

One Industry. One Workforce. One Future.

Building Canada's maintenance sector
advantage through collaboration,
competitiveness and safety-led productivity

“Failing to act decisively risks deepening fragmentation, inefficiency, and worsening workforce shortages that threaten major projects nationwide. Conversely, with cooperation and structured collaboration, Canada has the opportunity to set a new global standard for maintenance excellence—delivering safer workplaces, stronger productivity, and a more resilient industry for the future.”

Synopsis

Canada's maintenance industry is the backbone of the country's critical infrastructure – ensuring the safe and reliable operation of energy facilities, utilities, petrochemicals, manufacturing plants, and transportation systems. It employs tens of thousands of skilled workers, sustains local communities, and supports billions of dollars of industrial activity. Yet today, the sector is at a turning point.

An aging workforce, difficulty in sourcing skilled trades due to workforce misalignment, labour market disconnects, and workforce deployment inefficiencies, fragmented contracting practices, and uneven adoption of technology are eroding performance. At the same time, demand for maintenance services is rising as governments and industry invest in new energy corridors, infrastructure renewal, and sustainability goals. Unless the industry adapts, these pressures will drive up costs, delay projects, weaken safety, and undermine Canada's ability to compete globally.

The tools for adaptation already exist. Digital platforms, AI-powered forecasting, predictive maintenance, and collaborative data systems are transforming global heavy industry. Canada's maintenance sector must seize these tools of the future, embedding modernization into every project, contract, and training program. Failing to do so risks Canada being left behind.

To address these challenges, the Association of Maintenance Contractors of Canada (AMCC) convened an Advisory Panel of owners, contractors, unions, regulators, and training providers. Over the course of a year, the Panel undertook extensive consultation, analyzed leading industrial maintenance organizations' operations, and reviewed international benchmarks. The Panel concluded that the way forward lies in building systems of collaboration that turn fragmentation into alignment, trust, and shared accountability.

**“Collaboration is Canada’s path
to maintenance excellence.”**

The Challenge & Tools for the Future

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From Silos to Systems

For decades, the Canadian maintenance industry has operated in silos. Owners focused on cost control, contractors on project delivery, unions on worker representation, regulators on compliance, and training providers on curricula. Each group advanced its mandate, but often in isolation, resulting in fragmentation, duplication, and missed opportunities.

The central finding of this paper is that collaboration must replace fragmentation. Building systems based on industry collaboration is the only way to unlock lasting improvements in productivity, workforce mobilization, competitiveness, and safety.

Evidence from leading organizations demonstrates the power of collaboration:

- A large North American petrochemical operation adopted “radical transparency” in procurement, engaging contractors early and using weighted scorecards that balanced safety, performance, and cost. The result was faster execution, fewer incidents, and measurable cost savings.
- A large, complex western Canadian utility organization centralized its supply chain and standardized contracts, embedding Indigenous procurement as a core practice. This approach increased efficiency, improved governance, and strengthened trust with both contractors and communities.
- A major Canadian power generation organization integrated collaboration into its Life-Extension Program through leadership training, contractor scorecards, and cultural renewal, demonstrating that alignment across stakeholders improves both safety and productivity.

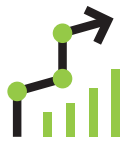
These examples show that when owners, contractors, unions, regulators, and training providers work together, the sector can break down silos and deliver safer, more predictable, and more competitive results. Collaboration is not simply an aspiration; it becomes the system that enables every other outcome.

But there is a necessary tension. Collaboration can drive productivity and competitiveness only if safety is assured. Without a safe work environment, workers will not be attracted or retained, and no amount of collaboration can achieve results. Safety remains the foundation on which collaboration and competitiveness depend.

“The central finding of this paper is that collaboration must replace fragmentation.”

The Four Pillars

Collaboration, when structured and intentional,
is the enabler of solutions to the industry's
most pressing challenges:



Productivity:

improving planning,
reducing duplication, and
streamlining project
delivery to make the best
use of resources and time.



Workforce Utilization and Mobilization:

ensuring skilled workers
are deployed effectively,
apprentices are retained
and developed, and
projects have the people
they need when they
need them.



Competitiveness:

aligning standards and
delivery models to attract
investment and position
Canada as a global leader.



Safety:

embedding shared
practices, transparent
reporting, and
collective learning that
make every site safer.

“Safety is the non-negotiable foundation.”

The Tension

There is a necessary tension in the industry's future model.

Collaboration is the enabler of productivity and competitiveness. But collaboration cannot hold without the foundation of safety. If workplaces are unsafe, workers will not be attracted to or retained in the industry. Without workers, there is no workforce to deploy, and no productivity to capture. In this sense, safety is not one pillar among others, it is the condition that makes collaboration possible and competitiveness achievable.

Safety underpins the entire system. Collaboration can improve workforce mobility and integrated models can drive competitiveness, but without a safe work environment, none of it is sustainable. Workers will not enter or stay in unsafe environments; owners cannot maintain productivity when incidents erode trust and disrupt projects.

Safety is a central part of this story.

“Success means every worker
home safe, every shift.”

The Imperative For Industry Transformation

What is needed is not more pilots or studies.

What is needed is bold action,
aligned across all stakeholders – owners, contractors, unions,
regulators, and training providers.

The recommendations in this paper provide that alignment.

They are grounded in practicality, tested
by industry input, and ready for implementation.



OWNERS MUST

commit to collaborative
contracting and shared risk.



UNIONS MUST

lead in mentorship and
mobility.



CONTRACTORS MUST

invest in workforce
innovation and digital
integration.



REGULATORS MUST

align policy with
best practice.



TRAINING PROVIDERS MUST

prepare a new generation for a new
reality.

The Path Forward

The Advisory Panel's recommendations provide a practical blueprint for collaboration in action: shared benchmarking and data platforms, harmonized certification, integrated workforce planning, performance-based contracting, structured mentorship, and safer workplaces, and the adoption of advanced digital and AI-enabled tools that will define the industry's next era.

The choice before the industry is clear. Continuing in silos will mean growing workforce shortages, higher costs, more incidents, and declining competitiveness. Building systems of collaboration, grounded in a culture of safety, will produce stronger workforce pipelines, predictable project delivery, safer workplaces and a globally recognized standard of maintenance excellence.

The time for action is now. Canada's maintenance industry cannot wait for incremental change. Every stakeholder—owners, contractors, unions, regulators, and training providers—must step up, align efforts, and act with urgency. With courage and cooperation, the sector can secure its future, modernize with the tools of tomorrow, and establish Canada as a global leader in safety, productivity, and resilience.

“The industry must shift from fragmented practices to coordinated systems, from reactive management to proactive planning, and from isolated excellence to collective capacity.”

The Advisory Panel

The Association of Maintenance Contractors of Canada extends its sincere gratitude to the members of the Independent Advisory Panel for their dedication, expertise, and thoughtful contributions to this discussion paper. Their insights reflect the diverse perspectives of Canada's maintenance industry and provide an invaluable foundation for continued dialogue and collaboration.

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“The tools are ready. The partnerships are taking shape. The window for action is open, but it will not be forever. Let this be the moment when Canada’s maintenance sector chooses courage over caution, and action over inertia. Let us get started.”



One Industry. One Workforce. One Future. is a landmark discussion paper authored by an Independent Advisory Panel and commissioned by the Association of Maintenance Contractors of Canada (AMCC), charting a path forward for Canada's maintenance industry.

The paper was released in 2025.

To download One Industry. One Workforce.

One Future. paper please visit, **www.AMCCCanada.ca**.