

Algonquin Transportation Technology Centre Addresses Skills Shortage

Ottawa, Ont., Oct. 7, 2004 – Representatives of all levels of government were at Algonquin College today to officially open the College's new Transportation Technology Centre.

"Skilled trades today offer exciting and financially rewarding career opportunities that are in increasingly high demand," said Robert Gillett, President of Algonquin College. "Algonquin's new Transportation Technology Centre reflects the College's commitment to offer high quality training in an area that has been identified as essential in today's economy."

Area politicians on hand to cut the ribbon at the ceremony included Marlene Catterall, MP for Ottawa West – Nepean; Marc Godbout, MP for Ottawa Orleans; Richard Patten, MPP for Ottawa Centre and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade (Innovation); Eli El-Chantiry, Deputy Mayor of the City of Ottawa and a member of the city's Transportation Committee; and Rick Chiarelli, Councillor for Baseline Ward.

The new Transportation Technology Centre replaces the College's 39-year-old automotive training facility where thousands of Ottawa-area technicians and apprentices learned their trade. The centre is fully outfitted with new, up-to-date equipment and is designed with oversized doors and an open concept interior to easily accommodate large trucks and coaches in addition to cars. The facility received funding from the government of Ontario.

Several factors underscore the importance of the transportation Technology Centre. "The transportation industry is one of the largest employers in Canada and a major source of revenue for the country," said John-Paul Tapp, Dean of the School of Transportation and Building Trades. "Algonquin College is the largest provider of automotive and transportation training programs in Eastern Ontario."

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 eight per cent are under 25.

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Algonquin Transportation Technology Centre – 2

Highlighting the growing need for highly trained personnel, a recent provincial survey revealed that 100 per cent of students who graduated in 2003 from Algonquin'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.

"This new facility is very exciting for our students and our faculty members," said Mr. Tapp. "We now have a highly practical building that combines the look and feel of the modern workplace with an effective educational and training workspace, and one that reflects the rising caliber of skilled trades."

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