

# Algonquin opens new transportation technology centre

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Ottawa Sun

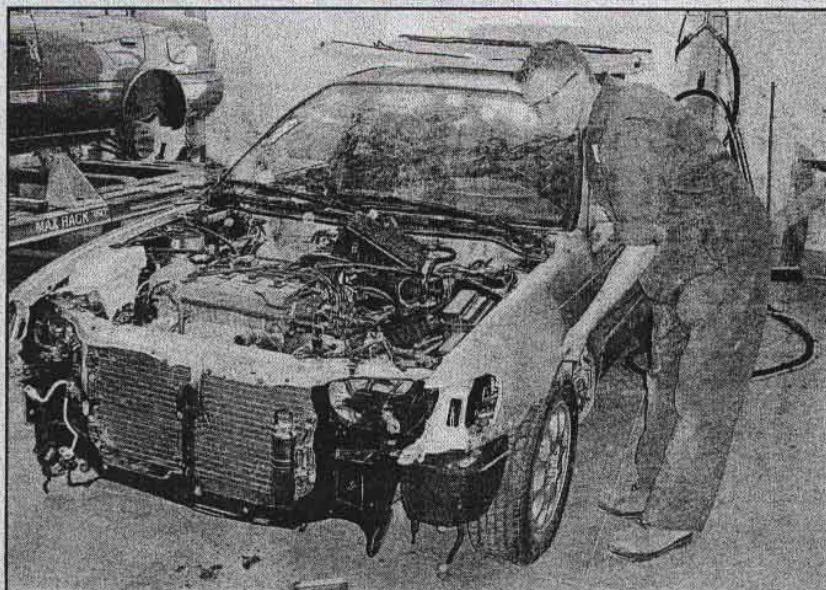
It's bright, shiny and equipped with hi-tech goodies that will hopefully attract youths to an industry that is in dire need of skilled individuals.

Algonquin College opened the doors of its new \$6.5 million state-of-the-art transportation technology centre last week.

The centre, which received substantial funding from the provincial government, replaces the college's 39-year-old automotive training facility where thousands of Ottawa-area technicians and apprentices learned their trade. Fully outfitted with new, up-to-date equipment, the centre will allow Algonquin College to continue teaching the full range of advanced technology involved in today's motive power industry.

The transportation industry is one of the largest employers in Canada and a major source of revenue for the country. However, there is a substantial shortage of skilled workers across the automotive repair and service industry throughout North America that is only predicted to get worse in the near future. Nearly half of the more than 200,000 skilled technicians employed in the Canadian transportation service industry are over 40 years of age while only about 8% are under 25.

"The industry is looking to us to attract people to training," said John-Paul Tapp, dean of the School of Transportation and



SUN PHOTO

**GRAEME MACDONELL**, a student in Algonquin's Autobody Repair Program, puts a fender back on a car in the college's new transportation technology centre. He likes the fact the air quality is better managed in the shop for a cleaner environment and the tools and technology are more up to date.

Building Trades at Algonquin. "So when young people come here, they will see a new, bright atmosphere with the latest technology. Having this facility will help us attract young people to the industry."

He knows Algonquin's old mechanic and autobody shop wasn't up to scratch.

"Now we have state-of-the-art equipment," said Tapp. "In the old facility we weren't up to the standard that is out there (in the industry)." And he adds that was definitely a deterrent in terms of getting people interested in training at Algonquin. "This will attract young people to the industry."

And the students agree. "I think it's a lot larger.

A lot brighter. Everything is up to date," said James Kilby, a student in the autobody repair program.

Graeme Macdonell, another auto body student, likes the fact there are more tools and everything is much more accessible and cleaner in the new shop. Even the air quality is better because of a vacuum and venting system.

"Above all at Algonquin College, we strive to address the career training needs of our local community," said Robert Gillett, president of Algonquin College. "This new transportation technology centre is another example of the college's commitment to provide quality instruction in an area that business and industry

have identified as essential in today's economy."

A recent provincial survey revealed that 100% of students who graduated in 2003 from Algonquin College's Motive Power Technician program had found full-time employment within six months of graduation. Another survey conducted for the college in 2002 revealed that employers of automotive technicians were outbidding one another for qualified employees.

## 18 automotive bays

The new facility is 31,500 square feet bringing together shop space and classroom space. It's larger and includes 18 ful-

ly-equipped automotive bays. In the old shop, students had to go to a centralized area for tools. There's even a wireless network in the shop.

"We will be equipping students with laptops when they come out to work on a vehicle," said Tapp.

The use of the wireless network provides for car-side access to diagrams, specifications and manufacturers' web sites.

Programs taught in this new facility include:

### Motive Power Programs

- Automotive Service Technician
- Auto Body and Collision Damage Repair
- Alignment and Brakes Technician
- Automotive Service Education Program
- Automotive Painter
- Commercial Vehicle Common Core
- Transmission Technician
- Truck and Coach Technician
- Motive Power Technician

### Continuing Education

- Technician Skills Upgrading
- Ozone Depletion Prevention
- Drive Clean Technician Certification
- Automotive General Interest
- Vehicle Damage Estimating
- Emissions systems Training

The new facility will also allow the college to develop and deliver new apprenticeship programs and expand youth, pre-apprenticeship, and journey person upgrading activities.