managing material cost volatility in contracts.



Resources for Employers

OEL Employer Engagement Program (EEP)

Various subsidies funded by the Government of Ontario's Skills Development Fund to help contractors hire, train, and keep apprentices.

Service Canada's Work-Share Program

A program of the Federal Government that helps employers and employees avoid layoffs during a decrease in business activity.

Electric Business Magazine: Tips to Mitigate Tariffs from Soloway Wright

Article written by a lawyer from Soloway Wright for EB Magazine with tips for business owners on mitigating the effects of U.S. Tariffs.

Electric Industry News Week: Navigating Tariff Uncertainty

Tips and a list of Canadian suppliers compiled from Electric Industry News Week.

Hicks Morley - News Bulletins on U.S. Tariffs

Webpage of updates and resources compiled by law firm Hicks Morley on the Tariff Situation.

Electro Federation Canada - News Bulletins on U.S. Tariffs

Webpage of updates and resources compiled by Electro Federation Canada, representing manufacturers and distributors in the sector.

Federal Government - Support Programs for Canadian Businesses & Workers

Webpage of economic programs available for Canadian Businesses & Workers.

WSIB Rebates for Eligible Businesses

Additional \$2B of rebates from the insurance fund surplus in the Spring.

Electrical Estimate

We are pleased to provide you with an electrical estimate for the supply of labor and material to complete the electrical installation based on scope of work below per photos provided.

Re: Base Building Qualifications:

- Trace & remove redundant conduit, wiring, devices & fixtures to suit new layout.
- Supply & install new lighting equal to specifications.
- Supply & install new lighting controls equal to specifications.
- Supply & install new exit lighting equal to specifications.
- Provide power & final connection to all new Mechanical supplied equipment. Mechanical contractor to provide localized disconnect, if required.
- Relocate power & final connection to existing mechanical equipment.
- Supply & install empty conduit & pull string to accessible ceiling space for communication. Wiring & final connections by others.
- Supply & install new conduit & wire for a complete & operational system including receptacles & switches.
- Retain services of base building fire alarm contractor to modify/supply fire alarm devices as required to include 3rd party verification.
- Provide Close Out Documents & As-Built drawings upon completion of project.
- Provide ESA final certificate upon completion of project.

TOTAL COST BASE BUILDING WORK: \$.00 plus HST

Separate Price: Electrical Civil Qualifications: (Adder Cost to Base Building Work)

- All work related to electrical civil includes excavation, conduit, concrete & rebar, backfill with native soils; Main feeders included in the above
- Concrete Encased Primary Duct Bank: 10m – 6 x 4" PVC
- Concrete Encased Secondary Duct Bank: 65m – 3 x 4" PVC
- Direct Buried Communication Duct: 13m – 2 x 4" PVC
- Direct Buried Communication Duct in Common Trench: 62m – 2 x 4" PVC
- Rigid PVC Conduit & Trenching:
- 98m - Excavation & Backfill
- 98m - 2" PVC for Site Lighting
- Concrete Pole Bases: Qty. 3 x 24" Dia. c/w Kellamy 610R Artform
- Transformer Vault & Grounding per Utility Specs c/w 4 – 6" Protective Steel Bollards
- Surplus soils left from excavation of duct bank to be stockpiled on site; removal from site by others
- Provide Utility locates

ADDER COST FOR EXTERIOR ELECTRICAL CIVIL WORK: \$.00 plus HST

Quotations Notes & Exclusions:

- Scope of work will be limited to the items above. Any change in scope as a result of site conditions will result in extra charges.
- All CCN's, including any site instructions will be subject to the latest NECA Manual of Labor Units.
- ESA Permit & Inspection Fees Included All work to meet latest edition of the Ontario Electrical Safety Code.
- All work to be completed during daytime working hours.
- Noisy work, drilling etc. to be completed after hours.
- Communication & Security wiring is NOT included.
- X-Ray, scanning, cutting & patching of floors/walls is NOT included.
- Quotation valid for 30 days; Payment Terms are NET 30 Days upon invoice date.
- All taxes are extra.

As we continue to experience significant price increases in the market for commodities such as copper, aluminum, packaging, transportation, steel and plastic products – please note that the attached quotation may be subject to pricing adjustments to reflect changes in the market. Unless otherwise stated on attached vendor's BOMs, the vendor's quotation shall be null and void unless accepted by Purchaser within thirty (30) days from the date of quotation.

[Click Here for more Resources & Templates on Project Management](#)

Created by Louie Violo, OEL Member

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We're here for you.

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