



Breaking: Canada Facing a Growing Repair Skills Crisis

By Dale Jodoin
Columnist

Across Canada, a quiet problem is starting to appear in neighbourhoods, small towns, and even large cities. It is not a dramatic crisis that makes the evening news. There are no flashing lights or emergency sirens. But the signs are there if you look closely.

A loose fence that never gets fixed. A deck board curling up after winter. A broken gutter hanging for months. A small repair that once took an hour now waits for weeks. For many Canadians this may seem like a small issue. But behind these small problems sits a much larger concern. Canada is slowly losing a generation of people who know how to repair things. The country is entering what many trades workers quietly call the repair gap.

For decades, the backbone of home repair in Canada came from the Baby Boomer generation and the group sometimes called Generation Jones. These Canadians grew up in a time when fixing things was normal. If something broke, you did not replace it. You repaired it. Many of these skills started in school. High schools once had strong shop programs. Students learned woodworking, metal work, basic electrical work, and small engine repair. They learned how to measure, how to cut properly, and how to work safely with tools. Those lessons did not end in the classroom.

At home, young people often watched their parents repairing the family car, patching roofs, fixing lawn mowers, or rebuilding a broken fence. It became part of daily life. Many people took pride in knowing they could solve their own problems.

For that generation, fixing something yourself was more than saving money. It was a point of pride. It showed independence and responsibility. Today many of those skilled homeowners are retiring. Some are selling homes they have cared for over forty or fifty years. Others are moving into smaller houses or retirement communities. Some are simply no longer able to climb ladders or handle heavy tools. As they leave those homes behind, a new generation is moving in. But many younger Canadians did not grow up with the same training.

Generation Z, the group now entering adulthood, grew up in a different education system. Over the past few decades many schools removed shop classes. Wood shops closed. Auto repair programs disappeared. Welding programs were reduced or eliminated. The focus shifted heavily toward computers, testing, and university preparation. Technology became the future. Young Canadians today are extremely capable with digital tools. They can build websites, edit video, manage social media businesses, and troubleshoot computer problems quickly. But digital skill does not always translate into practical repair ability.

Ask many young homeowners how to repair a loose railing or replace a faulty switch and the answer is often the same. They were never taught. This is not a criticism of the younger generation. It is the result of education choices made over many years. When governments removed practical training from schools, they removed a key path where young Canadians learned how to work with their hands. The effects are now being felt across the country.

Canada is currently experiencing shortages in many skilled trades. Electricians, plumbers, welders, mechanics, appliance repair technicians, and construction workers are in high demand.

In some communities it can take weeks to schedule basic repair work. Part of this shortage comes from retirement. Many experienced trades workers are leaving the workforce at the same time.

Another part comes from a lack of new workers entering those trades. To fill the gap, many companies are turning to skilled immigrants who already have strong repair and construction experience. These workers arrive from countries where trades training remains a major part of education. They bring valuable knowledge and strong work habits. Their work helps keep homes maintained and infrastructure running.

In many cases they are filling jobs that currently do not have enough Canadian workers. However, their presence also raises an important question.

Why did Canada stop preparing its own young people for these roles?

Many experts believe the answer lies in the slow disappearance of trade education in schools. Over time shop programs were considered outdated or unnecessary. Education systems focused more heavily on academic pathways and university preparation.

The result was a generation highly trained in digital technology but less experienced in hands on repair. There is another factor making repairs more difficult today.

Modern products are often designed in ways that prevent easy repair. Phones contain sealed batteries. Appliances rely on locked software systems.

Even farm tractors sometimes require special computer tools before repairs can be made. This has led to a growing public movement known as the right to repair.

Supporters believe that if consumers buy a product, they should have the ability to repair it themselves or choose an independent repair shop. They argue companies should provide access to parts, manuals, and software tools needed for repairs.

Farmers, mechanics, and small businesses across North America have strongly supported the right to repair legislation. They argue it restores independence and reduces waste.

Canada has begun discussing these laws, but many advocates believe stronger action is needed. Beyond legislation, there is growing discussion about rebuilding trade education.

Many educators and industry leaders now support bringing back practical training in schools. Modern shop programs could teach woodworking, electrical basics, mechanical repair, and construction skills alongside digital technology. This approach would not replace academic education. Instead it would balance it.

Not every student needs to become a trades worker. But every student should understand basic repair skills that help them maintain their homes, vehicles, and equipment. Those skills also support local economies.

When repairs happen locally, money stays in local communities. Hardware stores benefit. Small repair businesses grow. Local trades workers find steady work.

Rebuilding these skills could strengthen both the economy and community independence.

The discussion now moves beyond education alone. Citizens across Canada can raise this issue with city officials, provincial representatives, and federal leaders. They can ask for stronger support for trade schools, apprenticeship programs, and right to repair laws.

Public policy often begins with public conversation.

Canada was built by people who understood how to build and repair the world around them. Those practical skills helped create strong homes, reliable infrastructure, and resilient communities. Many Canadians believe those skills should remain part of the country's future. The challenge now is making sure the next generation has the opportunity to learn them.

Because once the last of the old fixers finally put down their tools, someone else will need to pick them up.

Job Ads Without Salary Information Are Business Opportunities

By Nick Kossovan

LinkedIn is flooded with job seekers complaining that many job ads don't mention salary. While their frustration is valid, publicly criticizing the lack of compensation transparency wastes mental energy and doesn't look good to recruiters and hiring managers.

Do complainers genuinely believe their posts and comments will influence employers, who aren't spending their time on LinkedIn reading comments—except perhaps when assessing a candidate's LinkedIn activities to decide if they're interview-worthy—to overhaul their hiring process? Controversial digital footprints negatively affect job seekers more than they realize. While you're free to say, or write, what you want, you're not free from the consequences of what you say.

I understand that work isn't a hobby, and pay is important. However, in fairness to employers, there are many reasons why they might choose not to include compensation details in their job ads or ask applicants for their salary expectations, a few being:

- Seek candidates motivated by fit over money. While this line of thinking contradicts why people work, it's understandable that employers want workers who are enthusiastic about the job, not just the paycheck.
- Avoid salary questions from current workers. It's common for employers to have salary disparities among their employees.
- Avoid wage wars with competitors. Employees who contribute measurable value to their employers' profitability are often on the lookout for higher pay, especially in higher-level professional circles.
- They'll get stuck at the top of the salary range. If a candidate is offered a starting salary near the lower end of the range, they might feel disgruntled before even beginning the job.
- More diverse applicants. In some cases, salary isn't listed because the employer is willing to pay even more for a truly exceptional candidate. From personal experience, I know that salary ranges are meant for average applicants, but if an ever-so-rare 'must-hire' candidate comes along...

Whether you agree with the reason(s) or not isn't the employer's concern, nor is it their concern that omitting salary details in job ads can seem like a power move to pay as little as possible—an unsubstantiated narrative that job seekers tend to promote.

The employer's closed-door reasoning for not including salary in their job postings isn't the job seeker's concern. It's because job seekers are hyper-focused on what they can't change, which, in this case, having employers list a salary or a small gap between the minimum and maximum salary pay range in their job posting, that they're overlooking a huge business opportunity.

Stay with me; what I'm about to explain will require a shift in your mindset—letting go of any limiting beliefs you might have about employers' motives, along with any frustrations and anger you have towards them, which recruiters and hiring managers can sense.

Employers whose job postings don't mention compensation often (no guarantee) are willing to negotiate salary; a skill most job seekers lack and, for some reason, refuse to learn. My advice: Name your salary expectation and stick to it!

I've never accepted a job where I wasn't comfortable with the salary; consequently, I've never been the employee who constantly complains about not being paid enough. Whenever a recruiter or employer contacts me, which, thanks to my writing of *The Art of Finding Work*, occurs frequently, I make it a point to inquire within the first five minutes what the compensation plan is, where the job is located, and how the role fits with the employer's bottom line. (Is the job essential to the employer's success or just a 'nice to have'?)

Growing up, I was taught that employees are free agents providing services; essentially, each employee operates as a business of one. I came to understand that an employee doesn't own their job; their employer does. This understanding led me to adopt the view that by making my salary requirement non-negotiable—rather than having expectations or desires like most job seekers—I controlled my salary, not the employer.

By waiting for an "offer" from the employer, you give them too much leverage. State your salary requirement, and see what happens. "But Nick, what if I'm too expensive?" Do you want to work at a job where you're constantly feeling underpaid? You deserve to feel satisfied with your salary. Don't be salary-guilt-tripped or salary-benchmarked.

Your attitude should be: "Yes, I may be expensive; however, here's how I can impact an employer's bottom line."

You probably noticed that I've overlooked the crucial part of securing the salary you want, which most job seekers fail to do. You must justify your compensation request (salary, paid time off, benefits, paid sick days, perks, bonus, profit sharing, etc.) by demonstrating the value you can bring to an employer's profitability. As I've mentioned in previous articles, job hunting is a sales activity, and interviews are sales meetings based on the core sales principle: features tell, benefits sell.

There'll always be job postings without salary information, or with a ridiculously large salary range. How you react—how you spend your mental energy—is a matter of choice. You can get frustrated, angry and publicly condemn employers, which, as mentioned, hurts your job search, or say to yourself, "I'm a business of one! I'm going to prove my worth and name my salary!"