

Electric contribution jolts program

Hydro One strikes deal to train students for trades positions

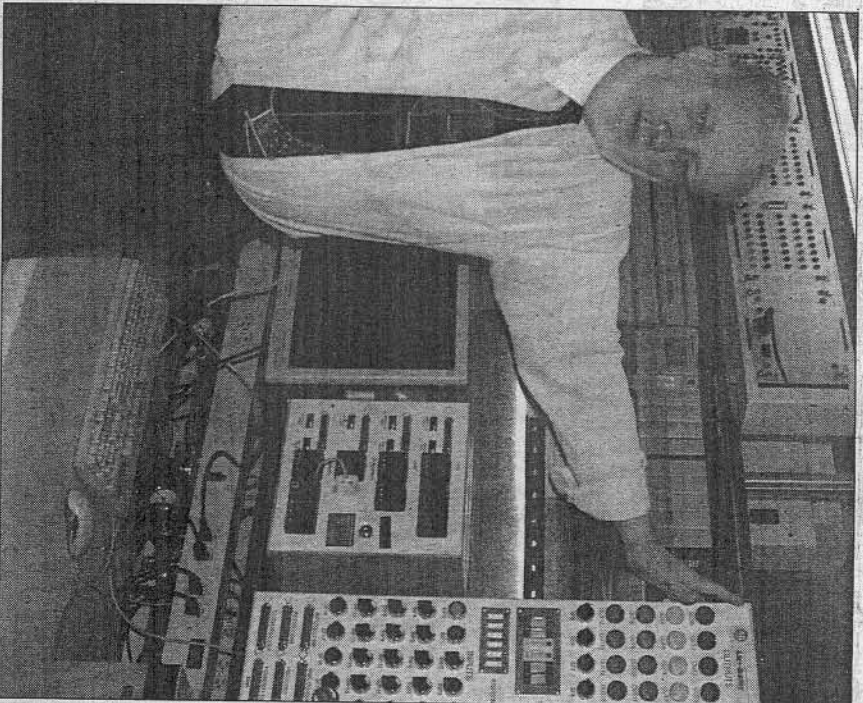
By Vanessa Burka

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In an effort to address its skilled trades shortage, Hydro One has formed a partnership with Algonquin to attract students to work in the electrical transmission and distribution sector.

"One of our biggest challenges right now is that Hydro One is facing a situation where approximately one third of our staff will be eligible for retirement over the next few years, leaving us with a large gap in our staffing requirements," said Paul St. Denis, Hydro One superintendent.

Hydro One will contribute \$3 million to four colleges for programs that will help train students for trades positions in the utility. Algonquin,



Vanessa Burka photo

Frank Bowick in the "automation lab" where students work with the programmable logic controllers.

Georgian College, Mohawk College and Northern College will be given the money to put towards scholarships, equipment and program develop-

ment. "We have a unique requirement that isn't widely addressed in existing training," said St. Denis. "We are trying

to have the students trained for the specific things we need them for. More training done at the college level means they will require less training in the workforce."

"If Hydro One could do this, this can act as a model for others to show that we can really start working with our industrial sectors."

Bob Gillett
President, Algonquin College

When beginning work at Hydro One, a new worker may require eight or more years to be fully trained and able to work competently on the various types of equipment that they would be exposed to, said St. Denis.

By adjusting the current curriculum, this could "shorten the entire time frame by a couple of years...there is an advantage for us if somebody comes in with skills that are directly applicable."

Frank Bowick, who is currently teaching the electrical machinery and electrical distribution design classes, is reviewing Hydro One's materials, attending meetings and working on the new curriculum.

"We've had access to their curriculum and we've analyzed what they're teaching and paired it with what we're teaching," said Bowick. "We looked at how we could modify our training to cover some of their current in-house training."

College President Bob Gillett feels this partnership will help prepare students for the kind of skill set they need and could act as a model for other colleges.

"If Hydro One could do this, this can act as a model for others to show that we can really start working with our industrial sectors," said Gillett.

"By working with us we can add, change and modify curriculum to make sure that our students are graduating with the skill set you need on an ongoing basis."