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HOW TO KEEP YOUR JOB

BY LISA TRUDEL

Wouldn't it be nice if careers came with road maps or GPS tracking systems? Decisions about work, skills and professional development would be clearly marked with signs including "detour ahead" or "dead-end" or "watch for the bump". Instead, you navigate and manage on your own always hoping that each choice will be the right one. There might not be

an actual career road map out there but there is support if you are a job seeker.

In the heart of Cabbagetown, at 595 Parliament Street, Centre for Education & Training (www.tcet.com) offers assistance to unemployed and underemployed job seekers. Career experts help with a wide range of career-related topics including how to prepare for your work search and

how to keep your job once you find it.

Keeping a job includes understanding the rules of work and the terms of employment, specifically the Canadian workplace cultural intelligence expected by many Toronto employers. Recent statistics compiled by organizations that focus on

CONTINUED ON 12



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WHY WE NEED UNIONS

BY ANNE MCDONAGH

By now most of us are aware of the shameful behaviour of Electro-Motive Diesel (EMD), a subsidiary of Caterpillar Inc., a multinational corporation. Until recently it was the employer of about 450 workers in London, Ontario. When it offered its unionized employees a fifty percent cut in wages (from about \$35 an hour to about \$16), the workers, insulted by the offer, refused it and were locked out by the company. Shortly after, the company announced that it was closing the factory and moving to Indiana, where anti-union laws are in effect.

Unfortunately, this outrageous behaviour is not an isolated case. We are all at the mercy of the multinationals, including governments who have ceded a lot of their power and our tax money to these organizations. Unions are the only weapon we have with which to defend ourselves.

To destroy the union movement has been a project for some business interests for many years often with the support of governments. However, it is not just corporations and governments that are anti-union. As a society we are ambivalent about—if not outright hostile to—unions. We were very angry about the garbage strike in the summer of 2009, and we tend to be resentful of the better wages union members earn.

It is clear why corporations and governments are anti-union. They don't want to spend money on workers. They want maximum profit for minimum cost even if that goal leaves employees working long hours for low wages.

The argument of “the man or woman on the street” goes something like this, “Why should they get paid so much? They are doing the same kind of work I do and get paid so much more! And often they are getting paid with my tax dollars.” It is understandable that the average Torontonian feels that way. Many ordinary non-union workers are paid poorly and haven't had a meaningful raise in years, whereas union workers as a rule earn a much better wage than their non-union counterparts. The mystery is why begrudge a good wage to union members. Why not demand the same benefits from your employer as union

members get from their employers?

What a ridiculous suggestion, you say! Of course it is; one lone worker has no power. But unions have power because they stand together, and standing together, they have achieved a great deal for all of us.

In fact, society as a whole owes the union movement a great debt of gratitude. Strikes are irritating, but the public needs to remember the gains achieved for everyone by unions over the years. Despite the many inequities in the workplace, all working people today would be much worse off than they are, were it not for unions.

Unions made possible a middle class. Before unions came into being, in the cities of the Industrial Revolution, there were two classes in society: the rich and the poor, and most people were poor despite the fact that they worked 16 hours a day. They worked in abominable conditions; many industrial accidents killed or maimed them. Employers could do whatever they wanted with their employees. Life was precarious; there was no security of any kind in work or in life, for that matter. After a massive struggle, during the first part of the twentieth century, against the captains of industry and their allies, sometimes resulting in the deaths of unionists, unions finally were legally permitted to exist.

Ordinary workers then had a voice that had some clout; they were no longer isolated, and exploited, but rather members of a group dedicated to improving the lot of the ordinary worker. The playing field was not as uneven as it had been.

All workers benefit because unions exist. To some extent union workplaces forced non-union workplaces to match the wages, working conditions and benefits of the union workplaces. At least they are forced to pay more than they would if the unions were not nipping at their heels.

Thanks to unions we have labour laws around hours of work, overtime pay, health and safety standards in the workplace, a minimum wage, employment insurance, prohibition of child labour and the list goes on. These benefits were negotiated

Today, the average worker takes most of these benefits for granted, but don't for a minute imagine that there are not people plotting to weaken or do away with

many of these benefits. As the behaviour of EMD illustrates, employers have not become benevolent. No doubt there are employers who treat their workers fairly, but if there were no unions, workplaces would still be unsafe, we would work every waking hour and our children would start working at seven or eight years of age etc.

The benefits unions have fought for have meant that workers had the money and time to live satisfying, middle class lives, and it is no coincidence that unions and the middle class way of life are now under threat and that both may well disappear altogether. For the past twenty years the ordinary middle class worker has seen very little increase in wages. To survive, many people are working two or three jobs.

There are lots of villains here. Both the provincial and the federal governments have allowed the business sector to set the agenda. They bribe companies to come to their jurisdiction by giving huge tax breaks and cash incentives including to EMD. When the companies turn around and leave, our elected politicians do little more than offer sympathy to the workers.

To be fair, governments faced with the unemployment of their constituents have had little choice in the matter. Free trade and technology have allowed companies to relocate to the cheapest jurisdiction no matter where it is. Surely those who negotiated these free trade deals had to know that we could never compete with the low paid workforce of

Viet Nam or the prison labour of China. Talk of value-added manufacturing so far has been just talk or so it seems.

In Ontario the manufacturing sector, which provided most of the well-paid jobs, has been devastated in terms of supplying employment. Some manufacturers have moved their operations, like EMD, to cheaper jurisdictions. At first we were told that only the boring, routine or unskilled jobs would be outsourced. Of course, that has not been the case. Many jobs that require technical know-how as well as low-skill jobs are no longer in North America

Partly because of offshoring but also because of technology, the nature of work has changed. Huge factories are no longer necessary. New procedures like Just in Time inventory control mean many jobs are short term. Many workers are expected to work on contract, with no job security and no benefits. The vast majority of jobs replacing the manufacturing jobs are in the service sector which pay about half the wages that the manufacturing sector had paid and many are part-time.

Unfortunately, the union movement has not yet been able to deal with this new economic reality. The recent recession has highlighted this systemic change in our economy. There are many challenges ahead, but as long as there are people who believe in fairness in the workplace and a decent life for everyone, there will be a union movement trying to deal with these challenges.



Union busters after the last union is busted.

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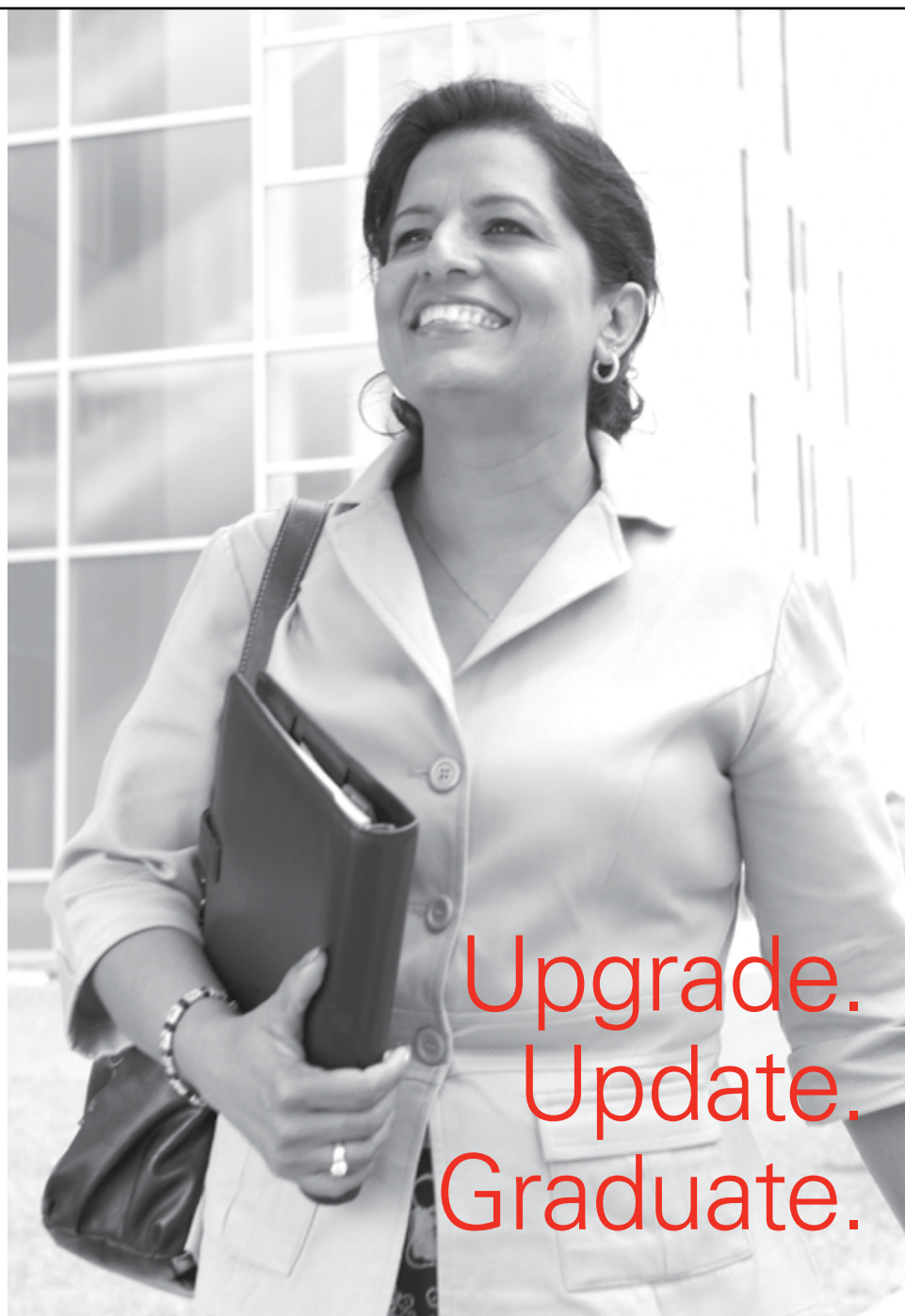
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BEHZAD RETURNS TO SCHOOL

By Behzad Mojaverian

Returning to school for most people can be a worrying experience at the best of times. Returning to school as an adult learner can seem like a “land of a thousand challenges.”

In 2011, I made a big decision to return to school. I needed to add current and up-to-date skills to my resume to improve my chances in the labour market. I wanted to be more competitive, so I decided to look into Second Career funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Let me tell you; Second Career funding approval was not an easy task to manage but was worth it in the end. Travelling around the city, researching schools, completing labour market research and talking with others who are in the field can be very time-consuming. You might ask, why there's such a demanding process in becoming a Second Career client. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is investing so much money in this program that it's critical each client has the desire and ability to complete their program successfully. They ask a lot but I knew it was worth it.

After researching several schools, I chose the Scarborough campus of Durham Business and Computer College. While it wasn't the closest school to my home, they offered everything I needed. With the help of my employment counselor and approval for Second Career funding,

I started my course in January 2011.

My classes were small; I worked at my own pace, received individualized attention as well as hands-on training and experience from day one. I was most impressed by the qualified instructors who guided me throughout my study period. At most, there were eight- to-10 students in each class. It's also a school with continuous intake, which was a big benefit for me. It meant that I was able to start immediately rather than wait until September, which is common at community colleges.

Because Durham Business and Computer College was not close to my home, travelling back and forth was my first challenge. I have one child and balancing my classes with school pick-up and drop-off required early mornings and very long days. Traffic delays also complicated things for my wife and me.

Then there was the challenge of getting myself into the right frame of mind for learning. I had to structure my studies around my family needs. I also needed to figure out the best way to apply myself and stay motivated in the evenings to do assignments and study for exams. It took some time but I eventually established a pattern that worked for me.

Thankfully, I didn't have to do all this on my own. The school designed a program specific to my needs. This allowed me

to study only the subjects that I required and that I sought after. The flexibility in course design was a real plus for me.

I was fortunate to receive exemptions in a few subjects. I was offered prior learning and assessment recognition for previous studies. This is something all students should be aware of and consider when choosing a school. Why spend valuable time and dollars studying things you already know and have received credit for?

So what did I study? I concentrated on the subjects that would make me more marketable. I upgraded my computer skills to Microsoft 2010 in Excel and Access, MS Visio, MS Project and Project+ I also studied AutoCAD 2D and 3D, Inventor, SolidWorks and Pro Engineer. These were strong complements to my existing skill set from university and past employment experience.

About two months prior to completion, my next challenge was to prepare an effective resume and, cover letter and to start actively job seeking. With the help of Barbara Marco, the Associate Director at the Scarborough campus of Durham Business and Computer College, we wrote and rewrote my resume until it was perfect. I graduated last August with an overall aggregate average of 93% and a diploma in Mechanical Engineering Design.

Finding gainful, rewarding

employment was not as easy as I thought even though I had a degree and 12-years of work experience.

I applied for various positions with little or no reply from employers. My top goal was to secure a position with Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). The application process was lengthy and required a lot of my patience, but I didn't allow myself to get discouraged. I even accepted a three-month contract position while awaiting my dream job.

The day came when I got the call from the TTC. I was interviewed and re-interviewed by a panel of three. My references were checked and I'm thrilled to say that because I was prepared, I landed my dream job in the Track and Structure Department with the TTC.

While returning to school might seem like wandering through a land of challenges, I can say that based on my own experience, you don't have to do it alone. Now, I have a job with a future thanks to hard work and ongoing support from the Durham Business and Computer College team and Second Career.

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CERTIFICATE, DIPLOMA, DEGREE: ONTARIO'S PLAN TO GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE.

JOANNE MACKAY-BENNETT

Making the decision to return to college or university has never been an easy one. It often involves taking a risk by giving up a life-style that at the very least is familiar. In the past, it also meant having to plow through a daunting amount of information to discover whether or not you were even eligible for acceptance into a program.

Historically, every college and university in Ontario had its own checklist of entry requirements. Since they were rarely interchangeable, it was a system that bred frustration. If, for instance, you happened to have already earned a number of postsecondary credits at one college or university but wanted to finish your diploma or degree at another, you needed weeks just to decipher the details. Even the most ardent applicant could get lost in the “paperwork” (which can be equally onerous online) while navigating the rules and regulations of “prior learning credit transfer.”

Students, of course, have long known that duplicating course material was a waste of time and money. Now that governments and postsecondary institutions are coming to terms with the reality of reduced budgets, and students are looking for that perfect combination of knowledge, and training that will get them a job, policy makers and administrators are scrambling to make the process of transferring credits efficient and accessible. In theory anyway, it's a win-win situation for both students and education.

For the past five years, the government of Ontario has invested in researching and implementing a new, flexible, credit transfer policy that would allow postsecondary students to move easily from one institution to another. Although Ontario's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities envisions a future where standardized policies will make credit transfer between all Ontario postsecondary institutions consistent, their initial focus is on enabling student mobility between college and university. Relatively recent partnerships between colleges and universities have made that avenue all the more accessible.

At Student Pathways in Higher Education, a conference held in Toronto on January 26 and 27, an invited group of Ontario researchers, registrars and administrators reported on models and policies that target the perceived movement from diploma to degree. Their new student portal, www.ontransfer.ca outlines steps for students to follow in order to ensure that they will receive credit for what they have already studied. It also provides a number of useful links for those who are considering a change.

Keynote speaker and President of the University of Guelph, Dr. Alastair Summerlee, began his address by making the (power) point that technology hasn't just changed the way we process information, it has changed the way we learn. He stressed that it's not just how we learn but who and what we teach that has changed.

Physical classrooms, ad hoc discussions between professors and students, grades based on an examination of book learning and an hierarchical accumulation of credits may not yet have completely disappeared from postsecondary settings but they are certainly in the throes of being dramatically overhauled.

How could it be otherwise? Today's postsecondary institutions are no longer the bastions of direct entry students (those who have progressed linearly from high school to college or university). Instead, enrollment at colleges and universities is comprised of students who come from all walks of life and linguistic backgrounds and who are at different stages in their life histories. Likewise, they want postsecondary education for different reasons – Canadian accreditation, personal interest, or, perhaps, a more meaningful life.

Challenging participants to imagine a reconfigured educational constellation – a degree, say, might require a combination of classroom time, vocational training and online research, or distinctions between certificate, diploma and degree might need reassessing to maintain their validity in today's marketplace. Summerlee insisted, repeatedly, that college and university administrators need to listen to their students. It is the students themselves who will guide the policy makers. They will let them know what they want to learn and how. His message to college and university stakeholders was a simple one: if you don't want

to permanently close your doors, open them!

When the conference was over, I wondered whether there was any room in our brave, not-so-new world for students who might want to jump off the postsecondary train(ing). Is there still a place for the Humanities in postsecondary education? Haven't some of our greatest creative and intellectual accomplishments taken root as a result of reading, thinking and discussing? Like Dr. Summerlee, who incidentally grew up on the Isle of Skye amidst deep lochs, high mountains and few people, we need to ask questions. We need to also pay attention to what is in danger of being lost when an intellectual life is measured by the unquestioned assumption that technology + “learning outcomes” = education.

Don Drummond, the masterful economist behind Ontario's Drummond Report, has said that he chose to pursue the study of economics largely because of a professor during his undergraduate years at the University of Victoria. Professor Leonard Laudadio, who was one of Drummond's mentors, used to bring in newspaper clippings about current issues for his undergraduate students to discuss. Sounds old-fashioned, doesn't it?

How many of us, I wonder, have made life or career decisions based on the personal encouragement and intellectual vitality of an in-classroom teacher or professor?

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BROCK UNIVERSITY: ONLINE LEARNING, LIFELONG LEARNING

BY HEATHER JUNKE

Online study has enabled James Pickett to follow a lifelong learning path. He studied online first as a student and then pursued his interest in teaching adult learners online as a facilitator with Brock University's Adult Education program.

Pickett's first online learning experience started in 1998 as a student in Brock's Bachelor of Education (BEd) in Adult Education degree program. Pickett enrolled in the program while serving in the Canadian Forces in Borden, Ont. He was able to take site-based weekend classes as part of the program's community outreach component.

With a few credits still to finish, Pickett was reassigned to Winnipeg. He was intent on finishing the program and obtaining his second undergraduate degree. Fortunately, Pickett was able to work out arrangements with Brock to complete his degree through online study.

Brock continues to offer students options to pursue its degree and certificate in Adult Education program through online study or community-based class offerings. Pickett has remained connected to the program as a part-time online facilitator since 2005.

Pickett, who is now a project manager with Service Canada in Ottawa, Ontario, has made lifelong learning a priority in his

life. Before retiring in 2006 from a 20-year career in the military, Pickett graduated from Royal Military College with a Master of Arts degree. Most recently, he completed his doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Phoenix. We asked him a few questions about his career:



What attracted you to a career in the Adult Education field?

My initial interest in Adult Education developed after being asked to teach some History courses for the Royal Military College of Canada.

I felt after my first course that I had a lot to learn and discovered that Brock had a program in adult education, offering weekend classes at local community colleges. I saw this as a wonderful opportunity to become a better teacher for my students. I have not regretted the decision to study in the Brock program as I feel it more than met this objective.

What do you see as some of the major changes and developments in adult education?

The greatest changes have been in the formalizing of the field. When I started, the study of Adult Education was still in its infancy and trying to show how it differed from the teaching of children. Today it is acknowledged that adults and children learn differently so the way we teach them must be different.

As a long-time Adult Education Facilitator, what do you believe are the top qualities that make someone an effective adult educator?

Patience and compassion are the most important qualities. This is especially important in this field as we are almost always dealing with adults who have full-time jobs and families that also demand their time.

Be prepared to be extremely flexible



as life will throw many issues at both you and your students so you will have to be willing to adjust your plans accordingly.

Finally, do it because you love it and wish to enjoy the personal satisfaction of having helped your human beings in reaching their life goals.

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>*

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LEARNING IN THE GTA

When we think of schools, we think of children's education but they are a key provider of adult education. To get the picture just try getting a parking spot at an adult education centre. Seasoned adult learners know the early bird gets the spot.

School Board Continuing Education courses are the most affordable in the adult system in Ontario. For the 99% who are struggling to stay afloat and feel they can't afford to upgrade their education to get a better job have a look at the school boards. By taking a school board course you get start yourself on path that would lead to college and an even better job.

Most school boards have several adult education centres that offer all or some of the following: English classes (ESL or LINC) for those who have English as a second and in today's world possibly a third or fourth language; a place to finally earn a high school diploma or a credit for college at an adult day school or in an evening course; pick up practical skills for a job not only in computers but in personal support worker courses and in co-op programs to gain work experience, that all important Canadian work experience; LBS Literacy Basic Skills programs where you can get basic help with math and English- for first language speakers; general interest courses which cover a broad range of language learning, arts, crafts, music, computers, dance, cooking, etc. and some school boards sponsor; Employment Ontario Centres where one is helped to find work or access retraining through Second Career funding as well as Newcomer Information Centres Some boards offer on-line credit courses.

Courses are offered during the day and in the evening.

Another option for flexible learning is the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) www.ilc.org. The ILC offers a range of online and print-based credit courses, from grades 9 to 12, in English and French leading to an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Adults can work independently, at their own pace to complete credits courses needed for college, university or apprenticeship programs. Ontario residents pay only \$40 a course. The Independent Learning Centre (ILC) is mandated by the government of Ontario as the province's designated provider of distance education.

The ILC also administers GED® testing in Ontario and grants the Ontario High School Equivalency Certificate. The GED® is a series of high school equivalency tests open to adult learners who have not earned a high school diploma. The tests are available for adults, 18 and over, who have been out of school for more than one year. The test fee is \$100. GED® test centres are located across Ontario. GED® preparation courses at not offered by the ILC, but are provided by several school boards. A full list of organizations offering GED® preparation courses can be found at <http://www.ilc.org/ged>.

Each GTA region school Board is organized slightly differently but they offer similar programs either free or at a low cost.

PUBLIC AND CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARDS

They are two school systems in the province one public and the other Catholic both offer courses to adults. The following is guide to finding adult programs in each.

Peel District School Board

www.peel.edu.on.ca Click on Quick Links for Adult ESL, Credit and LBS.

This school board covers the areas of Mississauga, Brampton, Bramalea and Malton There are three main campuses for ESL, High School Credit, LBS. The Peel District School Board does not offer General Interest Courses for adults. The

Peel Dufferin Catholic School Board does.

Mississauga Campus 100 Elm Drive West
A block south of Square One
905-270-6000 press 1 for Credit
- 2 for ESL - 3 for LBS

Brampton Campus 7700 Hurontario Street
just South on Steeles on Hurontario
905-791-6700 press 2 for ESL - 3 for ESL
For LBS programs press 1 ext 6401

Bramalea Campus –ESL only
25 King's Cross Road
East of Bramalea Recreation Centre
905-791-6700 press 2 for ESL

Centre for Education and Training.
1-800- 668-1179

This is an arms length organization from the Peel Board which operates Employment Centres, Newcomer Information Services and LINC (esl) classes.at four main Centres in Peel Region

50 Burhamthorpe Rd. –near Squire one
7700 Hurontario Street – south of Steeles
263 Queen Street East- Brampton
3233 Brandon Gate –Malton

York Region District School Board

www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/coned

This school board offers a wide variety of Continuing Education programs such as non-credit ESL for adults, Citizenship, and general interest classes in locations across York Region.

High school credit courses are available to adult learners during the day four times per year at the Dr. Bette Stephenson Centre for Learning at 36 Regatta Avenue in Richmond Hill. The contact phone number for the centre is 905-884-2046. Credit night school also takes place at this location on Tuesday and Thursday evening September through January and February to June.

The Stephenson Centre is also home to the Personal Support Worker program. Personal Support Workers are in high demand in homes for the aged, private homes and community agencies working with older adults, person with disabilities of all ages, new mothers. The PSW program runs from September to June. Information is available on the web site and by calling 905-884-2046 ex. 173.

Uplands Community Learning Centre
8120 Yonge Street, Thornhill
(Just south of #7 on Yonge street)
offers day, evening and weekend non-credit adult ESL classes.
Call 905-731-9557 for information about this and the over 30 other ESL sites

Also at Uplands: Literacy Basic Skills programs (English, Computers and Math Upgrading) and LINC classes too

General Interest: evening courses
Call 905 –884-2046 for site and course information

YRDSB operates an Employment Ontario Centre in Sutton and Stouffville www.yorkwoods.ca

YRDSB offers the ability to earn credits online www.virtualschooling.yrdsb.edu.on.ca

Durham District School Board

<http://ddsb.durham.edu.on.ca>
Click on Schools then Durham Continuing Education

This Board covers the cities of Pickering, Ajax, Whitby and Oshawa as well as others in north Durham.

There are three main centres where high school credits, english as a second language Literacy Basic Skills and computers are offered.

E. A. Lovell Continuing Education Centre
120 Centre Street South
Just south of the civic centre.
Call 905-440-4539

Pickering Learning Centre
1400 Bayly Avenue
Just east of the GO Station
Call 905-440-4539

Computer Training Division
2nd Floor Suite 155
Oshawa Shopping Centre
Call 905-579-6041

DDSB offers a Personal Support Worker program Call 905-440-4536

They also offer “dual credits” where you can earn high school and college credits at the same time by going to night classes at Durham College.

DDSB also offers high school credits online www.dce.ca

General Interest Courses are offered by Durham Catholic District School Board and Employment Ontario Centres by other community organizations.

Halton District School Board www.hdsb.ca
Learning Curves delivers to Oakville which is just west of Mississauga and served by the Halton District School Board and the Centre for Skills Development and Training.

The Gary Allan High School www.garyallan.ca
1330 Montclair Oakville.
Call 905-5845.7542

They offer Employment Ontario services under the Centre for Skills Development and Training at 465 Morden Road , Oakville Call 905-845-1157
www.thecentre.on.ca

LEARNING IN THE GTA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Durham Catholic District School Board

Board www.con-ed.ca

There are three main centres for ESL, High School Credit, PSW, LBS and Co-op and Correspondence and Re-engagement Programs that serve the Durham Region.

DCDSB also offers e - learning Courses for Continuing Education Summer School

Oshawa Campus
692 King Street, East
Call 905-438-0570 or 905- 626-6631

Whitby Campus
Whitby Centennial Building
416 Centre Street. S.
Call 905-668- 5371

ESL Computer Programs – Whitby Library
405 Dundas St. West. – Main Branch
Register call 905 668-6536 Ext. 2020

Ajax Campus
314 Harwood Ave. South, Suite 206
Call 905-683-7713

Computer Training including Microsoft Office Specialist Certificate Program
Ajax Campus - DCDSB

Welcome Centre
ESL & Linc Programs
458 Fairall Street (corner of
Wesney Road & Fairall St.
Across from the Ajax Go Station)

DCDSB offers a good range of General Interest courses at Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax and Pickering locations..

DCDSB offers a Personal Support Worker Program and a Bridging Health Care Aid to PSW program. Call 905-438-0570 Ext 8442
Oshawa or 905-683-7713 Ext. 4011 Ajax

York Catholic District School Board

www.ycdsb.ca
Call 416-221-5051

YCDSB offers a full range of ESL classes. They also offer Specialized Language Training Classes (SLT) for newcomers who want to work in Accounting, Health Professions, Business Administration and Real Estate.

YCDSB offers adult General Interest programs including computer classes.

They also offer night school credit courses for high school but have no adult day school

They offer a TESL Teach English as a Second Language program for those who want to be ESL teachers

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

www.dpcdsb.org/cec
There are three main centres for ESL, High School credits, LBS, Co-op

St. Gabriel Adult Learning Centre
Malton
3750 Brandon Gate Drive
Call 905-362-0701

Brian J. Fleming Catholic Adult Learning Centre
Lakeshore
870 Queen Street West.
Call 905-891-3034

Central Parkway English Learning Centre (ESL only)
Mississauga
377 Burhamthorpe Rd. East
Call 905-273-5591

DPCDSB offers a broad range of General Interest courses at several different sites in Brampton and Mississauga Call 905-891-9283 Ext 8

They also offer French as Second Language classes at Brian J.Fleming and St. Gabriel York Catholic District School Board [<http://www.ycdsb.ca/ace>]www.ycdsb.ca/ace.
Call 416-221-5051

Halton Catholic District School Board www.haltonalc.com
Learning Curves delivers to Oakville which is just west of Mississauga and served by the Halton Catholic District School Board

HCDSB runs the Thomas A. Merton Adult Learning Centre in Oakville.
171 Speers Road,
Call 905-7555 Ext 223

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www.robotech.com

RETURNING TO SCHOOL: UPGRADING YOUR CREDENTIALS

By Sonny Wong

The world of work is competitive and further education may give particular candidates the competitive edge and legitimacy needed in their professions. But does it always? It is vital that you clearly visualize or articulate your goals before investing your resources in further education. Retaining a trained professional career counsellor can facilitate your educational and career planning and reveal your career path. To elaborate, what is it that you want out of your career? How do you measure your career success? How much time and financial resources do you have to invest in your education? Most important, what type of education will assist you in meeting your career success?

Many of us are accustomed to taking courses that interest us, which is much easier than pursuing higher education to compete in the labour market. Therefore, once you identify your career interests and goals you need to research the current labour market requirements for that career. By reviewing print and electronic resources, it will become clearer what educational qualifications employers demand of employees in that field. In addition to educational requirements, you will want to find out how important years of experience, technical skills, personal qualities and added value skills are. Research the demands and employment rate of your career to ensure that upon finishing your training there is a place for you in the labour market.

Whether your path requires pursuing a master's degree, an undergraduate degree,

a college diploma, or vocational training, the particular route is dependent on your resources and suitability for the career.

Use your career counsellor to assist you in this decision-making because you will be examining a mountain of information. Each educational path will require you to evaluate and prepare for a series of stages.

Before jumping into a program, you and your career counsellor need to discuss admissions requirements, tuition, curriculum, university choice and the application process.

The application process is lengthy and depending on how many schools you apply to, it can be costly. As a consumer you need to read all course descriptions, familiarize yourself with the faculty and curriculum to ensure the program meets your professional and personal goals. If your program requires you to complete internships or placements, and you are working full time, what do you do? Your career counsellor can help you explore your options and find a solution. The decision you make needs to factor in your lifestyle, learning preference, finances, timelines and other personal commitments.

In general, masters' degrees are offered with a thesis component or coursework and can be completed in 18 to 24 months. Masters' programs allow you to further develop the specialization you have cultivated in your undergraduate studies or professional and community involvement. Hence, the query is: "What is the specialization you want to cultivate and for what reasons?" The admission committee expects this query to

be addressed in a personal statement. A master's program can engage you in deeper learning, refine your research skills, help you to explore particular topics in depth. You may be studying with working professionals where knowledge is shared in the classroom. This type of interaction is added value. Therefore, work with your career counsellor to discuss the benefits of online learning vs. traditional learning. Upgrading your undergraduate degree to a graduate degree strengthens your area of expertise. For some this type of educational upgrade may not guarantee an upgrade in salary or rank in the workforce.

Many positions require an undergraduate degree and these programs are usually completed in four to five years. This type of education teaches you to understand issues through theoretical frameworks. It fosters critical thinking, teaches concepts and language, and refines communication and writing abilities. These are key employability skills employers are looking for along with technical skills. Some individuals, are able to transition into the world of work to positions which coincide with their academic and personal interests. This successful transition is often due to the time they took to earn their degree and gather relevant experience.

If you expect that your degree warrants a good job, or you believe you can do a job well but do not have any proof, you may need to start proving yourself through volunteer work to build experience/references. Just because you earned a driver's license, your efforts may not be rewarded with a

new car – unless you are very lucky.

Diploma or post diploma programs generally take two years to complete and most programs require placement hours. The aim is to develop your practical application in particular areas of expertise. What you learn in the classroom will have a direct link in the field. Some college programs have partnered with university programs where you will be eligible to earn a university degree. Vocational training is offered by vocational schools. This type of training is designed to narrow skill gaps quickly. If you are a computer programmer and do not have a particular software skill or a bookkeeper who does not have computerized accounting skills, you will learn what is required to bridge the gap..

It is vital that you work with a professional career counsellor to determine your academic fit to ensure it is congruent with your professional goals. All too often, individuals have the perception that education alone is the key to meaningful work. But there is more to it than education. The formula for career success is a combination of the right educational qualifications, a developed career identity and relevant professional and personal experiences along the way.

Sonny Wong, M.Ed., holds a Masters Degree in Adult Education/Counselling Psychology with a focus on Work and Career. Presently, Wong is a professional Career Counsellor at Ryerson University, his experience span over 10 years as a counsellor, facilitator, trainer, and social researcher. He can be reached at sonny_wong_Tor@yahoo.ca.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR JOB

CONTINUED FROM 1

Canadian Employment Law and surveys completed by Certified Human Resource Professionals, often highlight the major reasons employees are hired or dismissed.

The following four points are reasons why many employees may not be retained, along with some practical solutions in case you recognize yourself in any of these areas.

1

"Inability to get along with others"

Customer service excellence is a common work rule, and it extends past your clients/customers and to your co-workers. In the workplace you are judged not only on what you say but how you say it. Learn to focus on the positive and to ask questions to become promotable, successful and efficient. Asking questions shows that you are paying attention and that you are smart and considerate. It also shows that you are interested in your colleagues.

Hard work and career advancements can be destroyed by a careless word or an unguarded moment. Look after yourself

2

"Unreliable work behaviors"

A workplace rule that most employers follow is that employees must be consistent in behaviors and productivity in order to benefit the company and produce profits and positive outcomes. Inaccuracy, absenteeism and inconsistency are usually not tolerated by employers and might eventually lead to termination. A solution can be to ask for an annual performance review in order to recognize workplace weaknesses and to create a mutually agreed upon method of professional development in order to improve. Look after yourself by becoming a consistent professional.

3

"Refusing to follow

directions and orders"

An important work rule is that your company owns your working time and you must do what your supervisors ask you to do. If you have a better idea you need to go through the proper organizational channels in order to do it your way. If you continually lose jobs because you cannot follow directions, a solution might be to become an entrepreneur and run your own business. Not everyone is suited to being an employee and since more work is short-term and project-based, being a free-agent could be the best solution to look after yourself.

On the other hand, if your boss asks you to do something illegal or unethical, you need to take a stand in a professional manner. Look after yourself by knowing the Employment Standards Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code. It is up to you to know the unspoken rules of the workplace.

4

"Lack of integrity on the job"

One of the rules of work is be honest and to protect your company's information and image. Employees cannot use company materials for personal use and absolutely no employee should use company time to operate a personal business. To improve these skills, define your work ethics, set personal standards and read the policies and procedures of your company. If you choose to break the rules and end up losing your job, stating "I didn't know" will not be an effective defense. Look after yourself by using workplace integrity.

For more career management tips or individual career assistance, drop by Centre for Education & Training at 595 Parliament Street, Main Floor or call 416-964-9797 for more information.

Lisa Trudel is Career Specialist with Centre for Education & Training Employment Services, 595 Parliament Street. She can be contacted at: ltrudel@tcet.com

ONCAT AND THE TRANSFER OF CREDITS

By Angela Walcott

Imagine dedicating yourself to a life of study to secure a better future—sacrificing and denying yourself because you know it will all be worth it in the end. You pride yourself on maintaining good grades throughout your years of study and with one final semester remaining, you decide to switch universities. Your pride quickly turns to panic when you receive a letter from the admissions office stating that the last three years are worthless because the university grading systems don't match. Your hard work and determination were in vain and you are left hanging on a limb.

The prospect of sitting in on classes that repeat the same concepts you learned years before is less than appealing, particularly if you are an adult learner. The additional costs for tuition that you will have to shell out are an added setback for any student, regardless of age. Apart from asking yourself 'what was it all for', it appears as though there is little you can do but start from the beginning.

This scenario would have been a common experience before representatives from the colleges and universities stepped in to alleviate the problems and issues arising from transfer credits.

ONCAT, the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer began as the College University Consortium Council (CUCC) which was established in 1996 to facilitate, promote and coordinate joint education and training ventures by Ontario's colleges and universities. In 2011 after collaboration with the Council of Ontario Universities and student advocacy organizations, the Minister of Training Colleges and Universities announced a new provincial transfer framework and

the establishment of a new coordinating body to replace the CUCC, ONTransfer.

ONTransfer, a comprehensive website, operates in collaboration with the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Developed and maintained by ONCAT, ONTransfer is interactive and easy-to-use and provides students in Ontario with information on how they can transfer credits among postsecondary programs of study in publicly funded colleges and universities. ONTransfer is designed to help make the transition, from one post-secondary institution to another less daunting, for example, by listing advisors who can discuss your particular academic status.

Questions surrounding transferring credits can arise due to a varied course evaluation system between two institutions. They can also occur due to a lack of communication between parties, loss and/or destruction of student records or even insufficient documentation. Thanks to ONTransfer and other agencies, it is possible to receive advanced standing if attending a new university. In general, the burden and hassle of trying to figure out where to begin is reduced.

Students also have the option of following up with personal enquires with institution contacts. The resources available through ONTransfer are valuable, particularly when knowledge gained from years of study and hard work is priceless.

Visit <http://www.oucatg.on.ca> for further information.

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 want to go back to school but I don't know what to study. I am 44 years old and I was recently laid off from my job in manufacturing, all those jobs are leaving or have already left Canada. I want to make sure that whatever field I go into now isn't going to go away. What are the hot jobs in the labour market so that I can be sure!

Undecided

Dear Undecided:

Just wait a moment... I have to go polish my crystal ball. Oh darn... it's cloudy. Seriously though, I don't have a crystal ball. While I certainly can empathise with you wanting a "sure thing" there is no guarantee that whatever you study is going to be that.

That being said.. I am not without some good advice (at least "I" think so). When choosing a career I know you have heard this before but it is an important piece of advice do what you love and the money will follow. (And by that I recognise that one needs to make a decent, living wage. No one is truly happy if they are worrying about bills)

Studies done recently among the elderly say that the one thing they regret is not pursuing work that they wanted to do. According to The Legacy Project (www.legacyproject.human.cornell.edu) the two most common pieces of advice seniors offer is to do work you like and to find your passion and pursue it. Think about this. The next time you go to your local department store or have to get some help at a government office look around at the people who work there. Chances are, the person you would want to work with is the person who enjoys the job. They are often the same workers who are more likely to be successful. People who genuinely enjoy the work they do are willing to come in earlier, work hard, stay later.

Oh, but how can I do that? What I would love to do is be a Fire Fighter or an Opera Singer. Is it too late? Well, it may or may not be. But chances are the person who wanted to be a Fire Fighter is not a person who is going to be happy sitting behind a desk all day. He or she may be someone who is interested in Emergency Planning or Emergency Dispatch. The budding Opera Singer may look for work in an industry that promotes the arts. Personally, I love career counselling. It combines a number of my passions.. talking to people, research, working in a team setting, helping people reach their potential. But in my past I also loved waitressing because, again, I enjoyed talking to people, ensuring they had a great dining experience, recommending dishes.

Think about the things you love to do and make a vertical list of jobs that would embody those skills from the lowest to the highest paid. (Mine goes from WalMart Greeter to Talk Show Host). Someone else may go from Filing Clerk to Forensic Accountant. For extra research check out these two great sites... www.poss.ca for career advice and job search tools along with Career Cruising (www.careercruising.com). Your local library or Employment Centre can provide you with a password to access Career Cruising. To find your closest EC just call 211 free from any phone or go to www.211toronto.ca.

Know Thyself... Examine where your skills and abilities lie. Ask people you trust to tell you where they feel your skills lie. I tried that once thinking the person was going to say what I thought about myself.. this person told me that I was "solution focussed" I was surprised. It wasn't a word I would have used but on examination I realised she was right.

For extra help I love the book "What Colour is Your Parachute" by Dick Bolles. A new version is published every year. However, he does host an online site called The Job Hunters Bible (www.jobhuntersbible.com) which has an assortment of online testing, resources and advice

Finally, I come to the Labour Market. Ensure that the labour market information you do look into is accurate and reliable. Beware who is giving the information and stick to government sites. Statistics can be manipulated to reflect any outcome you wish. The best one I can recommend is www.workingincanada.gc.ca. This site is chockfull of labour market statistics. It is easy to use and can be narrowed down to the region of Canada that you live in. It will give you information on what jobs are available, information about job duties and where you can study or train.

Well, Undecided. I am sorry I cannot tell you exactly what path or field to choose. I get asked this same question every day and haven't yet provided an answer. However, through careful examination and research I have seen many people go on to do work they find rewarding and fulfilling. Good Luck!

Adult Continuing Education Programs for the



DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Check out the following learning opportunities – Serving Durham Region

www.con-ed.ca

High School Credit (OSHAWA CAMPUS; AJAX CAMPUS)

Personal Support Worker,

ESL, Linc, Computers for ESL

Correspondence (at home learning)

Adult Upgrading - Literacy and Basic Skills (MTCU Funded)

Night school, Summer school, E-Learning, Computer Courses

Microsoft Office Specialist Training

Oshawa Campus 905 438-0570 & 905 626-6631

Re-engagement Program - 905 438-0570 Ext. 8448

Ajax Campus 905 682-7713 & 905 626-6631

Whitby Centennial Building Campus ESL & Linc – 289 481-1226

Welcome Centre ESL & Linc - 289-481-1336

Adult Upgrading LBS Program 905 438-0570 Ext. 8444

International Languages 905 683-7713

Interest Courses - 905 683-7713

THORNCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICE

HUMAN RIGHTS WEEK

DECEMBER 5-9, 2011

The TNO Human Rights week was a week of events to commemorate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human signed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, 63 years ago.

See www.tnohumanrightsweek.webs.com



Kathleen Wynne MPP, Chris Bolton Chair of the TDSB, Gerri Gerschon, School Trustee attended Overland event.



Overland students sing Free to be Me and You.



Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office TNO programs and services include:

- information and referral • a family violence program • women's counseling
- settlement services • language classes for newcomers • employment assistance services
- an Ontario Early Years Centre • youth services • community information workshops and seminars

Call 416-421-3054
www.thorncliffe.org
 18 Thorncliffe Park Drive



JANE-FINCH ADULTS ARE BACK IN SCHOOL AND LOVING IT!

BY JOHNYUEN

With the cold weather Anastassia Tsukovits has put away her Vespa, her trusty 150 cc Italian-made scooter, but her books, no, not at all.



Anastassia Tsukovits

Although she recently finished—with excellent grades—her adult upgrading courses at the PMP Workers Adult Learning Centre on Steeles Avenue West in Vaughan, the curly-haired 30 year-old Estonian-born woman is on the academic path again. This time, her eyes—and the money she is saving as a nanny—are set on sonography or the fine medical art of using ultrasonic imaging devices. Her target post-secondary institution: The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences in downtown Toronto.

Her classmate, Jennifer Baksh, a 1998 Grade 11 drop-out who loves animals and right after school became a hot walker and groom at Toronto's Woodbine Racetrack, got tired of working for low wages after two years.

Wanting to do much more with her life, and, according to her, "getting out of the vicious cycle of living from pay check to pay check and not having disposable income", Jennifer enrolled in adult upgrading through Seneca College which ran the academic program with the Toronto District School Board and other groups at the learning centre.

Last May, after finishing her math, English, computer and communications self-management courses, Jennifer joined 54 other first-year students at Seneca's "vet school" to prepare for a career as a technician to work with veterinary practitioners and biomedical research scientists in the business of caring for small and large animals.

The lives of thousands of Toronto adults in north-west Toronto, like Anastassia's and Jennifer's, came under scrutiny recently at the first Jane & Finch Community Research Forum organized by the York

University TD Community Engagement Centre, which brought together professors, sociologists and community group leaders to discuss the educational strategies in the Jane-Finch community to improve the lot of the residents.

Heather Miller of the Women Moving Forward (WMF) program at the Jane-Finch Community and Family Centre, reported that its yearly intake of young, single mothers (ages 20-29) who usually have less than a Grade 12 education, has been a great success.

"The majority of the women (when they come in) want to get into the social services field either to do something differently... or because they had a positive experience with a social worker," says Miller.

After going through the 10-month program, the students' awareness changes quickly and they usually end up deciding to pursue a college education in other careers as diverse as phlebotomy (medical technical work involving drawing blood), fashion design, engineering and international development,

said Miller, the WMF team leader.

Forum presenter Katrina Grieve, a researcher who reviewed the work of the PMP Workers' Learning Centre that was created for the more than 2,000 laid-off PMP (Progressive Molded Products) employees who attended English and math upgrading classes between 2008 to 2011, said the workers first felt they "wouldn't be able to manage in post-secondary education" even with language and academic upgrading.

But Grieve said co-operation between six education providers, five employment services, the Canadian Auto Workers trade union and the provincial government developed a plan that included not just ESL, literacy and academic upgrading but also career counselling and help through the government's Second Career program. This approach showed the former workers of the bankrupt company that it "can be done (to get them into college or university)".

Part of the results: More than 450

attended ESL/Literacy Basic Skills/Academic Upgrading classes. None dropped out. And more than 480 had entered or completed Second Career/Skills Development training.

Also, says Grieve, the PMP program proved that, "building foundational skills through English as a Second Language, literacy and academic upgrading is an important component for retraining for employment."

Forum attendee Kosal Ky, an analyst with a Toronto community agency, agrees. "There's lways a link between employment and education. People always want (and have) to pursue education in the hopes of economic security." What's more is that there are different trends in the workplace these days, and often these trends may "force you to go back to school or even force companies to look at retraining (their staff)," says Ky.

While many new immigrants who have English as a second language---like the PMP workers, 87 per cent of whom were in this category---have realized the need for upgrading their basic literacy and essential skills, obtain a "good job" and better lifestyle may take some time to attain. This is because of the different circumstances facing various adults.

For instance, Jane-Finch Family Centre's Miller notes the road to "economic self-sufficiency" for adults—who are single mothers on social assistance--in her program is fairly long. Many of the students in the Women Moving Forward program have been involved in physically, emotionally and/or verbally abusive relationships both as adults or as children.

So it may take up to 15 years to realize the payoff because it takes time to deal with their personal issues, get through academic bridging courses, like Academic Upgrading, in order to get into post-secondary schooling, gain experience in the field of study and obtain a job that provides

them with an income that is much above the poverty line where most are right now.

In another report, researcher Roxana Zuleta told the Jane-Finch Forum the high school dropout rate for Latin American youth in Toronto has been traditionally high

due to high level of poverty of their families.

Examining the lifestyle of Salvadorian-born children who are in Greater Toronto Area high school, colleges or universities, Zuleta, who herself comes from El Salvador, learned, in her master's degree paper, that parents who desired highly that their children get post-secondary education often get their wish.

According to Zuleta, who is manager of Financial Advocacy and Problem Solving Initiative, at the Jane-Finch Community and Family Centre, the parents who adopt cultural practices such as speaking Spanish at home with their kids, encouraging them to attend church regularly and saving money regularly for education purposes, end up "having positive results."

WOMEN MOVING FORWARD

- 110 women have participated between 2005 and 2010
- 72% have successfully completed the program
- 65% no longer receive social assistance
- 50% report better parenting skills
- 83% of the women report increased financial knowledge
- 99% report improved decision-making

For more information, phone Heather Miller, 416- 663-2733, ext. 238

PMP Workers Learning Centre

The partnership of community providers created the flexibility to change processes over time as laid-off workers' needs changed

A large group (of the 2,400 who lost their jobs) got access to literacy, upgrading and retraining for new careers, and might not otherwise have done so

Peer helpers gave people hope that some day a door would open. This helped reduce stress.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Charters, 416-491-5050, ext. 4759

Latin American Youth Project Ten Salvadorian families interviewed

Parents who saw post-secondary education as ensuring "social mobility" for their children, used the opportunities available

Six students are in college or university, three are doing well in high school, one dropped out of high school

For more information, phone Roxana Zuleta, 416- 663-2733, ext. 249



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