



## Skill Standards Backgrounder

### **National Skill Standards imperative**

#### ***Skills in a changing print environment***

The current economic situation highlights the benefits of an industry focus on skills development and national skill standards.

In adjusting print operations to meet current economic demands, employers need to be confident they have employees with the right mix of skills to get the job done.

Employees also need to know which skills are considered critical in the print workplace and how those skills can be developed to improve their career and employment prospects.

The focus on skills is also for the long-term.

As Canadian industries shift from their industrial base to meet the needs of an information society, few have been affected as dramatically as the printing and graphic communications sector.

All aspects of the sector, from prepress through to finishing, are undergoing rapid and profound change.

No longer are workers siloed in jobs such as manual colour separation; today, firms require adaptable workers who have a strong understanding of the entire printing process.

Printing industry workers are increasingly being called upon to operate computers, analyze complex problems, make strategic decisions, work cooperatively with colleagues and partners, and interact well with customers.

Having access to employees with this mix of skills allows Canadian print companies to do business effectively in an increasingly competitive global environment.

The industry, led by the Canadian Printing Industries Sector Council (CPISC), is responding to the need for skilled workers, through the ongoing development of national skill standards that will guide the training and careers of tens of thousands of printing workers.

The latest skill standards for prepress and finishing and bindery – being released today - add to the press skill standards which are already making a difference to training programs and workplaces across the country.

The development of such skill standards is a first for the global printing industry, which puts CPISC on the leading edge of global human resource development for this sector.



### **Unique CPISC-led standards**

CPISC's approach to skill standards development has been unique. The approach started with a plan for the creation of standards in three process areas: press, prepress and finishing and bindery.

Today's release of the prepress and finishing and bindery standards completes the first phase of CPISC's Skills for the Future Project. Standards for colour and output specialists, which were also highlighted as necessary by the industry, are already well underway.

In each process area, three types of skill standards have been developed: basic skills, core skills and operational skills.

Basic skills are essential to all occupations. They include literacy, numeracy, oral communications, problem-solving, decision-making and interpersonal skills. Basic skills are generally consistent across all process areas.

Core skills cover those elements that comprise a broad-based knowledge of the industry. For the most part, some core skills will cut across process areas, although some may be more relevant to a particular process area. For example, core skills could cover workflow knowledge, printing process knowledge, health and safety, and quality control.

Operating skills relate to specific operating functions within a process area. A function is defined as a set of related work activities organized in either chronological or operational order that often cut across occupations. In other words, functions are not highly specific job tasks, but groups of related activities that often cut across job titles. As an example, for the prepress process area, operating skills could include performing pre-flight operations, managing assets, manipulating images and making file revisions.

CPISC has also developed a series of profiles that outline what is required of the worker in a specific job, the availability of similar jobs in Canada and the kind of education and personal attributes that best contribute to success in those occupations.

### **The benefits of standards for companies and workers**

CPISC has developed its skill standards and occupational profiles in collaboration with industry. By agreeing on a set of standards the industry has made a huge leap toward a more educated, adaptable and highly skilled workforce. The establishment of a single set of standards for eventual adoption by all organizations means that there is real potential to unify Canada's approach to creating an industry that will endure well into the new century.

For employers, the main benefit of skill standards is better trained, more adaptable—and therefore more useful—workers. For workers, the benefit is a set of tools to judge their own progress toward occupational goals. Workers will better understand the nature of their training. They will be better able to stay current and, more importantly, they will be more likely to be highly employable, even in tough economic times.



### **What CPISC will do next?**

Through the process of developing prepress and finishing and bindery standards, the industry highlighted the need for additional standards for colour and output specialists, which are currently being developed and validated.

Industry input into the national skill standards process has also highlighted the need to consider other critical skill areas, such as Production Support— including estimating and sales. There is also a recognized need to support more companies to use the skill standards in the workplace, with plans to produce implementation guides and employee log books.

CPISC is now in the process of looking for funding to support both the development of Production Support skill standards and implementation tools.

CPISC is also working with industry to identify possible options for skills certification, to ensure that new and existing workers have the opportunity to have their skills and experience recognized.

CPISC will also continue to collaborate with print education and training institutions to ensure training programs continue to be upgraded and redesigned as new skill standards are developed. This will ensure training providers produce graduates and trained workers whose skills meet the industry's needs.

### **About CPISC**

As the printing industry's sector council, CPISC's mission is to identify and implement strategies to develop skills within the sector. CPISC was incorporated in April 2006 through the Sector Council Program of Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

The organization's guiding principle is partnership—bringing together employers, employees, educational institutions, unions and government to meet the current and future human resource development needs of the Canadian printing and graphic communications industry.

### **The printing industry in Canada**

The printing and graphic communications industry in Canada employs more than 85,000 people who work in around 8,300 establishments. It is the fourth-largest manufacturing employer in the Canada. In 2006, the industry's workers contributed nearly \$5 billion to Canada's GDP.

Printing and graphic communications firms in Canada vary widely in size, in the types of presses they use, in their range of job titles and in their production output. However, small firms dominate the industry, with about 75 percent of companies employing fewer than five people.

