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USING LABOUR MARKET INSIGHTS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMUNITY

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Abstract *This paper explores the critical role of labour market insights and strategic analysis in fostering sustainable economic growth within Ontario communities. It addresses the observed challenges in aligning workforce skills with employer demands, particularly for new entrants to various industries in Ontario. Key areas of focus include understanding local employer requirements, bridging the gap between post-secondary training and industry needs, and overcoming significant barriers such as transportation in rural areas. The document highlights the utility of tools like the Job Mapping Tool and emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts among educators, training institutions, and employers to build robust talent pipelines. Furthermore, it discusses leveraging labour force data for business attraction and retention, and the value of benchmarking regional performance against provincial and national metrics. The paper concludes by referencing the provincial government's "My Career Journey" tool as a strategic initiative to empower Ontarians in navigating career paths and accessing high-demand employment opportunities. A strong local economy hinges on aligning workforce skills with the demands of employers. By leveraging labour market data and strategic analysis, sustainable growth can be fostered in Ontario. During a recent visit to Eastern Ontario, I observed the challenges in finding suitable employment, particularly in certain sectors and for those new to industries. While part-time work is often available, securing positions aligned with one's field of study remains difficult. This imbalance is a matter of supply and demand, with a surplus of students compared to the limited number of available jobs in the area due to fewer industries.*

Key words: Labour Market, Community, Suitable Employment

Understanding Employer Needs and Educational Alignment

It is crucial for new students and jobseekers to understand local employer requirements by identifying top employers by sector, business size, and employment trends. Although education systems strive to align with industry demands, a significant mismatch often exists between post-secondary training and the actual needs of local employers. Monitoring the growth and decline of specific industries, as well as tracking hiring patterns by occupation and skill level, is essential but presents a considerable challenge. Developing a concrete tool to address this barrier is vital.

Addressing Transportation as a Barrier

My experience working at the Centre for Workforce Development highlighted that rural communities possess individuals with the necessary training and experience, especially in the trade sector. However, transportation emerges as a significant impediment to accessing available jobs in these areas. To mitigate this, I developed a Job Mapping Tool for the Centre for Workforce Development, which incorporates thirteen interactive layers to pinpoint job locations and related data.

Tools for Job Search and Career Planning

Several tools are available to assist with job searches and career transitions:

1. Plan your transition from school to work
2. Job transition tool,
3. Work-your-profession-or-trade

Figure 01: Ontario Colleges: Locations And Key Performance Indicators (Graduation, Employment & Satisfaction)
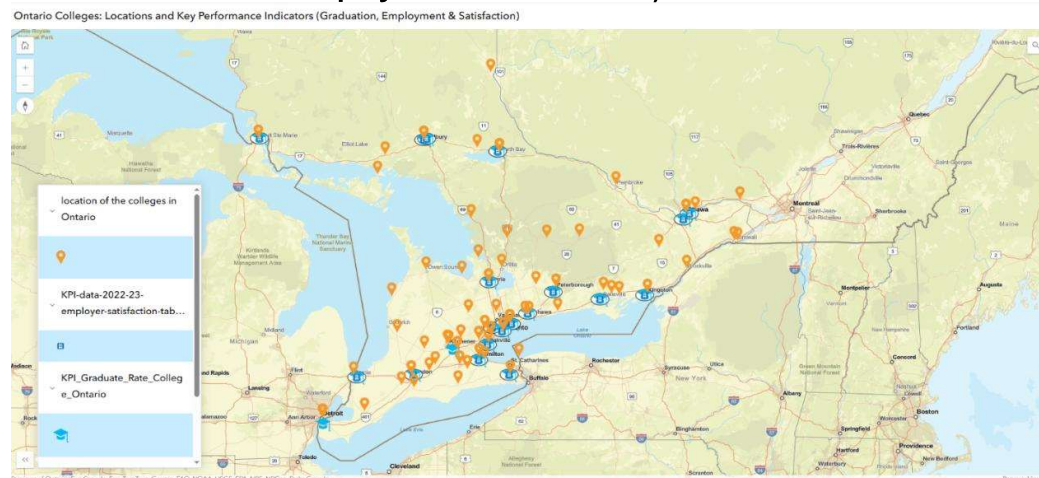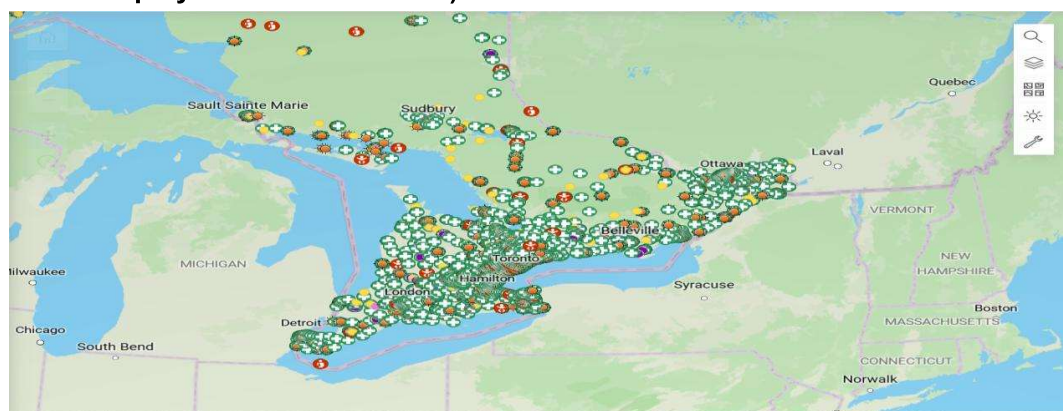

Figure 02: Ontario Colleges: Locations and Key Performance Indicators (Graduation, Employment & Satisfaction) Health care Facilities in Ontario

Building a Robust Talent Pipeline

Creating the right talent pipeline necessitates collaboration among educators, training institutions, and employers. This collaboration should focus on aligning curricula with in-demand skills and developing localized training programs for high-need roles, such as nurses, doctors, and PSWs, particularly considering demographic shifts like the growing baby boomer population. Expanding co-op, internship, apprenticeship, and upskilling programs ensures that students and jobseekers are well-prepared for real opportunities within the local economy.

Attracting and Retaining Businesses

Labour force and location data are powerful assets in business attraction and retention strategies. Highlighting local talent availability in specific sectors, demonstrating local support systems for startups and expansion, and showcasing infrastructure, land availability, and funding programs can attract businesses to an area. Sharing this vital information with local educational institutions can further facilitate new graduates' access to relevant opportunities. For example, Fleming College offers the "Fast start " program, a free initiative outside regular classes that equips students with entrepreneurial tools and skills. I am currently exploring similar entrepreneurship programs at other institutions to evaluate their outcomes.

Benchmarking for Strategic Growth

Comparing your region with others across Ontario or Canada is a valuable exercise for identifying areas of improvement and strategic investment. Key metrics for comparison include:

- Workforce qualifications
- Unemployment and participation rates
- Job posting volume and skill match
- Industry concentration and growth rates

Table 01: College Graduation Rate in Ontaio (%)

College	2020 to 2021 KPI (2019 to 2020 Grads (%)	2022 to 2023 KPI (2021 to 2022 Grads (%)	KPI Increase OR Decline (%)
Algonquin	60.2	64.5	4.3
Boréal	63.7	66.3	2.6
Cambrian	65.9	67.6	1.7
Canadore	66.0	67.0	1.0
Centennial	65.5	66.4	0.9
La Cité	62.1	62.8	0.7
Conestoga	65.0	65.6	0.6
Confederation	65.6	65.8	0.2
Durham	65.7	65.9	0.2
Fanshawe	68.4	67.9	-0.5
George Brown	61.0	60.5	-0.5
Georgian	64.1	63.5	-0.6
Humber	73.7	72.9	-0.8
Lambton	64.7	63.9	-0.8
Loyalist	65.9	65.0	-0.9
Mohawk	65.0	63.9	-1.1
Niagara	67.6	66.4	-1.2
Northern	66.5	65.2	-1.3
St. Clair	73.1	71.3	-1.8
St. Lawrence	65.9	63.9	-2.0
Sault	68.4	66.0	-2.4
Seneca	66.8	63.6	-3.2
Sheridan	64.4	61.2	-3.2
Sir Sandford Fleming	64.9	61.5	-3.4

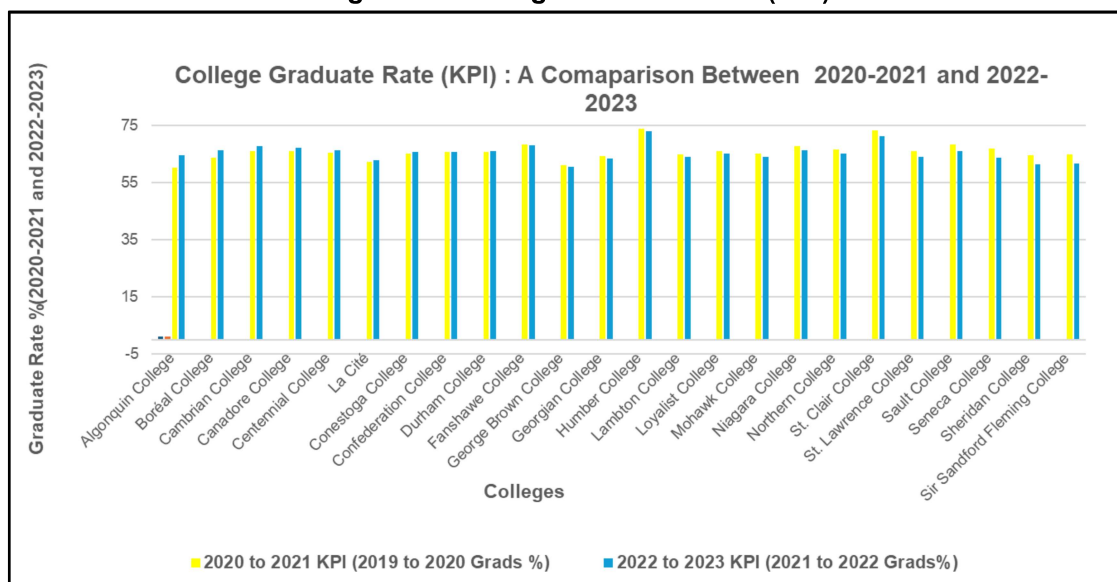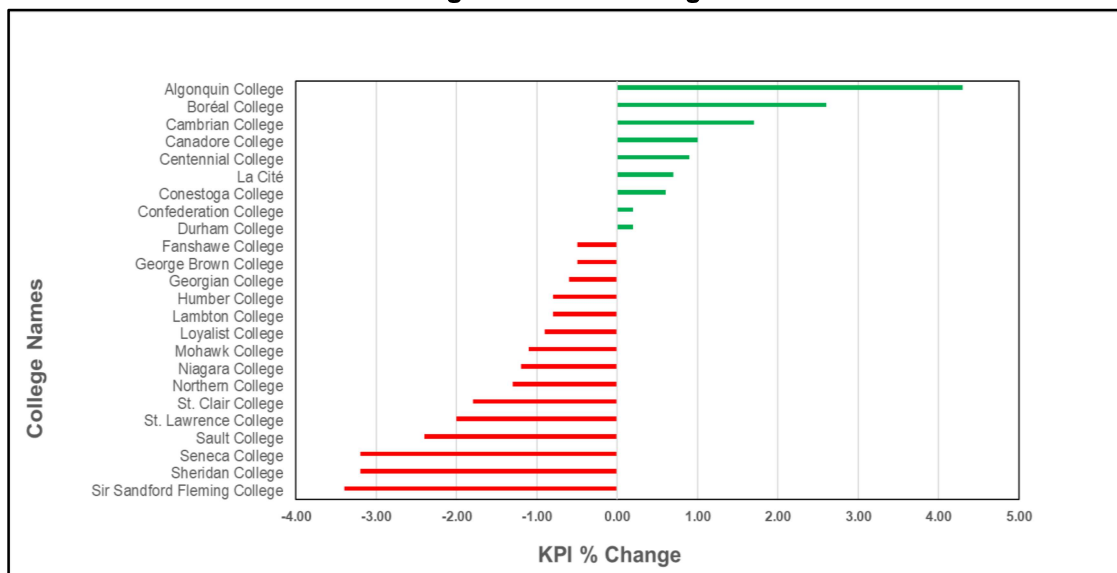**Figure 03: College Graduate Rate (KPI)**

Figure 04: KPI Changes

This confirms that a majority (fourteen out of twenty-four colleges listed in the table, approximately 58.3 percent) indeed experienced a decline, reinforcing the concern about "potential systemic challenges affecting student retention or graduation rates in the post-pandemic period (2021–2022 graduates)." These challenges could stem from several factors such as the transition to online learning, economic pressures on students, or shifts in career pathways.

The analysis shows the College Graduate in Ontario Employment Rate KPI Analysis. The employment rate of Lambton College graduates six months after graduation dropped by 2.9 percent from 2020–2021 to 2022–2023, highlighting a need for better alignment between education and job market demands.

Table 02: College Graduate Employment Rate at 6 Months after Graduation, Ontario (Expressed as a %)

College	2020_2021 KPI	2022_2023 KPI	KPI Increase OR Decline %
Centennial	66.9	80.5	13.6
Durham	76.3	88.6	12.3
George Brown	71.4	83.6	12.2
Mohawk	76.7	86.3	9.6
Confederation	80.5	89.7	9.2
Humber	75.5	83.6	8.1
Algonquin	79.2	86.3	7.1
Conestoga	83.2	90.0	6.8
Fanshawe	83.1	89.7	6.6
Niagara	83.0	89.4	6.4
Georgian	85.8	90.3	4.5
Loyalist	85.3	89.3	4.0
La Cité	81.6	85.1	3.5
Cambrian	87.6	89.1	1.5
Canadore	87.8	88.4	0.6
Boréal	84.6	84.8	0.2
Lambton	82.6	79.7	-2.9

Table 03: Employer Satisfaction Rate (Expressed as a %)

College	2020 to 2021 KPI (2019 to 2020 Grads (%)	2022 to 2023 KPI (2021 to 2022 Grads (%)	KPI Increase OR Decline (%)
Lambton	85.7	NA	N/A
Confederation	62.5	100.0	37.5
Sault	66.7	100.0	33.3
Loyalist	84.6	100.0	15.4
Durham	80.0	95.0	15.0
Mohawk	85.7	100.0	14.3
Sheridan	85.7	94.1	8.4
Fanshawe	87.5	93.8	6.3
Seneca	84.6	88.9	4.3
St. Clair	85.7	88.9	3.2
Conestoga	90.5	92.3	1.8
Province	90.6	91.8	1.2
Boréal	100.0	100.0	0.0
Georgian	100.0	100.0	0.0
Northern	100.0	100.0	0.0
Sir Sandford Fleming	92.9	92.9	0.0
Algonquin	92.3	91.7	-0.6
Humber	100.0	96.6	-3.4
George Brown	93.9	89.3	-4.6
Centennial	88.2	81.3	-6.9
Niagara	100.0	90.0	-10.0
St. Lawrence	100.0	88.9	-11.1
Cambrian	88.9	77.8	-11.1
Canadore	100.0	85.7	-14.3
La Cité	100.0	60.0	-40.0

The employer satisfaction rate for Ontario colleges shows a mix of results. Some colleges, like Confederation and Sault, improved a lot, while others, like La Cité and Cambrian, dropped. A few colleges, such as Boréal and Georgian, kept a perfect 100 percent satisfaction rate. This means some colleges are doing better at preparing students for jobs, but others need to improve how they train students for the workplace. To support Ontarians in navigating the evolving economy and preparing for successful careers, the provincial government has

introduced "My Career Journey". This new interactive online tool, launched on June 11, 2025, assists students and job seekers in exploring educational paths and training opportunities that lead to high-demand, well-paying jobs. The tool aims to strengthen Ontario's workforce by providing essential career planning resources, empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their future and pursue fulfilling employment.

Conclusion

As a result, the labour market information is vital for building strong and stable local economies in Ontario. By making sure education matches job needs, fixing problems like transportation, and using data to attract businesses, communities can create a skilled workforce ready for the future.

Reference

1. Government of Ontario, Ontario Data Catalogue (2025) https://data.ontario.ca/
2. ArcGIS application
3. Through personal experiences from students