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The Vocational Qualification System in the Quebec Construction Industry

A response adapted to the needs of
firms and the workforce



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Construction: Fundamental characteristics

- Major cyclical and seasonal fluctuations
- Many projects initiated by the government
- Inter-employer mobility
- Easy to create a company but short lifespan



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Fundamental characteristics of construction

- Production inputs move to where the product is consumed
- Products are not homogeneous
- Sequence of many trades and employers on one construction site
- Time-limited projects



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Characteristics linked to labour relations

- Unionized trades
- Multi-employer negotiations
- Hiring halls
- In Quebec, union and employer pluralism



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Construction in Quebec

- \$26 billion in investments
- 10% of GDP
- 1 job in 20

Industry covered by Act R-20

- Rate of coverage = 56%
- 20,000 employers + 120,000 workers
- 110 million hours worked



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These characteristics pose challenges

- Developing skills
- Recognizing workforce qualifications
- Supervising labour relations
- Ensuring job security
- Offering social benefits plans



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- To respond to these challenges, the employer, union, and government parties have developed a specific organization for workforce development in Quebec construction

The Quebec response

70 years of history

- 1934:** Regional parity committees oversee training of apprentices (collective agreement decrees)
- 1968:** A particular system for construction (centralized administration)
- 1987:** Creation of the CCQ and an orientation toward upgrading skills



Characteristics of Act R-20

- Definitions of trades established by regulation
- Regulatory framework for vocational training and qualification
- Centralized administration within the CCQ



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The CCQ: a place of convergence

- Structure favouring consensual decisions
- Detailed consultation mechanisms
- Financing by sector



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Parity operation

Four union associations:

Conseil conjoint	(71.9%)
CSD-construction	(13.8%)
CSN-Construction	(10.6%)
SQC	(3.7%)

Six employer associations:

ACEQ
ACQ
ACRGTQ
APCHQ
CMEQ
CMMTQ



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A major strategic orientation for the construction industry:

Workforce development



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What?

- Make sure we have a skilled and multi-talented workforce, taking into account the qualitative and quantitative needs of the industry's employers and workers.

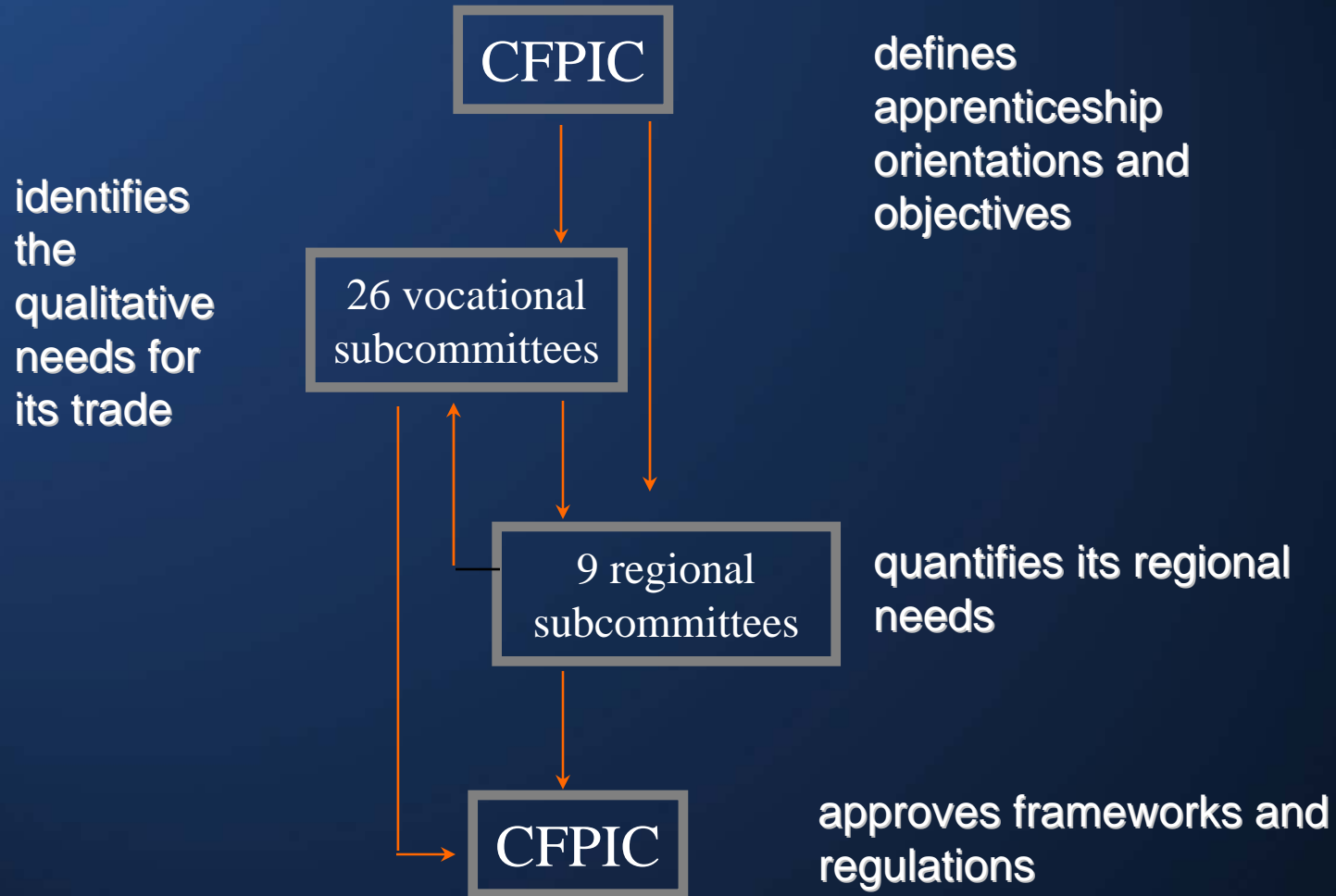


Why?

- A competitive economy
 - Workforce productivity
 - Competitive firms
- An economy compatible with long-term development
 - Ability of firms and individuals to adapt to change
 - Capacity to integrate innovations
- A humane and integrated economy
 - Sufficient employment and income levels
 - Level of business volume for firms
 - Development of individuals and firms



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An inspiring equation

Competency = Initial training + Trade apprenticeship + Upgrading

A single mobilizing equation

Competency = Initial training + Trade apprenticeship + Upgrading



**Labour
market
requirement**

An inspiring equation

**Initial
training**

= Study programs developed with the
industry (33) – 4,000 graduates per year

+

8 management agreements with specialized
training centres and 4 others
Participation in school councils

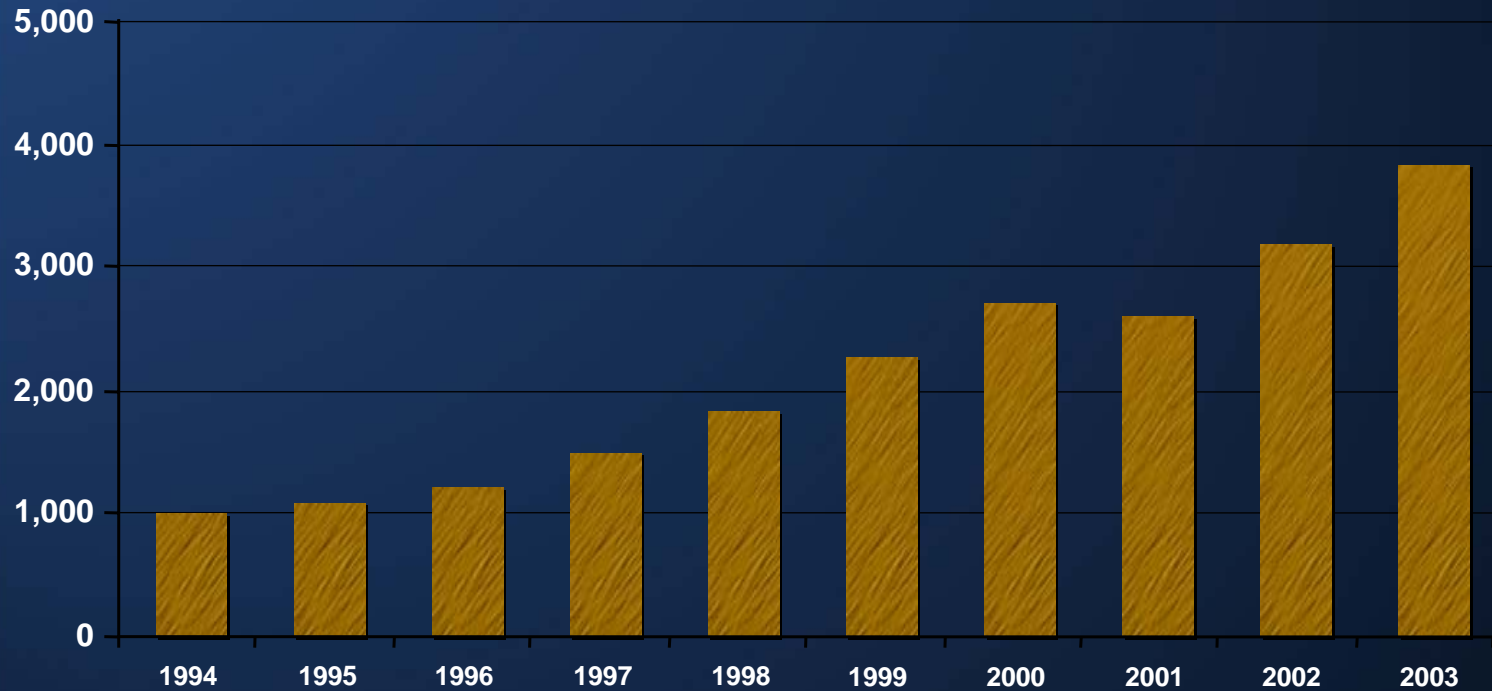
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Validation of instruments concerning
recognition of knowledge acquired



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Number of graduates admitted to the construction industry





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An inspiring equation

Competency = Training + Trade apprenticeship + Upgrading



**Labour
market
requirement**



**Ready for work
and basis for
upgrading and
adaptation of
the workforce**



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Changes on the way

Trade apprenticeship

- ≡
- New definitions have been proposed
 - Apprenticeship models structured around 5 fields of vocational activity
 - A “revival” of mentoring
 - Qualifications that attest to real skills acquired and recognized in the labour market



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Changes on the way

Trade apprenticeship

- The 2,000-hour apprenticeship period to be reconsidered
- Trades involving one to five apprenticeship periods
- An apprenticeship program adapted to both large and small firms



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The reality is not always simple

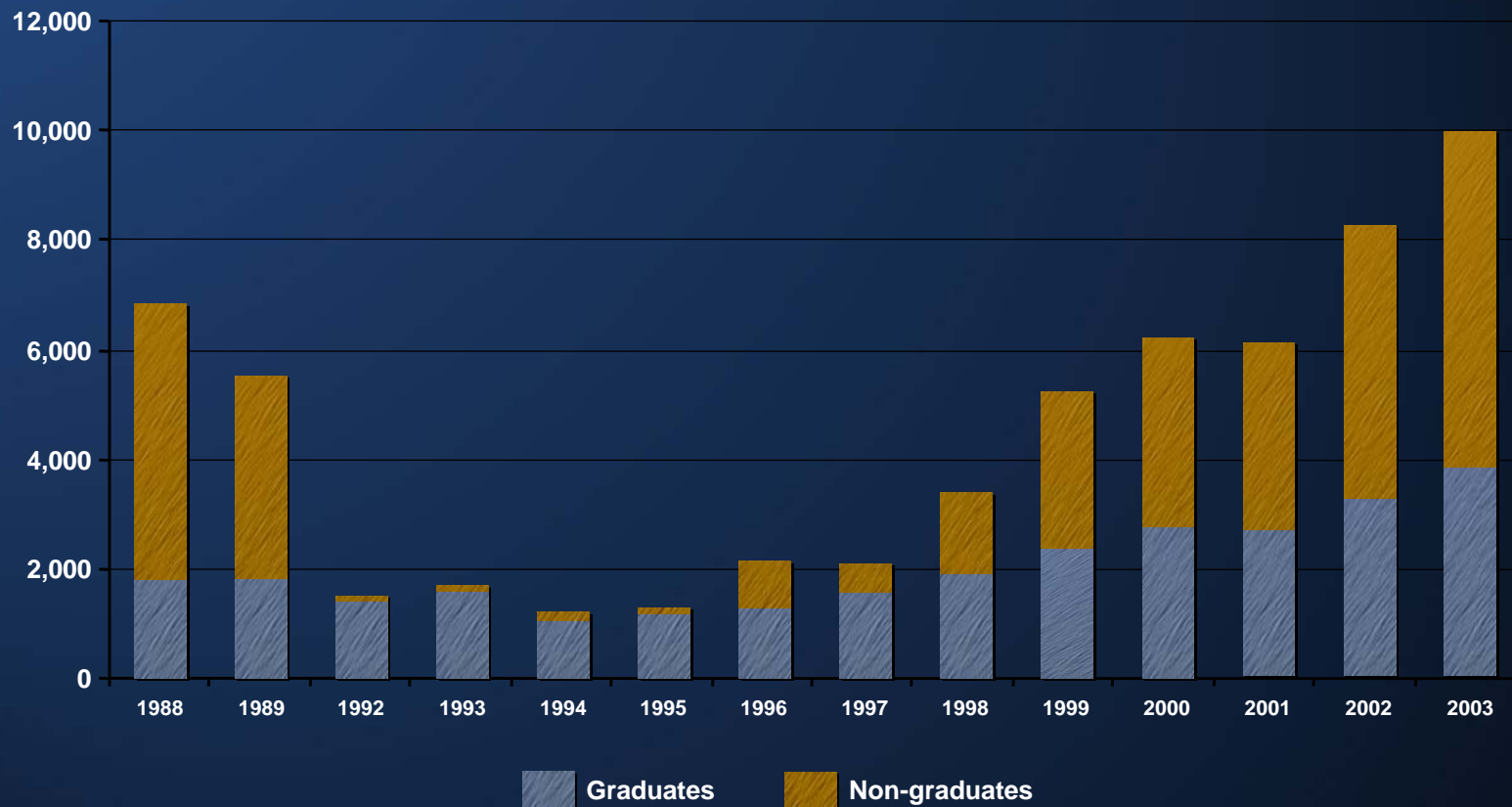
Trade apprenticeship

- ≡
- In 2002, 26,865 apprentices in 26 trades
 - More than 7,500 qualification exams administered (success rate of 84% for graduate apprentices and 74% for non-graduate apprentices)



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Number of apprentices admitted to the construction industry



Source : CCQ



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An inspiring equation

Competency = Training + Trade apprenticeship + Upgrading



**Labour
market
requirement**



**Ready for work
and basis for
upgrading and
adaptation of
the workforce**



**Growth in
productivity and
performance**



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Keeping skills up to date

- Upgrading** =
- In 2003–04, 13,100 individuals took upgrading courses (1 May) including 5,300 apprentices
 - 1,500 different activities offered to everyone (practical training)
 - More than \$100 million in training funds:
 - Payment of training costs
 - Incentives paid to the clientele (workers and firms)



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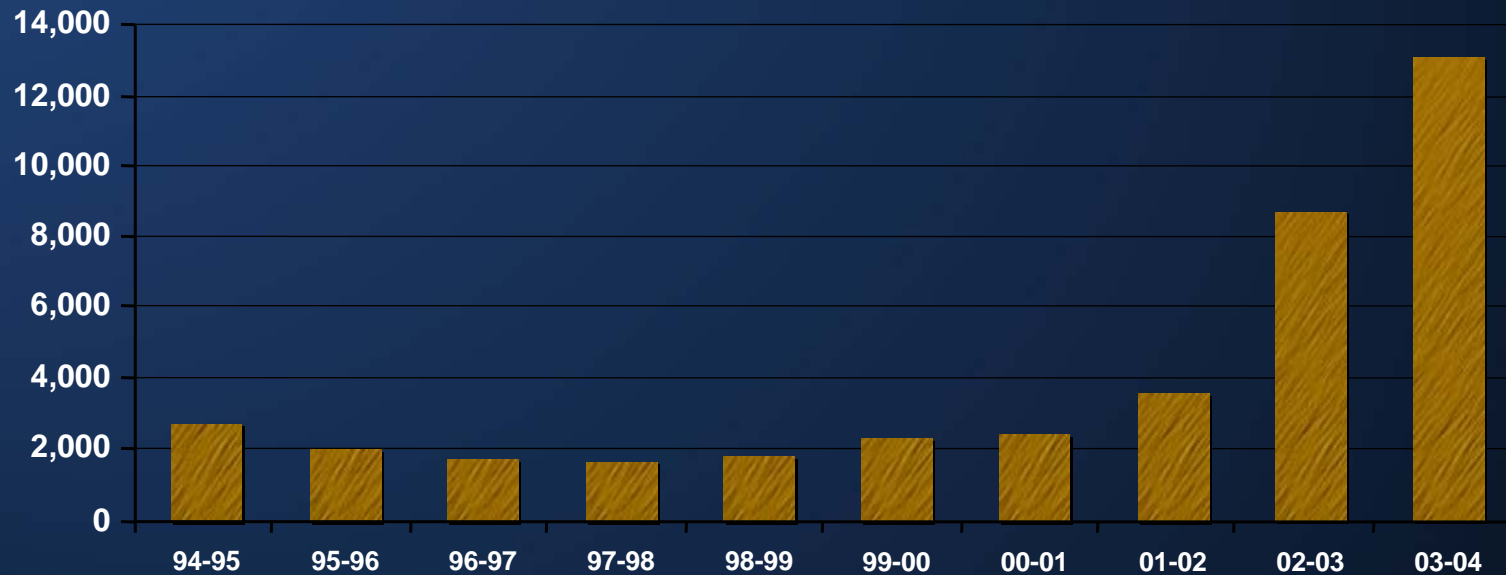
Keeping skills up to date

- Upgrading** =
- Almost \$18 million invested in upgrading per year
 - A wide variety of promotion plans structured according to sector (residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, and civil engineering and roadwork)



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Number of construction workers participating in upgrading





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An inspiring equation

Competency = Training + Trade apprenticeship + Upgrading



**Labour
market
requirement**



**Ready for work
and basis for
upgrading and
adaptation of
the workforce**



**Growth in
productivity and
performance**



**Maintaining
firms'
competitiveness
and workforce
employability**



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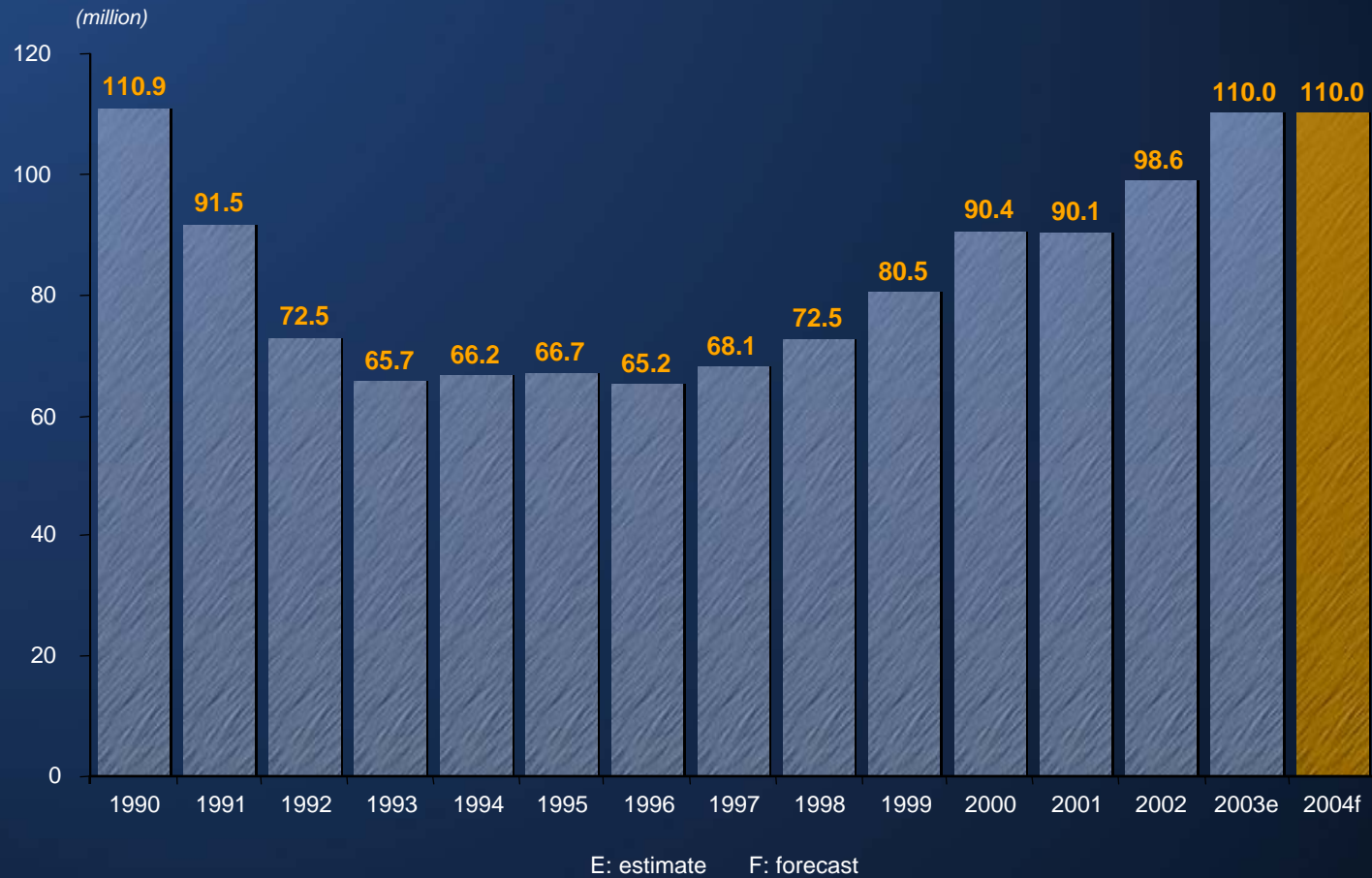
On the lookout

- Economic activity in the industry
- Workforce ageing and turnover
- Market-driven qualifications
- Intake of various clienteles
(strategy of inclusion)



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On the lookout: activity level

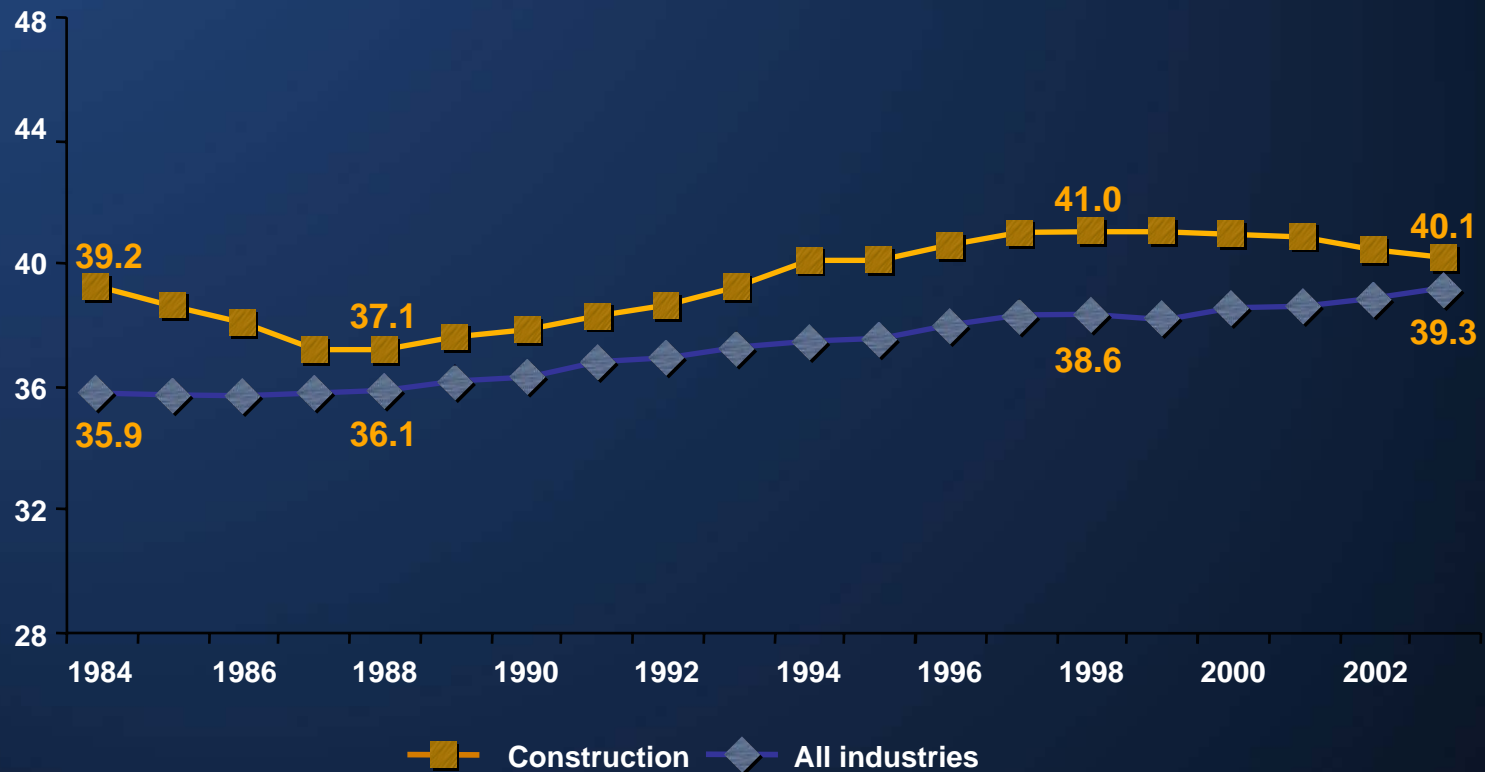


Source : CCQ



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On the lookout: Average age Construction vs. all industries

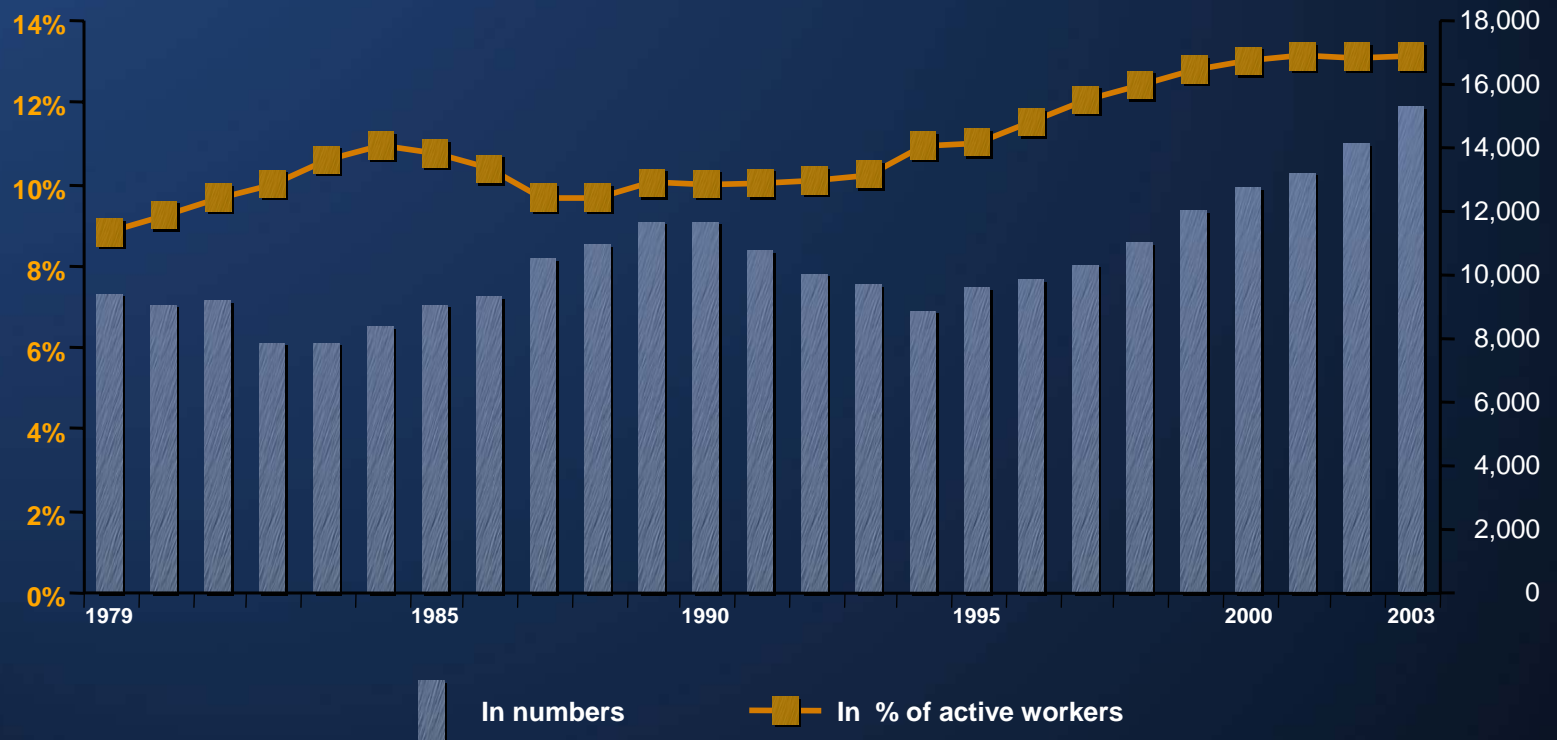


Source : Statistics Canada, CCQ



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On the lookout: Ageing (workers aged 55 years and over)

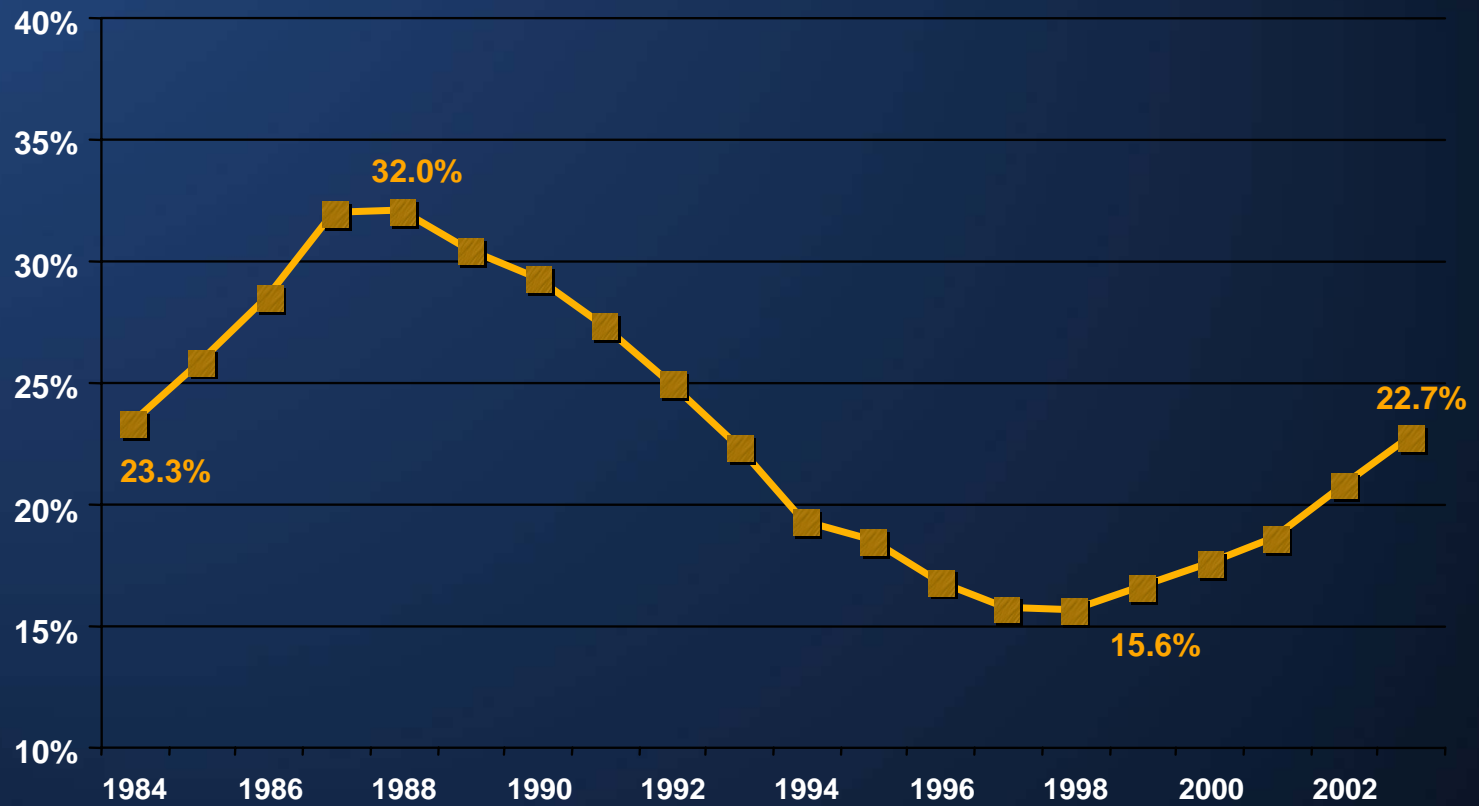


Source : CCQ



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On the lookout: The generation under 30 years old



Source : CCQ



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On the lookout: Changing realities

- Market-driven qualifications** =
- ✓ Changing qualifications
 - ✓ Use of computers and micro-electronics
 - ✓ Changes in construction standards and quality of work
 - ✓ Higher expectations by consumers and work providers



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On the lookout: Changing realities

- Market-driven qualifications (cont'd)** =
- ✓ Changing trades
 - ✓ Work organization
 - ✓ Knowledge to recognize and avoid health and safety risks



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On the lookout: An inclusive system

**Intake of
various
clienteles**

- ≡
- ✓ Integration of women
 - ✓ Enhancement of knowledge by intake of immigrants
 - ✓ Integration of First Nations people
 - ✓ Successful rehabilitation of someone who has had a work-related accident



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Impacts of the obligatory system: Challenges linked to weak points

- Reduce litigation of files
- Apply controls and sanctions in a targeted manner
- Institute better regulations to respond to specific needs
- Reduce administrative irritants arising from regulations



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Impacts of the obligatory system: Challenges linked to weak points

- Change takes a long time
- Reduce competency conflicts among the trades
- Provide access to industrial sites for apprentices
- Ensure that apprentices persevere in their apprenticeship



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Impacts of the obligatory system: Strong points linked to challenges met

- Existence of basic training in all trades before access to apprenticeship
- The community takes charge of the apprenticeship of apprentices (universal system)
- Financial support for apprenticeship, upgrading, and retraining



Impacts of the obligatory system: Strong points linked to challenges met

- Hiring of apprentices: not a competition issue
- Apprentices can go from one employer to another without problems (no contract with one employer)
- Apprentices who work every year will have their certificate renewed automatically and at no cost



Impacts of the obligatory system: Strong points linked to challenges met

- Apprentices will be automatically advised of a change in apprenticeship period and thus a salary raise
- Apprentices will be advised that they must register for their qualification exam
- Apprentices who work will have the right to receive social benefits and contribute to a retirement fund



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Impacts of the obligatory system: Strong points linked to challenges met

- Strategy of keeping trained apprentices in the industry: strong competition with other markets
- Enhancing the value of the trades and upgrading
- Targeted and systematic refinement of apprentice labour pools
- Personalized workforce reference service



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Impacts of the obligatory system: Strong points linked to challenges met

- Specific links with formal and informal training networks
- Accurate labour-market information and training profiles of all apprentices