

INTRODUCING THE MINISTER

BY JOHN KENNALEYL



Glenn Murray is the new Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities, appointed on October 20, 2011 by Premier Dalton McGuinty. Learning Curves spoke with Minister Murray in his riding office in Toronto – Centre on Friday November 18, 2011.

INTERVIEW:

LC: Do you consider yourself an adult learner?

GM: Absolutely. It is interesting because I think that we probably do more learning now, as we get out of school, because of the internet. We have two laptops at home, and when Rick [my partner] and I get into a discussion, we now go on-line - without having to go to a library - and search a lot of original sites and sources to learn something. While watching a

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WHAT DO THEY WANT?

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE OCCUPATION WALL STREET MOVEMENT
BY ANNE MCDONAGH

Those who do not “get” the Occupation Movement complain that the protesters have no goals and anyway they don’t know what they want. What the Occupiers know is that the world we have has more problems than they can deal with. They want a different world—or at least a fairer one—not the world we have now where the rich keep getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer. They want a world where not everything is a commodity. They

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WHAT DO THEY WANT?

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE OCCUPATION WALL STREET MOVEMENT BY ANNE MCDONAGH

CONTINUED FROM 1

want the opportunity to get a job that will let them have a life. And they need an education that is more than job training.

Government should be part of the solution to these problems, but our leaders govern for the benefit of the corporations and the wealthy rather than for ordinary people and so are a big part of the problem. They seem oblivious to the seriousness of our situation and seem not to understand how undemocratic Canada has become, or how new technologies and the exporting of jobs to Third World countries have completely altered the labour market so that unemployment has or will become systemic instead of cyclical. And like most young people who are going to be around for a while the Occupiers want governments to deal with climate change which threatens our very existence.

The protesters in the Occupier movement may not share all these concerns, but I am sure they would endorse most of them; these are complex problems and require thoughtful and complex answers, but the number and complexity of the problems are not the fault of the Movement. Nevertheless, by living communally and by consensus, they are demonstrating their commitment to a “new world order.”

One thoughtless bystander observing the Occupiers said—and I am sure he spoke for many—“Why don’t they

get a job?” That is precisely one of the problems the protesters on both sides of the border are complaining about. Many college/university graduates have huge student loans and jobs that will never pay enough for them to get out of debt..

The recovery from the Recession has been a jobless one because many corporations have shipped jobs abroad to countries with a low standard of living, low wages and no labour or environmental laws to interfere with business. Or they have invested in technology so that robots instead of people work in factories. The savings in manufacturing goods abroad are enormous.

Tax breaks for the corporations and the wealthy, who no longer pay their fair share in this society, have become routine! Many pay less in taxes—literally—than ordinary salaried Canadians. Some pay no income tax at all. And some still get subsidies for their industries. Is it any wonder that we can no longer afford the social safety net? It is about time that somebody protested the erosion of our way of life. Like many observers of the degeneration of our society, I welcome the Occupation of Wall Street movement.

A cause of great concern to many of us—not just the Occupiers—is the growing gap between the rich and poor. According to the American movement one percent of their population has most of the wealth. The same is true in Canada, and the gap is increasing faster than in

the United States. In both countries tax breaks have contributed enormously to this gap as have lavish salaries for business executives. Moreover, as poorly paid jobs in the service sector replace good jobs in the manufacturing sector, the middle class is disappearing and joining the ranks of the poor. The use of food banks is on the rise; a person cannot live on the minimum wage, let alone a family. In any case, wages for most people have not risen substantially in years; yet the cost of living increases all the time.

Another casualty of the current oligarchies* is higher education. Having given our money away in tax breaks, governments can no longer fund universities to the extent that they once did. So the private sector has stepped in and, of course, the university administrators are beholden to these wealthy individuals and corporations and tend to give them what they want. And what they want is getting value for money, by which they mean that universities should be more practical, more job-oriented and more commercial.

In addition, tuition fees have been raised over and over until only the children of the wealthy can attend university without incurring a huge student debt. The special concern of Learning Curves is the plight of the adult student with adult responsibilities who wants to go to university or college. The high tuition costs make the possibility less and less likely. High tuition

fees are not the only problem.

A thorough knowledge of the humanities used to be the sign of an educated person. Today the humanities are being marginalized through underfunding. One might even say the humanities are under attack and it is easy to see why. The study of the humanities does not have a direct link to jobs or profit and is therefore not very useful according to the thinking of those who give money to the universities. There may perhaps be a more subtle reason for the war on the humanities. The study of the humanities encourages people to think critically about their society, to look to other cultures to learn how they deal or dealt with societal or economic problems. In short, the humanities ask people to think for themselves about the important questions in life which have little to do with making money. Perhaps the humanities are a threat to the current agenda.

What the Occupy Wall Street movement has done is focus public attention on the issues of fairness, or lack of fairness, in our society. They do not have to have the answers to such complex problems. We owe them a debt of gratitude simply for making us more aware of the problems, a first step in finding solutions.

* An oligarchy is a form of power structure in which power effectively rests with an elite class distinguished by royalty, wealth, family ties, commercial, and/or military legitimacy. (Wikipedia)

MONEY FACTS

In 2009 alone, it [Canada Revenue Agency] recovered \$1 billion in offshore accounts.

Economist Armine Yalnizyan tracked the richest 1 per cent of Canadians; that is, those whose income was higher than 99 per cent of Canadian tax filers. This group—the 246,000 people whose average income was \$405,000—took home almost a third of all growth in incomes from 1998 to 2007.

The average income level of the poorest group of people in Canada—after taxes and transfers and after adjusting for inflation—rose over the time period for which we have data—but only marginally. It rose from \$12,400 in 1976 to \$14,500 in 2009.

According to the American Federation of Labor, Apple spends only \$9 on labour for every \$499 iPad it produces. Of course the factory is in China.

Canada's highest paid executive in 2009, Aaron Regent, chief executive officer of Barrick Gold, received \$24.2 million in compensation that year. In the same year, the median income

for a single Canadian was \$22,800

The federal government continues to give billions of dollars in tax breaks to the companies producing oil and gas in Canada. Analysis shows a total of \$1.4 billion per year in federal subsidies, \$840 million of which are special tax breaks, with a disproportionate share going to dirty fuels such as the Alberta Tar Sands.

Ontario university undergraduates are paying the third highest average tuition fees in Canada at \$5,381 this year, a 4.4 per cent increase from last September. Once compulsory ancillary fees are included, the tab jumps to \$6,082.

Food bank use has grown by an unprecedented 28 per cent since the recession in 2008.

400,000 Ontarians — or 3 per cent of the province's population — use the food banks every month.

Nearly a million businesses in Canada have not paid any corporate income tax for nearly a decade, according to recently released figures from the Canada Revenue Agency.

LEARNING CURVES JOINS THE 21ST CENTURY!

BY DEBORAH NOEL

Well, it has taken some time but we believe we have finally done it! Learning Curves now has a digital presence. We have a new website at www.learning-curves.ca. On our site you can find information about WEA, the most current issue of LC and lots of tips and handy hints for the learning community. You say you can't remember that resource that was in a previous issue? Access the latest issue of Learning Curves online. Our Facebook page can help you connect with the learning community in the GTA, share information and access the latest resources available. And don't forget to join us on Twitter. Our

Twitter(er) will be twittering the most up-to-date information and happenings that 145 characters can provide!

We know that taking those steps to lifelong learning or job searching can be scary and we want to help make your experience more successful. The new millennium has taken learning out of the classroom environment and into cyberspace. So, whether you decide to Like us on Facebook (we like to be liked!), follow us on Twitter (tweet, tweet), send us an email via our website (with lots of emoticons) or use snail mail (we check our mailbox daily!), we look forward hearing from you!

INSIDE:

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157 Carlton Street, Suite 205 Toronto, ON M5A 2K2 Advertising call: 416.923.7872 Fax: 416.923.7896 e-mail: learningcurves@hotmail.com. www.weacanada.ca



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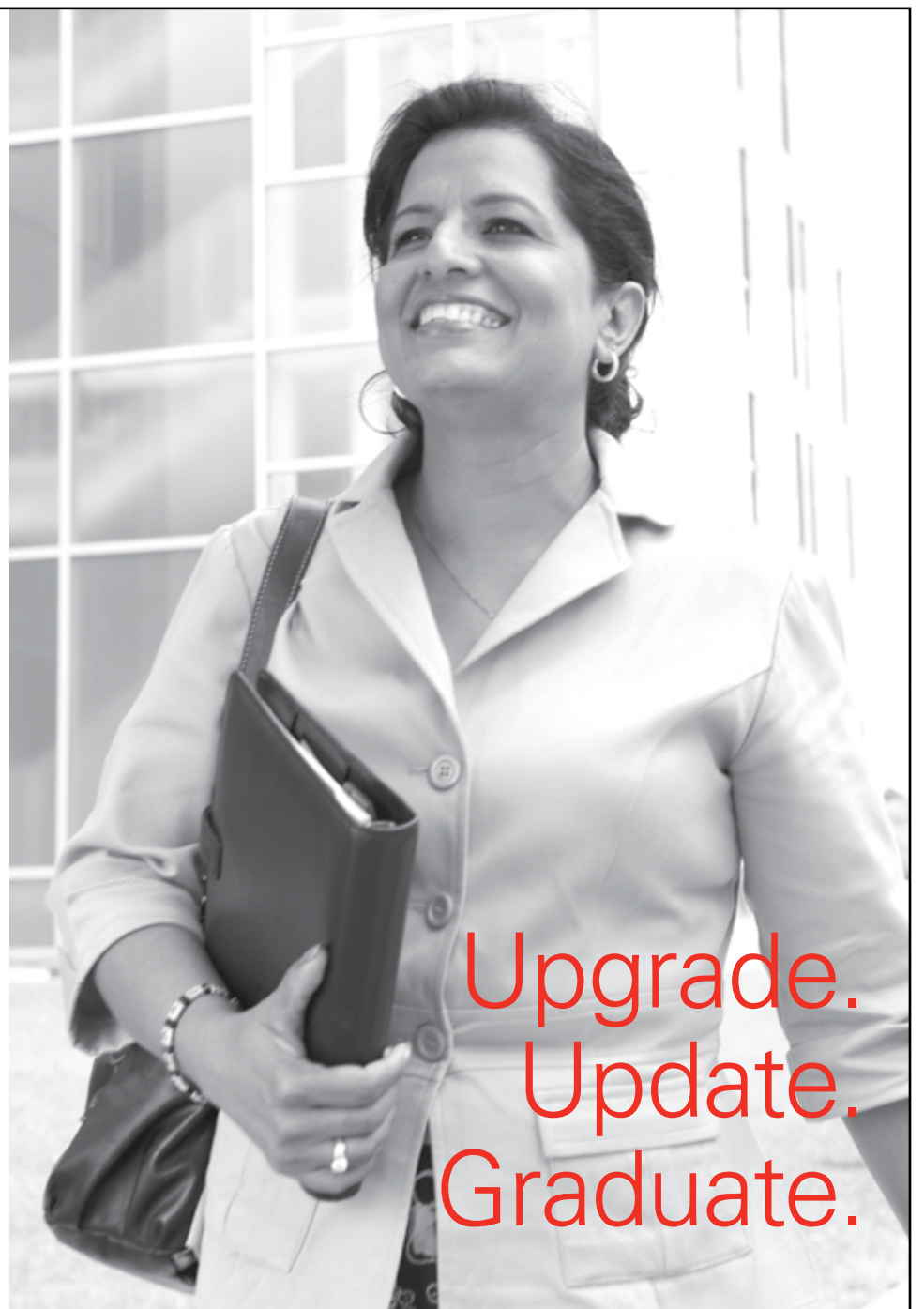
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ADULT DAY SCHOOLS IN TORONTO

By Wendy Terry

Toronto District School Board Adult Day Schools offer two programs for learners who want to earn high school credits or an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD): the Ed-Vance program for youth, eighteen to twenty, who want to finish high school and the Adult Program for adults over twenty one.

The four Ed-Vance programs are for students who have not completed high school although it is recommended that students have at least 5 of 30 high school credits to be considered for this program. Students out of school for one term are usually motivated to return to school to recommit, but more and more students are coming directly from mainstream high schools directly into the Ed-Vance programs.

Fully funded by the Ontario government, the Ed-Vance programs offer many of the same supports as the mainstream schools. Supportive teachers give these youth the extra support and guidance they need to succeed in getting their OSSD. All the same students need to have a greater level of maturity and ability to work independently to succeed.

The Ed-Vance programs often suit

the needs of older students better than mainstream schools because students who are behind in credit accumulation are in a school setting with students of their own age, facing similar challenges. The peer support is stronger than in a high school where everybody is several years younger. Students feel Ed-Vance is an educational home for them. Programs are offered in four 9-week quadesters, thus allowing students to take up to three courses per quad. Most Ed-Vance students take at least two courses per quad.

The second program is the Adult program where any adult over the age of 21 can attend. Through a Prior Learning Assessment process, students can be granted equivalency credits for a number of high school credits based on prior learning, life and work experience up to a maximum of 26 credits. However, students must successfully complete at least four to five credits at the adult school to earn an OSSD. The Grade 12 English credit must be one of the final four subjects that students study at the senior level. There are

four quadesters and most students take two courses a quadester. Given that the courses are quite intense, it could take a minimum of one year to earn an OSSD.

Often newcomers who have high school or post secondary degrees from their home country will take these programs before they go on to post secondary education or work to get a taste of the Ontario educational system. The school sites are smaller than a large college or university campus and so more comfortable.

Then there is a career counseling service where guidance counselors interview each student before they start classes and are available to counsel students throughout their program.

This counseling helps students select which college or university program to attend. This is invaluable as quite often the counseling workshops or services at colleges naturally recommend their programs rather than one at another college.

At the Adult Day Schools, as at a regular high schools, students can discover all their educational options.

Finally these sites have co-op programs which help students get that all important Canadian work experience. Though some co-op programs are targeted to a specific labour market, childhood education, others are open ended, placing students with employers where the students will use their previous skills. These programs help students get jobs and to pursue appropriate pathways.

All students are tested for both programs so if you do not have the required academic level you may be referred to an ESL or LINC program if your English language skills need further development before joining an Adult Day School, or you may be directed to a Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program. (See article on page six about the Literacy and Basic Skills programs.)

The phone numbers for the adult day schools are

SCAS 416 396 6921
CALC 416 393 9740
BCALC 416 394 7130
YALC 416 395 6505

Emery Adult 416 395 3225 Learning Centre has an Adult program but not an Ed-Vance one. The website is



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ADULT EDUCATION LABOUR MARKET – OCT. 24, 2011

(Submitted by Centre for Adult Education and Community Outreach, Faculty of Education, Brock University)

Students pursuing studies in Adult Education are looking to open new doors as professional trainers and educators of adult learners.

For many, that will mean advancing as teachers and trainers in their current companies or industries. Others are looking to begin new careers in an economy that has many people concerned about finding a job.

“The biggest labour market advantage for people preparing for a career in Adult Education is the vast array of job opportunities that currently exist,” says Dr. Candace Figg,

Acting Director of the Centre for Adult Education and Community Outreach in the Faculty of Education at Brock University.

“Adult Education students are looking at career opportunities found within all areas of the public and private sectors — industry, business, government, post-secondary education, community, social and health services,” says Figg.

“We like to think that there is good reason to be optimistic. There is an expectation today of learning on the job — all sectors embrace lifelong learning for employees, for their personal growth and professional enhancement. That requires more opportunities for training, as well as credential renewals and upgrading. That creates a growing demand for expertise in facilitation, curriculum design, and assessment, which, in turn creates new opportunities for our graduates.”

“Some of the optimism regarding employment comes from the fact that the majority of students enrolled in Brock’s Adult Education degree and certificate programs are already in the workplace and pursuing their studies part time. That allows them to blend their studies and their current work in a way that may very naturally create pathways to advance them forward in their existing professions.”

Figg advises anyone considering an Adult Education career to do some research about job prospects in specific

areas or sectors of interest to them.

“Get out and talk with people involved in Adult Education in the areas in which you have an interest,” she says. “Find out about opportunities that exist now and prospects for the future in order to find the right fit for you,” she says.

For a bigger picture of Adult Education labour market trends, there are many resources available online including the following:

- Service Canada:

Provides information and statistics about employment and job outlook.

Service Canada sites specific to the Adult Education sector are:

1. College and Other Vocational Instructors
www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/qc/job_futures/statistics/4131.shtml

2. Administrators - Post-Secondary Education and Vocational Training
www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/qc/job_futures/statistics/0312.shtm

Both sites describe job prospects as “good.” More detailed information includes: type of work; examples of occupations titles; outlook; sources of employment; labour pool; industries, trends and more.

- Working In Canada

The Working in Canada website can assist individuals who are searching for work or looking to make career decisions. It offers users free occupational and career information such as educational requirements, main duties, wage rates and salaries, current employment trends and outlooks.

www.workingincanada.gc.ca

- Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities— Labour Market Information

The MTCU labour market information site helps individuals and businesses make informed decisions about careers, education, employment, and business plans. Data and analysis of trends in the labour market provide valuable insights into labour market conditions and trends in Ontario, as well as in specific regions or communities.

www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/labourmarket/

Brock University is located in St. Catharines, Ont. The Centre for Adult Education and Community Outreach offers a Bachelor of Education in Adult Education degree program and a Certificate in Adult Education program in online delivery and site-based delivery at venues across Ontario including the GTA. Find out more by visiting <http://brocku.ca/education/futurestudents/adulted>

SECOND CAREER CONTINUES

By Anne McDonagh

Christina Lukie has just begun training for a career in social services at George Brown College. Unlike some of her fellow students she knows what she is getting into. And so she is likely to stay the course until graduation. Because Christina is a Second Career client, she has a clear idea what her work will be like; and she knows her salary will be modest when she graduates; nevertheless, she is certain that this is the career for her. Also, she knows that there are ways to advance. For instance, in two years when she gets her diploma from George Brown, she could then take another two years at Ryerson University and get her Bachelor’s degree in Social Work.

Second Career, introduced in 2009 and sponsored by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, is a signature program of the Ontario Government. Its goal is to re-tool 20,000 workers for the jobs of the future. The money available to those accepted into the program—up to \$28,000 over two years—is for books, living expenses, help caring for dependents, travel, transportation, disability supports and other living and training costs. This is a generous grant—not a loan—for two years to help people help themselves.

Until recently, Christina worked as a nanny. She enjoyed working with children but realized there was no career path in this field and started looking for other options.

Christina began the process of becoming a Second Career client in October of 2010. Her employment counsellor at St. Stephen’s Community House, Employment and Training Services, Ana Paredes, supported Christina during the whole process of becoming accepted as a Second Career client.

In December of 2010, Christina

learned that she was eligible—not accepted, just eligible—for Second Career. That is when the work began.

With Ana’s help she considered what work she would like to do. Then as required by Second Career, she researched the careers of interest to her. She decided upon social services hoping one day to work with children or youth, thus building upon her previous skills and experience as a nanny.

For eight months she researched work in social services. She met monthly with Ana to whom Christina says she will be eternally grateful for her direction and encouragement. Christina interviewed people in the field, did labour market research such as the demand for social service workers. She found out what the prerequisites were and what subjects she would study. She was disappointed when she found out what she would get paid. The starting salary was less than she earned as a nanny. But she decided she would like to work in this field anyway. Besides, there was a career path and the opportunity for advancement.

Even after all that research, Christina still did not know for sure if she would be accepted as a Second Career client. But in July she was accepted and in September she began her training.

Why such a demanding process to become a Second Career client? The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is investing so much money and the re-tooling of workers is so important, that it wants to be sure that the clients want to and are able to make optimum use of the program.

Christina proved to herself, to her counsellor Ana and to Second Career that she is likely to complete the program and have a successful career in social services.

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WHAT IS THE TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD'S LBS PROGRAM?

By Carol Visser

The Toronto District School Board offers Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs at over 30 locations throughout Toronto. In the LBS program, we offer adults the opportunity to upgrade their skills in reading, writing, numeracy and basic computer skills. When learners attend our classes, they become more adept at Finding and Using Information, Communicating Ideas, Understanding and Using Numbers, and using Digital Technology.

While many of our successful learners may have been hesitant or a little nervous about coming back to school, once they started with us, they discovered quickly that LBS classes could be an important stepping stone towards their goals.

Here are some of their success stories. Note that we've changed the names of our learners to protect their privacy.

David attended LBS classes and upgraded the skills he needed for admission to college. At college, he successfully completed the Police Foundation Program. He's a volunteer constable now and is waiting to hear back from the Ontario Provincial Police.

Dolores attended LBS and successfully upgraded her skills for admission to the adult credit high school. From high school, she successfully completed upgrading courses at the college level and has

been admitted to York University.

Mohammad upgraded his skills in the LBS program in order to be admitted to the adult high school. He is now completing his 3rd year in a college Accounting Program.

Safia tells us that as a result of her participation in LBS classes she is better able to understand notes from her children's school, manages her own appointments and communicates more confidently on behalf of her disabled mother.

These are but a few of the successes experienced by those who have taken advantage of the free upgrading programming Literacy and Basic Skills offers. Our classes are learner-centered, and allow learners to work at their own pace towards achieving their own goals. The program is free of charge and TTC tokens are provided to those who qualify. Those who would like more information can call our friendly clerical staff at one of our three locations. They'll be happy to help you.

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Carol Visser is a program coordinator for the LBS Program at the Toronto District School Board

ADJUSTING -AN IMMIGRANT'S STORY

By Rumana Khalifa

Five years ago I wrote an article for Learning Curves about my experiences since coming to Canada. Some experiences I mentioned were negative; for example, I encountered discrimination because of both my race and my age, which prevented me from getting several jobs. On the other hand, I met many people, who believed in me and I have had several satisfying jobs. I have learned an enormous amount from all my experiences both negative and positive.

In that article I mentioned running a small café for awhile and other jobs.

At the time I wrote the article, I was the coordinator of the Eritrean Canadian Community Centre. I stayed at the ECCC for three years until 2008. While I was at the ECCC I worked weekends at a shelter for teenagers. But funding for the ECCC was problematic and the pay from the shelter was not enough to live on.

I should say that from the very beginning of my time in Canada all I really wanted was a stable job and I wanted to help people. So again I began looking for work. One organization offered me a job as an itinerant settlement worker for 20 hours a week. It did not pay enough and perhaps was not as stable as I wanted.

There were other possibilities, but finally I found the perfect job. I am working as an information and referral specialist. What that means is that I help people find the information they need whether it be the right agency to contact for emergency housing, where their nearest food bank is or how to get legal aid etc. It is a job that allows me to make a difference in people's lives at least for the moment. I use my facility in several languages to communicate with clients in their own language. From my experiences as an immigrant, I really understand where many of the clients are coming from. I know that I make a difference in their lives and that means everything to me.

Despite all my challenges, I feel I have achieved what I needed to achieve. I bought a house in 2004. (Believe me, if I can do it, anyone can!) and my daughter is in second year university (I invested in an RESP for her and fortunately that has worked out.) and she is doing well.

I am happy and content with my life. Of course, I am not living in luxury, but I have a secure job which satisfies me, a home that comforts me and a daughter who has the opportunity to fulfill her dreams.



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TORONTO GROUP OFFERS LATEST INFORMATION ON CITY'S JOB TRENDS

By Karen Ferguson

For those of us pondering a change in our working lives, big or small, a question that inevitably surfaces as we flip through the college and university calendars, is But where are they hiring? Or maybe, Who will be hiring when I graduate?

These questions aren't easily answered. It quickly becomes clear that there may be no straight line from a completed educational program to a related job, with many factors and risks to be weighed. For us, labour market information is one of the starting points to help ease the risk and help us make the best possible decision.

One of the best sources for information and insight about where the jobs are and where they are emerging in Toronto, is the Toronto Workforce Innovation Group (TWIG). One of 25 "workforce planning groups" found across Ontario, TWIG is financially supported by the provincial government and governed by representatives from business, labour, education, and some special interest communities.

"Our job is to tell the story of our labour market," says Karen Lior, TWIG's Executive Director. "We focus on issues specific to Toronto, give resonance to labour market changes and issues, and we strive to make that information accessible."

Ms. Lior and her staff start with government data generated by the census, then seek out and mine data created by other sources such as university researchers, business, and professional organizations. They, like the other groups, compile a state-of-the-union type of report every year, called the TOP Report—Toronto's Opportunities and Priorities, Local Labour Market Update.

The 2011 report's "Sectors to Watch" looks at the retail trade, construction, arts and culture, and information and communications technology (ICT). For example, for the retail trade sector, "...there is an increasing need for qualified professionals who are experts in their field, such as store managers, as well as experts in administration and management. The retirement rate for store managers is higher than average and has created numerous opportunities. The unemployment rate in this sector is considerably below the national average.

"Jobs in the Retail Sector are requiring higher and higher levels of expertise and experience, somewhat driven by the technological changes in inventory, sales and marketing. This trend is now affecting small businesses, which in turn are tooling up and training themselves on new technologies."

Emerging themes and priorities in the labour market are also identified. Top of the list is the growing "green economy": "New opportunities for 'green' careers are arising in response to a surge in demand. These careers include environmental auditors, environmental engineers, solar panel installers and technicians who can manufacture and build wind turbines. Much of this is in response to the rising cost of oil and interest in renewable sources of energy, as well as increasing demand for local food and growing emphasis on local and/or environmentally safe products."

Also cited as emerging themes and priorities are diversity, economic transformation, and technological advancement.

The TOP report is only the starting

point for TWIG's reporting. Ms. Lior cites three key works in recent years, among many other works, which have proven pivotal in how we think about Toronto's labour market, and perhaps further afield.

2010's *An Economy Out of Shape: Changing the Hourglass* identified a top-heavy proportion of knowledge-based jobs in Toronto, when, "in the rest of Ontario, the hourglass is bottom-heavy, with a higher proportion of (e)ntry-level jobs."

Planning to Succeed in Toronto examined workforce planning initiatives undertaken in Chicago, Philadelphia, Dublin, Berlin, and London, England, and offers recommendations for consideration in the development and implementation of labour market planning in Toronto and Ontario.

The recently released *Greening the Economy - Transitioning to New Careers: Career Profiles* was produced by TWIG and the workforce development boards in Peel Halton and York Region, Brantford, West Gwillimbury, and is an inventory of "green jobs" and their educational and skill requirements (including most important high school subjects needed), the numbers of people working in that occupation at various ages, and current salaries in the field. From agrologists to building supplies distributors, financial services occupations, environmental economists, property managers, and refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics, information about 72 occupations in transition in response to the greening of jobs, is presented. Indeed, the transition to "green jobs" is so significant, we now speak of "green collar jobs."

That's only a fraction of the data TWIG has to offer.

"High school guidance counsellors and job developers love the TOP report. It's solid data," says Ms. Lior. "Our website tracking tells us that people from 20 countries use our information to plan their migration to Canada or Toronto.

"We also know," she continued, "that the report is used by local training and employment services to develop programs and proposals."

The good news, says Ms. Lior, is that TWIG has a website revamp in the works which will feature more easily accessible data, less reading of reports. The newly designed site is expected to launch by the end of November.

In the meantime, says Ms. Lior, the recent significant shifts in Toronto's labour market include a shift away from big manufacturing to "boutique" manufacturing, a focus on information communication technology (ITC, Toronto is the third largest employer city in North America) and the soaring demand for digital literacy skills across occupations.

"An inability to manage and manipulate technical devices, as I would describe it, from the simple to the complex -- barcode scanners and inventory devices are only the beginning -- is a shortcoming of Toronto's workforce. For all sectors and all occupations, the impact is coming."

There are no occupational areas in Toronto, says Ms. Lior, where there is a training or educational shortage.

"The problem is that many people can't afford training." The supports that were at one time in place for people to retrain and upgrade, she says, simply are no longer available. For more information, check out TWIG at www.workforceinnovation.ca.

As well, the group has a monthly e-bulletin on labour market and employment trends in Toronto, which you can sign up for on their homepage. Those who might appreciate a clipping service on the topic, "like" TWIG on facebook.

Karen Ferguson, former Executive Director of The Workers' Educational Association, is an instructor with the Workplace Communications in Canada program at Laurentian University.

ADD COURSES TO YOUR CHRISTMAS 2011 WISH LIST

Giving a loved one a continuing education course for Christmas says something special to them. It tells them that you see them as a dynamic, learning, creative person. You could find a course that the two of you could take together—quality time together.

It is known but not well publicized that many a romance has begun or been enlivened in a continuing education class or over a coffee and conversations after.

Need some ideas? Have a look at the Learning Curves Web Site www.learning-curve.ca and check out the December 2010

issue for creative courses or the March/April 2011 issue for liberal arts courses.

The winter courses start in early January and registration is on now. So grab a calendar from your local college, or school board. Cultural Centres offer courses the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum, the Ontario Science Centre. Even retail stores offer courses like Home Depot in renovations, Loblaws in cooking, St. Michael's in arts and crafts. Pick up a copy of Whole Note from your local library where lesson in music or music appreciation are promoted. Look around

you neighbourhood bulletin boards for local artists or musicians who offer courses.

There are ways you can give gifts to support your loved one's learning. Give them time by offering to babysit, a home cooked meal ready for the microwave after class or before. You could offer to tutor in a course. You could buy stocking stuffers from Business Depot or Gwartzman's like project supplies or art supplies. A gift certificate for Best Buy could help buy a tech tool or an enhancement for their computer that would help them with a digital media course. And that old stand

by a gift certificate from Tim Horton's could finance those after class coffees.

My Christmas wish list is this: from the TDSB Learn4Life calendar, a beginner course in painting; from Humber College, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Philosophy of Love and Sex, from Whole Note, lectures on What is Opera by the Canadian Opera Company, and from the Royal Ontario Museum, Lectures, Courses and Events a course like Hands On Ancient Civilizations. What's your Christmas Learning Wish List? Make one up and pass it around.



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LOOKING FOR JOB SECURITY? TRAIN IN THE MEDICAL FIELD!

BY WENDY TERRY

With the aging of Canada's baby boomers, it is a sure thing that health care work is going to increase. Job security is assured in the medical field and thus a good place to invest your education dollar.

One of the places that adults can get training in health care work is at Robetech Institute. Recently I spent an afternoon with Jean Robles, one of the founders of Robetech College in 1988.

This career college specializes in health care training. They offer the following Diploma programs:

Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Assistant
ECG/Phlebotomy Technician (blood samples)

Medical Laboratory Technician
Medical Office Assistant
Live-in Caregiver/Personal Support Worker.

Students of the Medical Laboratory Technician program are eligible to write certification exams for the Ontario Society of Medical Technologists and the Canadian Society of Medical Laboratory Science. Robetech has a review program for these exams which is offered on-line.

Robetech Institute is a registered

career college with the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities and a member of the Ontario Association of Career Colleges. Career colleges have continuous intake so you do not have to wait for term or yearly start dates; they have flexible schedules to accommodate students with child care or part-time work commitments, and they have small class sizes so you get individual hands-on attention from the instructors.

Graduates work in hospitals, private clinics, home health care, long term care facilities, insurance companies, medical labs, medical research labs, sports and fitness centres, doctor's offices, recreation centres, physiotherapy clinics, Canadian Blood Services, and other health-related organizations. Robetech has career services that help graduates with resumes, job search and interview techniques.

Tuition at career colleges is more than at the community colleges because career colleges do not receive government funding as community colleges do. To help students with tuition costs, there is financial assistance for those who qualify including Second Career funding. Ask Robetech what assistance you might qualify for. They also have installment payment plans.

Internationally Trained

Medical Professionals

For newcomers with medical training, Robetech offers advanced standing programs in most of these programs. Robetech has an approved Prior Learning Assessment Process that grants students credit for what they already know, so they can complete these programs as soon as possible. More important, they can use this training to get working as soon as possible. Robetech has extensive knowledge of the overseas colleges in the Philippines and India and other countries from their Prior Learning assessment experience, and so they can readily understand the prior training of many newcomers.

Classrooms simulate work settings

Jean gave me a tour of Robetech classrooms. Classrooms—not quite the right word—are set up exactly like the medical setting where a student would be working in the future: physiotherapy rooms, a medical office reception area, labs equipped with medical testing machines, computer programs and equipment the students would use in the field.

Robetech wants all students to walk through their teaching areas before they commit to taking classes.

They are proud of their facilities.

Canadian Work Experience.

Students are placed with employers, so work experience is part of the training program. Jean leafed through the employer's evaluations of students with me. The following comments from employer evaluation will be invaluable to students when looking for work. Some comments that caught my eye were "She was very helpful to our busy location... and well be a real asset to any organization." "Her customer service skills are excellent.." "...her venipuncture technique was exceptional." The students have good references from employers along with their training.

Clear Language Teaching Materials.

Leafing through the evaluation of Robetech students one comment really caught my eye "course material clear and to the point" Quite often incomprehensible medical jargon is the norm. To know that the course material is clear and to the point would encourage one to dig in and learn.

Check out Robetech's training in the health care field at www.robetech.com.

Or call 416-466-6107. Or drop in visit at 150 Laird Drive, Toronto.



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INTRODUCING THE MINISTER

By John Kennaley

CONTINUED FROM 1

television program - we were watching a piece on Europe and the Euro zone - we were going on, getting into debates about what was the history of different things, and we had almost simultaneous access.

Television now - we watch a lot of documentaries, movies and things like that. There are always learning seminars. I often find when I go to speak - there was a major thing on art and design, and reports of designing to economically successful companies, and I spent an entire morning there listening to lectures of quality that were with people that had a [more] vast experience in these fields, than probably most of the people I would have been lectured to when I was in universities in the ancient times.

As an elected official, you are constantly learning. When I became Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I had to learn my job almost from scratch, because you have to learn the Ministry. Not that I am alone in that. I think that being appointed into cabinet, and for most of us when we start something new, we are acquiring huge amounts of information and knowledge. For a lot of people, my sister completed high school in her early-thirties, and went on to a college degree later on. My partner had a military career in his early-thirties, and went on to a nursing degree. I think most of us are life-long learners now, formally and informally.

LC: How do you see your role, and that of your Ministry, in helping adults to go back to school?

GM: I think that we have to continue to give strong support to community organizations. I think that a lot of the people that provide employment, pre-school preparation and adult learning programs are often people who have gone through that experience themselves. A lot our community based not-for-profit organizations that we support, our partners in helping Ontarians achieve success in life and better access to knowledge, are often run by people who have done it themselves, or who are drawn to it ...because of their personal passion. So, to continue to fund and support those [organizations].

Creating more seats in our colleges

and universities. You may know, in the last eight years we have added a 100,000 seats to college and university programs. We are about to add another 60,000. We have the tuition grant that is equivalent to ... about thirty percent of the cost of a university or a college program. That new program, that starts in a few weeks, is going to be very important to make university and college more affordable. We also have low-income family assistance: if you make under \$41,000 in household income, you get fifty percent of your college and education paid for. We have invested very strongly, \$28 million, into Pathways to Education, that helps folks who are going through the school system connect to universities and colleges with some income assistance right away. We run a series of programs like Second Career for mature workers who have lost their jobs, and who are trying to re-skill and retrain themselves. Continuing those programs has been very important.

We run the Bridges program for folks whose education was received in another country, who might not immediately be recognized with the equivalency of the same credentials in Canada. There are thousands and thousands of Ontarians who fit that description, who through the Bridges program at our colleges and universities, are able to get the skills they need to continue in their field, or redirect their experience with their existing education to a similar field that they can practice in.

That is just a sample. There is a very big commitment. The Premier has said our two priorities are education and healthcare. We won't be cutting in those areas. We will continue to invest. I don't think we have ever had a Premier in Ontario, maybe since Bill Davis, who has put on education, training and employment such a huge priority. I am very fortunate as Minister of a Ministry to which the budget cutters are told to keep their hands off of. I am very fortunate in that sense.

LC: And, what of the Second Career program - will it be extended?

GM: Yes. It is over 40,000 [clients served] now. It is quite a large program. 75%, about three quarters of those people, found

jobs. I think the satisfaction rate in the last study that I saw, was something like over 80% of people were satisfied that they had gotten good value out of that.

We have committed to not just expanding student aid and employment programs for people who have been long in Ontario - we have put a huge amount of money into that - but there are also people that had the job experience from somewhere else and had an education, but they can't get money or work in Canada. So, you're here four or five years, you've got your Canadian citizenship, you're waiting for a job, but to become a certified general accountant, or to become a physician or pharmacologist, you must get twelve months work experience. It doesn't mean you get a job, but for 1,200 Ontarians who already have their degree and work experience, and who need twelve months practice in Canada, we have a small tax incentive for up to \$10,000 for employers.

We are taking a very complex, holistic approach, recognizing that there are many reasons why different groups of Ontarians who are not able to participate in the economy, to help Ontario students afford their tuition, right on through to helping those who have work experience and education abroad and who have come to Canada, to make sure everyone has a chance to participate in the economy. That is a huge challenge.

LC: What would you like to say to Learning Curves readers, who are adult students, their teachers, and counselors?

GM: I want to thank them very much for the extraordinary commitment that they make. We are very blessed and lucky to have them. It takes a real commitment to public service to support other Canadians and neighbours who connect to improve their skills and pursue jobs that may be more meaningful, and to give people better choices. A lot of us in the public service work to give people better choices in their lives, than they had before. I, also, think people that take on educational challenges, especially when they take them on later in life, are very courageous people.

My sister was a single mom of three,

whose husband left her, with very modest financial means. I was very inspired when she, in her thirties with young children, went back in for a nursing degree. I know how hard it was to manage. I know the organizations that supported her through that were critical to her success, the friendships, knowledge, and support she got from them. We are very blessed and lucky to have you. To have people providing these services, as well as the people who are working with Learning Curves as your clients, as your collaborators, and friends.

LC: As former Mayor of Winnipeg, what your thoughts on the new NHL Winnipeg Jets?

GM: A terrible burden that I bear, being a true Canadian, is that I have lived in three cities. I grew up playing hockey in Montréal as a kid. I played goalie. The reason I became a Liberal was that Ken Dryden became a Liberal. Goalies were always beaten up, and were the butt of jokes when I was twelve, thirteen, and fourteen. Ken Dryden was the goalie for the Montréal Canadians. He made being a goalie cool. Before the year Ken Dryden became the goalie, I was the butt of jokes. I have to admit I am a big Habs fan.

I had a big deal in getting the Jets back to Winnipeg. I have a big attachment to them. I thought we had lost them forever. So, it's hard not to be a Jets fan.

And, I have always loved the Maple Leafs. I have always believed the Maple Leafs were one of the greatest and most significant community and cultural assets. My dream would be to see all the [Canadian] teams in the final. I would like to see the Phoenix Coyotes, the old Winnipeg Jets, actually come back and become the Canadian Nordiques. I believe we have to nationalize hockey back to Canada.

I went down to the Jets - Maple Leafs game, I was impressed when the Winnipeg Jets came into the arena for the first time, they got a standing ovation. I thought Torontonians were pretty cool people. I believe we were a very class act. It was the best hockey, a 3-3 tie. It was so exciting to the very end [and] really exiting watching the overtime.

OCCUPATION SPECIFIC LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR NEWCOMERS (OSLT) AND COLLEGE ENTRY PROGRAMS FOR ALL ADULTS

By Wendy Terry

This article focuses on OSLT programs and lesser known entry programs like the General Arts and Science programs at the colleges. OSLT programs are free language training programs for newcomers who are looking to restart their careers in specific labour markets like business, health, human services, construction, automotive and technology.

You can find the college websites for these courses at www.co-oslt.org. Each website listed here leads to different program areas in each college.

Each college will have some programs that are unique and all of them will have programs that are similar. Subject listings

and descriptions are not uniform. Each website highlights different areas; you may see a topic of interest on one website and it won't be mentioned on another. That happens because colleges are large institutions and each is organized differently. So when searching for programs, the strategy is ASK and ASK and ASK again.

Sometimes it is better to tell someone what you need rather than asking for a specific type of training as that person may direct you to a better starting point than the one you are asking for. For example, you could say, "I'm a newcomer engineer looking for language training so I can get a job in Canada"

If you google Centennial's site oslt@centennialcollege.ca you are linked to the School of Advancement. All the programs and services listed here will help you advance to college, university or work whether you are a newcomer or not.

The first page you are linked to is the Occupation Specific Language Training for Accounting and Finance. Not only can you learn the language associated with accounting and finance but you also practice typical interactions involving listening and speaking for this type of work. As with all OSLT programs, career building skills such as targeted resumes, interviewing, networking etc. are included.

By linking to Tuition Free courses on the navigation sub bar for the School of Advancement, then clicking on OSLT courses, you find other OSLT courses listed under Workplace Communication Skills for Business: Entrepreneurship, Sales and Marketing, Project Management, for Health Care and for Automotive Trades. All these courses cover similar material but are specific to each labour market.

The School of Advancement offers programs for all adult students which enable them to advance to college or university General Arts and Science. (GAS programs)

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Many newcomers tend to ignore any program with General Arts in its title but by earning a Certificate (one year) or Diploma (two years) you can transfer to university with 15 or 30 credits already earned or to a college program.

The best thing about the web page for GAS programs is they actually list the programs you can transfer to at a university or college by clicking on the link, Articulation Agreements. Articulation means joining two pieces of equipment together like a ball and socket. In this case the term is used metaphorically and means that a GAS program can be joined with a college or university program. For example, if you earn a GAS Diploma from Centennial you can enter York University with 30 credits.

GAS programs, for which there is a tuition cost, are offered part-time as well as full-time.

Choosing the Right Career workshop, for all students, is a gem. For \$5 you get nine hours of help thinking through a new career direction.

George Brown College

To find the same type of programs at George Brown, you need to look at two Centres: the Centre for International and Immigrant Education; and the Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies. When you google www.oslt@georgebrown.ca you get into Immigrant Education which offers Occupation Specific Language Training in Business, Health Sciences, Human Services, Construction, Automotive and Technology.

You also get a link to Entry Advising. Although linked to career counseling, these advisors give you educational counseling and are more focused on course selection at George Brown.

The side bar to Immigrant Education has a great link called Get Credit for What you Know. It outlines how you can get up to 75% of your course through Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) and Transfer Credits. The PLAR process can give you credit for “knowledge and skills from previous work, volunteering and even non-credit learning.” This link also explains advanced standing (i.e. entering at the second year instead of the first year), and exemptions from George Brown courses based on credits from other sources. This process can save you valuable time by not repeating what you already know. These credit granting processes are available to all students not just to newcomers.

The Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies leads you to the General Arts and Science (GAS) programs found at all colleges for all students. The George Brown site does not list articulation agreements with other institutions as did Centennial’s, so you need to ask.

Humber College

When you google oslt@humber.ca you are linked directly to an OSLT page. On the sidebar you can link to an advising service. Here counsellors can help Internationally Trained Professionals with advice on “employment pathways and academic programs.”

The OSLT program seems to be housed in the English Language Centre of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences though this link is only clear when you use the

Humber search engine to find Occupation Specific Language Training. At the school of Liberal Arts and Sciences you can find other entry programs for all students such as Academic Upgrading programs (ACE) and General Arts and Science (GAS) programs.

Every college has ACE programs see the September 2011 issue of Learning Curves at our web site www.learning-curves.ca page 7 under College Academic Upgrading is free.

Seneca College

If you google oslt@senecac.on.ca you reach a dedicated web page. On the side bar click on Occupations and you will get a detailed list of occupations for each sector. For instance, the Health Sciences Sector lists Dental Hygienist, Medical Radiation Technologist, Nurse, Personal Support worker and Sleep Technologist.

This OSLT page can link you to other programs. If you click on Seneca Faculty of Continuing Education and Training, you will find two useful faculties, the Faculty of Workforce Skills Development and the Faculty of Liberal Arts.

Like the other college websites, if you shop around these two you will find similar helpful entry programs. The Liberal Arts website has the most amazing link, Academic Opportunities. It is a detailed list of how you can take your Liberal Arts Diploma and ladder your way to a degree program at the University of Toronto, York University and other universities in Ontario, Canada and the USA.

Sheridan College

To find the same type of entry programs at Sheridan when you google oslt@sheridanc.on.ca you are linked to the home page of Sheridan College. Here you choose the type of student you are. Newcomers is one link and Future Students is the other useful link applicable to all students. The third program link on the Newcomers page is OSLT programs and the fourth one is Academic and Career Entrance programs (ACE). These ACE programs are open to all and are free.

To find the General Arts and Science Programs you find at other college sites from the Sheridan home page you link to Programs and then link to Liberal Arts.

Although not listed, there are credit granting processes like PLAR or articulation agreements to help you move on from your Sheridan program. So if you are interested, ask.

Durham College

Durham College does not have a web page for OSLT, but from the home page for Durham, go to Program and Courses and then in the Academic Schools menu box, click on School of Interdisciplinary Studies and Employment Services. There you will find the ACE programs and the GAS programs, one of which was titled University Articulation explaining how you can get from college to university.

Specialized Language Training (SLT)

SLT programs are similar programs to the OSLT ones for newcomers but offered at the School Boards and other sites. If you google Specialized Language Training, SLT programs in Peel Region, Toronto and York Region come up as well as for other areas in Ontario. No websites are listed but the phone numbers for the programs are listed.

DEAR ELCEE

Dear Elcee will be a feature in every issue of Learning Curves. Send your questions about education, training, careers, jobs to:

Elcee

The WEA of Canada

157 Carlton Street, Suite 205

Toronto, On M5A 2k2



I went back to school in my mid-forties, am now graduated, and pursuing a new career. I have been getting lots of help with my job search but I am getting so confused. Needless to say, before I went back to school I had a spotty work background. I worked a lot of temp jobs and had some gaps here and there. On top of that I am of a “certain” age. I have been having people tell me to either leave out the dates on my resume or to “lie” to fill in the gaps. I am not totally comfortable with this but I really want to work. What should I do?

Lisa

Hi Lisa:

Congrats on going back to school! That takes a whole lot of work and determination. You just need a little bit more now to get through the job search.

The predicament you find yourself in is a common one. I see many resumes where a well meaning counsellor has said “Oh, here’s how we can trick the HR people. Just leave the dates off your resume and they won’t know how old you are!” Well, as someone who used to work on the “other side” as a recruiter I can tell you that those tricks don’t work. When a resume came across my desk sans dates I would assume that the person either a) didn’t proofread his/her resume (which means they don’t have an eye for detail) or b) are trying to hide something. Not a quality I want in someone on my team! Unless there was something compelling I rarely contacted that person.

There is another effect of spinning the truth on your resume. Should you get the interview, you then have to own up! If you are trying to hide your age, chances are, unless you have a great beauty regimen (and if you do I want to know about it), they may know your

real age sooner or later. If a person doesn’t want to hire an older person, they won’t. Bottom line? Better to put the correct dates on your resume. Consider this. Fifty percent of the population of Canada is over 40. Our concept of age is changing. Odds are, the person interviewing you may be older than you.

Your next area of concern is about gaps on your resume. Here is another opportunity to tell the truth. Gaps are not the same concern as they were 20 years or more ago. Many people these days work on a horizontal job line (back and forth) rather than vertically (working your way up the job ladder).

More people are working temp now than ever before. Your cabbie can be picking you up at an airport one day and writing software the next. The person pouring your coffee at Tims could be working evenings doing accounting. Those gaps on your resume could have been used for travel, taking care of your children or your in-laws or for medical reasons.

Good luck, Lisa. I will leave you with this final thought: When in doubt, remember that honesty in job searching, as in life, is always the best policy.

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Ally (noun) One in helpful association with another, one with common interests, backer, benefactor, booster, champion, colleague, companion, comrade, endorser, friend, helper, partner, patron, supporter, upholder

Ally (verb) To place in a friendly association, to connect in a personal relationship, band together, combine, come aboard, come together, consolidate, cooperate, fuse, hook up, join together, meld, merge, mingle, network, plug into, pool, relate, stand behind, sympathize, team up, tie in, unite



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CONGRATULATIONS BEV!

Bev has been studying at Access Business College. She was laid off from her job but fortunately her plan to study to be a Medical Office Assistant was accepted by Second Career (the Ontario Government retraining program for laid off workers). Here Bev tells us about her program at Access Business College.

What course have you completed and how many months was it?

The Medical Office Assistant Diploma.
It took nine months.
My reasons to choose the MEDICAL OFFICE ASSISTANT program:
Was the fact that people are now living longer which ensures that demand for health care services will keep increasing.
Irrespective of the state of the economy people will need health care.
An industry that grows even in a recession must offer good career prospects, professional stability and growth.

How did you fund your training?

My Medical Office Assistant (MOA) program was funded through the Provincial Government of Ontario (Second Career) when I got laid off

after being employed for a long-time.

These diploma programs are offered to those who qualify:
laid off
Maternity/Parental leave
ODSP/ WSIB/Reachback

Some of the other programs include:
Banking Financial Services
Administrative Assistant
Computerized Accounting/
Canadian Payroll
Food & Beverage Management
Hospitality Management
Graphic/Web Design
Business Administration

Also parking is FREE!

What can you tell me about the teachers, lectures and instruction at Access Business College?



Access Business College is a private career college, I found them to be extremely professional with highly qualified teachers and small classroom sizes so every student gets attention from the teachers. The teachers and lecturers go that "extra mile" in their teaching approach; they are extremely helpful in guiding, motivating, and steering one in the right direction. extremely supportive. I have the greatest respect and admiration for them and for the College Program.

What has been the approach in terms of doing a job search?

There is a huge emphasis on job placement and resume writing.

Special instruction and scheduling is assigned to resume writing to assist the students in producing a professional looking and sounding resume related to the applicable business sector.

I should add that I have already had responses to my resume that I re-wrote and condensed to one page for the Health Sector.

It was mandatory to produce five resumes per week preparing us for the work force. I began my job search a few months ago and have been on a few interviews and hopefully will be gainfully employed very soon.

What direction will you be taking and what type of work would you like to be involved in?

The health sector will certainly open many doors; however, my plan is to work in a supportive role in Senior care as I have a passion for seniors. I lost both my elderly parents last year, so my wish is to continue applying my nurturing ways, helping, and encouraging.

I am able to bring to the table many transferable skills, but I am happy to enter the medical field at an entry level position and work my way up.

You sound so positive?

Attitude is key, we take ourselves with us wherever we go.

"Love what you do, plan your work, work your plan."

Good luck everyone, blessings and well wishes over the holiday season.

Yours in ongoing learning, Bev.



Nancy K.

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