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WORKFORCE RESEARCH

2026

Technician Shortage Report

Troubleshooting the Tech Shortage in Canada

Unfilled technician jobs cost equipment dealers hundreds of millions each year in lost business and hindered growth. A look at what's behind the shortage, how industry is responding, and consensus around the path forward.

CA$803M
LOST DEALER REVENUE PER YEAR

1,263
TECHNICIANS NEEDED ANNUALLY (DEALERS)

78%
DEALERS UNABLE TO MEET CUSTOMER DEMAND

80%
DEALERS RATE HIRING DIFFICULTY 4+ / 5

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INSIDE

Table of Contents

01 Executive Summary 03

02 Sizing the Ag and Construction Technician Workforce 04

03 The Economic Impact is Significant 05

04 Why the Pipeline is Broken 06

05 Dealers Struggle to Recruit – and Retain 09

06 Solutions Stakeholders Agree On 12

07 Promoting Heavy Duty Tech Careers 14

08 Survey, Economic Impact and Growth Projection Methodologies 15

SUMMARY

Executive Summary

Canadian ag and construction dealers face a shortage of approximately 1,263 techs per year, costing them an estimated CA$803 million per year in lost shop and parts sales.

That's the finding of a months-long research project conducted by Randall Reilly on behalf of the Canada Equipment Dealers Foundation (CEDF) and the Associated Equipment Distributors Foundation (AEDF). As part of the project, a survey in February-March over members of the North American Equipment Dealers Association and Associated Equipment Distributors found 80% face a high degree of difficulty in hiring technicians and 78% are unable to meet customer demand due to the shortage.

Making the situation even more challenging for dealers, heavy equipment technician skills are readily transferable between business types and even industries. Because ag and construction dealers compete with truck dealers, independent repair shops, rental and leasing companies – and even their own customers – for technicians, it's important to consider the total shortage of technicians across all industries and business types. Another approximately 2,000 techs per year will be needed for non-dealer work in ag and construction and estimates of techs needed in the automotive, truck and bus space are just over 5,000 per year.

> This is not just a pipeline and recruitment problem. Dealers also struggle to retain technicians.

But this is not just a pipeline and recruitment problem. Dealers also struggle to retain technicians, with turnover particularly high at the critical 2-to 5-year employment mark when techs are reaching peak performance and bringing in the most revenue. This despite 74% of dealers saying they raised pay more than 10% over the past five years.

The report also compares Canadian dealers' experiences of the technician shortage with those of their counterparts in the U.S. around key areas: root causes, recruitment and retention and policy solutions.

The acute shortage of heavy equipment technicians didn't happen overnight and it won't be solved quickly. Fortunately, there is consensus among surveyed dealers around the problem's causes – social stigma around trades work and an educational system not designed for today's workforce – and its solutions – a focus on practical, work-based training and increased subsidies for employers who train employees.

SIZING THE SHORTAGE

Sizing the Ag and Construction Technician Workforce

In 2023, 70,600 people worked as heavy duty equipment mechanics (ag and construction) in Canada, according to the Government of Canada's Job Bank. Of those, 15,532 (22%) worked in Wholesale Trade, which is how the government describes equipment dealers.

70,600
HEAVY DUTY EQUIPMENT MECHANICS IN CANADA (AG & CONSTRUCTION), 2023

15,532
WORK IN WHOLESALE TRADE — EQUIPMENT DEALERS (22%)

140,400
AUTOMOTIVE, TRUCK & BUS MECHANICS AND MECHANICAL REPAIRERS

Another approximately 140,400 technicians work as automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics and mechanical repairers. (The Canadian Occupational Projection System – COPS – does not break out heavy equipment mechanics working in trucking, for truck dealers or truck repair garages within this category.)

Because technician skills are readily transferable to other industries and between various business types within industries, technicians working as heavy duty mechanics or truck and bus mechanics can move between these roles. For example, while the exact skill requirements might vary somewhat, a heavy duty technician employed by an ag equipment dealer could easily move to an independent repair garage serving area farmers or to a construction equipment or truck dealer, trucking fleet or rental business. Technicians are aware of their marketability and are open to making such career changes.

How Big is the Shortage?

Demand for entry-level technicians is driven by two factors: job creation (expansion demand) and replacement demand (retirements, in-service deaths and emigration). Over the next decade, COPS estimates that these two factors combined will result in 26,500 heavy equipment technician job openings across all industries and occupations, or about 2,650 per year or 3.8% of the 2023 employment level (70,600 workers). (Numbers are not exact due to rounding by COPS). Sixty-two percent of those will be due to replacement, with the remaining 38% due to expansion.

Looking at just the 22% (15,532) of heavy duty mechanics who work for ag and construction dealers, and layering on the more aggressive 3-year growth projections by dealers in the survey, ag and construction dealers alone will need to replace about 1,263 technicians each year (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Additional technicians needed annually over the next 3 years – Dealer only subset

Dealer Techs (current)	Annual replacement 2.33%	Annual growth 5.8% – Survey projections*	Total needed per year
15,532	362	901	1,263

Source: Canadian Occupational Projection System, Heavy-duty equipment mechanics (72401) 2024–2033 projected flow of job openings. *Growth projections are taken from the technician shortage survey in answer to the question: To meet your businesses' growth goals and the needs of your customers over the next 3 years, by what percentage will your company need to increase the number of technicians you employ? The weighted average of 17.4% over three years annualizes to 5.8% per year.

THE IMPACT

The Economic Impact is Significant

When a technician seat goes unfilled, the consequences ripple through every part of the business — and into the broader economy.

Technicians average around 1,800 billable hours per year. Given an hourly rate of CA$190 (average in-shop and on-road hourly rates), that's CA$342,000 in lost gross revenue per year for each unfilled technician role. But experts say even that number doesn't go far enough.

For every dollar of labour dealers bill customers, they sell CA$0.86 in parts, according to Shawn McCready, service division manager, Horizon Ag & Turf, Edmonton, Alberta. Figuring in lost parts sales of CA$294,120 per year brings the total annual loss per unfilled technician role to CA$636,120. Projected over the 1,263 annual dealer tech shortage, that adds up to CA$803 million in lost service and parts revenue to the ag and construction dealer communities each year (Chart 2).

Chart 2. Dealer Industrywide Revenue Loss for Each Unfilled Technician Position

Avg billable hours	Avg hourly rate	Hrs revenue / tech / yr	Parts revenue / tech / yr (parts @ $0.86/hr billed)	Total revenue / tech / yr	Techs needed / yr	Total lost revenue / yr
1,800	CA$190	CA$342,000	CA$294,120	CA$636,120	1,263	CA$803million

Source: Canadian Occupational Projection System, Heavy-duty equipment mechanics (72401) 2024–2033 projected flow of job openings. Billable hours, hourly rates and parts revenue per billable hour are estimates based on industry averages.

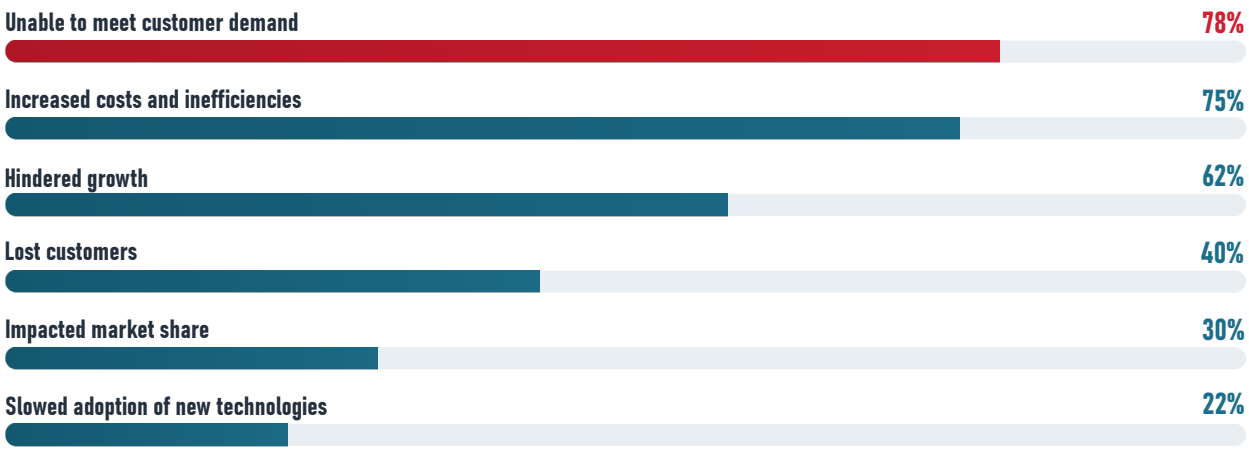
Dealers are feeling the business impact of the shortage in numerous ways (Chart 3), with 78% of those responding to the survey saying they are unable to meet customer demand.

"Not everybody understands the impact through the whole business," says Brian Osterndorff, CEO of Roberts Equipment, an ag and construction equipment dealer with locations across Ontario. "It affects equipment sales, too," he says. For now, "we can manage our customers, but it's getting more challenging to do that."

THE IMPACT

Because the service department is the most profitable area of the dealership, dealers put a higher priority on service to maintain those high profit levels, says Wes Becker, dealer operations excellence with Bobcat. "That puts more pressure on needing good techs." Inability to hire enough technicians also limits business growth, says Horizon's McCready. "I could easily hire 20 techs across all locations," he says. "We could grow the business a lot faster, and technicians are the reason we're not."

Chart 3. What Dealers Report as Business Effects of the Shortage



The impact of the technician shortage on dealers' businesses is significant, with repercussions throughout the business. Source: 2026 dealer surveys. Multiple responses allowed.

THE PIPELINE

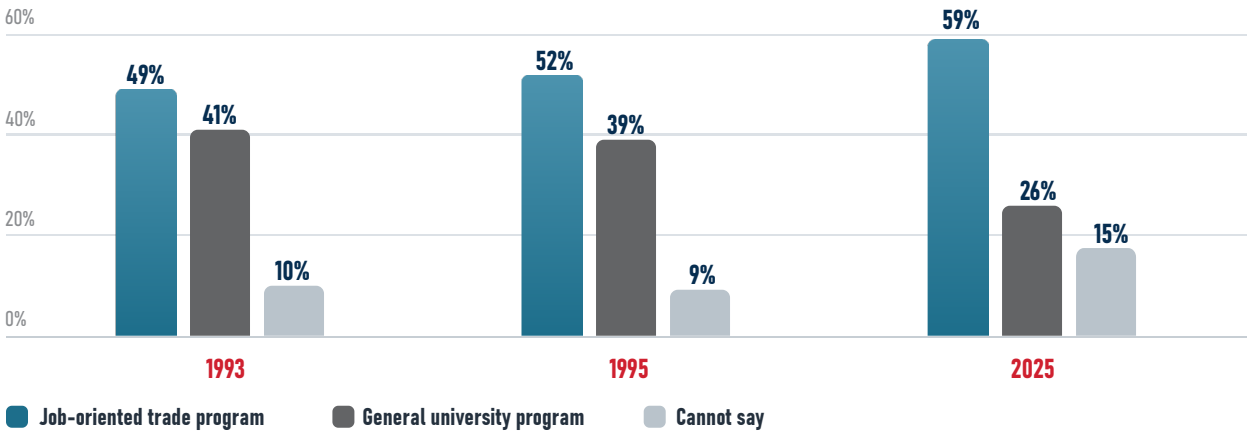
Why the Pipeline is Broken

While Canada leads the G7 as the most educated workforce because of its large share of college and university graduates, it faces a shortage of workers in skilled trades. Data from Statistics Canada shows that in recent years the number of working-age (25 to 64 years) apprenticeship certificate holders has stagnated or fallen in critical fields, including mechanic and repair occupations (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

Specifically, the study found a mismatch between the declining number of tradespeople in the 15 to 34 and 45 to 54 age groups and the rate at which older workers in the 55+ age groups are retiring.

And yet a majority of Canadians think students should pursue a career in the trades. A study (Chart 4) by the Environic Institute of Survey Management asked Canadians aged 18 to 60+ whether they would encourage a child to enroll in a job-oriented trade school or apprenticeship program, or a general university program. Three in five (59%) said they would encourage the child to opt for a job-oriented trade school, twice as many as the proportion that would recommend a general university program (26%).

Chart 4. A growing proportion of Canadians would recommend trades training over a university program



Source for 1993 & 1995: Environics Focus Canada. Question: If a child asked you to help them choose between a job-oriented trade school or apprenticeship program and a general university program, which course would you encourage them to take (assuming the student had the ability to do both)?

Unfortunately, high-schoolers do not share their enthusiasm. Less than 10% of 15-year-old students plan on pursuing a job in the trades, according to a report from the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. Close to 40 percent of students were undecided, with 26 percent reporting that, although they were not planning on pursuing a job in the trades, they would nevertheless consider it.

THE PIPELINE

Who's to blame for young peoples' lack of interest in the trades? Sixty-five percent of dealers responding to the survey point to parents and schools that push 4-year university degrees over trades training (Chart 5).

> *"Consolidation of farms is generating fewer kids who are used to working on manual labor/with their hands. Thus, the applicant pool shrinks."*
>
> SURVEY RESPONDENT · ON WHY DEALERS STRUGGLE TO FIND TECHNICIANS

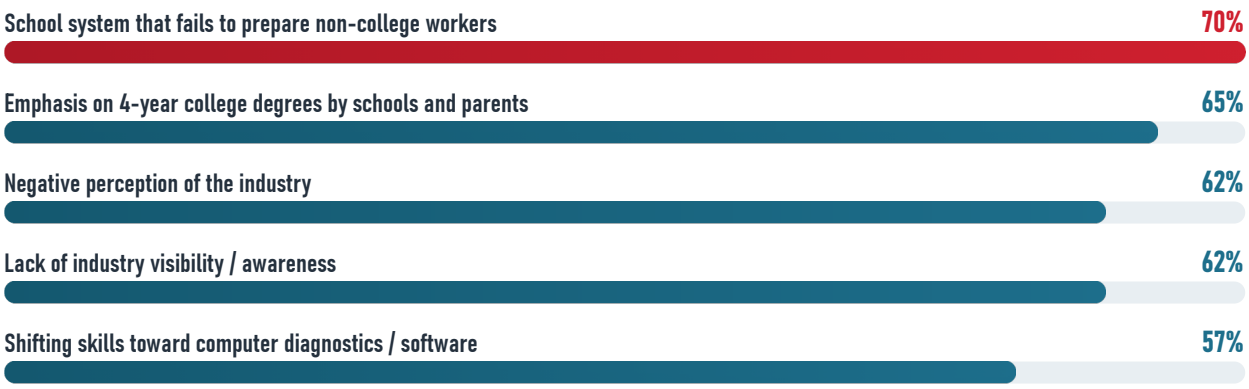
"As an industry, we've done a very bad job of promoting ourselves," says Darren Marcenko, regional service manager with E. Bourassa & Sons in Saskatchewan. "No one even thinks about working at a tractor dealership. It's our fault as much as anyone's."

In an effort to change that, 78% of dealers responding to the survey said they work within their communities to promote their industry and the technician career and 57% have forged partnerships with schools (Chart 10).

But getting students to consider careers in the trades is just a start. The next step is for them to choose to become heavy duty technicians over other trades, and then further to specialize in ag and construction versus trucking or automotive. That's a big hurdle, surveyed dealers say (Chart 5), because there is a lack of visibility of ag and construction industries (62%), combined with negative perceptions of those industries (62%).

Schools in particular can be a roadblock, says Osterndorff with Roberts Equipment. "The only problem we have is schools letting us in there to talk about our industry," he says. For instance, he believes students would be more interested if they knew how tech-intensive the ag industry is. "Our advancements in technology are far more than the automotive industry. We've had self-driving before cars had it. That word is not getting out."

Chart 5. What Dealers Say are the Root Causes of the Technician Shortage



Dealers blame parents and schools that push students to pursue 4-year college degrees and that fail to prepare them for careers other than college for the shortage of vocational workers, including heavy duty technicians. Source: 2026 dealer survey. Multiple responses allowed.

THE PIPELINE

Efforts to promote technician careers should be done in concert with other industries that also need technical talent, suggests Grif Reome, director of technical workforce development for Komatsu. Recognizing that candidates who are likely to pursue tech careers could work in mining, HVAC, electrical or other trades, "it should be collaborate now, compete later," he says. All industries should work together to identify kids with aptitude and bring them into skilled trades careers," he says.

> *"Schools need to show students there is a future in skilled trades."*
>
> SURVEY RESPONDENT · ON THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE TECHNICIAN SHORTAGE

But the problem goes deeper, dealers say. Seventy percent of respondents to the survey (Chart 5) say the school system fails to prepare students for non-university careers. And only half said they believe local educational institutions understand their workforce needs and align their curriculum and train students to meet those needs. When asked to rate their satisfaction with how those institutions train future technicians, technical schools earned a rating of 3.7 out of 5. High schools received an average grade of only 2.4 out of 5.

Even with training, recent technician graduates often lack the basic skills needed to succeed in the workforce, dealers say. Entry level techs struggle with the soft and hard skills and sometimes the work ethic to meet workforce demands (Chart 6).

Chart 6. How Dealers Rate Entry-Level Techs on Basic Skills

Deficiency	Average rating	% at 4+	Observation
Soft skills	**3.75**	**60%**	Dealers said that lack of soft skills is a common problem.
Hard / technical skills	**4.12**	**80%**	Hard-skills deficits even more common than soft-skill deficits.
Work ethic	**3.55**	**62%**	Not as concerning as the skills deficits, but still a problem.

Many entry-level technicians lack the hard and soft skills – not to mention the work ethic – to build a successful career. Source: 2026 dealer survey. Respondents rated skills deficiencies of entry level techs on a 1–5 scale (1 = rarely a problem, 5 = very often a problem). Soft skills: communication, problem-solving, team work, time management. Hard skills: technical abilities such as hydraulics, electronics and software.

> *"Work ethic is difficult to find. They want to make a lot of money right away. Oftentimes if growth isn't quick, they get poached."*
>
> SURVEY RESPONDENT · ON WHAT ENTRY LEVEL TECHS LACK

THE PIPELINE

CANADA VS U.S. **How Canada and U.S. Compare – Root Causes**

Root Cause	U.S.	Canada	Differences
School system fails non-university prep	**81%**	**67%**	Both high, but U.S. dealers cite this more acutely — Canadian school system perceived slightly better
4-year university emphasis	**75%**	**62%**	Same cultural pattern in both countries — college-first messaging is universal
Industry visibility	**64%**	**62%**	Similar — industry largely invisible to students in both markets
Negative perception of the industry	**59%**	**60%**	Similar sentiment in both countries about how industry is perceived

Source: 2026 dealer surveys.

Canadian and U.S. dealers surveyed cited the same top 3-4 factors as the root causes of the technician shortage, although Canadian dealers were less intense in their feelings around school system failures and 4-year university emphasis. Canadian dealers are also more likely (50% versus 38%) than their U.S. counterparts to say their local educational institutions understand their workforce needs and align their curriculum accordingly. Canadian dealers are also slightly less likely than their U.S. counterparts to blame lack of visibility of the industry for the shortage and slightly more likely to cite negative industry perception.

RECRUIT & RETAIN

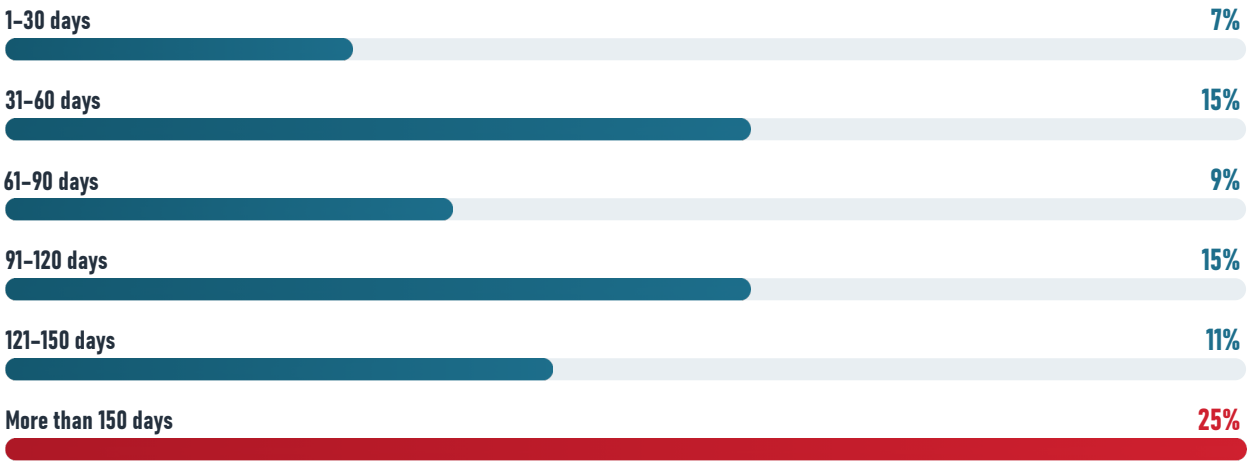
Dealers Struggle to Recruit – and Retain

Dealers responding to the survey agree that hiring technicians is a struggle. On a scale of 1-5, dealers rated their difficulty finding technicians at 4.15, with 80% rating it 4 or higher and zero saying it is not difficult.

Dealers' experiences with hiring technicians tracks closely with that of their competitors at independent repair garages. In Fullbay's annual State of Heavy-Duty Repair, which included some Canadian businesses, 43% of respondents said the technician shortage/hiring qualified staff was their top concern tied with increasing operating expenses (rent, utilities, insurance, etc.). When asked about difficulty hiring, 46% of respondents said it was about the same as in 2024, but 40% said hiring was somewhat or much more difficult.

A look at the job opening metrics reported by dealers underscores their hiring challenges. While most Canadian businesses report that jobs remain open on average between 30 and 45 days, only 15% of survey respondents fell within the job open range of 31-60 days. Fifty-one percent of jobs at dealerships are open more than three months, with 25% open more than 150 days (Chart 7).

Chart 7. How Long Technician Jobs Stay Open



More than half of equipment dealers report jobs remain open 90 days or more. Jobs remain open at most Canadian businesses between 30 and 45 days. Source: 2026 dealer survey.

The best approach for dealers is to partner with their local schools, says Bobcat's Becker. "It's all about relationships. Dealers need to work with schools along the way, not just expect to hire their graduates when they haven't supported the school throughout the process."

While dealers' challenges with recruiting enough new technicians get the most attention, retention is also a big problem. Technician turnover at dealerships participating in the survey hits its peak at the 2- to 5-year mark (Chart 8), when techs are fully trained and bringing in the most revenue.

RECRUIT & RETAIN

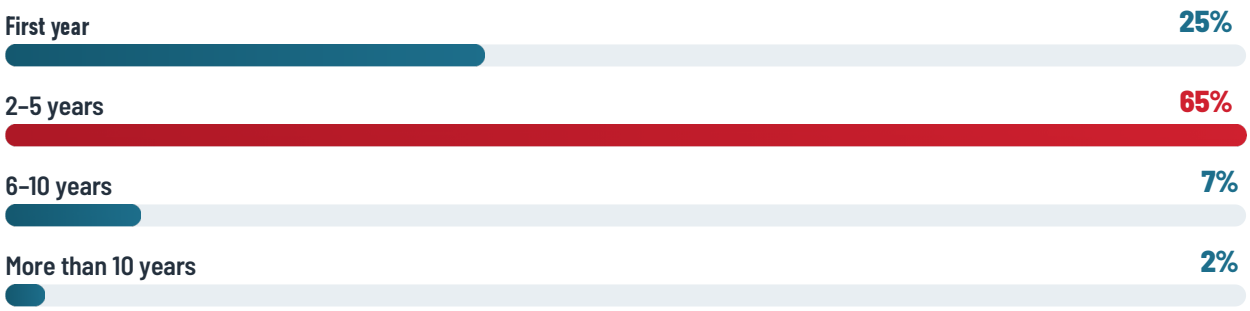
Dealerships lose technicians to other dealers, but also to the mining and oil and gas industries for big increases in pay, Horizon's McCready says, noting that techs in the oil industry can make as much as CA$500,000 per year. Techs may also take what they've learned and set out on their own, he says. "They buy a truck and go from field to field, taking advantage of the relationships they built working for our dealerships."

E.Bourassa's Marcenko finds entry-level techs hired from local farms often work long enough to gain knowledge, "and then they go back and work on the farm," he says.

> *"New hires do have an awareness of their scarcity, which is empowering some unwanted behaviors – tardiness, lack of cleanliness, lack of empathy. Some feel they are indispensable and management is having to tolerate those behaviors as they need to fill manpower gaps."*
>
> SURVEY RESPONDENT - ON CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN RETAINING TECHNICIANS

Chart 8. When Tech Turnover Hits Hardest

Timing of highest employee exits

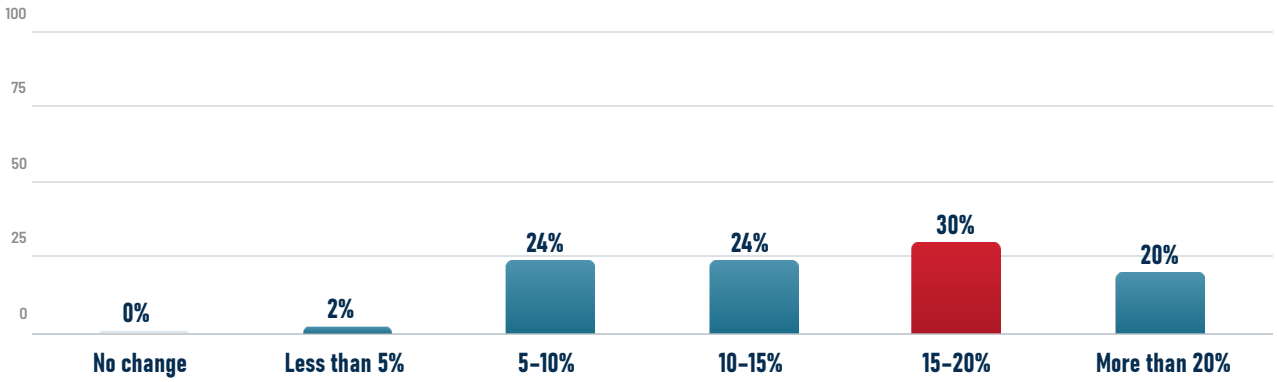


Techs are most likely to leave just as they reach their highest productivity. **Source:** 2026 dealer survey.

Many dealers recognize they have a retention problem and are taking steps to overcome it. Pay is always a significant issue and wages at most dealerships have steadily increased in recent years – with 74% raising pay more than 10% over the past five years (Chart 9) and 20% raising it more than 20%. Seventy-two percent plan to increase pay again this year (Chart 10).

RECRUIT & RETAIN

Chart 9. How Technician Wages Have Changed Over the Past Five Years



Dealers are steadily increasing pay in an effort to recruit and retain enough technicians. Source: 2026 dealer survey.

Beyond pay, many dealers are tackling the problem by creating the work-life balance younger techs demand. Techs today don't want to work the overtime or evening and weekend hours that customers often require, dealers say.

Roberts Equipment gives techs the option of working four, 10-hour days or five eight-hour days, Osterndorff says. "That's helped with retention," he says. Roberts also provides five paid-time-off days in addition to vacation. "Benefits have to be stellar," he says. "We supply coveralls, trucks. We're kind of running out of options because everyone's doing the same thing. It's hard to differentiate."

> *"Finding a technician that understands the urgency of the busy season, and the need for weekend work, as well as on-call responsibility."*
>
> SURVEY RESPONDENT · ON CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN RETAINING TECHNICIANS

Dealers also look to immigrants to fill their hiring gap. Half say they hire technicians internationally and of those, the median hired two technicians internationally in the last year. Sixty-five percent rate their experience at 4 or higher out of 5.

Horizon Ag & Turf has had success hiring immigrants from South Africa, Ireland and Brazil, McCready says. The only downside is they may move on for other opportunities after two to five years. "It can be hard to build a family and community in a small, rural area," he says.

A robust referral program with financial incentives simplifies hiring immigrants at E. Bourassa & Sons, says HR Advisor Kali Holdstock. Technicians working for the dealership from countries such as Ukraine and South Africa often recommend the work to other technicians from their home country. "We've never actually gone out and found our own people to sponsor," she says. "They are almost found for us."

RECRUIT & RETAIN

CANADA VS U.S. How Canada and U.S. Compare – Recruitment and Retention

Metric	U.S.	Canada	Differences
Difficulty hiring – ranking 4+ / 5	75%	**80%**	Canada reports higher degree of difficulty.
Severest job-opening duration	>150d (20%)	**>150d (25%)**	Canadian dealers slightly worse on vacancy duration.
Top turnover period	2–5 yr (52%)	**2–5 yr (65%)**	Higher Canadian turnover in the 2- to 5-year range.
First-year turnover	39%	**25%**	U.S. dealers see more first-year turnover than Canada.
Wage growth over 5 years	74% up 10%+	**74% up 10%+**	Identical wage pressure — both invested heavily.

Source: 2026 dealer surveys.

Compared to their counterparts in the U.S., Canadian dealers report a higher degree of difficulty in hiring techs (80% compared to 75%) and struggle slightly more to get new techs in the door – with 25% reporting job vacancies remaining open more than 150 days versus 21% in the U.S. Canadian dealers are also 13% more likely to lose technicians in the critical 2- to 5-year range, when they have reached their peak productivity and revenue-generating potential. Both regions have invested heavily in pay – and 72% of Canadian dealers and 71% of U.S. dealers plan to raise pay again this year.

SOLUTIONS

Solutions Stakeholders Agree On

Many dealers and their OEM partners are already committed to providing apprenticeships or other types of work-based learning opportunities (Charts 10 and 11). Programs such as those offered by John Deere and CNH combine classroom training through partnerships with tech schools, with paid work at participating dealerships. Many also offer virtual options that allow students to work at dealerships while completing online training.

Students in these programs may receive all or part of their tuition paid by the dealer and they may also receive tool discounts. Upon graduation, "as long as the student doesn't have any issues, I don't know a dealer that won't hire them," says Jason Kinzey, John Deere service development manager.

Beyond apprenticeships, dealers are also making significant investments in pay and other efforts (Chart 10). Recognizing that lack of awareness of and misperceptions about the ag and construction industries are among the root causes of the technician shortage, 78% of surveyed dealers are stepping up, working to educate their communities about their industries and the career opportunities they offer. At the same time, 67% of OEMs are promoting the benefits of the tech career (Chart 11).

Chart 10. What Dealers are Already Doing

Dealer Action	% of Dealers	Why It's Important
Community promotion	**78%**	Lack of awareness of industry and tech careers are root causes.
Increased pay	**72%**	Even entry-level techs know they can command good wages.
School partnerships	**57%**	School cooperation seen as key to solving the shortage.
Tool allowances	**57%**	Tool cost can be significant barrier to entry.
Increased benefits	**40%**	Savvy techs compare employers around pay and benefits.

Source: 2026 dealer survey. Multiple responses allowed.

There is universal agreement between U.S. and Canadian dealers that expanding work-based learning is the best policy solution to the technician shortage, with three-quarters or more of each group citing this as their number one policy priority. U.S. dealers are more likely to push for curriculum alignment (71%), likely because half don't believe schools understand their workforce needs, while half of Canadian dealers believe schools already understand them and align their curriculum accordingly. Canadian dealers ranked expanding subsidies/tax credits for employers who train employees as their number two policy priority at 75%, while that option ranked third (66%) with U.S. dealers. Canadian dealers are also considerably more interested in financial aid (62%) than are U.S. dealers (53%).

SOLUTIONS

Chart 11. What OEMs are Already Doing

% of OEMs taking each action (n=9). Multiple responses allowed.

67%
Promote career benefits within community – the top OEM action

56%
Each of the eight other actions – from school donations and outreach to paid internships and equipment grants – was cited by 5 of 9 OEMs, showing broad, even engagement across the board.

OEM Action	% of OEMs	Why It's Important
Promote career benefits within community	67%	Career awareness campaigns raise awareness and build brand.
Donate funds to a technician school	56%	OEMs are in a unique position to offer financial support.
Donate funds to a trade organization	56%	Helps bring solutions to scale.
Outreach / partnership with tech or high schools	56%	OEMs active in school relationships — need alignment with dealers.
Promote industry's use of technology to attract talent	56%	Tech positioning may attract a generation raised on technology.
Develop advanced digital tools to boost tech productivity	56%	Efficient tech = fewer techs needed per unit of output — a demand-side lever.
Create tech-focused training with paid internships	56%	Paid internships are among the most effective pipeline investments.
Collaborate to standardize training & career paths	56%	Standardization could multiply impact across industries.
Donate equipment to tech schools for training	56%	Hands-on training with real equipment is critical.

Source: 2026 OEM survey. Multiple responses allowed.

CANADA VS U.S. How Canada and U.S. Compare – Policy Solutions

Policy / Solution	U.S.	Canada	Difference
Work-based learning / internships	75%	78%	Top policy solution for both.
Aligning curriculum with industry needs	71%	65%	Slightly less of a concern for Canada.
Subsidies / tax credits for employers that train	66%	75%	Canada more likely to support government funding.
Financial aid (grants, scholarships)	53%	62%	Bigger push for financial support in Canada.

Source: 2026 dealer surveys.

PROMOTING THE CAREER

Promoting Heavy Duty Tech Careers

What Makes Ag and Construction Stand Out

One of the top reasons potential techs don't enroll in trades programs – cited by 62% of dealers responding to the survey – is lack of industry visibility/awareness. A negative perception of the industry was cited by 62% (Chart 5).

Dealers and OEMs are actively working to overcome these issues, with 78% of dealers and 67% of OEMs out in their communities promoting the benefits of a career as a diesel technician, including:

01 Alternative to expensive 4-year university degrees that may not lead to a good-paying job. (41% of bachelor's degree holders in Canada work in jobs that don't require a college degree.)

02 Little to no student loan debt (many dealers underwrite training for minimum work commitment).

03 Start earning sooner – technician programs can be as short as 2 years, with many "work-while-you-learn" options.

04 Wages comparable or better than many white-collar careers that require far more schooling. Experienced techs can easily make $100k+.

05 Continuing education opportunities.

06 Job security – current shortage plus growth projections mean techs will be in demand for decades.

07 Unlike many white-collar jobs, artificial intelligence won't replace heavy duty techs.

Making the case for the skilled technician career is a start. But as previously noted, heavy duty techs are in demand across many industries, meaning ag and construction stakeholders must specifically promote the benefits their jobs provide. A study by the American Transportation Research Institute asked techs working in trucking who were considering moving to ag or construction what appealed to them about those industries.

They said ag and construction offer:

- More interesting work
- Better variety of work

Additionally, they believe ag offers:

- Better pay incentives for additional certification or training
- Availability and reimbursement of additional certification or training

PROMOTING THE CAREER

Given the range of equipment types in ag and construction, it makes sense that techs in these industries find the work more engaging, a positive that could be better promoted, industry leaders say. They also point to the high-tech nature of the work as another selling point. "Technology is huge in this industry and this job," says Ash Alt, manager of AGCO's after sales and technical training North America. "A tractor, sprayer, or planter has more technology than a space ship does," he says.

And new and seasoned techs alike value ongoing training to help them stay ahead of rapid technological advances and complex diagnostics systems – especially if there are financial incentives. "This is not a dead-end job," Alt says. "If you are willing to work hard and learn, the sky is the limit."

Despite the rewarding career opportunities available to ag technicians, there remains a significant shortage of candidates who pursue the trade, costing Canadian equipment dealers hundreds of millions in lost revenue and growth opportunities.

Driven primarily by the push toward 4-year college education and the social stigma around skilled trades jobs, the shortage has been decades in the making and won't be solved quickly. Fortunately, there is broad consensus around the scope, causes, impacts and even solutions to this issue by dealers and OEMs.

With enhanced support around building greater awareness of the benefits of the tech career, increasing work-based training, and expanding government funding for schools and employers, industry stakeholders can continue to build off the work that has already been done and create a sustainable workforce for years to come.

METHODOLOGY

Survey, Economic Impact and Growth Projection Methodologies

The Canada Equipment Dealers Foundation and the Associated Equipment Distributors Foundation contracted Randall Reilly to produce this study, with the goal of taking an in-depth look at the causes, effects and recommended solutions to the technician shortage plaguing their members – agriculture equipment dealers. This report also attempts to quantify the size of the shortage and its economic impact on dealer revenues.

Included in the report are the results of surveys deployed in January-March 2026 to NAEDA dealer members of CEDF, as well as dealer members of its U.S. survey partner, the Associated Equipment Dealers, and industry OEMs. To add context and real-world perspective to the survey results, Randall Reilly conducted interviews over a select group of OEMs and dealers. Excerpts from those interviews are included in this report.

Group	Raw N	Adjusted N	Adjustment Notes
U.S. Dealers	132	**126**	Multi-respondent companies aggregated to single company records; responses averaged/unioned by field type.
Canada Dealers	46	**40**	Exact duplicates removed (kept earliest submission); companies domain-aggregated.
OEMs	11	**9**	2 OEMs had 2 respondents — aggregated to company-level records.
Total	**189**	**175**	**Net reduction of 14 records from raw.**

ECONOMIC IMPACT METHODOLOGY

The figure of CA$636,120 in lost revenue per unfilled technician job per year is calculated from an industry standard 1,800 hours per year billed by the average technician, multiplied by an hourly rate (average in-shop and on-road hourly rates) of CA$190, for an hourly billing loss per unfilled tech role of CA$342,000 in gross revenue. Industry executives interviewed for this report recommended combining this hourly billing loss with the related parts sales loss of CA$0.86 per billable hour, or an additional CA$294,120, for a total of CA$636,120 in gross revenue loss per unfilled technician job. The CA$636,120 multiplied over the 1,263 annual dealer technician shortage (calculated using COPS data and growth projections from the dealer survey – see below), comes to CA$803 million in lost revenue per year.

GROWTH PROJECTION METHODOLOGY

The 17.4% three-year headcount growth target uses a headcount-weighted average — each dealer's stated growth percentage is weighted by current technician employment, so larger operations have proportionally greater influence on the aggregate figure. Bucket midpoints were used to assign numeric values to response ranges (e.g., "16–20%" = 18%). U.S. and Canada surveys used different bucket labels; midpoints were adjusted independently for each.

PARTNERS

About the Research Partners

Established in 1998, the Canada Equipment Dealers Foundation was founded by the Canada West Equipment Dealers Association to provide educational programs and services for agricultural, industrial, and outdoor power equipment dealers across Canada. The support for the CEDF continues with the creation of the North American Equipment Dealers Association. Specifically, the foundation:

- Creates educational programs for the benefit of dealers, employees, and the equipment industry.
- Establishes and funds scholarship programs at post-secondary educational institutions.
- Establishes public awareness campaigns to promote within the industry and to the general public.
- Conducts research on related topics within the industry.

The AED Foundation (AEDF) is the non-profit foundation for the equipment industry and is the sister organization to Associated Equipment Distributors (AED), the international trade association for equipment distributors, manufacturers, and service providers. The AED Foundation is actively addressing the serious shortage of skilled professionals in the equipment distribution industry through expansion of its "community-based, school-to-work" school partnership strategy. AEDF is putting dealers, manufacturers, and educators together, working toward the common goal of growing a new generation of highly in demand, highly skilled, and highly rewarding technical positions in the equipment industry.

Randall Reilly delivers effective hiring solutions for skilled labor. Equipment dealers, private fleets, and trucking companies rely on Randall Reilly to hire truck drivers, diesel and automotive technicians, warehouse professionals, and other essential frontline talent. Our solutions are powered by AI-driven technology and one of the largest proprietary data sets of drivers and technicians. Our experienced recruiting teams can fully manage or support the hiring process. By combining data intelligence, marketing innovation, and industry expertise, we help organizations solve complex talent challenges and drive growth.

AUTHOR

About the Author

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INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER & JOURNALIST

Linda Longton is an independent researcher and journalist with decades of experience covering the construction, trucking and ag markets. She has won Jesse H. Neal awards (considered the Pulitzer for B2B journalism) for Driver Deficit, an in-depth report on trucking's driver shortage, and Death by Trench, covering one of construction's most serious safety issues. She has produced research used by OEMs, suppliers, industry associations and B2B media outlets on topics including workforce issues, technology adoption and buyer behaviors.