



# POLICY UPDATE

News and views from the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce May 29, 1998

## The Skills Gap - Where is it?

The help wanted index routinely shows a large number of employers looking for employees, and the unemployment figures indicate a large pool of employees are looking for employment. Still, people remain out of work and positions remain vacant - Why?

In the 1998 Knowledge Economy Report Card recently released by NovaKnowledge 55% of the respondents indicated that there were not enough people in Halifax with the skills that they required.

This is not news. Over the past several years there have been growing references to a "skills gap" as the reason why we cannot bring unemployment figures down in any truly substantial way.

But what is this skills gap? It is argued that the "new economy" and the old education system do not match up and that we need to teach modern skills and promote more innovative personal development in order to meet the demands of a global economy.

Yet it is also said that the modern approaches to teaching do not provide the basic skill sets like literacy, numeracy, problem solving and communication, that are fundamental to the development of good employees - no matter what industry they choose to join.

Please consider and respond to the questions listed below. Your answers will help to clarify the Chamber's understanding of the skills gap and what is needed to close it.

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***Be the Voice of Business -- Fax Back to the Chamber at 468-7333 by Friday, June 19.***

1) What industry are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

2) Do you believe that there is a skills gap in your industry?

Yes No

3) Do you believe there is a skills gap in other industries?

Yes No

If yes, which ones?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) Do you have vacancies that you are having difficulty filling or cannot fill?

Yes No

If yes, what are they ?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5) Are there basic skills that you, as an employer, are looking for and cannot find or that are not readily available?

Yes No

If yes, what are they?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6) The Chamber would appreciate any other comments you might have on the skills gap.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***Your responses are critical as the Chamber works to meet the needs of today's employers.***