



CAREERS on the WATER

Final Report

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The Centre For
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Introduction

Careers on the Water and Beyond is a project of The Centre for Employment and Learning, part of the Avon Maitland District School Board, funded through a partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The goal of this project, begun in September 2013, is to build awareness of career opportunities in Ontario's Great Lakes marine industry and enable and encourage youth participation in the industry by making career paths easier to follow. The project began with organizing a Career Fair and Trade Show in November 2013 and continued afterwards with ongoing research into the current state of the labour market and promoting career opportunities. While there are many aspects and career opportunities within the Great Lakes marine industry, the project focuses primarily on shipboard positions with Canadian shipping companies, which represents almost half of the direct employment in the Ontario marine sector.

Background

Huron County is a large, relatively sparsely populated area on the east coast of Lake Huron in Southwestern Ontario. Historically, economic activity has been focused on agriculture and manufacturing. Both of these areas have seen decreases in labour requirements due to technological change. The population of Huron County, 59,100 in 2011, has been in decline since the 1990s. In particular, there is a continuing trend of outmigration of youth and educated professionals. The median age of Huron County is significantly higher than that of Ontario, reflecting the reality that many youth leave the area to pursue education and career opportunities and never return.

The Great Lakes marine industry surrounds Southwestern Ontario and has far reaching effects on the local economy, as well as connecting it to the world economy. Despite the size and impact of the sector, it is often overlooked and taken for granted. According to the Chamber of Marine Commerce, the total economic contribution in Ontario of the Great Lakes marine industry was \$9.6 billion in 2010, representing a total of 64,000 direct and related jobs. The actual number of people in Ontario directly employed on ships is about 800.

Huron County's proximity to Lake Huron and strong marine history make it an ideal candidate for being a centre for Great Lakes marine employment. Career opportunities in the shipping industry provide above average wages and benefits while allowing Huron County youth to keep their home in the community as they pursue an exciting career path that allows them to travel.

Just as the median age of Huron County is increasing, so is that of the workforce in the Great Lakes marine industry. The average age is approaching 60 years old, meaning many mariners will retire in the near future creating a huge demand for new workers. This means the existing recruitment practices within the industry may be unable to keep up with the need for skilled mariners.

Previous Research

The most significant previous research into the topic of the Canadian Great Lakes marine industry was a study undertaken at Niagara College in 2000. *Making Waves: A Profile of Career Opportunities in Niagara's Marine Sector* was funded by the Canadian Shipowners

Association, Human Resources Development Canada and Port Weller Dry Docks. This study found a significant looming shortage in the marine industry, especially for marine engineers, caused by a rapidly aging workforce. The report recommended new directions for recruitment and training, including more flexibility in training options and encouraging more women to become involved in the workforce.

A similar study from 2007, *In The Same Boat: A Collaboratively Developed Marine Careers Promotion Strategy for Eastern Canada*, looked at the marine industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, and came to similar conclusions. It recommended increased promotion of career opportunities in the marine sector and the establishment of a National Marine Sector Council.

The *Ontario Marine Transportation Study*, conducted by MariNova consulting for the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Ontario Marine Transportation Forum in 2009, looked broadly at the current state of the industry, including the labour market. It found a total of 800 people in Ontario directly employed in the marine sector, mostly as Deck Officers, Deck Crew and Engineering Officers. The study outlined the difficulties facing the industry with an aging workforce and inadequate recruitment practices, including the fact that only one of the accredited training institutions in Canada is in Ontario: Georgian College. It found that short-term policies to alleviate staffing shortages led to employee burnout and that more needs to be done to recruit and train new mariners.

Job Fair & Trade Show

The first phase of Careers on the Water was to organize a Job Fair & Trade Show in November 2013. The event coincided with efforts to mark the 100th anniversary of the Great Lakes Storm of 1913. Although there was some irony in promoting career opportunities in the marine industry while at the same time remembering an event where many mariners lost their lives, there was a focus on the new technologies and policies in place that would prevent a similar weather-related disaster from occurring today.

The Careers on the Water Job Fair & Trade Show was a great success. Held over two days and hosted at two venues in Goderich, it attracted over 1,200 visitors, well above our goal of 700. This included over 400 students attending on organized field trips. We also exceeded our goal of 50 employers/vendors/educators including 10+ job ready employers with 51 and 11, respectively. Feedback from visitors and exhibitors was very positive. Visitor surveys showed that both students and job seekers were satisfied with the diversity of exhibitors and speakers. In almost all cases, visitors left with a much more positive perception of the type and availability of career opportunities in the marine industry.

One of the highlights of the event was the significant participation of Algoma Central Corporation and Canada Steamship Lines, the two largest Canadian shipping companies on the Great Lakes. Both companies brought significant staff with them and had large, elaborate displays and promotional materials. Georgian College brought their marine simulator, which proved to be a very popular booth. Many of the Georgian College students that staffed the booth were themselves recruited by Algoma and CSL.

The event was a success thanks to the combined efforts of staff from throughout the Centres for Employment and Learning, the GLS1913 organizing committee and a group of volunteers. Many of the exhibitors expressed keen interest in returning for future events and were disappointed to find out it was a one-time event. We also received ongoing feedback from a number of students and job seekers who attending the event saying it helped them decide on a career path and gave them the information and contacts necessary to pursue it.

Relationship with GLS1913 Committee

Careers on the Water enjoyed a very positive ongoing relationship with the Great Lakes Storm of 1913 Remembrance Committee. The Job Fair was planned in conjunction with a series of other events marking the 100th anniversary of the storm. Although organizing a job fair to coincide with other marine-themed heritage events did present some logistical challenges, Careers on the Water benefited greatly from the increased exposure and many of the marine industry contacts of the GLS1913 committee members.

The GLS1913 was very successful and received a lot of recognition for their work. The committee was honoured with the Huron Cultural Award for Heritage Organization, the Dorothy Duncan Award from the Ontario Historical Society and the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Community Planning. The Governor General's Award was a special honour, with committee members traveling to Ottawa for a reception with His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston.

Promotional Activities

One of the main goals of Careers on the Water and Beyond is to raise awareness of career opportunities in the marine industry by promoting available jobs and the industry in general. We produced a number of videos to that effect, built a website and make use of social media tools and we also participated in a public event with the Chamber of Marine Commerce.

Algoma Equinox and Other Videos

The first video we produced was of the Job Fair & Trade Show. It showcased the variety of exhibitors and speakers at the event, as well as capturing the excitement and energy of the event. The response to the video on social media was very positive. Within a week of posting the video on YouTube and promoting it through social media, we were approached by a local university student who had not attended the event but was very interested in a marine career. Since then, the student has changed programs and is now in the marine program at Georgian College.

The second and most exciting video produced by Careers on the Water and Beyond was a tour of the brand new Algoma Equinox lake freighter. Although organizing the logistics for a shoot aboard a working ship with an ever changing schedule were difficult , Algoma were very accommodating and we were able to arrange a time in June 2014 to board the ship in Hamilton with a videographer and travel to St. Catherines. This gave us ample time to tour the ship and interview Captain Seann O'Donoghue (who also starred in the Job Fair video) and crew about their career paths and experiences working in the Great Lakes marine industry.

The resulting video is a fantastic look into what it is like to work and live about a modern Canadian freighter. It highlighted the new shipboard technology and showcased the diversity in the crew: young and old, male and female, and people from different regions of Canada. It proved immensely popular on YouTube and garnered lots of positive feedback. Algoma was very happy with the results and has used the video in their own recruiting efforts.

Another video produced by Careers on the Water is of the Toronto Brigantine, a youth organization that sails tall ships on the Great Lakes. Many of the crew working on modern lake freighters got their start spending summers with Toronto Brigantine. The video shows what it is like to spend a summer on a tall ship, sailing from Bayfield to Goderich, and how the adventure can lead to an exciting career.

Website and Social Media

The primary outreach and promotion tool of Careers on the Water and Beyond is a website: www.careersonthewater.ca. Developed with the Avon Maitland District School Board's Communications Department, the site provides visitors with detailed information on how to pursue a career in the Great Lakes Marine industry. It includes descriptions of the type of positions available, the educational and training requirements, links to educational institutions, labour unions and trade organizations, a glossary of marine terminology, and a video gallery. The goal of the site is to provide an interested job seeker or student with no background in the marine industry the information they need to pursue a career. This information is often difficult to find and the regulatory requirements can be confusing for someone new to the industry.

Careers on the Water and Beyond has also been active on Twitter and YouTube, sharing information and news related to marine careers and the Great Lakes marine industry in general. We have responded to inquiries for information on both Twitter and YouTube, and have directed people to the relevant information on available positions, educational opportunities and appropriate employers.

Making Waves with the Chamber of Marine Commerce

In October 2014, we were involved in organizing *Making Waves*, an event put on by the Chamber of Marine Commerce and the Huron Chamber of Commerce. Despite the identical name, there was no connection between this event and the 2000 research study from Niagara College. During the planning of the event, the Huron Chamber of Commerce experienced significant staffing turnover and could not provide the organizational efforts required to put on the event. Luckily, Careers on the Water and Beyond was able to step in to provide logistical support and sponsor the event.

Making Waves was a Great Lakes marine industry-focused luncheon featuring presentations by Stephen Brooks, president of the Chamber of Marine Commerce and Rowland Howe, president of the Goderich Port Management Corporation. Both presentations focused on the economic impact of the industry in Huron County and across Ontario, and the opportunities ahead with the planned expansion of the Goderich Port.

This event provided Careers on the Water and Beyond with the opportunity to participate in a community event and promote the project and the career opportunities to members of the local business community and government officials. The event was well

attended by local business owners and community members, as well as local and provincial politicians. The exposure we received at the event led directly to the project being featured in a recent *Marine Delivers* magazine article on new recruitment initiatives in the marine industry.

Labour Market Research

A primary goal of Careers on the Water and Beyond was to research the current state of the labour market in the Great Lakes marine industry, building on the previous research. To that end, we developed a survey very similar to the one used in the 2000 *Making Waves* research study. The goal was to have a directly comparable update to show how the industry changed over the previous 14 years. Unfortunately, we did not receive any responses to the survey. All attempts to get shipping companies to participate in the survey were unsuccessful. Therefore, all of the information in this section of the report is anecdotal evidence from informal discussions with people in the industry.

Regulations and Requirements

The Great Lakes marine industry is primarily regulated at the federal level by Transport Canada. This regulation applies to Canadian ships that carry cargo between Canadian ports and between Canadian and American ports. Foreign ships are not allowed to carry cargo between Canadian ports. All the foreign ships operating on the Great Lakes carry cargo between Canadian and international ports and have international crews.

Canadian ships must have Canadian crews. These crews are divided into officers and crew. In general, officers, both engineering and navigation, must have attended an accredited

marine education program. Crew, both deck and engine, require less training and get most of it through on the job training. Galley crew require a diploma in cooking. All shipboard employees must pass a Transport Canada marine medical exam.

Education and Training

There are seven Transport Canada accredited marine educational programs for maritime officers in Canada: Camosun College and BCIT in British Columbia, Georgian College in Ontario, the Maritime Institute of Quebec, Holland College in Prince Edward Island, the Nautical Institute in Nova Scotia and the Marine Institute in Newfoundland and Labrador. Graduates from any one of these programs may become certified to work aboard ships on the Great Lakes.

The majority of students from Ontario attend the Georgian College Great Lakes International Marine Training and Research Centre in Owen Sound. Many officers from the shipping companies are involved with the education program, including Captain Seann O'Donoghue of Algoma Central. As we learned at the Job Fair, graduates from these programs, especially those in the engineering stream, typically have no trouble finding work in their field.

Unionization

Most crew positions on Canadian Great Lakes ships are unionized, either with the Seafarers International Union of Canada or Unifor Local 4401. These unions control hiring for low-skilled, entry level positions on the majority of ships such as deck hands. Some companies,

including Lower Lakes Towing, are not unionized and job seekers looking for entry level positions apply directly to the company. Officers are represented by the Canadian Merchant Service Guild.

Workforce Demographics

While we did not get any current data on the topic, all previous data and anecdotal information from shipping companies, unions and current employees confirm that the average age in the industry is close almost 60 years old and continues to increase. This means there will soon be a significant wave of retirements.

The workforce is also mostly men. Historically, women were not encouraged to work on ships. Modern ships do not have any positions that cannot be staffed by women. One of the speakers at the Job Fair was Lillian Kluka, the first female captain on the Great Lakes. Although she achieved a lot of success in her career as a captain and later marine pilot, she did have to overcome considerable discrimination. Of the eighteen mariners aboard the Algoma Equinox, three were women, including the Chief Mate. More women are now entering the marine workforce but still in numbers lower than men.

Labour Mobility

Mariners, both officers and crew, are allowed to work anywhere in Canada. Anecdotal evidence suggests there is a great deal of labour mobility between the Great Lakes, the Atlantic Provinces and arctic shipping regions. This is in part due to geography, since all these regions are connected. The shipping industry in British Columbia, which directly employs the most

people, tends to be more isolated, with less labour movement between the west and east coasts.

Though shipping tends to be a very globalized industry, Transport Canada requirements limit opportunities for non-Canadian mariners in the Great Lakes marine industry. All employees on Canadian ships must be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants. There is also very little labour mobility between the Canadian and American Great Lakes shipping industries, due to regulations in both countries. Some of the mariners we interviewed aboard the Algoma Equinox did spend time abroad on foreign ships. While they enjoyed the excitement of visiting foreign ports, they generally preferred the working conditions and lifestyle of Canadian ships.

Foreign Workers

Temporary Foreign Workers have not been used to crew Canadian ships on the Great Lakes, nor are there any immediate plans to change this. When speaking to representatives of the unions, we did hear that there is the looming threat of regulations being relaxed to allow Temporary Foreign workers to fill crew shortages on Canadian ships.

Though there is no proof of this happening in the near future, the union representatives did cite as an example the recent changes in regulation to allow foreign-built ships to be imported into Canada without tariffs. Previously, all Canadian ships had to be built in Canada or be subjected to punitive import tariffs. Since the change in regulation, all the new ships are being built in China and the local shipbuilding industry has collapsed.

Accompanying Lifestyle

The lifestyle that comes with working aboard a Great Lakes freighter is an attraction to some people and a deterrent to others. The work is characterized by long periods of time away from home, followed by long breaks. Many mariners appreciate the long, uninterrupted breaks and say they are better than only having evenings and weekends free. Others find being away from home for weeks or months at a time to be difficult.

Modern communications technology has made it easier to stay in touch with family back home while aboard ship. Most modern freighters have satellite internet connections and much of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway is in range of regular cellular networks. According to some of the mariners we spoke to, however, these changes have resulted in decreased social activity aboard ship as many people spend their free time communicating with family back home instead of engaging in social activities with the rest of the crew aboard ship.

Lessons Learned

While this project was mostly successful, we did encounter some difficulties that could be avoided if undertaking a similar project again. Firstly, holding the Job Fair at two different locations presented many complications related to transportation and deciding where to place different exhibitors. Exhibitors also provided feedback that they were unable to visit or network with people at the other venue. The two venues were needed because the number of exhibitors exceeded the capacity of the Legion, which was the home for the GLS1913 committee's events. For future events, finding a single venue to hold the entire event would be better.

The other main difficulty encountered was in getting survey responses. In hindsight, it would have been better to deliver the survey to employers when they were in town for the Job Fair. Even if completed the detailed information requested in the survey was not possible in person, at least we would have had time to discuss the survey and encourage them to complete it on their own. We were unable to have the survey ready in time for the Job Fair due to the limited amount of time between the start of the project in September and November.

Outlook and Conclusions

Thanks to the efficiency of marine transport, the Great Lakes marine industry will remain an integral part of the Ontario economy for the foreseeable future. It is by far the most cost effective and environmentally sustainable mode of transport for large cargos. Recent investments in new ships show the industry is in a growth period as demand for these cargos increases. While newer ships tend to operate with slightly fewer crew than the older ships they replace, there is still a requirement for a large number of mariners aboard each ship. This means there will be a need for skilled mariners on the Great Lakes for the foreseeable future.

The current demographics of the workforce mean a significant number of young people will be needed in the coming years to replace retirees. Current recruitment practices, often through family members of existing mariners, will not be sufficient to meet the demand. Resources like www.careersonthewater.ca will be valuable in making Great Lakes marine industry careers more accessible to people without a previous connection to the industry.

The website will remain online as a source of information for students and job seekers interested in a career in the marine industry. We partnered with the Avon Maitland District School Board's communications department to maintain the hosting and domain registration for the foreseeable future. The information on job descriptions, certification requirements and educational institutions should remain relevant and useful for the next few years.

Acknowledgements

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